

TOURISM

A NEW LOOK AT OLD PLACES

Been away from India for some years? Planning to go back this year, family in tow, for a long vacation? If the answer's 'Yes' for both questions, chances are you'd like to meet old friends, and relations; to visit remembered places; most of all, you'd love to 'do the country'—a trans-subcontinent jaunt to catch up with the India you never were able to perceive when you were there.

What sort of itinerary would you chalk out? Which places would you circle on your holiday map? If the answer to both questions is "the usual", then go ahead and list the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort, the Qutab Minar, Mahabalipuram and Cape Comorin, Pune and Bombay, Puri and Budge Budge. You will then be on par with most visiting tourists—clustered in dusty coach-tour groups, trailing dispiritedly behind a chattering

guide, hefting cameras, shooing away pesky beggars.

How much better it would be to strike out on your own, to turn explorer! How exhilarating to be able to stumble across places on your own journey of discovery! Most of us would surely welcome the chance to refresh our general knowledge about our mother country, and if we knew how to look between the hyperbolic lines of tourist brochures, we would opt for an off-the-track itinerary.

One memorable way to do this would be to plan a holiday where you could journey backward into time. History. Legend. Mythology. The thrill in wandering through the ruins of ancient civilizations. Far from the madding crowds. Mughal fortresses. Maratha ruins. Pandyan rock sculpture. British relics. Buddhist caves. Jain temples. Colonial graveyards. There's so much to look for!

All it needs is a "Have time, will travel" attitude. Also, the capacity to take in some of the inevitable discomforts that overtake a traveller in India. Don't expect sleek Greyhounds; you may have to try harder than Avis for car rentals. Don't assume you'll be able to stick rigorously to time-tables; you may have to make space for some lackadaisical delays en route. But think of the fun you will have, and it will be worth everything.

To help you plan a history-filled travel program, we have divided the country into four sectors—North, East, South, and West, with Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay as the respective points of take-off.

So fasten your seatbelts, take a deep breath, check your camera for film, and get set for A New Look At Old Places!

The West

Many international flights clock into Bombay every day, so it should be convenient to take this city on the west coast for a jumping-off point for the first part of a holiday through the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and the union territory of Goa.

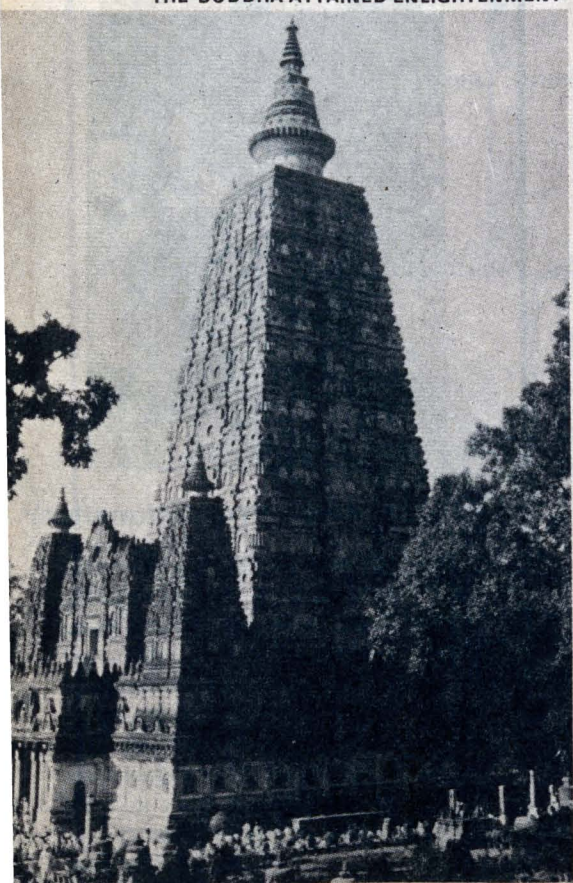
Although Gautama Buddha preached his first sermon in Bihar, Maharashtra

contains some of the most stunning relics of Buddhist architecture and history. Close to Bombay are the Karla, Bhaja, and Kanheri caves; Karla boasts one of the most impressive **chaityas** (chapels) ever found, dating back to nearly 2,000 years ago. Close to Aurangabad, north-east of Bombay, are the Ajanta and Ellora caves, with a profusion of both chapels and **viharas** (monasteries). Ellora, in fact, contains examples of the artistry of three religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.

