

# TEMPLES OF MITHILA



*Surya, Badijaan, Kishanganj*



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*Loose Sculpture, Vireshwarnath Temple,  
 Bhitbhagwanpur*

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**Inscription of Baba  
Madhaweshwarnath,  
Sourath, Dist. Madhubani**

## **Introduction :**

Satapatha Brahmana Says

“जनको हो वैदेहो”

Videha was the first designation. Videgha Mathava, who first introduced Agni (sacrificial fire of Brahmanical civilization) beyond the Sadanira. It leads to habitation/ Civilization since Darbhanga Distt. Gazette defines Videha Country from Rapti (Gorakhpur) to Purnea (Kosi) North to the hills and South was bounded by small kingdom of Licchavis (VAISALI)

Also to be mentioned Buddhaghosha's

Sanyutta Nikaya "Veda-ihā"

"Vedana-ihati"

or intellectual effort i.e. VAIDEH (Videha)

Mithila is an old name revived in recent times of a tract of country comprised by what is today indicated as "North Bihar" Terai and southern portion of the kingdom of Nepal inclusive of lower ranges of hills. The name 'Mithila' was flourishing part in ancient and mediaeval



**Inscription of Baba  
Madhaweshwarnath,  
Sourath, Dist. Madhubani**



time. It was famous for its history, art, architecture and culture. During the mediaeval period Mithila was an important center of *tantric* practices and brahmanical religions.

Mithila has an old history. In *Satpatha Brahmana* (the date of has been roughly computed between 1000 and 600 B.C.) it is mentioned that river *SADANIRA* distinguished mithila (then called *videha*) from Kosala even in epics the important kingdoms mentioned are those of *vaishali* and *mithila*. It is not clear where the kingdom of *mithila* ended and where that of *vaishali* began, but it is stated in the *Valmiky Ramayana* that "They" (the two kingdoms) were not far from the confluence of the river *Sona* and the *Ganga*. Buddhist texts have one or two stray references which show that the province of *videha* was situated in the tract of land called *madhyadesa*. Indeed far from being included in the *madhyadesa* (mid-land) *mithila* was consistently regarded

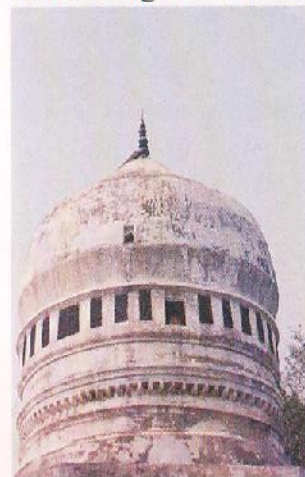


**Raj-Rajeshwari Temple, Rajnagar, Dist. Madhubani**



**Shikhar, Kapileshwar Temple,  
Dist. Darbhanga**

Mithila. In *Mithila Mahatmakhanda* it is stated that *Tirabhukti* (a later name of the province) is situated between the river *ganga* and *Himalayas*, extended over 15 rivers and the extension, from *Kosi* to *Kousiki* (in the east) to the *Gandaki* (in the west) for 24 *yojanas* and from *Ganga* to the forests of *Himalayas* for 16 *yojanas*.



