

for meditation. One of the paintings shows a tree and a *stupa* surrounded by a railing. Others show social or hunting scenes; men, women, and animals; weapons; and designs.

Although the pillars bear resemblance with the typical *Mauryan* polish, it is not made of the Chunar sandstone features of the Asoka Empire but of the local sandstone. Some of the other remains that have been found are that of stone pieces, pottery and bangles with

beautiful polish and some exquisite copper fragments. Some of the other art form that are worthy of mention are the stone pieces of the *Mauryan* polished *Chattra* (the multi-tiered "umbrella" at the top of a *stupa*) with evidence of radial ribs. To the West of the main *stupa*, a lump of iron ore, iron slag and white nodules of lime indicate the presence of an iron-smelting furnace nearby.

MURELKHURD

Located about 8 kms Southeast of Anther to the South range of low hills, the *Murelkhurd stupas* afford a view of both the Sanchi and *Andharstupas*. Built on four 'levels' along hill, these *stupas* are connected by rough steps cut in to the rock. Of the 72 buildings-both *stupas* and monasteries-erected within an area of about 8 sq kms in Murelkhurd, most are in ruins and few bear any resemblance to their original form.

To sum up, one can easily observe that the Buddhist Circuit in the state of Madhya Pradesh has a great impact in the development and progress of Buddhist culture, art and philosophy in the nation and outside of nation as well. The sites also have historical and

archaeological significance. All these reasons draw a large number of tourists and pilgrims across the globe to visit them. Undoubtedly, the Government of Madhya Pradesh in collaboration with



Archaeological Survey of India is making all the sincere efforts to preserve these great monuments as some of them are reckoned as World Heritage Sites.

Published by:

Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies (SUBIS)

**BUDDHIST
CIRCUIT**
IN MADHYA PRADESH



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Buddhism appears to have been firmly established in Madhya Pradesh since the days of King Asoka who erected a *stupa* and a pillar at Sanchi, 6 miles Southwest of Vidisha. Asoka's keen interest in the Buddhist establishment of Sanchi is clearly evident through his edict, on the pillar, recording his fear of excommunication, from the Sangha, of any monk and nun attempting to instigate schism in the Sangha.

The economic prosperity of its populous capital, Vidisha (modern Besnagar near Vidisha), at the confluence of the river Betwa and Bes offered a very aesthetic look to these vast building schemes. Apart from Sanchi, where monumental edifices were added to the already-existing ones, there sprang forth several important groups of Buddhist establishments in quiet and serene spots on sandstone hills within a radius of 12 miles from the capital. Particularly, impressive among these are the monuments at Sonari, about 6 miles South-East of Sanchi, Satdhara, about 6½ miles west of Sanchi, Bhojpur (Pipalia), about 7 miles East Southeast of Sanchi and Andher, nearly 9 miles East Southeast of Vidisha. These groups are mainly popular for their imposing *stupas*, consisting of circular drums and almost hemispherical domes similar to and almost contemporaneous with *stupas* 1 (as enlarged in the second

century B.C.), 2 and 3 of Sanchi. Several of the *stupas* yielded relics including those of the direct disciples of Buddha and later Buddhist teachers. Overshadowed by the towering and well-preserved monuments at Sanchi, these groups, though significantly, have drawn less attention that they deserve partly and also due to their somewhat remote situations. Unlike Sanchi, these centres as well as Bharhut, which rose to great prominence during the rule of the Sungas, dwindled in importance after the Christian era.