Close by at Aurangabad is the Bibi-ka-Makbara, where Aurangzeb's wife is interred, and the Daulatabad fort, where Mohammed Tughlaq once had his capital. 56 km from Aurangabad is Paithan, famous for its ancient craft of Himroo cotton brocades, and for its illustrious son, the singer-saint, Eknath.

Close to Poona, which itself contains many examples of the best of Peshwa architecture, are the forts that Shivaji built in his crusade against the Mughals—Shivneri, Sinhgad, Raigadh, Pratap-

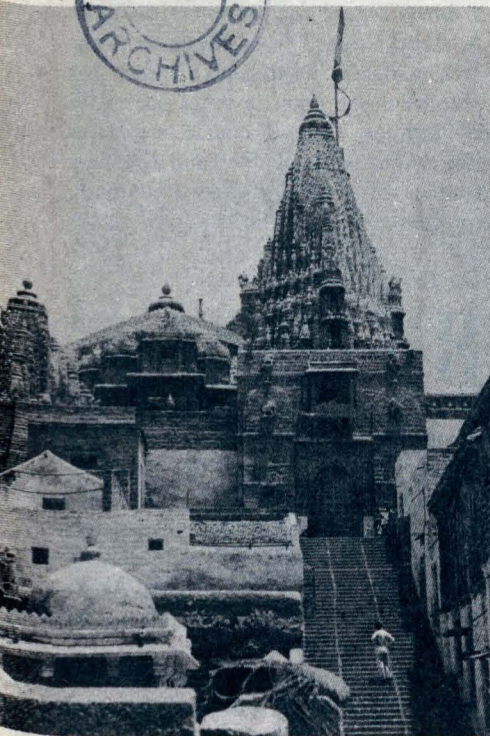
THE BODH GAYA TEMPLE IS THE MOST PROMINENT LANDMARK IN THE AREA.WHERE THE BUDDHA ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT



PHOTOGRAPHS ON THESE PAGES COURTESY DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TOURIST OFFICE, BOMBAY

THE LINGARAJ TEMPLE AT BHUBANESWAR—AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF KALINGA ARCHITECTURE





DWARKA TEMPLE—VENERATED BY FOLLOWERS OF LORD KRISHNA

Near Indore is Mandu, the City of Joy, where you will find architectural oddities like the Jahaz Mahal (Ship Palace) or the Hindola Mahal (Swing Palace), where echoes of the city's Afghan rulers still linger.

In Gujarat are the famous Jain temples on the Shatrunjaya Hill, no less than 863 of them, spanning 900 years of time. What is intriguing about Shatrunjaya is that no man may remain on the hill after sunset, for the gods are to be left alone to slumber. Dwaraka, on Gujarat's west coast, is one of India's most ancient and sacred ports, the origin of the Krishna legend, where Lord Krishna migrated with his Yadava clan from Mathura 34 centuries ago. Dwaraka is the site of one of the eight monasteries founded by Adi Sankara to spread the Hindu gospel.