**Shikhar, Mahadev Temple,  
Kollakh, Dist. Madhubani**

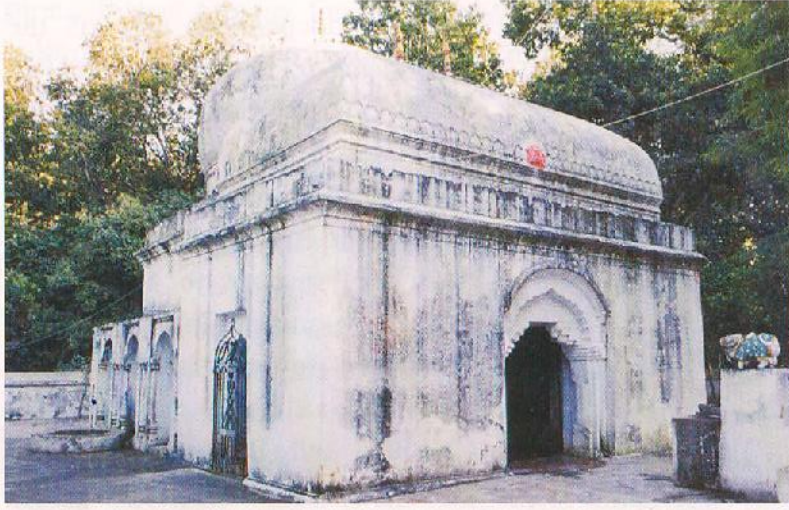
as an independent unit of the *Pracyadesa* (Eastern Country) In *Aitareya Brahamana VIII, 14* includes Mithila in the ground of *pracyadesas* and also *Kosala*, *Magadha* and *Anga*. In this it is also interesting to note that, *Praci*, in ancient Tibetan works, excluded (even *Magadha*, *Kasi* and *Kosala*) but included *Mithila* and *Banga*. In *Brihad Vishnu Purana* (5th cent A.D.) we get an accurate idea about

Chanda Jha, describes this boundary in his well-known Maithili verses :

गंगा बहति जनिक दक्षिणदिशि पूर्व  
कौशकी धारा । पश्चिम बहति गंडकी  
उत्तर हिमवत बल विस्तारा ॥

कमला त्रियुगा अमृता धेमुडा बाग्मती  
कृतसारा । मध्य बहति लक्ष्मणा  
प्रभृति से मिथिला विद्यागारा ॥





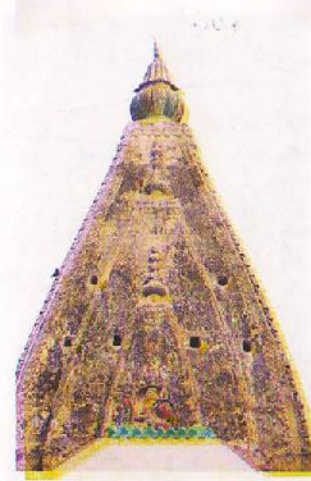
Kaveleshwar Mahadev Temple, Bhaisa Lotan, Dist. Betiah

निमि पुत्रस्तु तथैव मिथिर्नाम महान्,  
स्मृतः प्रथमं भुजबले येन येहुतस्य  
पार्श्वतः निर्मितम् स्वीयनाम्ना च,  
मिथिलापुरमुत्तम् ।

In *Bhagwata-purana* IX, 24, 64, IX, 13. 13. Mithila is narrated as "mahagovinda" sultanate of *Digha Nikaya* Mithila was built by Govinda. In the *Jaina Sutras* 5 B, XXII pt. 1, P 256 we get the information that was born in Kundanpura or Kunda Gram i.e. Videha. He lived 30 years in Videha hence also known as विदेहजात्य विदेह सुकुमार (कल्प सूत्र, सूत्र नं.110), Vardhamana Mahavira stayed in



Murali Manohar Temple, Madhubani



Jogeshwar Mahadev Temple,  
Nahar Bhagwatipur,  
Dist. Madhubani

The most reasonable explanation of the origin of the name appears to be as given by the *Unadi Sutras*. Its author derives it from *Mantha* (to churn) and thus explain it :

मिथिलादयश्च ॥ मध्यन्तेत्रिपवे । मिथिलानगरी

"that city is called mithila where enemies are tonmented"



Shikhar,  
Murali Manohar Temple,  
Madhubani

mithila for 30 years. In *Budhist Jatakas* it is stated that the city of mithila was leagues and in the kingdom of videha 300 leagues in extent. According to the *Bhavishya Purana*, Nimi the son of Manu, king of Ayodhya frequented the land of sacrifices. His son Mithi founded a kingdom here which was named Mithila after his name. Being a "City builder", he came to be known as "Janaka".

