



# Ancient Buddhist Monastery Found in Jharkhand

## Why in News

The [Archeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has unearthed a **Buddhist** monastery, believed to be at least 900 years old, buried under a mound in a village near Juljul Pahar of Sitagarhi Hills in Jharkhand.

- Earlier an ancient Buddhist shrine, buried under a similar mound was found, close to this site.

## Key Points

### ▪ Artifacts Unearthed:

- Four statues of **deity Tara in Varad Mudra** (gesture of hand showing dispensing of boons).
  - **Nagri Script on Tara Statue:** Nagri was a **previous version of Devnagri script** and the words indicate Buddhist religious affiliation.
- Six statues of the **Buddha in Bhumisparsha Mudra** (gesture of hand showing five fingers of right hand towards the earth symbolising the Buddha's enlightenment).
- A **sculpture** which appears to be that of **Shaivite deity Maheswari** - with a coiled crown and chakra - indicating cultural assimilation in the area.

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**Bhumisparsa**

**Mudra**

Touching the earth as Gautama did, to invoke the earth as witness to the truth of his words.



**Varada**

**Mudra**

Fulfillment of all wishes; the gesture of charity.



**Dhyana Mudra**

The gesture of absolute balance, of meditation. The hands are relaxed in the lap, and the tips of the thumbs and fingers touch each other. When depicted with a begging bowl this is a sign of the head of an order.



**Abhaya Mudra**

Gesture of reassurance, blessing, and protection. "Do not fear."



**Dharmachakra**

**Mudra**

The gesture of teaching usually interpreted as turning the Wheel of Law. The hands are held level with the heart, the thumbs and index fingers form circles.



**Vitarka Mudra**

Intellectual argument, discussion. The circle formed by the thumb and index finger is the sign of the Wheel of Law.



**Tarjani Mudra**

Threat, warning. The extended index finger is pointed at the opponent.



**Namaskara**

**Mudra**

Gesture of greeting, prayer, and adoration. Buddhas no longer make this gesture because they do not have to show devotion to anything.



**Jnana Mudra**

Teaching. The hand is held at chest level and the thumb and index finger again form the Wheel of Law.



**Karana**

**Mudra**

Gesture with which demons are expelled.



**Ksepana Mudra**

Two hands together in the gesture of 'sprinkling' the nectar of immortality.



**Uttarabodhi**

**Mudra**

Two hands placed together above the head with the index fingers together and the other fingers intertwined. The gesture of supreme enlightenment.

▪ **Significance of the Findings:**

- The findings are significant since the **monastery is on the old route to Varanasi, 10 km from Sarnath**, where the Buddha gave his first sermon.
- The presence of statues of deity Tara shows **possible proliferation of Vajrayana form of Buddhism** in this region.

**Vajrayana**

- Vajrayana means "The Vehicle of the Thunderbolt", also known as **tantric Buddhism**.
- This Buddhist school **developed in India around 900 CE**.
- It is **grounded on esoteric elements and a very complex set of rituals** compared with the rest of the Buddhist schools.

**Source: IE**