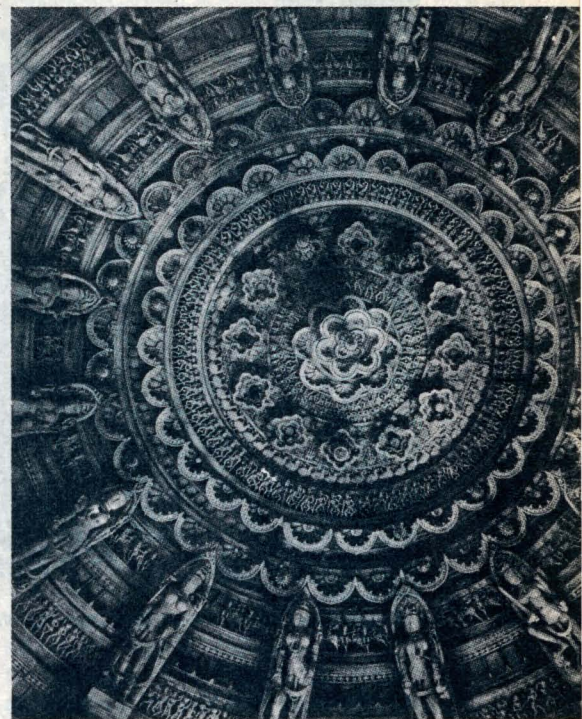
One the southern coast of Saurashtra is the sacred Somnath temple, razed to the ground by successive waves of conquerors, but built again on the previous ruins. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, Krishna is said to have been cremated at the Triveni Ghat here.

Near Baroda (or Vadodara as it is called today) is the historical city of Champaner, replete with both Mughal and Hindu architecture. At Modhera, 108 km from Ahmedabad, is a Sun Temple built in the first century AD, and so designed that the rising sun at the equinoxes shines straight into the sanctum sanctorum. Modhera boasts some of the finest sculpture of the early Hindu period.

128 km from Ahmedabad on the other side is Lothal, the 'mound of the dead', one of the most full-fledged towns of the Harappan culture of the first millennium BC. The Indus Valley Civilization had its roots here, and apparently endured longer than Harappa and Mohenjodaro. You will be able to see the remains of prehistoric shipyards and intricate underground drains here. Surat, the place where the British first landed in India in 1612, contains many fascinating colonial relics, the English Cemetery for instance.

The North

It is surprising, but Delhi, the nation's capital, itself contains many archaeological gems that few visitors to this city ever know about. The Purana Qila or the Old Fort, the Lal Kot, the citadel built by the Rajputs; the Mehrauli



AN EXQUISITE CEILING FROM THE DILWARA TEMPLES, MT. ABU

area, with one of the most spectacular exhibits of ruins in India; the Qutab Sahib Dargah; the Moti Masjid, built by Bahadur Shah I in 1709; Zafar Mahal, built by Akbar II—these are some of the exquisite sights in store for an intrepid traveller.

Rajasthan, India's desert state, possesses many proud remnants of Rajput history. South-westwards from Delhi, you will have a number of historical sites to choose from—Bhangarh, Alwar, Amber, Jaipur, Ajmer, Beawar, Chitor, Udaipur, Mount Abu, and so on. At Kalibangan excavations have revealed a pre-Harappan civilization. Pandupol, 19 km from Alwar, is reputed to have been one of the retreats of the Pandavas of Mahabharata fame. 50 km from Jaipur is Bairath, a center of ancient Buddhist culture. The ancient capital of Amber houses the Amber Palace, another architectural marvel.

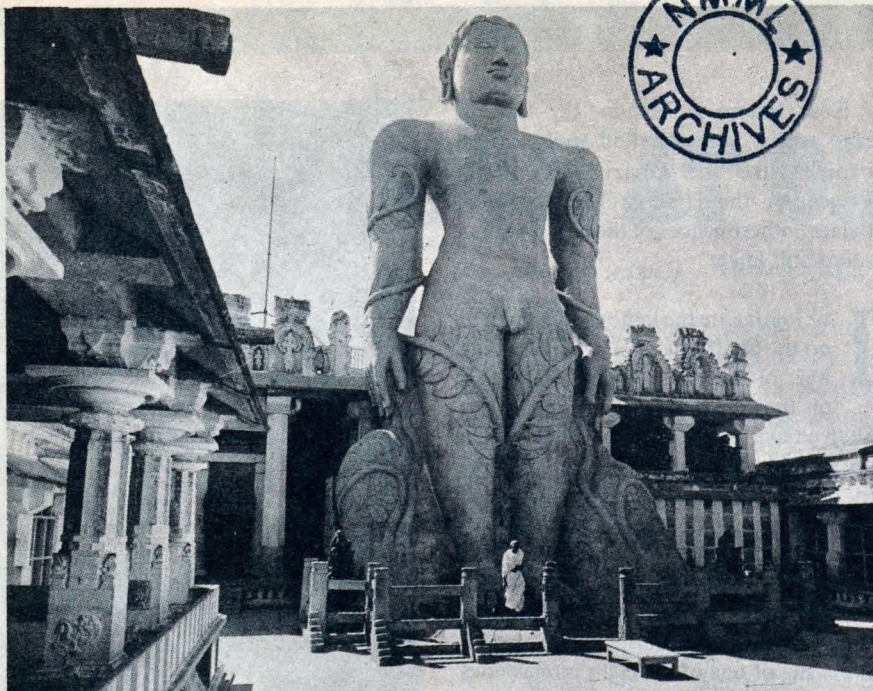
Rajasthan is also dotted with rugged Rajput fortresses, each standing in solitary splendor, echoing with the battles that must once have been fought from their ramparts.

