



Nalanda University, located in the ancient kingdom of Magadha (modern-day Bihar, India), is widely regarded as one of the first residential universities in the world. Established in the **5th century CE** by **Emperor Kumaragupta I**, it flourished for over 700 years, becoming a premier center for learning and scholarship in various fields.

Historical Significance

- **Foundation and Growth:** Founded around **427 CE**, Nalanda was initially a Buddhist monastic university that attracted scholars from across Asia, including China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, and Sri Lanka. It became a beacon of knowledge, particularly in Buddhist studies, but also offered courses in subjects such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, logic, and philosophy ^{1 4}.
- **Influential Scholars:** The university was home to many renowned scholars, including **Aryabhata**, who contributed significantly to mathematics and astronomy. Other notable figures included **Nagarjuna**, **Dharmakirti**, and the Chinese traveler **Xuanzang**, who studied there for five years and documented his experiences ^{2 5}.
- **Library and Resources:** Nalanda's library, known as **Dharma Gunj** or the "Mountain of Truth," was one of the largest in the ancient world, housing around **nine million manuscripts**. This vast collection made it a vital repository of Buddhist knowledge and other academic disciplines ^{2 3}.

Architectural Features

Nalanda's campus was designed with an intricate layout that included multiple temples, meditation halls, classrooms, and residential quarters for students and faculty. The architecture reflected a blend of artistic styles prevalent during its time. The university's infrastructure supported a vibrant academic environment conducive to learning and spiritual growth.

Decline and Rediscovery

The university began to decline in the 12th century due to invasions by forces led by **Bakhtiyar Khilji**, which resulted in significant destruction of its facilities. The library was reportedly set ablaze, leading to the loss of countless manuscripts. After its fall, Nalanda gradually fell into obscurity until it was rediscovered in the early 19th century by Scottish surveyor **Francis Buchanan-Hamilton** ^{3 4}.



Revival Efforts

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to revive Nalanda's legacy. The idea to re-establish Nalanda University was proposed by former President **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** in 2006. This vision materialized with the passing of the Nalanda University Bill in 2010, leading to the establishment of a new campus near Rajgir ² ⁵. The new university aims to continue the tradition of excellence in education and research.

Conclusion

Nalanda University stands as a symbol of India's rich educational heritage and its historical contributions to global knowledge. Its legacy continues to inspire scholars and students worldwide, reflecting the enduring impact of ancient Indian scholarship on contemporary education systems. The archaeological remains of Nalanda are now recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, attracting visitors who wish to explore this remarkable center of learning that shaped Buddhist thought and academic pursuits across Asia.