The outstanding examples of the rock-cut monuments are at Bagh and Dhamnar, the former group celebrated for its marvellous paintings. A promising site of this epoch is Phophnar (District East Nimar), about 15 miles from Burhanpur, which is yet to be fully explored. Apart from the mounds containing ruins of brick structures, the site yielded seven superb bronze images of standing Buddha in *Abhaya-mudra* and five parasols, all in bronze. Four of these images bear dedicatory inscriptions in characters of 5th-6th century A. D. Another important centre was at Mandasor, ancient Dasapura of which hardly any remains are presently available. A stone-inscription found in inner face of the East wall of the fort here records the construction of a *Stupa*, a *Prapa* and an *Arama* and the excavation

of a well (*Kupa*) within the limits of the *Lokottara-vihara* in the Malava Samvat 524 (A.D. 467-68) by Dattabhata, whose father was a General (*Senapati*) of Govindagupta, son of Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty. The *stupa*, the Yashti of which is said to have touched the clouds, was probably covered with plaster, as it is described as white as the *kunda* flower and the Moon.

Buddhism continued to flourish in the post-Gupta period not only at Sanchi, which had a long and a plaid career but at many other places as well. While some of the sites are partly explored others are yet to be exposed. One of the *stupas* of 7th-8th century A.D. has been located at Gyarpur (Vidisha) where four remarkable images of Buddha are still attached to the base of the dome. A

stronghold of Buddhism of this period was at *Sirpur* which nourished a prosperous establishment during the reign of the Panduvamsis of South Kosala.

A partially-explored site is located on the hill known as Guptesvara or Gopeshwar in the vicinity of Barauni village (Datia). Here inscribed terracotta tablets and plaques were noticed amidst a heap of the earth and brick-bats. The tablets bear the Buddhist creed in characters of 9th or 10th century A.D. and the representation of a *stupa*.

Thus, it is observed that in the ancient Madhya Pradesh the Buddhist monuments are found in the form of (a) *Stupa*, (b) *Toran Dwar*, (c) *Chaitya and Vihar*, (d) *Stambha*, (E) *Mandir* and (F) *Caves*.

SANCHI

The establishment at Sanchi (lat. 23° 29'N.; long. 77° 45' E.; Dist.. Raisen) by far overshadows others in Madhya Pradesh not only by the number and variety of its monuments but also by the quality of its architectural and sculptural features. Indeed, amongst the vast galaxy of structural monuments of India, Sanchi, with its well preserved monuments, stands out majestically. Further, it has the distinction of having specimen of almost all kinds of Buddhist architectural forms. With its nuclear dating from the third century B.C.,



the establishment continued to flourish till 12th century A.D., despite of all political changes due to the rise and fall of many dynasties.

The site had no associations with the master and earliest structures were the work of the king Asoka who erected on the flattened top of the hill a brick *stupa* and by its side a polished pillar of the Chunar sandstone with a capital similar to the one at Sarnath. One of the reasons behind king Asoka's selection of the site might have been his early linkage with Vidisha, when, as a victory of Ujjayini, he married the daughter of a banker of this city. This queen of king Asoka was a devotee of Buddha and stated in the Ceylonese chronicles to have constructed a monastery on the Vedisagiri (variantly Chetiyagiri), generally identified with the hill of Sanchi. Her son was Mahendra, who

carried Buddhism to Ceylon. The Sunga period also witnessed the construction of the drum-balustrade and the ground-balustrade and later on processional path at the ground-level. The four gateways were added by the devotees in the first century B.C.

The elaborately carved four gateways (torana) were added by the devotees in the first century B.C. As the inscriptions revealed, top architrave of South Gateway was the gift of one Ananda, who was the foreman of the artisans of King Satakarni, a former member of the Satavahana dynasty. The South pillar of the west gateway and the middle architrave of the South gateway were the gifts of the same person, one Balamitra, the pupil of Aya-Chuda. Nagapiya, a native of Kurara, was the donor of both South pillar of the East gateway and North pillar of the West gateway which

is famous for its rich texture, vibrant with lavish carvings, are unique of their kind. The form of the gateways is similar to that of the Eastern gateway of Bharhut but here the pillars are oblong in section.