In Haryana State, traces of the campaigns of many of India's foreign invaders are still to be found today. The famous battles of Panipat were fought here. Banda Singh Bairagi's first Sikh kingdom

gadhs, and Vishalgadhs. Midway between Aurangabad and Poona is the Ahmednagar Fort, built by Ahmed Nizam Shah, which was defended by Chand Bibi against the Mughals from the North.

From the point of view of religious monuments, Maharashtra seems to be next only to Tamil Nadu in the variety and the wealth it offers. At Nanded is the Gurdwara housing the ashes of the Sikhs' tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. At Bahubali in Kolhapur district are exquisite temples hallowed to both the Shwetambara and Digambara sects of Jainism. In Kolaba district, off the west coast, is another wonder—the impregnable island fortress of Janjira, constructed by Siddis who had immigrated from Abyssinia in the 17th century.

Madhya Pradesh contains the famous Sanchi stupas—Buddhist monasteries dating from the 4th century AD. 72 km from Bhopal, the State capital, the Great Stupa is 120 ft in diameter and 54 ft in height, and has four beautiful gateways which illustrate incidents from the Great One's life. Close to Sanchi are the Udaigiri caves, reportedly built by Emperor Samudra Gupta, one of the stalwarts of the Gupta dynasty which once spanned the country, and distinguished by a colossal image of Vishnu in his Boar Incarnation.



THE GARGANTUAN STATUE OF GOMATESWARA AT SRAVANABELGOLA IN KARNATAKA

was based in Mukhlisgarh Fort in the Siwalik foothills. At Kurukshetra, where the epic battle of the Mahabharata was fought, all that remains today is a gigantic water tank. Pinjore, on the road to Simla, contains beautiful Mughal gardens.

40 km from Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab, is Sanghol, an ancient city of which only battlements and monasteries, palaces and gates, remain today. On the banks of the Sutlej is another archaeological site, the ruined city of Ropar. 40 km from here is the ancient city of Anandpur Sahib, one of the most sacred of Sikh spots. A little distance from Jullundur is Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, the center of the Radhasoami sect which has followers from all religions. One of the most impressive fortresses in Punjab is at Bhatinda, some 150 km from Amritsar.

If you are enthusiastic enough, you can travel to the holy Amarnath Cave in the Lidder Valley in Kashmir in July-August, when the moon is full, and the annual Amarnath Yatra takes place. The route is generally kept open through September from June, after which it is blocked by bad weather. 13 km from here is the Sheshnag lake, with shining glaciers coming down to its edge.

Uttar Pradesh is full of Hindu pilgrimage centers. The fact that the Ganga flows through it itself lends much sanctity to the land. Full of places with profound mythological significance, the State contains places like Hardwar, where Lord

Vishnu's foot is supposed to be impressed on a stone; Rishikesh, where Bharata is supposed to have performed severe penance; the Triveni Ghat, where the Ganga, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers converge—these are some of the spots worth seeing.

