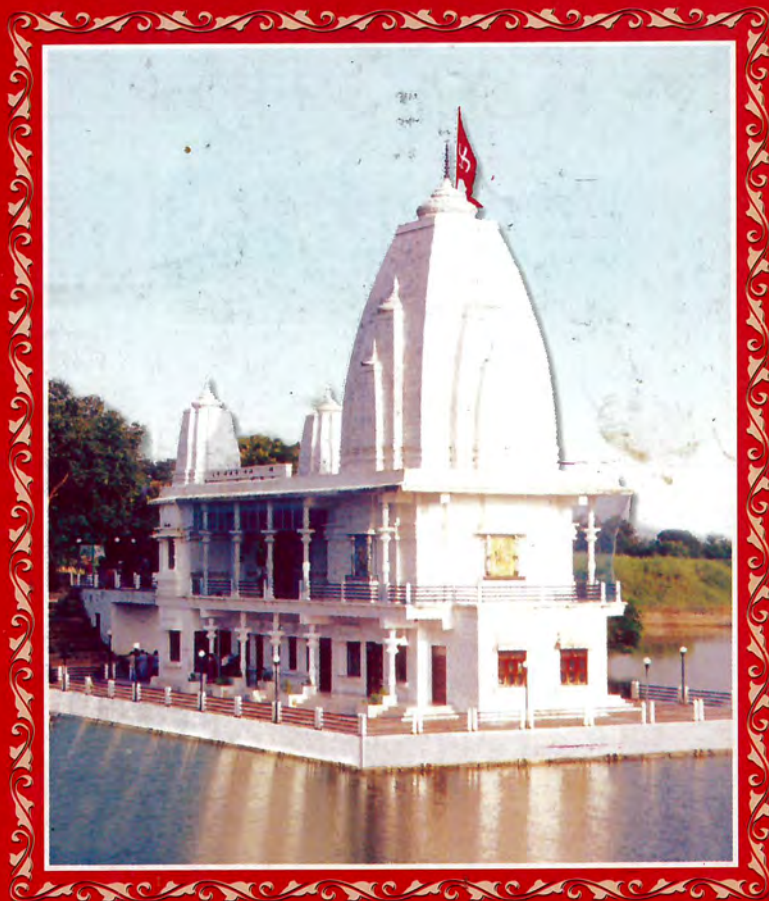


Shree Sita Samahit Sthal : Sitamarhi

(Holy Abode of Bhagwati Maa Sita)

INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

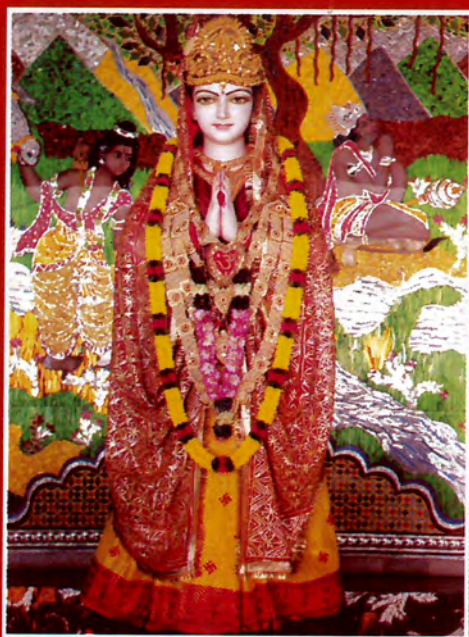
Presented : Indu Punj & Satya Narayan Prakash (Satti) Punj



Shree Sita Ji Mandir (Sitamarhi)

Shree Sita Samahit Sthal Trust, Sitamarhi

Village & Post - Sitamarhi, Distt. Sant Ravidass Nagar
(Bhadohi) 221309 Uttar Pradesh



Maa Sita Ji - Divine Goddess (Upper Floor)



Maa Sita Ji - Descending into Mother Earth (Lower Floor)

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SITAMARHI

THE LAST ABODE OF

BHAGWATI MAA SITAJI

Since ancient ages, India has been the fountain head and torch-bearer of knowledge. Its ancient civilization and rich cultural heritage have given to it the unique position of distinction among the countries of the world. The exalted teachings enshrined in the four Vedas are not meant for any particular sect or religion. They are of universal appeal for the good and benefit of the entire humanity. Apart from these we have two great Epics, 'The Ramyana' written by Maharishi Valmiki and the 'The Mahabharata' written by Vyasa. Vyasa made great contribution by compiling the four Vedas, and writing eighteen Puranas, the Mahabharata and Brahm Sutra. It is because of him that we have been able to preserve much of our ancient culture.