The projecting ends of the architraves are supported by the arresting figures of Salabhanjikas. The entire surface of the gateways is replete with bas-reliefs depicting five jatakas- Vessantara-jataka, Mahakapi-jataka, Chhaddanta-jataka, Sama-jatakas and Alambusa-jataka- incidents from the life of Buddha, miscellaneous scenes including the division of relics, the *stupa* of Ramagrama and king Asoka's homage to the Boddhi tree, Manushi-Buddhas and ornamental patterns and figures. These reliefs, with their decorative beauty and edifying narration, make an irresistible appeal to the human mind. From the technical points of view, these reliefs are an advance upon those of Bharhut in composition, perspective as well as modelling.

The last addition to the *stupa* was made in the Gupta period when four seated images of Buddha, each under a pillared canopy, were consecrated against the drum of the *stupa* facing the four entrances. Besides this *stupa*, which is known as Great *stupa* or *stupa* or *stupa* 1, there are many others. Among them stand *Stupas* 2 and 3. *Stupa*, of about 2nd century B.C. and modelled after *stupa* 1, is located by the latter's side.

The top of its drum, gained by a staircase, served as the second Pradakshina-patha, the first one existing on the ground around it. Its ground-balustrade, relieved with lotus-patterns, and a single gateway, carved luxuriantly like the gateway of the *stupa* 1, were constructed respectively in the 1st century B.C and A.D. The relic-content of this *stupa* is of great sanctity, as the bone pieces, as known from the inscription on the stone boxes containing the caskets belonged to the two foremost disciples of Buddha, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. The relics of these two distinguished persons were also found in the contemporaneous *stupa* 2 of Satdhara on the bank of the river Bes.

Stupa 2, on a lower ledge, is without any gateway but its ground-balustrade with four L-shaped opening, of about 2nd century B.C., is remarkable for its ornamental reliefs, mostly framed inside medallions. These reliefs bear a family-resemblance to those of Bharhut and represent the folk art in its true indigenous character with all its archaism simplicity and decorative beauty. This *stupa* is also important in its yield of the body-relics of ten Buddhist luminaries of at least three generations of teachers, including Kasapagota and Majhima, who were commissioned to preach the doctrine in the Himalayan region in the reign of the king Asoka. Monastery 45, with remains of two periods respectively of 7th - 8th and 10th-



11th centuries A.D., is remarkable for its temple. The cells of the first period are arranged in the usual quadrangular way. Buddhist *Vihara* is a modern monument. The relics found in a Satdhara stupa are enshrined in a glass casket here in the inner sanctum. The excavation has revealed this mammoth bowl carved out of a single piece of stone. Food used to be distributed from this bowl to the

BHARHUT

Among the monuments, which flowered during the reign of the Sungas (187-75 B.C.), who supplanted the Mauryas, those at Bharhut (lat. 24° 27' N.; long. 80° 52' E.; Dist. Satna), about 9 miles South of Satna railway-station, and at Sanchi hold supremely-exalted places not only in the Buddhist world but in the history of Indian art as well. Unlike the great monuments of the Maurya period, the edifices of this age at both the places were mainly undertaken by the masses who engaged skilled artisans for this purpose.

The Main *stupa*, made of brick and finished with a coat of plaster on the exterior was located on a low eminence at the foot of the hill, called Lal-pahar. In the absence of the superstructure one has to visualize its form in the representation of *stupas* on the railing. These consist each of a drum capped by a railing, a hemispherical dome and a *harmika*, within a railing at the base, crowned by a corbelled member from which rises the

Buddhist monks living at Sanchi.

