



## Historical and religious perspective of Bihar Sharif: A critical analysis

Dr. Rana Uday Pd Singh

N.T.P.C. Coloney, Ram Krishna Nagar, Patna, Bihar, India

### Abstract

India is a country with diversities in religious faith. Here Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity etc. religious faiths are adopted by the people. Each religious faith worship Almighty in different forms and every religion has its own institutions where people perform their religious activities by different rites. Here, focus is a historical and religious perspective and activities of Bihar Sharif town, the district headquarter of Nalanda district Bihar. It is an old town where old Islamic and Hindu institutions are visible. In its vicinity at Rajgir and Pawapuri famous Buddhist and Jain institutions are located respectively.

**Keywords:** Bihar Sharif, historical, religious perspective

### Introduction

Bihar Sharif is an ancient city. Its earlier name was Udaypur or Udaypur. Subsequently, the city became famous as Vihara, after the development and growth of Buddhist monasteries. In medieval period it emerged as a seat of learning of Muslim Sufi saint. At present this town exhibits a composite religious culture where Hindu, Muslim, Jain and some extent Christian and Buddhist reside here. However this town could not maintain Hindu Rajas glory and Buddhist religion. Muslims and Jains maintain their religious institute and it became dominant centre for Muslim shrine after the various order of Sufi saint.

San Francis Buchanan demarcated a Hindu temple near the hill, further he has described that the Hindu tomb had probably gone to running with the Magadh Dynasty.

A little west of the old fort is a very considerable heap of bricks called Pajaiya which means a brick kiln and people alleged that it was an old brick kiln site of the Magadh, but its elevation and size render this opinion untenable, it has probably been a large solid temple, and its ruins indeed may have supplied bricks for the modern town to a very considerable extent to which the name may be attributed.<sup>1</sup>

### Historical and Religious Perspective

This town was founded by the Padmodaya Raja before 300 BC according to Jain tradition. It means the city is a very ancient town of Bihar and also famous for Jains. A number of Buddhist and Jain Shrine ruined witnessed such fact, a mile away from the fort towards the bank of the Panchana river remains of several Buddhist building exist.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Franklin describe two Jain temples, containing stone and copper images in his report.<sup>3</sup>

During the early medieval to Late medieval this town emerge as a sight of Muslim Sufi Saint, thus a number of Muslim Sufi saint came here and opted it as a preaching centre particularly Chistiya, Firdosiya, Jahiliya, Kalandariya and Abdaliya. Other Sufis consequently a number of Muslim shrines established here. All Sufis reached and educated for social reform and

communal harmony. This is the major factor each and every community, sect is attached without distinction of caste and creed, attained there and came near to the truth.

Tomb of Pir Pahar is situated on Pahariper, this tomb is associated with famous Sufi saint Malik Ibrahim Baya. Tomb of Makhddum Janha, stands at the south bank of Panchana river and is a very famous Muslim Shrine. Makhddum Janha was great Sufi saint of Firdausia order and he was scholar, prolific Persian writer, calligraphist and he achieved his knowledge through highly educated teacher Sarffudin Abutamama of Bengal and learn fourteen branches of contemporary education. After the achievement of education he inclined towards meditation for eternal satisfaction and search of truth. He spent his life about 36 years in meditation for the spiritual purification, during these days, he spent 12 years in Bihiya, 12 years in Rajgir and rest days in Makhdumpur, Bihar Sharif and other places. Lastly permanently reside in Bihar Sharif and preached the people, achieved great popularity. Mohammad Sah Tuglad visited Bihar and consulted with Makhddum Janha and offer a lot of property and order for built a Khanka where he pray and preach the people. So his Khnka and Tomb both are equally demarketed as a Muslim Shrine. Annual Ursh of Hajrat Moquhddum Janha is celebrate in the Arbin Month of Saiwal every year with gitty and glory and more than lakh people without the distinction of caste, creed and community attain and participate the ursh rituals which locally known as chiraga. His tomb is famous as Bari Dargah which is situated in south east of the town. Throughout the year pilgrims come here and offer chadar and sweets on the shrine of Sufi Saint.

