

A NOTE ON THE SANJAY GANDHI BIOLOGICAL PARK, PATNA, BIHAR

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India is a land of physical, ecological, biological, social, cultural and linguistic diversity over the centuries. The people of India have a close linkage with nature. The ethos of conservation is ingrained in India's cultural heritage. The cultural diversity of the Indian people helped to maintain a range of Biological diversity and also increased the natural diversity by the introduction of selected species of both flora and fauna. The same habitat character and disposition one will find in this Biological Park.

This Biological Park was established first as a Botanical Garden in 1969, over 34 acres of land, provided by the then Governor of Bihar, Hon'ble Shri Nityanand Kanungo, from the Raj Bhawan Complex.

In 1972, 58.20 acres of the Revenue Department land and 60.75 acres of PWD land were transferred to the Forest Department to develop the Park further. Since 1973 this Park has been developed as a Biological Park over an area of 153 acres. The land acquired from PWD and Revenue Department has been declared as a protected forest by the State Government on 8th March 1983. The Park is classified as one of the 16 large Parks in the country. At present this beautiful Biological Park consists of both different species of flora and fauna.

Colourful trees and flowers play an important role in the making of towns beautiful. They refine the minds of the inhabitants and also provide a healthy atmosphere. The plants not only add to the aesthetics of the city, but provide with a remarkable input to the beautification and purification of the environment.

Sanjay Gandhi Biological Park has a picturesque landscape of garden, lakes and zoo, the only favourite place for Patnaites which is their life-line also. More than 25 lakh visitors visit the Park every year. This is the only zoo which provides free entry to morning walkers, from 5 A.M. to 7 A.M. After that there is an entry fee of Rupees twenty per adult. The Park is closed on Monday.

The entire Biological Park has been classified into three sectors and three beats nicely depicted in the lay out of the map displayed inside the garden. There are two entry points to this Park. The one called the main gate is from Bailey Road, and the second one the Taylor Road behind Raj Bhawan.

As you enter from the main gate the evergreen Aam, Amaltas with yellow flowers, Ashok, Barh and *Delonix regia* with red flowers called flame of the forest are the first to greet you. As you proceed further into the circular road, to the left there is an orchard of nursery, sprawling lawns lined with hedges. There is an arboratum with many native trees like Badam (seeds eaten raw, fruits as a source of dye), Bahera, Kachnar with purple and white flowers, and Arjun etc. The evergreen *Putranjiva* with its drooping branches cures fever and liver problems. There is a firm belief that if small piece of root is tied in the left arm of a married woman, she is blessed with a son. This statement has been verified from a mali named Parasuram Singh of the zoo.

There are altogether more than 350 species of higher plants and shrubs which provide free oxygen, shade and aesthetic beauty to this garden.

There is a separate fern house where different species of the fern and fern allies, such as *Pteris*, *Pteridium*, *Adiantum* etc. are growing which provide a lush green coverage soothing to the eyes. As you proceed further, you will find desert plant house where cactus species like that of organ pipe, silver touch and powder puff are growing.

Besides all these mentioned above, there is a separate garden of medicinal plants called "Dhanwantari Udyan" where more than 50 medicinal plants are under cultivation. There you will find a human figure lying on a platform where different medicinal herbs are put on different organs of the body, such as Aswagandha for diabetic patients, Sarpagandha for blood pressure, Brahmi as brain tonic etc.

The Biological Park has two more attractions for the visitors, children, students and senior citizens. There is a big lake where boating facilities have been provided. You can enjoy it. By the side of the lake there is a nice restaurant where one gets all sorts of eatables.

As the name signifies, this Park on the other hand has a nice famous zoo. It has more than 75 types of animals such as Lions, Tigers, Leopards, Rhinos, Monkeys, Spotted Deer etc. All put nicely inside the enclosures. Similar is the case with birds, like Crimpon Horned Pheasants, Cuckoo, Parrots and Peacock etc. All of them are in enclosures. Some butterflies are also seen sucking juice from the flowers.

There is a very big Aquarium, Reptiles (snakes) in glass covers and Crocodile in small pond. Visitors have been requested by the zoo authority not to give any food to the animals and birds, as this may harm them.

As there is lot of pressure of visitors in this Park, the Environment & Forest Department of the State Government has developed another Eco-friendly Park, behind the Secretariate, during the last three years. It is also coming up nicely.