In 'The Ramyana' Maharishi Valmiki has given detailed account of Lord Ram and His consort Maa Sita. Maharishi Valmiki very delicately defined the noble character of Maa Sita. Her sincerity, devotion and sacrifice which made her an ideal woman. Sitaji's life is full of pathos, agony and sufferings and inspite of all these Her steadfastness is remarkable. In the whole of Indian mythology, no other woman has excelled Sitaji in Her purity, love and sacrifice. Valmiki has portrayed Sitaji's role with great emotion and sensivity.

Maa Sita was not born. She was found by King Janaka in an earthen pitcher, while ploughing a field. Since he had no child of his own, he took Sita to his palace and brought Her up as his own daughter. Truly speaking, Sita was the daughter of Mother Earth. Sitaji's early life, Her marriage with Lord Ram, Her going with Ram in exile for fourteen years, Her kidnapping by King Ravana are all well known. What is, however, little known about Her is Her second exile when She was abandoned alone in the deep forest near Valmiki Ashram. This part of the story is not mentioned by Saint Tuls Dass and is given only in Maharishi Valmiki's Ramyana.

In the year 1992, Swami Jitendranand Tirth set out on foot from Rishikesh along the bank of Holy Ganges with Varanasi as his destination. After traversing a number of districts, he crossed Allahabad and a few days later came to a small sleeping village known as 'Sitamarhi'. At this place Sitaji had descended into the lap of Mother Earth forever. He went to see that sacred spot which was very near the Valmiki Ashram, a little away from the Holy Ganges. To his great surprise he saw a small valley with a small mound in the middle, around which thirty feet high four hillocks were standing guarding the mound. He also saw water coming from West direction taking a full round of the mound and then



moving out towards East. How this earthen mound had borne the onslaught of water for centuries and yet remained intact was another surprise for him. He continuously gazed at the mound for a couple of minutes and, then, all of a sudden felt an urge to stay there for a few days. He stopped his journey onward and stayed back to explore the secret of the mound and to verify the truth that Sita had taken Samadhi there. He cleared the mound of the wild bushes and started to sit there in meditation. He meditated there for long hours. Swamiji felt some enlightenment with the feeling that there exists a bliss of Maa Sita and the vibrations bring peace and consolation to the mind and soul. It was indeed very difficult to describe the strange feelings and bliss that he enjoyed while meditating on the mound.

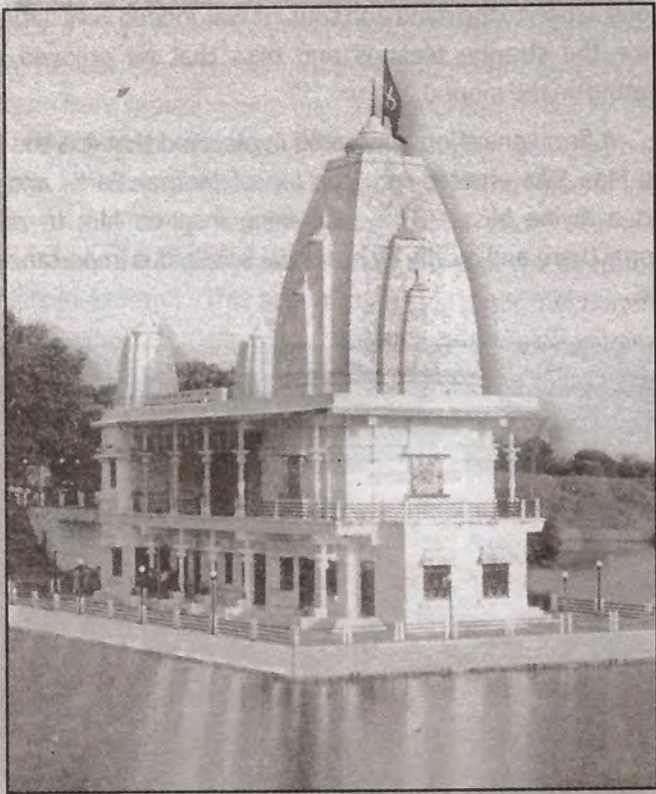
A firm conviction generated in his mind that it is the place where Maa Sita entered into the lap of Mother Earth and thus carries a divine bliss. The awakening inspired him to raise a memorial there and glorify its historical & religious importance and values.





