

Persian & Hindu architecture. The urban spaces and the buildings of this heritage city capture the imagination and wonder of all that experience it.

**Ghaziabad (Our District)** is the most upcoming district of U.P. where world class industrial and residential complexes are coming up. From the historical cultural, mythological and archaeological point of view Ghaziabad was a prosperous city. This has been proved from the research work and excavations done in the district. The excavation work carried out at the mount of Kaseri situated on the bank of river Hindon, 2 km north from Mohan Nagar shows that civilization was developed here in 2500 B.C. On the eastern border of the district is situated the village "KOT" which is associated with the famous emperor Samundra Gupta, who performed the Aswamedha yagya. The modern city of Ghaziabad was founded in 1740 by the vizir Ghazi-un-ddin. He named it after himself and called it Ghaziuddinagar. The Jat raja, Surajmal, killed near the city by the Rohillas in 1763. The city was the scene of fighting during the Indian Mutiny, 1857-58, revolt that began with Indian soldiers in the Bengal army of the British East India Company but developed into a widespread uprising against British rule in India. In an encounter between the freedom fighters and a small British force the former were defeated while trying to hold the Hindon. This was the first war of independence and it brought Ghaziabad much of its glory. After the opening of the railway line the name of the place was shortened to Ghaziabad. Ghaziabad is one of the minority concentrated district in India. There are a no. of world class malls dotting the city. The Pacific and Shipra malls of which are amongst the largest in the NCR (National Capital Region). The Metro has already reached at the doorsteps of Ghaziabad as it has extended to Dilshad Garden station which is situated at the Apsara Border. At present it is benefiting the areas of Rajendra Nagar, Shalimar Garden etc. This line will further be extended till naya bus adda in its third phase. By September 2009 it will be running from Anand Vihar to Vaishali and later on to Indirapuram.

**Indirapuram (Our Town)** one of most prosperous and sophisticated emerging new city is Indirapuram (in Ghaziabad) where our association members have the privilege to live and participate in the development. It is located on NH-24 surrounded by Delhi, Noida, Kaushambi, Vaisahali, and Vasundhra and other parts of Ghaziabad. Mr. Moti Lal Vohra, Governor of Uttar Pradesh at that time, laid the foundation stone of Indirapuram years ago. This became famous as "Kaala Patthar" because of being built with Granite and is now a well-known landmark in Indirapuram. The area is divided into many khands like Abhay khand, Nyay khand, Gyan khand, Niti khand, Vaibhav khand, Shakti khand and Ahimsa Khand and Shipra and similar residential townships.. Indirapuram is having largest nos. of Shopping Malls and Multiplex in India within 5 kilometers of circle area. The most noticeable events that add pomp and show to this beautiful town is the annual cultural extravaganza of Onam programmes, Ayyappa Pooja and Christmas-New Year celebrations by Keralites of Indirapuram and these are largely attended by people irrespective of caste, creed and religion. One of most picturesque area of Indirapuram is the Swarna Jayanti Park which is adjacent to Shipra Mall, the biggest shopping mall of NCR.

