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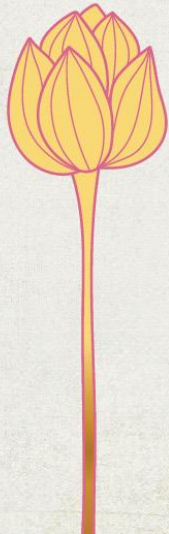


# LAND OF THE SACRED AWAKENING

MAHABODHI TEMPLE COMPLEX, BODH GAYA

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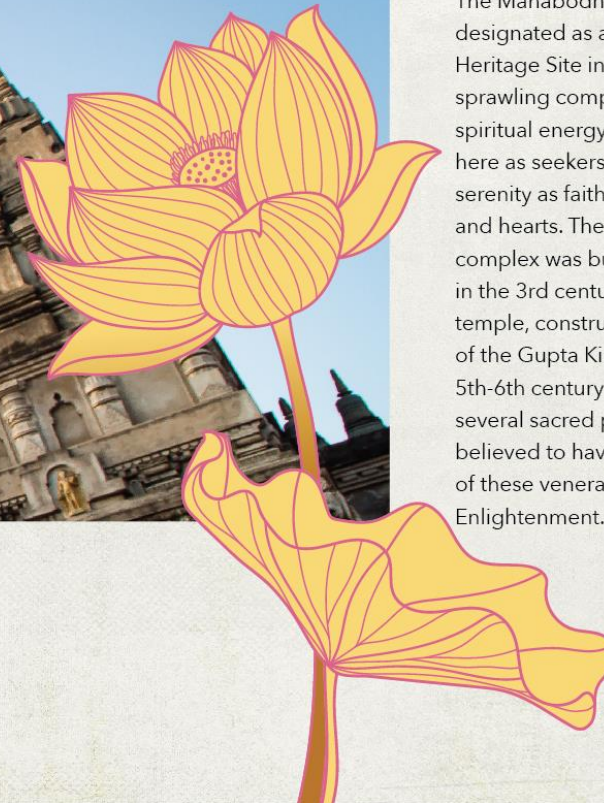
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Discover the revered land where Buddha began his spiritual journey. More than 2500 years ago,

Prince Siddhartha Gautama reached here in his quest to understand the meaning of life. After deep contemplation and meditation, he attained Enlightenment.

It was from these hallowed grounds that the world first heard his teachings of self-discipline, detachment and brotherhood. His philosophy continues to give spiritual solace to believers. With millions of visitors, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex in Bodh Gaya is one of India's top spiritual destination.



## **IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BUDDHA AT THE MAHABODHI TEMPLE COMPLEX**

The Mahabodhi Temple Complex was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 2002. The sprawling complex is infused with the spiritual energy of believers who come here as seekers. But there is also serenity as faith and belief calm minds and hearts. The first temple in the complex was built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC. The present temple, constructed during the reign of the Gupta Kings, dates back to the 5th-6th century. The complex also has several sacred places. Buddha is believed to have spent a week in each of these venerable sites after attaining Enlightenment.



## THE GRAND TEMPLE

Made entirely of bricks, the temple design had a profound influence on the architecture of the times. The magnificent World Heritage structure has several towers, the highest being 50 metres. There are many statues and images of Buddha, including a gilded one in a seated pose. With mouldings, niches, parapets and halls, the exquisite structure is testimony to the artistic talent and skills of a bygone era.

## THE SACRED BODHI TREE

To the west of the temple, stands the sacred Bodhi Tree under which Buddha meditated. It is said that he continued to be seated here, completely unmoving, for seven days after attaining Enlightenment. The 'Kalingabodhi Jataka' describes the tree in vivid detail and is probably the earliest written record of it. The present Bodhi Tree is regarded as the fifth generation descendent of the original tree and is worshipped with reverence by devotees.

## VAJRASANA

The red sandstone slab, between the Bodhi Tree and the Mahabodhi Temple, is the 'bodhimanda' or seat of Enlightenment. It was built by Emperor Ashoka at the exact spot where Buddha was seated while meditating. The name Vajrasana literally means the diamond throne or the thunder seat. The scholar Ashwaghosa referred to it as the 'navel of the earth' in his epic Sanskrit poem, Buddhacharita.



## ANIMESHA LOCHANA CHAITYA

During his second week, Buddha is said to have spent seven days here, standing motionless in deep contemplation, gazing at the Bodhi Tree without blinking even once. On all seven days of the third week, Buddha walked continuously between the Bodhi Tree and Animesha Lochana Chaitya. This route is known as the Ratnachankrama or the Jewel Walk. The legends claim that this was Buddha's way of expressing gratitude to the Bodhi Tree for sheltering him.

## CANKAMANA

Located in the northern part of the Mahabodhi Temple, the Cankamana is an elevated platform representing the path taken by Buddha during his 'walking meditation'. Lotuses carved in black stone are believed to mark Buddha's footsteps as he walked on the pathway.

## RATANAGHARA

Located northwest of the temple, this is where Buddha meditated in his fourth week. He glowed with an aura as he reflected on the Pathana or the law of dependent origination. Interestingly, the Buddhist flag has the entire spectrum of colours seen in his aura.

## AJAPALA NIGRODHA TREE

During his fifth week, Buddha meditated under the Ajapala Nigrodha Tree. He also delivered a discourse on equality. According to folklore, the tree was planted by a young shepherd to protect Buddha from the elements. A pillar stands at the spot on the eastern entrance of the temple where the tree once stood. Devotees chant and meditate around the pillar.



## MUCHALINDA SAROVAR

Buddha is believed to have spent the sixth week after his Enlightenment here. The pond is named after the king of snakes, Muchalinda. It is believed that a storm broke out as Buddha sat in deep meditation. The snake king raised his hood to protect Buddha from the strong winds and rain.

## RAJAYATNA TREE

Buddha meditated for a week under this tree. Located to the south of the temple, this is also where Buddha accepted his first two lay devotees, Tapassu and Bhallika. The two Burmese merchants, who were passing by, offered Buddha rice cakes and honey and took refuge in his teachings.



Walk the path that the Buddha did thousands of years ago as he sought to discover the universal truth. Embrace the rich philosophy of love and acceptance that he espoused from this land and embark on a spiritually fulfilling journey from the cradle of Buddhism, the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya.

## HOW TO REACH

- By Air** : 10.6 km from Gaya International Airport
- By Rail** : 20 km from Gaya Junction
- By Road** : 15.8 km from Gaya Bus Stand