To affirm the truth about the place, a typical grass was seen which grew only on the slopes of those four hillocks and resembled to the hair of women in softness and length. The animals never eat it and it is worshipped by the women of the area as the 'Hair of Sitaji'. Thus, it was established both due to the spiritual vibrations on the mound as well as the growth of this unique grass that Sita had, in fact, taken Samadhi there.

It seems that Bhagwati Maa destines very rare disciples to perform divine tasks. Mr. Satya Narayan Prakash Punj, a big





industrialist, pioneer of Punj Lloyd Limited, New Delhi, was favoured and the responsibility of raising Sita Maa Temple, the only one in the world, was assigned to him by the divine Mother.

Now a very magnificent 'Shree Sita Temple' stands at the place of the mound as a holy memorial of Bhagwati Maa. It comprises of two storeys. In the lower one Maa Sita is descending into the lap of mother Earth and in the upper one Maa Bhagwati stands as a worshipped Goddess. All the important events and happenings of that period have been depicted on the innersides of the walls. Mr. Satya Narain Parkash Punj popularly and affectionately called and known as Satti Punj; volunteered himself to undertake the task of raising this memorial in the form of a very beautiful & magnificent temple.

Some people claim that Sitaji took Samadhi somewhere else. About thirty kilometres from Kanpur towards Kannauj is Bithoor. Just opposite to it on the other bank of the Holy Ganges is a small village known as Perihar. It is said that it is called Perihar because Sita was abandoned (Perityag) there.

There were three very important factors to be considered before deciding the place of Sitaji Samadhi. Firstly, Sita was abandoned near the Valmiki Ashram. Secondly it was after crossing the Holy Ganges and thirdly, the journey from Ayodhya by a Rath i.e. chariot, took only one and a half to two days. At Perihar the Holy Ganges was not crossed as it was on the same side. Again the distance between Ayodhya and Perihar is such that it could not be covered within the time mentioned above. So far the Valmiki Ashram is concerned, there is no doubt that an Ashram in the name of Maharishi Valmiki existed at Bithoor also on the other bank of the Holy Ganges but this is not the Ashram as has been mentioned in the Valmiki Ramyana by Maharishi Valmiki himself.



In the Valmiki Ramyana, Maharishi Valmiki himself has given the geographical position of his ashram. He has stated that his ashram was located on the bank of River Tamsa which was very near the confluence of Tamsa with the Holy Ganges.

स मुहूर्तं गते तस्मिन् देवलोकं मुनिस्तदा।
जगाम तमसातीरम् जाह्नव्यास्त्वविदूरतः॥

This is the original ashram of Maharishi Valmiki which is incidentally only three kilometers away from his birth place, village Dasupur. It was here that he met the Sapatrishis who changed the course of his life. From a robber he became a saint. Here he had done severe penance and earned the name of Valmiki. It was here that after seeing the pathetic end of a Kronch bird he had uttered a curse in the form of a couplet which entitled him to become the First Poet of the World. It was here again that he undertook the task of writing the great Epic 'The Ramyana'.

Sita ji was abandoned here was also confirmed by Saint Tulsī Dass who happened to visit this tiny village during his journey from Prayag to Varanasi along the bank of Holy Ganges. Saint Tulsī Dass had spent three nights here and got wonderful experiences. He wrote three couplets which are mentioned in his compilation of Kavītwali No. 138, 139 and 140. In the first couplet Tulsī Dass has mentioned that Sitamarhi was situated between the two villages Dieg on one side and Baripur on the other side. These two villages exist even today.