On the north east corner of the town a famous Muslim shrine 'Amber Ki Dargah' is located here, which is also known as Chiram Posh Ki Dargah. Hajrat Makhddum Ahmad Chiram Posh was contemporary of Makhddum - A - Janha, but he belong to suhar wardia order. He was also a scholar, Persian poet and a great Sufi saint of the town, a number of the visitor every moment visit here, for performing 'Fatiha' and observing minnat. A lot of people come here for folk medicine

and spiritual device one who suffering from bad spirit.

Bari Dargah forms a segment of Shrine's, among the famous Shrines Paharpura Ki Dargah is also popular. This shrine belongs to Hajrat Hassan Nausa Towhid. Nausa Towhid was very beloved Sufi Saint of Hajrat Makhddum Janha. He was great Persian poet of his time and founded another one Sufi order namely Balliya. In the eastern side of Bari Dargah a famous shrine is located known as Choti Dargah or Kacchi Dargah where taking rest Jahidya order Sufi saint Pir Badar Alam Jahidi, in the extreme west and northern part of the town, a famous tomb of Bibi Abdal is situated, she was famous Sufi-lady of Abdaliya order and sister of Bibi Kamalo Bibi Jallalo of Kako.

A number of Chistiya order Sufi saint also taking rest here, but the shrines of Chistiya order Sufi's could not gain popularity among the mass.

Only one Hindu shrine is famous in this town which is commonly known as 'Baba Maniram Ka Akhara'. This shrine or temple is located just north east of Bari Dargah where a 'Mela' is organized in the month of 'Sawan'. On such occasion public and government organization come here with joyful procession and offer "langoot" and "Dhawaj" to Manibaba and organize a competition of 'wrestling'. Buddhist shrine almost disappear from this town. A contemporary religion in ancient time which is known as Jainism developed in Bihar and this town named after his 24th Tirthankara "Bhagwan Mahavir". At Pawapuri Bhagwan Mahavira got 'Nirwana' and famous temple of Jain constructed here which is centre of attraction for Jain's tradition all over the India, here both sects i.e. Pitambera and Digambara are visitors and offer big Laddu, ornaments on the statue of Mahavira. Here a big tank is situated in the regiment of Mahavira temple, where fishes taking breath fearlessly because no one can fishout, devotees offer to fish sweet and other food stuff with great affection, among devotee someone' golden Nath with wrignal pear's offer to the sacred fish. Although this temple is located extremely south east of the tomb which is a distant rural area and the name of this village is Pawapuri.

The share of Jains, Sikha, Budhists and Christians population is almost negligible. All these religious groups together constitute only 0.10 per cent of the total population in the study area.

Muslim offer their prayer (Namaj) daily 5 time in their Mosque. On Friday they offer group prayer in big mosque of the town called Jama Masjid in Biharsharif. More than hundred large and small masjid are located. Among them few masjid having their historical importance as well as recognized as more sacred religious centre. Bhai Morarpur Masjid, Jama Masjid pulper, Kali Masjid Khandque, Bari dargah Masjid, Mirdad Masjid, Jama Masjid, Shai Khani, etc. are famous.

Muslim celebrate three big festival in a year they are Ramajan, Id-ul-fiter, Id-A-Ajha. Ramajan is a one month festival and most sacred festival among Muslim communities. They observe fasting before rising to setting sun, take break-fast after sun setting, on this moment they take different types of dishes and Fruits. This is known as Iftar. Before rising of the sun they take something in little amount, this ritual is known as Sahari. Whole day they offer prayer and resite holly quran. After completing 29 or 30 days of fasting muslims celebrates

festival which is known as Id-Ul-Fiter. After two months of Id-Ul-Fiter a holly festival of Id-A-Ajha is celebrated there in same rituals as Id-Ul-Fitter with little difference because they sloaten, the four footed animals for sacrifices after prayer, such rituals known as Kurban. So this festival also known as Bakarid.

