



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.

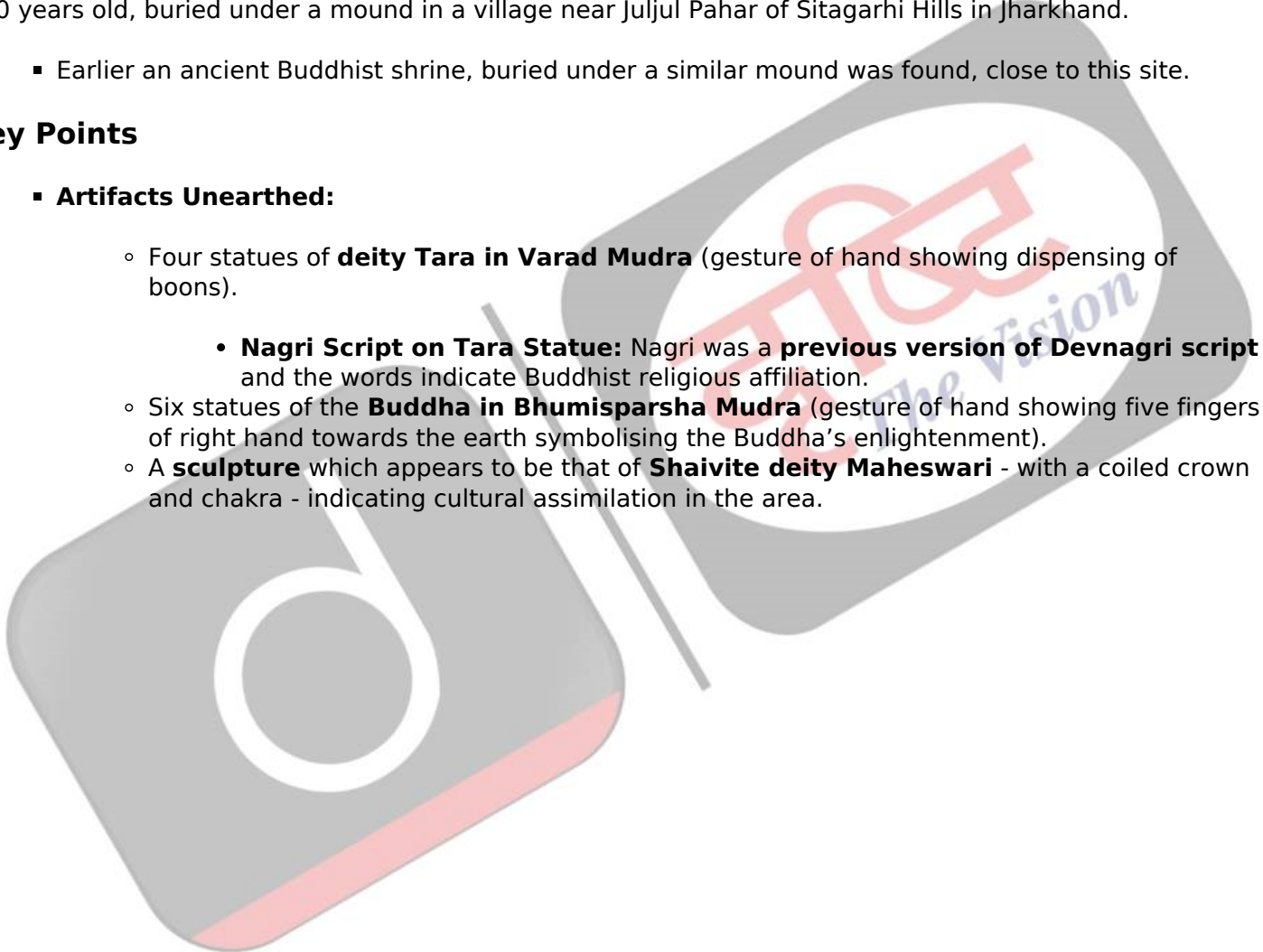
- Earlier an ancient Buddhist shrine, buried under a similar mound was found, close to this site.

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