सीतावट-वर्णन

बिटप-महीप सुरसरित-समीप सोहै,
सीतावट पेखत पुनीत होत पातकी ।
बारिपुर दिगपुर बीच बिलसति भूमि,
अंकित जो जानकीचरन-जलजात की ॥१३८॥

(उत्तर काण्ड, कवितावली)



Perihar, therefore, is not the place where Sita ji was abandoned. Swamiji had the occasion to spend a night at Perihar and he could also affirm from his own experience that Perihar could not be the place of Sitaji's Samadhi as there were neither any eruption of earth, no any mound and no vibrations. Maharishi Valmiki had a number of disciples who set up their own ashrams at various places but named them as Valmiki Ashrams. Perihar might be one like this.

Sitamarhi is not only a historical place but also a holy abode of gods. Lord Ram himself preferred this place for Maa Sita's living during her banishment. Shrimati Vimla Sharma, the first lady of India, wife of Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma, the then President of India laid the foundation stone of the holy temple in the year 1994 and the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Mr. Rajnath Singh dedicated it to the people and society on 1st December 2000.

Since then, there is always a stream of pilgrims coming from all parts of the country and abroad to pray and seek blessings of Maa Sitaji.

Sitamarhi is midway between Prayag and Varanasi. It can be reached from both sides. One can come from Prayag or Varanasi to Gopi Ganj which is almost 60 kilometers from both sides. Gopi Ganj is connected by rail as well as by Grand Trunk Road. From Gopi Ganj one can reach Sitamarhi through bus, taxi or scooter, a distance of 20 kilometers on the Jangi Ganj-Dhan Tulsi Marg. Those coming from Allahabad by their own conveyance can go straight to Sitamarhi from Bhatti which is only 7 kilometers away.

This historical place of immense significance began to be called Sitamarhi only after the Samadhi of Sitaji under the earth. How Sitaji came here and how She ended her life abruptly is



Beside this small temple, Lord Shiva's temple, stands in its glimmer. Outside, Lord Shiva is penancing on a hillock to bring Ganga on earth through the peck of his head hair (Jattas). Constant flow of water from his Jattas give much peace and pleasure to the pilgrims.

Mr. S N P Punj, a true and trusted devotee of Bhagwati Maa Sita, is always inspired by her divine blessings. A year back he heard an inner voice and a spiritual urge arose in his mind that Hanumanji should be brought to Sitamarhi as Maa Sita considered him her faithful son. To satisfy this urge 108 ft. high statue of Hanumanji has been installed on an artificial rock of 20 ft. The pilgrims feel enthralled when they get a glimpse of Hanumanji from long distance.

Under the hillock, there is a cave where another small temple of Hanumanji attracts thousand of pilgrims daily. People pay their reverence and worship him with great fervour.



A short distance away from the holy Tirth, temples of Oriya Baba & Mauni Baba are located which add more to the religious values of Sitamarhi.

In a nutshell, Sitamarhi carries deep religious values and is considered a holy Tirth like Paryagraj and Kashi. Four to five thousand pilgrims visit the place every day and the stream of the people never ends.



Shri Satya Narayan Prakash
(Satti) Punj



Smt. Indu Punj

Punj couple, Satti Punj & Indu Punj, has done a lot for re-enshrining Sitamarhi to its glory of religious holy place and big tourist centre. Many crores of rupees have been spent to glorify this magnificent memorial of Maa Sita. To facilitate the pilgrimage a number of facilities have been provided for the stay and food for the pilgrims. Here pilgrims are overwhelmed by the inspiring environment and holy spirit bestowed by nature. A visit to Sitamarhi and prayers at the temples bring peace and solace to the mind and heart.

Sitamarhi occupies a high rank among the five important Tirths in Poovachal (Prayagraj, Sitamarhi, Sarnath, Vindhyawasni & Kashiraj). All the five places can be visited in one stroke within three days. Sitamarhi is the only Tirth where people can stay within the temple campus and with a holy bath in Ganga, both morning and evening Aarties can be enjoyed. It now, has become a very important and famous place for tourists, historians and religious saints.



Brief History

After his return from the fourteen years' exile, Ram was crowned king of Ayodhya. He used to receive information about his state and people through secret messengers & courtiers. One day he came to know that people of Ayodhya were critical about Sitaji and say that He should not have taken Her back after She had spent so much time at Lanka under Ravana's confinement. This piece of news greatly upset Him because He very much knew that Sitaji was pure, pious and innocent. She was put to Agnipariksha from which She had come out successfully. But inspite of this Ram felt uneasy and perturbed. Ultimately he decided to forsake Sita who was pregnant at that time. He called Laxman and asked him to take Sita and leave Her in the dense forest near the Valmiki Ashram. Laxman in the first instance greatly protested against this decision but at the end had to yield before the king of Ayodhya.