In Sanskrit and Maithili literacy works like *varnaratnakara* of *Jyotireswara*, *Kirtilata* of *Vidyapati* etc. we find descriptions of building Architecture during the time of the *Karnata* and *oinwara* dynasties of Mithila. A few temples are in existence here and there from which we can have a glimpse of the temple architecture. A large number of Temples were constructed in



stone or brick in Mithila in later periods, but except a few structures belonging to the *Karnata* Dynasties, they have all perished, leaving no trace behind. In Mithila no temples of great antiquity exist but by a close study and analysis about their general features from several stone reliefs, for in many cases the deity is shown as installed in temples where outlines are carved round the figure (e.g. doorjamb) belonged to the Northern style of Indian Architecture.



Sketch of Shikhara,  
Shiva Temple, Madhubani

**Mithila's Temple Style :** The Temple Survey, Govt. of India Project (Northern Region) has taken up the Architectural Survey of Temples of Mithila to study scientifically the evolution of Architecture. The findings were remarkable and in this survey the effort was made to bring to light some of the rare artistic monuments of Mithila and to know the Temple Styles in Mithila Region. Although the land of Mithila has stood throughout ages the reproductions is rich in fertile alluvial plain but sweeping destructive forces of the Rivers KAMALA KOSI Balan destroyed Bhit Bhagwanpur,



Door-Jamb, Vireshwarnath  
Temple, Bhitbhagwanpur



Door-Jamb, Vireshwarnath  
Temple, Bhitbhagwanpur

Kadaha and Andharathadi of some of the extremely capricious and turbulent rivers as a consequence of which monuments had slender chance of surviving in this region. Further, the building material used had been primarily brick, as there had been no suitable supply of stone and this also contributed to the weathering of the monuments in course of time.

During the survey of the Mithila temples it was found that Mithila has its own school of Art and Architecture, particularly temple architecture. The area received patronage from the *Karnatas* and *Oiniwaras* rulers in the development of temple and sculptural Art.

Mithila would have given us the evidence of early specimens of Art but due to the lack of proper scientific and systematic excavation of ancient sites we are yet to trace out such evidences.



Shikhara, Murali Manohar Temple, Madhubani

During the mediaval period a number of temples have been built in Mithila. A few temples are in existence here and there from which



we can have a glimpse of the Temple architecture. The Karnata kings felt a necessity of erecting monuments and buildings and also palaces in the region. Stone was the main material in early phase but in later phase brick with stone or purely brick was commonly used. Here in the monuments the builders have preferred brick walls with thatched roofs in the beginning and later might have turned to brick roofing. In this flat alluvial plain, lack of stone might have encouraged the builders largely to depend on such indigenous products as *mud, bamboo, reed, straw, wood* etc. It is certain that such fragile articles cannot be durable. Besides, the whole region is marshy and there are number of small *rivulets*. The rich alluvial clay furnishes a convenient and easily available medium for the fashioning of the bricks. Stone has been used very rarely but occasionally *door jambs, pillars* etc. of some of the temples were found made of stone. (*Bhit Bhagwanpur door jambs*)

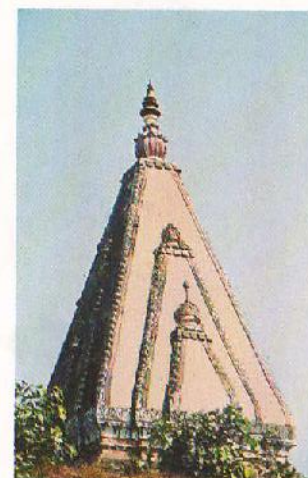


**Surya, Nahar,  
Bhagwatipur**

Mithilas indigenous building styles, developed by Maithila genices of Maithila builders



**Shikhar, Ram Temple,  
Bhagwatipur, Dist. Madhubani**



**Shikhar, Champa Temple,  
Madhubani**

especially in the temples are based on its traditional wooden houses with thatched roof. Clay is easily available from detaic region so brick is extensively used. Sometimes probably these bricks are also carved for the ornamentation of the exterior walls of the temples. The traditional bamboo and thatched herds of the poor dwellers fixed and echo in the pointed arches, the sloping roofs and curved eaves. Generally these temples are dedicated to *Siva, Vishnu* or to *Suryanarayana*.