A selected religious rituals and festivals celebrated by different sects of Muslim community e.g. Moharam, Sub-a-Barat, Kunda, Che-helum, Moharam is a most sacred festival for Siya-Muslim. However to some extent Sunni-Muslim community celebrate Moharam. In Sabe-barat all muslim offer prayer whole night in Masjid and in their houses, they also recite holly quran but in day time festivals celebration they prepare halwa, bread, sweets etc. for fathiya which is not acceptable for all sects in Muslim community. Kunda is also popular among Siya's but some Sunni Muslim also celebrate the Kunda festival.

A few festival is particular for this town, they are chiraga, bara-wafat, Id-ul-Milla-uddin-nabi. Chiragas festival is mainly organised near the bari dargaha complex and Amber Ki dargaha complex. In bari dargah, chiraga celebrates after fourth day of Id. On such occasion, Mela is organized near the Bari Dargah and chadar and sweets offered in Dargah of Hajrat-Makhddum Janha. Similarly in the month of Sabe-barat, Chiraga is celebrated at Amber Dargah.

Hindus celebrate a number of festivals in this town, major festivals are Durga-Puja, Diwali, Ram Nawami, Holi and local level festivals are Chhat, Nag Panchami, Langoot. Durga Puja is one of the most sacred festivals for hindus. This festival is also known as Nav Ratra. Although this festival celebrated twice in a year-Sarad-Durga and Chaiti Durga, but Chaiti-Durga Puja is more popular in Biharsharif. Before the field work I have not known about Chaiti-Durga Puja inside the study area. Sarada Durga Puja or Nav Ratra which is celebrated here with high religious enthusiasm in all most all important Mohallas and location where hindus are concentrated. Idol of Ma-Durga is placed in different forms and decorated in very attractive colours, ornaments and dress. On such occasion Pandals are also developed. Biharsharif Durga-Puja pandals are very famous in the entire state. On such occasion hindu starts Maa-durga path from very first day to the last ninth day but festival comes in its attraction after Mahalya. After kalasa-asthapan, idols of Maa-Durga instolled in Durga Sthan, devotees visit the puja pandals and Durga-Sthan offer arghya'. After two weeks of celebration of Durga Puja Dipawali festival festive in this area. It is a faith of General Hindu on such occasion lord Rama come back to Ayodhya after the conquest of Lanka and he throned (Raja Abhishek). So all hindus clean their houses, shops and other places before the celebration of the festival and they also paint and colour their houses and change their furniture, utensils and try to change all house-hold items, sofa-cusion cover bedsheet etc. This occasion is celebrated for two days generally famous as Chhoti Dipawali and Bari Dipawali. In this sacred occasion on first day they celebrate as Dhan Teras. Dhan Teras celebration started after famous physician of Harsh period vaid Dhanwantari. On second day, they decorated their houses and light lamps from evening to whole night and at night puja of Bhagwan Ganesh and Lakshmi is performed, in each and every family and they also do fire-

works and some people use gambling. Gambling is based on the myth of Mahabharata. Over all these festival celebrated with deep religious stinct by every member of the family. In Biharsharif on such occasions sweet shops represent a distinction, making different type of sweets, with the help of sugar ingredient and 'gur'.

Holi is one of the most popular festival of Hindu. In this festival hindus of Biharsharif do not festivate in a good manner and not demonstrate a good culture. Generally they use waste material, garbage, mud, and occasionally they pour the trees-passers in the drainage or cow-dung. Although this festival philosophy teach the lesson of (finish the distance from each one) brotherhood and coloured in one colour and embrace every person without distinction of caste, creed and community but the festival represent the bad image regarding this festival. People generally use in toxication and move hither and thither in licencies form, use bad sentences and vulgar words. Lastly they take bath at about 3 p.m. and become well dressed and offer 'abir' and 'gual' to every associated member. On this occasion local dish which is known as 'puwa' and 'bachka' is prepared. Non veg-dishes are also prepared on this moment.