If you are a nature lover, the Valley of Flowers would bowl you over. Over a thousand varieties of wild flowers bloom here every year. Alpine meadows, stark rockscapes, snow, tumbling streams,—

it's very difficult to imagine yourself in India. Almora, where an old colonial Army station stands, once contained a dance school run by Uday Shankar. A short distance from Mathura is the archaeological site of Sonkh, which has revealed layer upon layer of successive civilizations. Then, of course, are places like Varanasi, Lucknow, and the holy temples of Badrinath and Kedarnath, for the spiritually inclined.

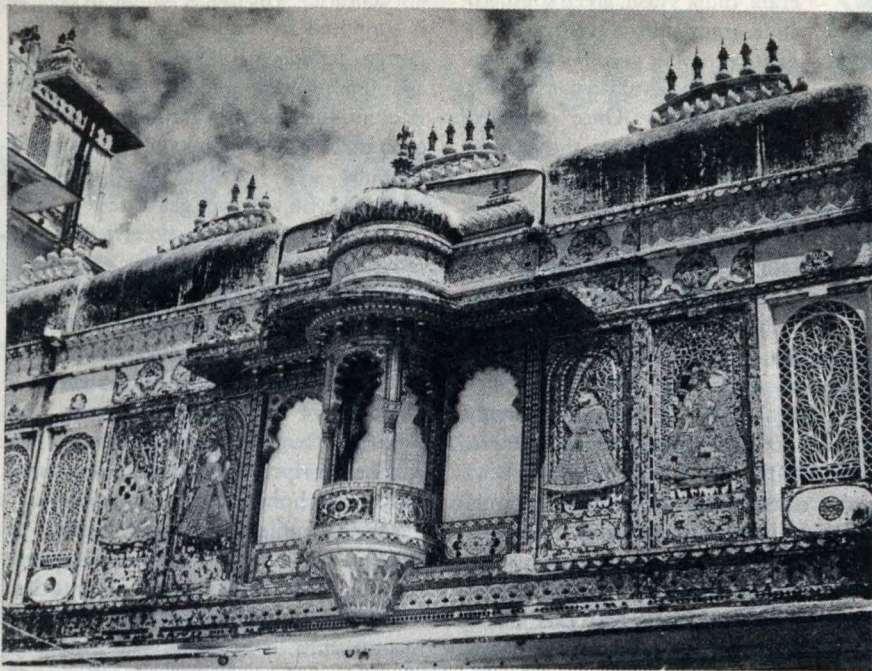
The East

Bihar is the center of Buddhist history and culture, for here, at Bodh Gaya, the Buddha was supposed to have achieved enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree. The Saisunagas, the Nandas, the Mauryas, the Sungas, and the Kanvas all ruled over Northern India from the ancient capital of Pataliputra (modern Patna). 88 km from Motihari lies the great Asoka pillar, on which that warrior turned saint had his edict inscribed.

Sarnath, 32 km from Varanasi, was where the Buddha preached his first sermon. The Wheel of Law (Dharma) was supposed to have been set in motion here. For many centuries, the coveted goal of devout Buddhist pilgrims, Sarnath today is full of **stupas** and monasteries in ruins, and antiquities ranging from the 3rd century BC to the 12th century BC may be seen here. Kushinagar, 55 km by road from Gorakhpur was where the Buddha preached his last sermon at the age of eighty.

THE GREAT STUPA AT SANCHI—AKIN IN GRANDEUR TO THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT





A STUNNING BALCONY AT THE UDAIPUR PALACE—THE RAJPUTS WENT IN FOR GLITTERING STONEWORK

Rajgir, another Buddhist spot, 90 km from Patna, was the capital of the mighty kingdom of Magadha. At Nalanda, 103 km from Patna, lie the ruins of the vast monastic university that flourished from the 5th to the 12th centuries AD. Nine levels of occupation and six monasteries have been unearthed here, and attest to the vast learning that must once have permeated the atmosphere here.