Laxman brought Sita in a chariot to the dense forest and left Her near the Valmiki Ashram. When Laxman had gone, Sita was lost in deep agony and could not control her feelings and emotions. She could not analyse what to do. The fact that She was being abandoned was not told to Her at Ayodhya. That is why She was brought and dressed as a Queen and was bedecked with royal jewellery too.

Sita was desperate enough as she did not know where to go, what to do in such a precarious situation. She couldn't control her grief and began to cry. Maharishi Valmiki heard the wails of a woman, crying in her helplessness. He at once realized that it could be Sita. He rushed to the place where Maa Sita was sitting, recognized her and took her to his Ashram. There he made all necessary arrangements for her comfortable living and advised her to have peace and courage to bear up the agony.



A new chapter began in Sitaji's life. She was so much engulfed by the pain and sorrow that She would not talk to anyone and pass Her time alone in silence and solitude. The events had taken such a sudden turn that She was completely overtaken by them. Tears flowed from Her beautiful eyes all the time and the pang of separation from Her beloved husband ruined Her completely. She would go out and sit under a banyan tree the whole day, brooding over Her fate and the past and present life.

After a few months Luv and Kush were born as twin sons to Her. On that day, instead of being happy, She was full of remorse and Her heart was burning with agony. In spite of Her best efforts, She could not restrain tears from Her eyes. That day Her mind was very sad because except the ashramites no one was aware of the entry into this world of Luv and Kush. Had She been in Ayodhya, people of the whole country would have celebrated their birth. People would have crowded the palace and the beggars would have received such gifts that they would no longer need to beg again. Sitaji thought that Luv and Kush were not only Her sons but they were also the sons of Ram. Because of people's criticism She was being punished but those innocent children had not done any wrong to entail upon themselves the same punishment.

Gradually Luv and Kush grew and Maharishi Valmiki himself took upon himself to teach them the use of weapons and the art of warfare. Maharishi Valmiki also taught them "The Ramyana" which he had written and which they used to recite with their melodious voice with the accompaniment of musical instruments.

When the Ashwamegha Yagya was held by Ram, the Ashwamegha horse was sent to travel various states to establish Ram's supremacy. The horse came near Valmiki Ashram. Luv and



Kush saw the horse and read the note that hung on his neck, "Surrender or Fight". Luv captured the horse and tied it with a tree. Ram's victorious army that followed asked him to release the horse to which Luv and Kush said that they had captured the horse to fight and not to surrender. Thus, a battle between the large army and these two boys ensued but, to the great surprise of all, the boys defeated the army and returned to the ashram with success.

Sitaji had known about the capture of the horse by Luv and Kush and wanted to stop Her sons but She could not do so lest the secret of Her identity would get disclosed to Her sons. Fresh reinforcement came from Ayodhya but they also met with the same fate. Ultimately Lord Ram had to come Himself. On hearing this, Luv and Kush went hurriedly to give a fight to Him. That day Sitaji was much upset and disturbed as a fight was going to begin between the father and the sons.

Luv and Kush challenged Lord Ram to have fight. Ram advised them to retreat but they stood firm on their challenge. The moments were tense and hot. Any time the arrows might fly at the opposite sides. Everyone stood in great suspense. At the very moment Maharishi Valmiki appeared on the scene and stood between the two. He tried to pacify them and advised not to fight with each other. He told Ram that Luv and Kush were his twin sons, no one else. Ram was taken aback to hear it and believe.

Maharishi Valmiki related the consequent events that took place after the banishment of Sita. Ram heaved a sigh of grief and inquired where Sita was at that time, Sita reached the place at the very occasion. She stood with her sons and grieved heavily.

Ram and Sita looked at each other in great perplexion and



remorsefulness. Maharishi Valmiki asked Ram to take Sita and his two sons to Ayodhya and perform the Ashwamegh Yagya with Sita as his Queen. For moments together Ram couldn't whisper a single word. Then he told the Maharishi how the people of Ayodhya speak and criticize Sita as his Queen. If her purity is re-established he would not hesitate to have her as his queen. On hearing it Sita burst into tears asked why every time she was asked to prove her purity and piety. In a remorseful mood she cursed her fate and prayed Mother Earth to take her in her lap as she couldn't bear the insults anymore. She cried and prayed for Mother Earth.