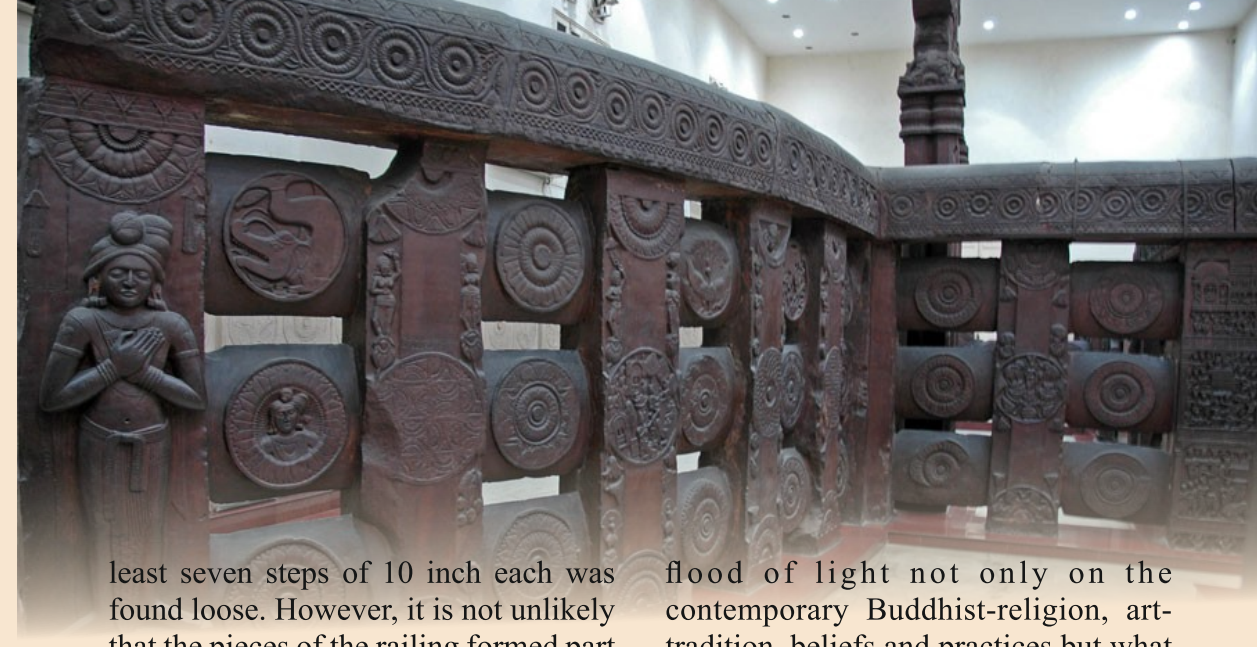
Apart from the *stupas* and Buddhist Vihar, there is also Archaeological Museum. This Museum was established on the hilltop of Sanchi in 1919. The objects displayed in the gallery are representative of six cultural periods, namely *Mourya, Sunga, Satvahara, Kushana, Gupta and Post-Gupta periods*.

shaft of the umbrella.

The circular processional path 10 feet 4 inch wide around had a thick flooring of lime-plaster. The floor was edged with a line of curbed kerb-stones, against which were fixed the posts of the great railing. The terraced floor extended beyond the railing to a distance of several feet. On this extension were found some stone votive *stupas* and remains of brick walls, some of the latter being again plinths of votive *stupas*.

From the discovery of two posts, each with a height of 2 feet 1 inch and breadth of 1 inch and containing standing figures, and ten pieces of a plain curbed coping, the latter found outside the railing, Cunningham presumed the existence of an outer railing erected at a later date due to the accumulation of the remains of structures around the early railing.

At that time the visitors, according to him, used to descend to the processional path by a stone staircase, of which one, with a width of 3 feet inch. And having at



least seven steps of 10 inch each was found loose. However, it is not unlikely that the pieces of the railing formed part of the balustrade around the upper processional path above the drum to which the staircase also gave access.

The railing (*circa* second half of the second century B.C.) was the result of the joint effort of individuals, including monks and nuns, their names often inscribed on their gifts. This railing (*Vedika*), about 9 feet height, with an inner diameter of 88 feet 4 ½ inch was divided into four quadrants by four opening facing the cardinal points. Covering the direct approach to the *stupa* and returning from the left side of entrance was an L-shaped extension of the quadrants. The railing comprised a series of oblong posts (*Stambhas*) with three parallel sets of lenticular cross-bars (*Suchi*) mortised into the posts on either side and capped by a huge coping (*Ushnisha*) rounded at the top.