West Bengal, so brimfull of culture, history, and tradition, is passed over, along with its neighbors Assam and Orissa, by many tourists perhaps because of the impression they carry that Bengal is congested, full of squalor, and hardly worth a visit. But Bengal has had a hoary past, and the imaginative tourist will come across many interesting spots. Calcutta itself contains many relics of the grand colonial past, for the British period was the golden age of this region. Very close to Calcutta, are traces of French, Dutch, and Danish settlements—at Chandarnagore, Chinsura, and Serampore. Gouda, once one of the largest Hindu kingdoms in northern India, is today littered with a graveyard of archaeological ruins. Murshidabad even now evokes strong memories of the period when Mughal rule was effectively brought to an end by the British.

In Assam, you will discover many fascinating remains of the mighty Ahom dynasty that once ruled this region. At Kohima in Nagaland, where the last stages of the Japanese invasion in World War II linger, colorful scenes crowd camera lenses chock-a-block. Tripura,

once an ancient princely state, exudes an air of royal grandeur in its palaces and temples.

In Orissa, near the capital, Bhubaneswar, is Mount Dhauli, around which was waged the terrible battle of Kalinga in which the Emperor Asoka, victorious, was so repulsed by the carnage that he decided to devote his life thenceforward to the propagation of *dharma*. This is just one spot that ought to be on every itinerary, besides the twin temple cities of Bhubaneswar and Puri, and the Sun Temple at Konarak. Close to Bhubaneswar are the Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves, carved out long before Christ, which contain many Jain murals.

The South

South India is, of course, full of spots worth a visit. Almost every city in the four States here is full of temples, gardens, history. Many dynasties, chief among them the Vijayanagar rulers, have left indelible impressions on Andhra Pradesh. At Hanamkonda, 6.4 km from Kazipet, is the thousand-pillard temple of the Kakatiya dynasty of Warangal. Warangal itself is a fortress-city, with four massive gateways called *kirtistambas* giving into the old city. Sculpture here is amazingly akin to wooden carving, and the ancient craftsmen must have spent many years giving finishing touches to this masterpiece. Around 64 km from Warangal is the great Ramappa temple, called one of the most beautiful gems in the galaxy of medieval Deccan temples. The temple was constructed in 1213 AD by King Rudradeva.

16 km north-east of Vizianagaram stands the ancient settlement of Gurubhaktakonda, where Buddhist monks originally lived, and later Jain *bhikkus* held sway. Close to Visakhapatnam is Bheemunipatnam, where the Dutch built a fort and a factory in the 17th century.

256 km from Vijayawada is Amaravati, an ancient Buddhist site adjoining the ruins of Dhanyakataka, capital of the Satavahanas. The *stupa* which stood here was reputedly bigger than the one at Sanchi, and was built in the 2nd century BC. Its foundations can still be seen. Amaravati attracted students and pilgrims from all over the world. Lepakshi, in the Madanapalli district, contains many striking examples of Vijayanagar art.

Tamil Nadu is perhaps one of the richest States in terms of history, for

THE JHAZ MAHAL AT MANDU—DOES IT REMIND YOU OF A SHIP?



its inhabitants; the aboriginal Dravidians, were among the oldest of Indian peoples. Tamil itself is one of the oldest languages of the subcontinent, and Tamil literature and art and culture, therefore, always resound with ancient knowledge. In rural Tamil Nadu, in the districts of Tiruchi, Pudukkottai, Ramnad and Madurai, you will be surprised to come across an ancient form of the Spanish bull-fight, the **jellikattu**, where grapplers wrestle with the maddened bulls and try to extricate a piece of bright cloth tied to the base of the bulls' horns.

122 km from Madras is the historic rock-fortress of Gingee. Its foundations were built by the Chola kings 700 years ago, and it was later a stronghold of the Vijayanagar chieftains, later of the Marathas under Shivaji, and in the late 17th century, of the Mughals, the French capturing it in the 18th century. Vellore, on the banks of the Palar river, contains an 18th century fort, and this figured prominently in the First Indian War of Independence in 1857.