**Sardhana** is the most important pilgrim centre of Christians, who is one of the peace loving and social service oriented community in India, I liked christians not because that I have lot of close relatives and friends from this community but also for the very cosmopolitan culture and very adaptability of this people.. When my christain friends took me to this place, after seeing religious and historical importance, I wanted to write about this church and enlighten others. This souvenir gave me a platform to pay tributes to this magnificent church and its historical background. SARDHANA is located some 63 miles north-east of Delhi, and 13 miles in the district off Meerut. It was the seat of the Begam Samru, a Roman Catholic, the only indigenous Catholic Christian ruler there has ever been. **Begum Sombre** also known as Zebunissa, Farzana and Joanna after baptism. She started her career as a Dancing girl in 18th Century India. Later on, she played a key role in the politics and power struggle in 18th and 19th century India. She was the head of a professionally trained mercenary army, inherited from her European mercenary husband, Walter Reinhardt. This mercenary army consisted of Europeans and Indians.. Over a period of time, she became a powerful lady of North India, ruling a large area from Sardhana, Uttar Pradesh.. The British East India Company considered her as a threat to its territorial ambitions in undivided India. She has been forgotten in the history because she was so successful. We remember Jhansi ki Rani and Joan of Arc because of the element of tragedy. But this woman lived till she was 86, overcame tragedies from a dancing girl to a powerful ruler of Sardhana Province of Meerut. Bégam was baptized, at the age of about forty, by a Roman Catholic priest, under the name of Joanna, on the 7th of May, 1781. She died at Sardhana, the capital of her Principality, in January 1837 at the age of 85. The Church built by Joanna Begum is now known as the Basilica of Our Lady of Graces, it is the centre of two annual pilgrimages in March and November, when thousands come to bless the Begum and pray to the Virgin Mary. The Basilica of Our Lady of Graces this beautiful church is the largest in North India. The architect was an Italian in the Begam's service named Antonio Reghellini. It is based upon St Peter's in Rome with a touch of Palladio, and more than a touch of Indian influence. It is truly monumental both within and without. The altar and its surrounds are of marble set with colored stones like the Taj Mahal. Much of the rest of the interior is also in marble, and everything is of the very highest craftsmanship. It is illuminated from an octagon set in the dome, from which the sun streams in. In December 1961, Pope John XXIII conferred the dignity of Minor Basilica to the church. This dignity is given rarely and only on churches that are both beautiful and historically famous.

**Mathura & Vrindavan** are the twin sacred towns of Hindu religion. These are located on the bank of the river Yamuna, both the places are closely and equally associated with religious sentiments of the people. Both Mathura and Vrindaban are believed to be the ancient birth place and playground of Lord Krishna and henceforth they are considered to be one of the holiest places of India. Mathura & Vrindavan is the city which is associated with the most venerated of Hindu Gods Lord Krishna. Mathura is the nucleus of Brajbhoomi. The surroundings 'Braj Bhoomi' is where Lord Krishna is supposed to have grown up and spend his youth with and famous for Rasaleela with Gopikas.. A temple, built on the site of Krishna's birthplace (an underground prison), was partially destroyed by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, who built a mosque in its place.

**Bada Imambara:** Among all other monuments in Uttar Pradesh, Bada Imambara (in Lucknow) has its own renowned place, well known for its exquisite Mughal architecture and intricate narrow passages that will lead you nowhere. Designed especially for enemies to get bewailed in its confined paths and hence never able to find their way out. Many of the stairway leads to deep dark wells, which are now, close down by the authorities for security reasons. These 489 identical galleries and corridors in the upper structure form a complicated and intricate puzzle make it impossible to find a way hence its always advisable to accompany a guide whose interesting tales will keep you involve and you will not get stuck in the creativity of the designer. Try to break out the riddle yourself by finding your way upwards till you reach the terrace, one on top you have break the puzzle, enjoy the panoramic view of the Lucknow city from here, your all loss energy will be regained.

Asaf-Ud-Daulla an inveterate builder of Bada Imambara constructed in 1784 which took six years, and hence become one of the ambitious discoverers of the glory of the ancient heritage. The Bada Imambara also known as the Asafai Imambara is considered as a monumental feat. Keeping the fact in mind that it once boasted the largest vaulted hall in the world with the height of 50 feet high roof, spanning an area of 162 feet in the absence of a single beam. Bara Imambara is easily accessible as it is centrally located just 20 kilometers away from the city there is an international airport.

**The Dhamekh Stupa, Saranat, near Varanasi** is one of the sacred places for the followers of Buddhist faith. This massive structure at Sarnath is built partly in brick and partly in stone, with 28 meter in diameter at the base and 43.6 meter in height. Dhamekh Stupa has a particular significance at Sarnath as it signifies the place where Buddha delivered his first sermon to five disciples. Archaeologists believe that the Stupa was built here by the emperor Ashoka named Dhameka to mark the spot where Lord Buddha preached the Dharamchakrapavartana (Set in motion the wheel of law). While on visit to this place don't forget to examine the smooth glistening stone pillar that commemorates the King Ashoka's visit to this holy place called Ashoka pillar with lion capital on its top. The lion capital became the National Emblem of India.