Due to acute paucity of ancient structural remains and due to natural calamity like flood, earthquake etc., it was a difficult task to reconstruct the earlier architectural



**Ahilyasthan, Kamtol,  
Dist. Darbhanga**

pattern experimented in *Mithila stylistically*. Brick it is said, projected pendants at the corners used for support of the circular dome over a quadrangular space. Mithila temples can be broadly divided into following types:

#### **Bhadra or tier type :**

This is like the Orissan temples consisting of a number of horizontal tiers gradually



diminishing upwards and finally with an "amalaka sila" provided on the top with the help of a narrow cylindrical neck.

**Hut type :** With sloped roof truncated at the top.

**Sikhara type :** Combination of Hut\_Sikhara type where in use of "Corbelled Arch" for construction EKCHARI type : DOCHARI type Temple with ekchhari as at kalna, Kapileshwara etc.

**Gumbad type:** Within 2 sloping roofs or thatched huts of Mithila making a roof base carved like the segment of a circle to permit the rapid draining of water. Temple with constricted neck. It would not be out of place to mention here that the Gumbad type of temple Sikhara might have originated from the influence of Gaur Pandua in the Maldah and Dinajpur districts of undivided Bengal which was the centre of the activities of the Sultanates of Bengal in 14-15th centuries A.D. This is probably the Indo Muslim influence.

**Miscellaneous types :** Art of Mithila is essentially religious. Mithila has also revealed the



*Vireshwar Temple,  
Lohana, Dist. Madhubani*



*Gaurishankar Temple,  
Shiv Nagar, Dist. Madhubani*



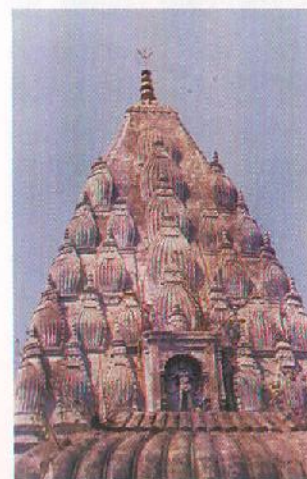
*Buddha,  
Bhoomi Sparsh, Mudra*

evidences of Sakti or Mother worship. The Sakti aspect of Durga is represented in the form of sculptures found in Mithila as of Mahishasur-mardini, Simhavahini, Chamunda etc.

### **Sculpture :**

Medieval Mithila sculptures can be classified, broadly speaking, into the following groups;

1. **Vishnu** - indicating the cult of Vaishnaism.
2. **Siva**- indicating the cult of Savism.
3. **Sakti** - indicating the cult of Saktism.
4. Also we find Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical iconographic types of Sculptures which are statutory.



*Shikhar,  
Madhaweshwarnath Temple,  
Sourath, Dist. Madhubani*

Mithila School of sculpture was at its zenith during the medieval period. Mithila is the stronghold of the popular Hinduism and that of the sanskrit and sastraic learning. It was a great centre of the Sakti, Vishnu and Siva Worship.

Besides a few sculptures of Buddha, Tara, Ganesha, Surya, Brahma, Ganga and Yamuna are also available. The most important cult was of Saivaites



and that is why even today we find a number of *Siva Temples* in *Mithila*. It was found that every Maithila of medieval period was a Sakta, Saiva and Vaishnava.

There is a saying prevalent in Mithila viz. Antah Saktah, Bahih Saivah, Sabhamadhye tu Vaishnavah.'

अंतः शाक्तः, बहिः शैवाः सभामध्ये तू वैष्णवाः

In the course of field survey some loose sculptures like *Kali Durga, Vishnu, Shiv, Ganesh, Surya, Parvati* and the *Navagrahas* were discovered dating back to 8th to 9th century A.D.. It is interesting to note that, none of these sculptures were reproduced anywhere else. The sculptures of Durga at Uccaith in Benipatti Tehsil of Madhubani District was unique and rare in its Art. A large number of images of Brahmanical gods and goddesses were discovered in various parts of Mithila, which testifies to the gradual expansion of Brahmanical tradition and culture under the *Karnata* and the *Oiniwara Kings*.