The railing was luxuriantly carved with a profusion of bas-reliefs throwing a

flood of light not only on the contemporary Buddhist-religion, art-tradition, beliefs and practices but what life was like in those days. The object of narrative, particularly of *jatakas* (tales of Buddha's previous births) and the life scenes of Buddha were twin folded as to beautify the cherished object of sanity and imprint permanently on the popular mind and sacred lores, the visual representation of which are far more convincing than the texts describing them. The appeal of these representation is direct and immediate and the effect indelible.

Particularly interesting among the bas-reliefs are those depicting the *jatakas*, of which more than thirty are identified on the extant quadrant. The inscribed labels attached to most of them are the immense help in identifying these *jatakas*, the treatment of which is, however, condensed in most cases. The versions, depicted for the first time in these reliefs, sometimes slightly differ from those of the extant texts.

In the life-scenes carved on the railing, Buddha was never represented in human form. Whenever a scene demanded his portrayal, his presence was indicated by some symbol, for example, a seat, *tri-ratnas* and footprints. A throne under the Bodhi tree, a wheel and a *stupa* symbolized respectively his Enlightenment, Sermon and Demise.

About fifty years after the building of the railing, were added the gateways of which the Eastern one was erected as may be gathered from an inscription on it, by *Vatsiputra Dhanabhuti*, grandson of King *Gargiputra Visvadeva*, during the reign of the *Sungas*. Like the railing, the gateways were made of sandstone of chocolate-red colour. The extant Eastern gateway, 22 feet 6 inch high, comprises of two pillars, each a combination of four octagonal pillars with a square base,

THE BAGH CAVES

There is a group of nine Buddhist cave near the town of Bagh in Dhar district. Bagh is 176 km from Indore and 40 km South-West of Dhar. The Bagh Caves belong to 5th and 6th century A.D. and have been excavated out of a sandstone cliff at the foothill of the *Vindhya*s. The Bagh Caves are widely visited by masses for their beautiful wall paintings. The finest paintings at Bagh are in Cave No. 5, which is known as *Rang Mahal* or the painted mansion. This cave is the largest excavation; its portico being about 220 feet long.

In the South of the *Vindhya*s, the

a lotus and an oblong abacus, capped by two pairs of addorsed animals, supporting a superstructure of three curved curviform architraves, the ends of the latter having a *makara* with a spirally-curved tail.

The architraves are connected with one another with blocks, set in the same vertical line as the pillars; uprights relieved with figures and moulded balusters, some bearing as mason's marks single *Kharoshthi* letters. It is likely that the masons for the gateways were imported from the Northwest of India. Crowning the topmost architrave is a *dharma-chakra* above a honeysuckle pattern in the centre flanked by two *tri-ratnas*. This demotic art impresses people by its sincerity, unaffected naiveté, buoyancy and freshness.

tradition of *guha-monasteries* can easily be witnessed. Even in late decline of Buddhism, a splendid set of caves was constructed on the Southern face of the *Vindhyan hills*. These are known as 'Bagh Caves' from a nearby village of that name. About thirty feet below them, a small stream known locally as Baghini meanders down from its source somewhere up in the hills and, flowing through a channel called Kukshi, discharges itself into the *Narmada river*. Among the *guha-monasteries* of India, these caves are the most northerly.

The Bagh Caves were carved out of



sandstone rocks, but these rocks happened to be topped by a deep band of clay-stone. These caves contain large pieces of mural painting.

Lending a slight colour to the surmise, a solitary letter, *Ka*, initial consonant of the alphabet, has been discovered standing oddly under a scene depicted on the back-wall of the portico joining caves No. 4 and 5. The solitary letter has been submitted to palaeographic test: experts' opinion is that it is a *Gupta* character referable to 6th or 7th century, when the later *Gupta's* were still reigning after the break-up of the empire. This palaeographic indication is borne out and amplified by the existing sculpture and painting. Especially the painting, in its general idiom and in all particulars of pigmentation, posture and



pose, is unmistakably in the style of Ajanta.