Luv and Kush were greatly surprised because till then they had not known that their own mother was Sitaji. Sitaji looked towards Her sons and then prayed to Mother Earth to give Her shelter as She was not able to bear the agony of insults and sufferings any more. Immediately the sky became overcast with clouds. With thunder and lightning heavy rain started pouring and with a big noise, the Earth got erupted and Sitaji began to descend into it slowly. Ram was dazed and for a few moments He could not realise the gravity of the situation. He recovered His senses only when Sitaji had virtually gone into the Earth. He extended His arm and tried to catch hold of Her. But, alas! It was too late and He could only catch a few hair of Sitaji's head which he threw in disgust. These few hair have grown there in the form of long, soft, knotless and round grass which is never eaten by the animals and the women worship it as the hair of Sitaji. Maharishi Valmiki handed over Luv and Kush to Lord Ram and told him what had happened was destined and, therefore, He should not grieve over it and return to Ayodhya with His sons to perform his Yagya.

* * * * *



The area in and around Sitamarhi is very remote and backward. Illiteracy and social backwardness are very significant impediments. Poor and insufficient means of livelihood add fuel to their misfortunes. Such a sad plight of people touched the mind and soul of Mr. S N P Punj. He was deeply moved by the sad plight of the people.

With the divine inspirations bestowed by Maa Sitaji and spirit of social service Mr. Punj thought to take such measures that could help the people in their upliftment. He visualized that education could be the first and best means to help them. He decided to introduce an educational project under the aegis of Pt. Kanahya Lal Dayawanti Punj Charitable Society founded by his parents. The School, 'Dayawanti Punj Model School', established in the memory of his mother in 2002 is the first to come up.



It is housed in a modern three storyed building equipped with all necessary essentials for imparting good quality education. Latest teachings aids equipments and technology help the child to



grow in full manhood. Computer Education, stage and Cultural Programs, indoor and outdoor games and midday meal are the routine features of the school.

Presently 600 students are studying with 30 teachers. There is a plan to raise it upto Degree College. One hundred students, mostly girls get free education, books & stationery and school uniforms. Many more are granted scholarship and fee concession. It is simply to encourage the parents to send their wards to school for education.

* * * * *



With the experience and interaction with the parents and their wards, Mr. S N P Punj came across the actual fate of the people of the area and realized that development in the social and economic life of the people is the need of the hour and it should be done with no restraints. An idea of Village Development Programme generated in his mind. Framework with systematic thinking and planning has been worked out to develop the villages falling within 5 km. radius by adopting one village every year and convert it into a "Model Village" where every young and old would feel the shine of 21st Century.

The Village Development Project (VDP) will centre on a Five Point Programme to implement it and achieve the desired goals.

The Five Points are :

1. Education for all :-

(i) Literacy Drive (Adult Education) Male & Female Centres. Every member of the village community between the age of 14 - 60 years has to be literate.

(ii) Schooling (Elementary Education) :-

Every child between the age of 4-14 will be a school going child and will study upto upper Primary Level, No drop out.

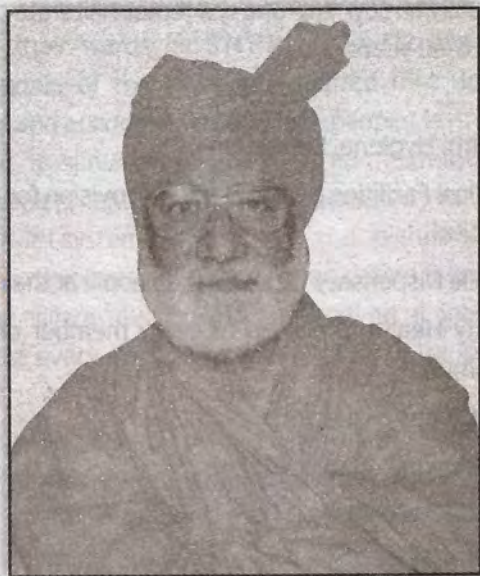
(iii) Aanganwari (Child Care Centre) :

Every child between 2 ½ - 4 yrs of age will be enrolled with the Aanganwari. Nutrition, Vaccination, pre-school education & proper rearing up and growth shall be looked after.