In ancient India, art and architecture almost invariably or inevitably went



Panch Temple, Chhapra  
Panch Temple, Chhapra

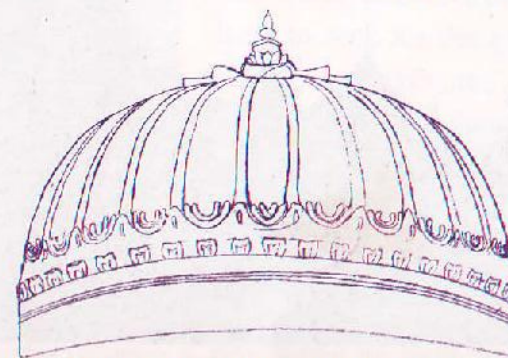


Painting, Ahilyasthan,  
Kamtor, Dist. Darbhanga  
Painting, Ahilyasthan,  
Kamtor, Dist. Darbhanga



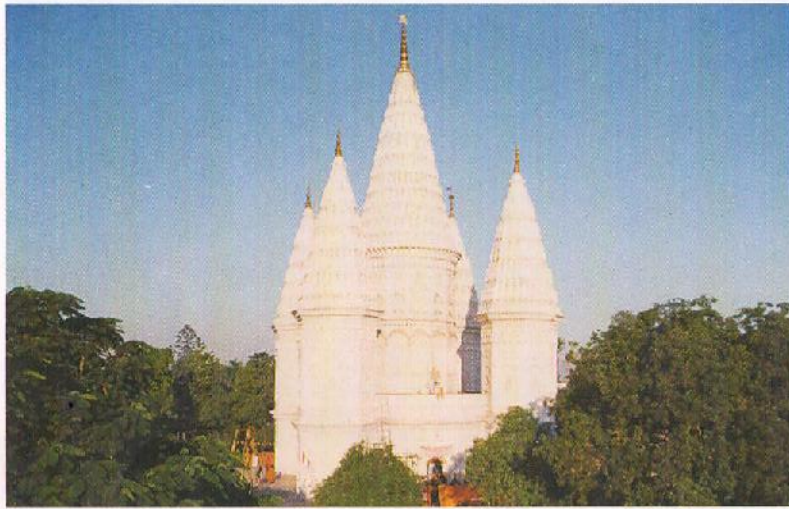
Upper part of Doorway, Shiva Temple, Gangapur, Dist. Burdhan, W.B.  
( Much advanced / developed then we find in Mithila )

hand in hand. Unfortunately, specimens of sculpture, that can definitely be dated to the 6th or 7th century A.D. are very few. The Important reason for the comparative paucity of early specimens of art in our province has to be sought for in the lack of a proper scientific and systematic excavation of ancient sites in Mithila. Most of the specimens of Mithila sculpture, besides those in modern temples, are found lying above ground or mere chance finds from tanks and ditches or excavated from



Sketch of Shikhar, Mahadev Temple, Ultra, Dist. Madhubani





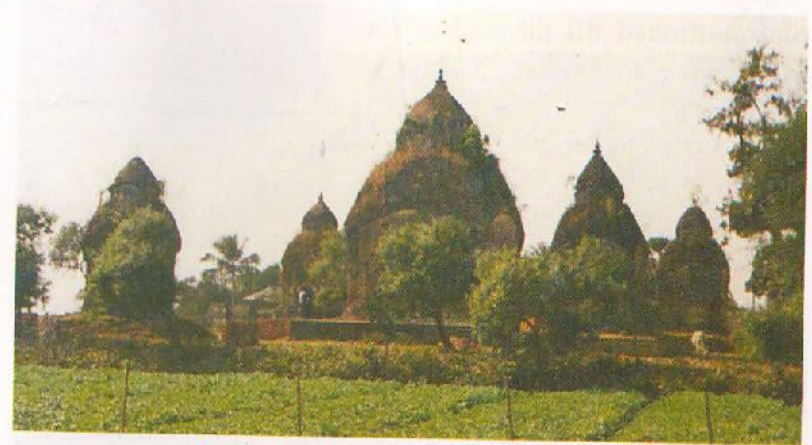
*Bhukteshwarnath Shiva Temple, Ram Nagar, Dist. Betiah*

the upper stratum of the soil.