Kumbakonam, in Thanjavur district, is an ancient city, studded with temples, and a monastery set up by Adi Sankara. Tiruvaiyar, 10 km by road from here, is where the great Tamil composer-saint Thyagaraja composed more than a thousand songs, which are the core of Carnatic music today. In Thanjavur itself, stands the mighty Brihadeeswara temple, conceived by Raja Raja Chola (895-1016) and built by his master architects, described by the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** as the "grandest temple in India". Built in the purest of Dravidian styles, it rises to a height of 66 meters, and its sculptures are modelled on Saivite and Vaishnavite and Buddhist mythology. Fresco paintings of the Chola period also adorn the temple's walls.

Kerala, India's lush, green southern state, may not have much of history to offer you, but it makes up for medieval lacklusteriness with its scenic beauty. Once occupied by the Dutch and then by the Danes, both of whom were succeeded by the British, Kerala contains many colonial memories. In ancient times, Kerala was the base for merchants who traded with Greece, Rome, Arabia and China. St. Francis' Church in Cochin exhibits the headstones of all three of Kerala's European conquerors.

In Cochin, too, you will suddenly stumble across an anachronism: the Jew Town. Red-haired, freckle-faced, the Jews here are descendants of people who were forced to flee from Babylon, Persia and Spain. A beautiful synagogue distinguishes this area of the town. Both Christianity and Islam first established themselves in Cranganore, on the coast. The first chapel that was set up by St. Thomas can be found here.

73 km from Cochin is the ancient city of Trichur, built around a magnificent temple dedicated to Vadakkunathan. Here, on the Puram Day, the gates of the temple are thrown open to all, and the Umbrella Competition is held—two rows of 15 elephants, their heads heavily covered with gold-plated visors, face each other. Their attendants raise beautiful umbrellas, lovingly constructed throughout the preceding year, in a competition of brilliant colors. The judges then decide the winners.

Karnataka, the last State in our itinerary, has, like the rest of India, a history of different dynasties ruling over it. It is believed that the roots of South Indian temple architecture are to be found here, at Aihole, Badami, and Pattadakal, which were centers of Chalukya power between the 6th and the

8th centuries. The oldest temple in Aihole is supposed to be the Ladh Khan. The Durga temple here is a Brahmanical adaptation of the Buddhist **chaitya** style. Badami, the ancient Vatapi, was once the capital of the Chalukyan kings and contains some of the most beautiful sculpture you will ever get to see.

The Chalukyas were succeeded by the Hoysalas, and their centers, in Belur and Halebid, are also replete with architectural splendor. But the most impressive of Hindu ruins in Karnataka can be seen at Hampi, once called Vijayanagar, the kingdom of Krishnadevaraya. As you wander through the ruins at Hampi, you will be transported backward into time, footsteps echoing dully in stone alleys.

Muslim influences are prominent in Bijapur, which was at its peak, architecturally, in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Gol Gumbad here is reputed to be second only to St. Peter's in Rome in dimension. Its whispering gallery, 40 meters in diameter, echoes any sound twelve times over. The final vestiges of pre-British rule in Karnataka can be seen at Srirangapatna, where the great Muslim king, Tipu Sultan, fought against the British.

This, then, is the India you can get to see if you were to strike out from beaten tourist tracks. One cannot possibly present every place of interest in a survey of this sort, but the fact remains that there are hundreds of places in this vast land which have never really been accepted by our "India-sellers". Perhaps it is because one instinctively associates a tourist with a person who wants a comfortable, five-star-hotel trip, with the customary sights thrown in. That there may be many visitors who would like to see the **true** India is not considered. Many cynical Indians criticize our tourist literature, too, for selling what they consider only the rosy aspects of the country. But then that is the job of every tourist agent.

And then, you will not only get to see historical India in all her glory, you will also get a first-hand glimpse of how the **real** India lives—in her villages, in her small towns. You may be surprised at the warmth and hospitality of your country cousins. And what better way can there be to absorb as much as possible of India in the shortest possible time, than to set out on a quest like this? "What is history but a fable agreed upon?" said Napoleon. How wonderful it would be if you could go back and tell everyone: "What is life but to be charmed by a fable like this?"

Chaitanya Kalbag



THE RUINS OF THE UNIVERSITY-MONASTERIES AT NALANDA, BIHAR