The entire group of caves at Bagh must have been from the beginning in the occupation of *Mahayanist* monks and all the Buddha-images here, sculpted or painted, are accompanied by Bodhisattva figures or are flanked on each side with the figures respectively of *Avalokitesvara* and *Manjusri*.

The monks' cells are mostly square in shape not rectangular as in the *lenas* of western India. There are some with an antechamber at a lower level reached from the cell by a very narrow doorway in a side wall. Perhaps, it represents a 'meditation chamber' of which there are several examples in the monasteries of Nalanda.

DHAMNAR

There is a group of Buddhist Caves at Dhamnar, which is about 20 km West of Shamgrarh railway station in Mandsaur District, and 35 km Northwest of *Kholvi*. In these caves there is fine combination of early Buddhist symbols of the *stupas* with the reliefs of the Buddha images. There is a large rock-cut *stupa* in the centre of *Chaitya* Cave (No.13). Behind the *stupa* is a sanctuary containing a colossal seated Buddha. The doors are also decorated with Buddha figures.

The stony caves of *Dharmarajeshwar* are situated in Dharmnar. 14-170 caves have been described in 3 to 4 km diameter. The three Buddha caves namely *Chota Bazar*, *Bhim Bazar* and *Badi Kacheri* are very popular. *Chota Bazar* cave is about 35 meter long and 24 meter wide. There is an attractive statue of Buddha on north direction. The



posture of Buddha is in blessing mode. It has 9th century monolithic temple of *Dharmarajeshwara*, carving it out of solid natural rock. The temple is carved out of a rock of size 50 metre in length, 20 metre in width and 9 metre deep. It has a sanctum with a *Sabhamandapa* and porch. The spire of the shrine is in the North Indian style. The architecture of *Dharmarajeshwara* temple can be compared with Kailash Temple of Ellora.

SONARI

Sonari village is built on the spur of a sandstone hill, Southeast of Sanchi. It is located 1.5 km of NH 86 that connects Sanchi with Bhopal. Sonari *stupas* stand on top of a hill that affords lovely views of the surrounding countryside, dotted with small streams that must have quenched a million ascetic thirsts in their time.



ANDHER

Andher village, 17 kms Northeast of Vidisha, sits at the foot of hill that not only affords beautiful views stretching as far as *Gyaraspur* and taking in the Sanchi *stupa* and *Udayagiri* but also is the home of three of today's best preserved *stupas*.



DEURKOTHAR

It is located about 5 km Northwest of the Katra village in Rewa at a distance of 75 km from Rewa on Rewa- Allahabad Road. Deurkothar is known for its Buddhist *stupas*. There are remnants of 40 *stupas* made of stones or bricks. In the area around there are rocks with old rock paintings. Some rocks have inscriptions in Brahmi language. The inscription mentions Buddha on the very first line. The gist of the inscription, pertains to the erection and dedication of stone pillar. The inscription speaks about an Acharya and his disciples.

The Deurkothar complex proudly houses four brick *stupas*, the most ever found at a site of this period. The bricks used are of varied sizes like twirling lotus, conical lotus bud, and a simple flower pot on a three-tiered pedestal-the carving of which foreshadows early Buddhist art, can be seen on the railing posts of the largest brick *stupa*, which rises to a height of nearly 30 feet.

The stencil cut design of the friezes, along with their simple ornamentation



and paucity of animal and human figures depict that they are attempt for stone railing art. This *stupa* was at Deurkothar was built much before the early free standing Sanchi *stupa*. Apart from this the site of Deurkothar also comprises monasteries, an ancient pathway, a system for water channel, and 30 stone *stupas*, many of which contained shreds of high quality northern black polished ware, the pottery of everyday use between 700 and 300 B.C. The absence of such shreds from Sanchi proves the fact that Deurkothar predates that site. There are 63 rock shelters adorned with various types of arts dating back to first century BC which were used by monks