Target : - 100% literacy. No one will remain illiterate between the age group of 6-60 years.

2. Health, Hygiene, Sanitation : -
 - (a). Medical Facilities & Health Care Provision for a charitable hospital.
 - (b). Mobile Dispensary to serve the people at their doors.
 - (c). Yearly Health Check up of every member of the village community.
 - (d). Eye Camps vision for all.
 - (e). Population & Family Welfare.
 - (f). Sulabh Sauchalaya & Pure Drinking Water
 - (g). Multi-purpose Community Centre
3. Women Work Centre : Training in Cutting, Tailoring & Stitching, Embroidery.
4. Plantation : Trees to exceed the number of adult members of the community.
5. Social Awareness & Awakening to educate the community to fight against social evils, early marriage, dowry, gender bias & girl education.



"SWAMI JITENDRANAND TIRTH"

(19.10.1926 - 16.10.1998)

Born in a Brahmin family of Rawalpindi (Pakistan), he took Sanyas in 1982. He lived at Attri Ashram on the Bank of Ganges at Rishikesh and devoted most of his time in the study of religious scriptures, meditation, yoga and learning Sanskrit. In December 1991, he left Ashram in the discovery of God and self-realization. He reached SITAMARHI in February 1992, covering arduous and rigorous journey of about 900 kilometers on foot from RISHIKESH along The Bank of Ganges.

It was Sitamarhi, where he had an unusual dream and was ordained by same sublime power to construct a temple of Maa on SAMAHIT STHAL.



Mystique influence of the place made him stay there and he initiated efforts to build the temple. For its construction, he approached all his nears and dears for the necessary donations and financial help.

It was only when he came in contact with SHRI SATYA NARAIN PRAKASH PUNJ of M/S PUNJ LLOYD LIMITED who helped him to accomplish his mission that a temple could be built.

Besides the temple, Swamiji launched many other schemes for the removal of illiteracy, upliftment of backwardness of the people of the area and also for providing medical aid to the needy and poor which are very much part of the ongoing projects.

Swamiji being a wandering monk had decided to leave Sitamarhi after having accomplished his mission. But it seems, it was not to the liking of DEVI SITA who never wanted him to leave. On 16th October 1998, Swamiji left his wordly clock forever, however, his mortal remains are buried over which, Samadhi has been made to perpetuate his memory.



**108 Feet High - Tallest Hanumanji
offering obeisance to Maa Sitaji**



1892 - 1971



1901 - 1995

Late Shree Pt. Kanahya Lal Punj

Born on 26th June 1892 at Saidpur, Tehsil Chatwal (now in Pakistan). Lost his parents at an early age and was brought up by elder sister. After Matriculation, served Indian Post and Telegraph and Army Headquarters for short spans. Afterwards set up his own business at New Delhi and flourished it to high peaks. Honesty, sincerity, constant endeavors and entrepreneurship were the guiding-stars in his trade and working. Had deep faith in religion and social service since his early age. Trained and perfected his sons in sound principals of business.

Took Vanprasth Sanyas in 1956 when his sons matured to control the business. Spent his last 15 years at Haridwar and got absorbed in meditation, religious discourses and Sammelans. Was involved in social service and care of the poor and homeless and left for his heavenly abode on 3rd December 1971.

Always an Inspiring Spirit.

Late Smt. Dayawanti Punj

Was the first child of Pt. Fakir Chand Ji Issar hailing from Dumun (Tehsil Chatwal, now in Pakistan) with five younger sisters and one brother. Became life partner of Pt. Kanahya Lal Punj at a very tender age of fourteen. Completely devoted lady with firm convictions in religious and social obligations. Was a worthy mother to her seven sons and one daughter. Very efficiently and successfully discharged her family responsibilities. Brought up the family with devoted spirit and stood firmly in all endeavors of Peditiji.

A very simple, affectionate, sagacious and religious minded lady who imbibed sound culture, disciplined manners and behaviour, honesty and selfless instinct in the conduct of her children

At the age of 94 breathed her last in 1995.

- A Guiding Mother Forever.