Towards the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century A.D. the history of India begins to take a severe turn in another direction. For one or two centuries more the ideal



*General View of Panch Temple, Lalganj*



*General view of Kiteshwar Temple,  
Vaikunthpur, Distt. Burdhan, West Bengal  
( Developed style of Ekchari Temple in Mithila )*

of an all-India sovereignty still lingers, but the regional spirit or peculiarities gradually get a firm footing and what is better of the Indian becomes effective in all spheres of life. In the political sphere different kingdoms begin slowly to evolve a consciousness of their respective frontiers and this regional outlook gradually reacts on different aspects of culture as



*Shikhar,  
Murali Manohar Temple,  
Madhubani*

well. The local scripts and dialects begin to take definite shapes during the next two centuries, and it is in this formative period that we have to seek for the genesis of all major languages and alphabet of mediaeval and modern.

India. The same thing is true even in the case of Mithila art. Even in Mithila, the so called Pala period ushered in a local school which has developed its own characteristics



and continued till the end of the ancient Hindu period i.e., 800 to 1200 A.D.

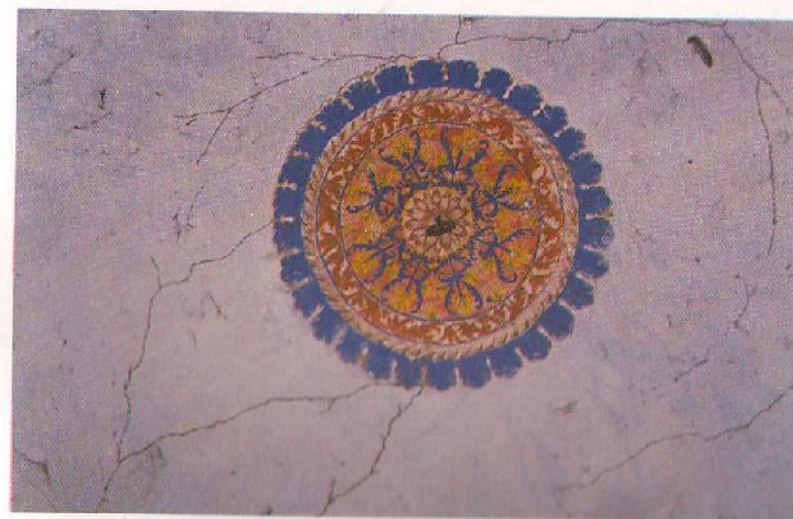
Brahminical culture gathers its strength in the Kamata and Oinivara periods. Vishnu and Siva cults become very popular during these periods. A large number of images of Brahminical gods and goddesses have also been discovered in various parts of Mithila, which testifies to the gradual expansion of Brahminical tradition and culture under the Karnata and the Oinivara rulers. Brahminism made a great headway in Mithila under the patronage of the Karnata and the Oinivara kings. They were devotees and followers of Puranic Brahminism. According to the Smriti traditions, the smartas are panchopasakas-worshippers of Ganesa, Siva, Vishnu, Surya and Sakti. Innumerable images of Vishnu Surya, Parvati, Ganesa and the Navagrahas were discovered. Siva was probably worshipped mainly in the phallus symbol and also in the anthropomorphic form and the Bull. The sculptures of Uma-Mahesvara and of Bhairava reveal the fact that Saivism was also popular in this region.



**Jateleshwar Mahadev Temple**  
Bhaisalotan, Dist. Betiah



**Shikhar, Ram Temple,**  
Bhagwatipur, Dist. Madhubani



**Painting, Ahilyasthan, Kamtol, Dist. Darbhanga**