The other important monuments of the state are **Itam-Ud-Daulla Tomb** also known as mini Taj and Kalinjari Fort. About the Daulla tomb it is said that it has become the source of inspiration for Shahjahan to build the Taj Mahal. The Kalinjari fort is believed to be built in the 7th century by Kedar Burman, the King of Chandela Dynasty. Remember to mention the names of these monuments while charting out the tour programme to Uttar Pradesh. The architecture and design is amazing and you will find the experience great.

**Varanasi/Kashi/ Benaras** has been the ultimate pilgrimage spot for Hindus for ages. Often referred to as Benares, Varanasi is the oldest living city in the world. These few lines by Mark Twain say it all: "Benaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together". Hindus believe that one who is graced to die on the land of Varanasi would attain salvation and freedom from the cycle of birth and re-birth. Ganges in Varanasi is believed to have the power to wash away the sins of mortals. Ganges is said to have its origins in the tresses of Lord Shiva and in Varanasi, it expands to the mighty river that we know of. The city is a center of learning and civilization for over 3000 years. With Sarnath, the place where Buddha preached his first sermon after enlightenment, just 10 km away, Varanasi has been a symbol of Hindu renaissance. Knowledge, philosophy, culture, devotion to Gods, Indian arts and crafts have all flourished here for centuries. Also a pilgrimage place for Jains, Varanasi is believed to be the birthplace of Parsvanath, the twenty-third Tirthankar. Mrs. Annie Besant chose Varanasi as the home for her 'Theosophical Society' and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, to institute 'Benares Hindu University, the biggest University in Asia. Ayurveda is said to be originated at Varanasi and is believed to be the basis of modern medical sciences such as Plastic surgery, Cataract and Calculus operations. Maharshi Patanjali, the preceptor of Ayurveda and Yoga, was also affiliated with Varanasi, the holy city. Varanasi is also famous for its trade and commerce, especially for the finest silks and gold and silver brocades, since the early days.

Varanasi has also been a great center of learning for ages. Varanasi is associated with promotion of spiritualism, mysticism, Sanskrit, yoga and Hindi language and honored authors such as the ever-famous novelist Prem Chand and Tulsi Das, the famous saint-poet who wrote Ram Charit Manas. Apty called as the cultural capital of India, Varanasi has provided the right platform for all cultural activities to flourish. Many exponents dance and music have come from Varanasi. Ravi Shankar, the internationally renowned Sitar maestro and Ustad Bismillah Khan, (the famous Shehna player) are all sons of the blessed city or have lived here for major part of their lives. Varanasi is widely considered to be one of the oldest cities in the world. It is famous for its ghats (bathing steps along the river), that remain bustling year round with devotees from all over India and beyond, who want to take a holy dip in the sacred Ganges River.

