

REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL TOUR

TO

RAJGIR & NALANDA

BY

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
KRISHNA CHANDRA COLLEGE,
HETAMPUR, BIRBHUM**

13-14TH November, 2019

An educational tour has organized by the Department of History, Krishna Chandra College, Hetampur, Birbhum on 13-14th November, 2019 to Rajgir and Nalanda. Altogether 40 students and 2 teachers have joined in this trip. It was a tour full of fun and enjoyment. This trip helped the students to learn about the early- historic and early medieval history of India. Moreover, they got a chance to see the ruins of one of the largest learning establishments of ancient India, i.e. Nalanda Mahavihara.

Rajgir:

We have started our journey from our college campus on 13.11.2019 at about 8 p.m. in a private luxury bus. After whole night bus journey, we reached Rajgir around 7 a.m. in the next day, i.e. 14.11.2019. After fresh up and having our breakfast, we booked three autos for visiting few important tourist spots of Rajgir.

The first spot we visited was the Son Bhandar Caves. These are the two man-made caves in the base of the Vaibhar hills in Rajgir. Both the caves belonged to the 3rd-4th century CE, as an inscription of the Gupta script have been discovered from one of the caves. However, the main cave possibly constructed during the Mauryan period. Inside the main cave there is a *Chaumukha* carved with the idols of four Tirthankaras on four sides. In the second cave one could find the carving of Mahavira in the cave wall.

From Son Bhandar Caves we went to Maniyar Math. It is a cylindrical well like structure of archaeological importance situated on the way to Son Bhandar caves. It is an architectural example of the Gupta period. This was built in the memory of Naga Salibhadra.

After that we visited the Cyclopean Wall of Rajgir. This wall is a 40 km long wall of stone which encircled the ancient city of Rajagriha to protect it from enemies and invaders. It was possibly built during 6th-4th century BCE. Now only some portions of the wall are existed.

After returning we took our lunch at Rajgir and around 1 p.m. we have started our journey for Nalanda.



Nalanda:

After reaching Nalanda we first visited the ruins of the famous Nalanda Mahavihara. Students were so much excited and speechless to see this huge Buddhist monastic complex. Nalanda is considered as a greatest centre of learning in ancient world. It was established in the 5th century CE under the patronage of Kumaragupta I, however, it achieved glorious position under the support of the Pala rulers. After the Palas Nalanda was patronised by the Pithipatis of Bodh Gaya. In all probability Nalanda was attacked and damaged by Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1300 CE. This Mahavihara had a renowned library, where a number of ancient Sanskrit texts were housed. Tibetan sources mention the existence of a great library at Nalanda named Dharmaganja, which comprised three multi-storied building- Ratnasagara, Ratnabodhi, and Ratnaranjaka. In Ratnabodhi, several sacred manuscripts including *Prajnyaparamita sutra* and *Guhyasamaja* were kept. Xuanzang visited Nalanda in 637 and 642 CE and spent two years here. Besides, eleven travellers from China and Korea are known to have visited Nalanda from time to time. Various subjects taught at Nalanda, which attracted the pupils and scholars from Korea, Japan, China, Tibet, Indonesia, Persia and Turkey. Nalanda played an important role in development of Vajrayana sect of Buddhism. Apart from several explorations, Nalanda was excavated time to time by the Archaeological Survey of India. The ruins of Nalanda now extend 400 mts. from north to south and 244 mts. from east to west. Excavations have unearthed 11 monasteries and 6 major brick -built temples. All the monasteries are of a typical vihara design of architecture. Walls of the monasteries and temples are carved with religious and secular panels. Huge numbers of sculptures made of stone, bronze, and stucco have been discovered from these ruins.

After that we visited Archaeological Museum of Nalanda, located just opposite the entrance of ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara. A number of sculptures made of stone and bronze, ceramic, terracotta objects, copper plates, architectural members, stone inscriptions, coins, sample of burnt rice, discovered from excavations of Nalanda and found from adjacent areas are housed in this museum.

After completing our dinner at Nalanda, we started for our return journey around 9 p.m. on 14.11.2019. Spending whole night in bus we reached Hetampur around 7 a.m. on 15.11.2019.