Ram-nawami is a national level festival, but in Biharsharif it is celebrated with full dedication and devotion. This festival is celebrated on the occasion of Birth of Lord Rama on Ninth day of Chaitra. In Ram-Nawami Hindus host red Mahaviri Flag on green bamboo stand in their houses and at the temple of Bajarangbali (Hanuman). A procession with musical parties also demonstrate with the raising of slogans "Jai Shree Ram".

Chhat is one of the most popular local festival of Biharsharif. This festival starts from Lohanda to Prathama Argha. Devotees observe fasting about 36 hours after using Kadu Bhaat and Khir, all preparation for Chhat-Argha needs more attention. It is general faith, that any mistake or adultration may cause adverse effect. So devotee use new earthen pots and new wodden house-hold items and never use impure material and take full precaution during the preparation. Two times argha is offered to the god Sun first one is offer at the moment of Sun-set which called in local dilect, sanjhauwa Aragh and second one offer at the momment of sun rise which is also known as "Bharawa Argh", and then they distribute prased among devotees and non devotees. Every one use chhat argh with sacred feeling. Generally Kartik Chhat is popular here and Chaiti chhat is not so common here.

Ganeshpuja is one of the most famous religious festival of Biharsharif. On this occasion idols of Ganpti (Ganesh) is installed at various places in Biharsharif. This festival is festivated every alternate year. After Ganesh Puja the idols of god is emerged in local tanks (talab).

Makar-Sankranti, is a National level festival but in Biharsharif this festival is festivated with specific local rituals. On this occasion people generally use chura-dahi (curd), Tilwa, Tilkutt, Chakki Ka Guyr, Bhura after taking the secred bath. On the occassion of this festival youth of this town generally rush to Rajgir for out door re-creation.

Jain population is also visible in urban area, near the Pawapuri village. Jain temple which is one of the most sacred place for Jainies world. It is an assumption that the jainies are one of the sect of Hindus, but Jainies religious rituals, social life, customs, tradition and life style is quite different from Hindu.

They worship and devotee for Tirthankara and min teaching of Jainies is Ahinsa Parmo Dharmah, (non-violence) is great religion. Religious rituals of Jain devotees are more difficult than the other religious, In Mahavir Jayanti Jainies demonstrate procesion in Biharsharif with white dress and mouth cover which represent a distinguish feature of Bihar and witnessed a composite culture.

### Conclusion

Few Budhists also reside in Biharsharif but at present there is no religious centre inside Biharsharif town, so they do not celebrate any festival in Biharsharif. In adjacent areas of Biharsharif, the Nalanda and Rajgir are famous sites for Budhist where two sects of Budhist religious centre are located i.e. Mahayan and Hinyan but another one newly emerged sect Bajra Yaan is not popular in this locality. Budh Purnima is one of the most important festival of Budhist world. Thus Buddhist offer prayer, revolve Dharm Chakra and bit drum, but in Biharsharif this ritual is not performed, but all rituls are performed at Nalanda and Rajgir and Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya is a top most religious centre and highly sacred place for Buddhist like Makka, Vetican city, Kashi, Revolving Dharam chakra is one of the most important religious rituals for Buddhist. It is a faith that the Dharam Chakra is that sacred revolving ritual which wash out their evils.

Christian are mainly concentrated in north-western part of the town in negligible number but they celebrate christmas day, ester-day and good friday with full religious colour. They decarate church and distribute Kambal, Sari and clothes among down trodden people. All christian belongs to Roman Catholic sect. Everyday they offer prayer at morning and evening in the churches with their tolling bell.

### References

1. Francis Buchnan, "Patna Gaya Journal", P-95
2. D.R. Patil, The antiqu quarians remains in Bihar, Kashi Prasad Jaiswal Research Institute, Patna 1963, P-47
3. Kanigham Archalogical Survey of India Vol. 1, P-37
4. Broadly JASB P-284
5. Colonial Franklin, Volume 31, P-69