**Allahabad** also known as Prayag is a city situated at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. The ancient name of the city is Prayāga (Sanskrit for "place of sacrifice") and is believed to be the spot where Brahma offered his first sacrifice after creating the world. It is one of four sites of the Kumbh Mela, the others being Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik. It has a position of importance in Hinduism and Hindu mythology since it is situated at the confluence, known as Triveni Sangam, of the holy rivers, Ganges and Yamuna, and Hindu belief says that the invisible Sarasvati River joins here also. The name is derived from the one given to the city by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1583. Fort of Akbar, Allahabad, Akbar built a magnificent fort one of his largest on the banks of the holy Sangam and re-christened the town as Allahabad in 1575. The Akbar fort has an Ashoka pillar and some temples, and is largely a military barracks. On the southwestern extremity of Allahabad lies Khusrobagh; it has three mausoleums, including that of Jahangir's first wife Shah Begum. It was from Allahabad that Prince Salim, later to become emperor Jahangir, revolted against his father, the Mughal emperor Akbar. (remember the eternal story of Anarkali) In 1602, prince Salim held a parallel imperial court in Akbar's fort here, ignoring the royal summons to leave Allahabad and proceed to Agra. However, before his death in 1605, Akbar named Salim his successor. The history repeated itself when in his (Muslim League) presidential address on December 29, 1930 at Allahabad, Muhammad Ali Jinnah outlined a vision of an independent state for Muslim-majority provinces in northwestern India named Pakistan. Every year, thousands gather at Allahabad to take part in the festival held on the banks of the Ganges, the Magh Mela. The same festival is organised on a larger scale every 12th year and is called the Kumbha Mela, where over 10 million Hindu pilgrims congregate the largest gathering of human beings in the world. From Varanasi, a distance of 80km Ghazipur is famous for Ganga Ghats and Lord Kornwalis Tomb maintained by Archeological Survey of India, it is on the way to Kushinagar Dudhwa National Park is one of the best Tiger reserves in the country. Lakhimpur Kheri is a must see location - home to the Tiger Reserve - and another sanctuary, Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, the most concentrated sanctuary in India, with a large population of tigers, as well as leopards, situated in Bahraich and bordering Nepal is also worth a visit. Some areas require a special permit for non-Indians to visit. Uttar Pradesh is famous for its rich heritage of art and craft. Most famous centres are the following: -**Kanpur** is internationally known for its leather craft; shoes and other leather items are made for the Indian market and exported to foreign countries as well. Green Park Stadium in Kanpur is one of the oldest cricket venues in India and has witnessed some of India's most famous victories

**Firozabad**, the city of bangles, is also a hub for many glass accessories. The glass artifacts produced in its factories are just amazing and are exported the world over. **Kannauj** is well known for oriental perfumes, scents and rose water and also for tobacco. **Khurja** is famous for its ceramics pottery. In fact, the entire state is famous for its pottery not only in India but also around the world. **Lucknow**, the capital, boasts of its cloth work and embroidery (chikan) work on silk and cotton. **Mirzapur** and **Bhadohi** are known for carpets. **Moradabad** is well known for its metal ware, specially brass artifacts. Pilibhit is known for its wood flutes and wood chappal (Khadao). flutes are exported to Europe, America and other contries.. **Saharanpur** is known all over India and abroad for wood carving items produced here. **NOIDA AND GHAZIABAD** is most modern Industrial and residential cities which are giving a very tough competition to Delhi Other important places have already been covered separately for its historical and religious importance.

**The Rani of Jhansi** (1828 17 June 1858), the queen of the Maratha-ruled princely state of Jhansi in North India, was one of the leading figures of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and a symbol of resistance to British rule in India, she was given the name Lakshmi Bai.. After the death of their son, the Raja and Rani of Jhansi adopted Damodar Rao. Her husband, Raja Gangadhar Rao died on 21st November 1853 when the Rani was eighteen years old. Using the doctrine of lapse, the British government under Lord Dalhousie rejected the young Damodar Rao's claim to the throne and annexed the state of Jhansi After the start of the Indian mutiny, Rani Lakshmi Bai strengthened the defense of Jhansi and assembled a volunteer army of rebels. Women were also given Military training. Rani was accompanied by her brave warriors, some of them were Gulam Gaus Khan, Dost Khan, Khuda Baksh, Lala Bhau Bakshi, Moti Bai, Sunder-Mundar, Kashi Bai, Deewan Raghunath Singh and Deewan Jawahar Singh. The British attacked Jhansi in March 1858. Rani Jhansi with her faithful warriors decided not to surrender. The fighting continued for about two weeks. Shelling on Jhansi was very fierce. In the Jhansi army women were also carrying ammunition and were supplying food to the soldiers. Rani Lakshmi Bai was very active. She herself was inspecting the defense of the city. However, Jhansi