

drawn to the magnificent lion-capital of Asoka with a remarkable mirror-like luster, placed at the farther end in an alcove.

Other important sculptures and architectural fragments displayed here are: the fragment of an umbrella-stone, a stone bowl of the Mauryan period, railing pillars of Stupa 2 bearing the names of donors in early Brahmi characters and the graceful yakshi-figure from the gateway of Stupa 1.

A few Mathura stone sculptures including the Buddha in dhyana-mudra from Stupa 4, belonging to the Gupta period are also exhibited in this hall, which indicate relationship between Sanchi and Mathura art.

The important sculptures exhibited here are; Naga-Nagini, a seated Buddha fully-robed in dhyana mudra and Manjusri. In Gallery 2, smaller antiquities are displayed in the wall show-cases. Besides, chauri-bearer of the first century BC, Avalokitesvara, Visnu and lotus-headed nude Goddess, datable to the Gupta period, are interesting examples of cult-affiliation. Some large-size stone sculptures are also on display in the open verandah of Gallery 2. Notable among these are Gajalakshmi, Siva with four-hands, Bhu-varaha and Mother and Child over serpent coils, surrounded by divinities, etc. Recently a new gallery showing history of conservation was added for the benefit of the visitors.

In view of its grand artistic excellence, Sanchi has gained a pride of place as a monument of universal importance, and as such has been inscribed in the World Heritage List (1989)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### SITE

**Timing:** Open on all days from sunrise to sunset.

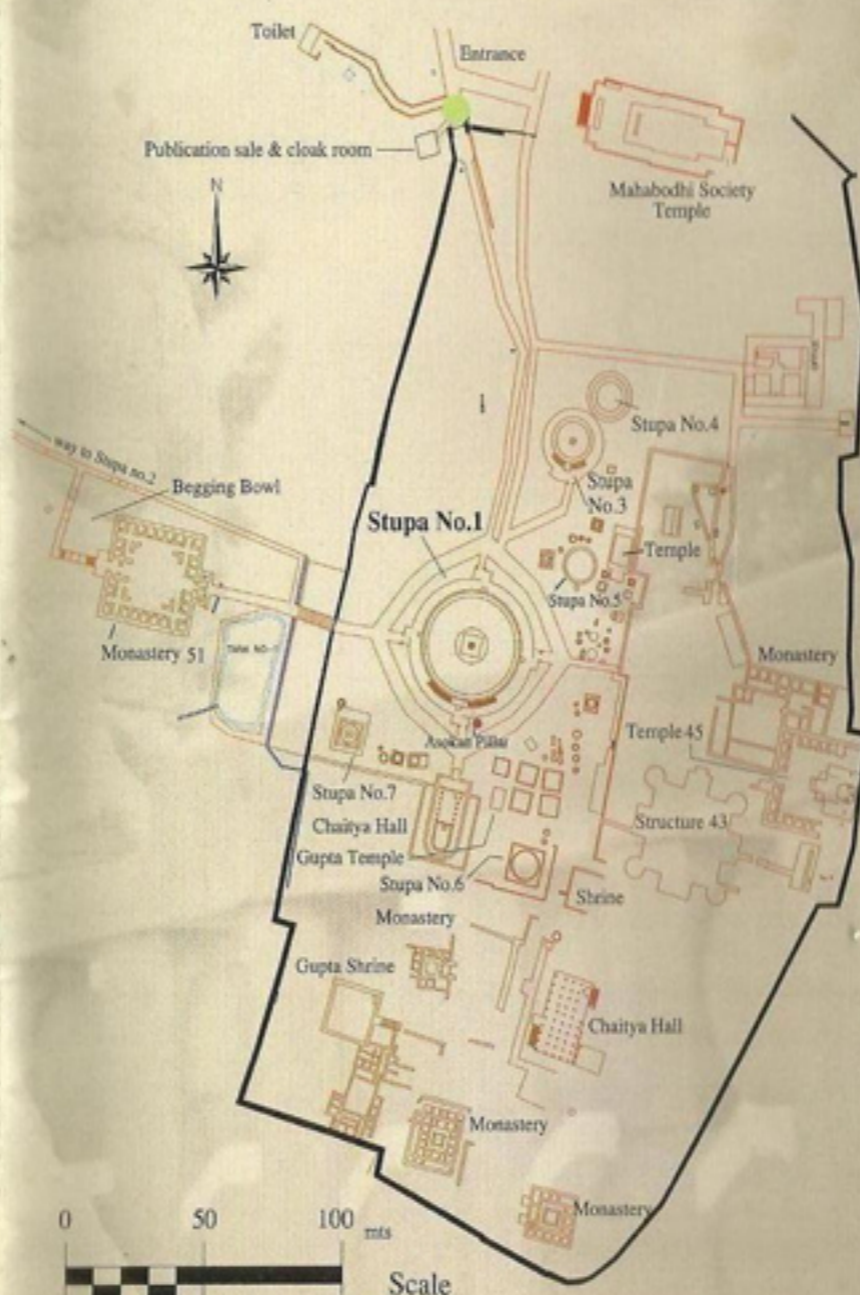
**Entry fee:** Indian nationals and those from SAARC and BIMSTEC countries Rs 10/- other nationals Rs 250/- Free for persons up to 15 years.

### MUSEUM

**Timing:** Open on all week days from 10 AM to 5 PM except Friday.



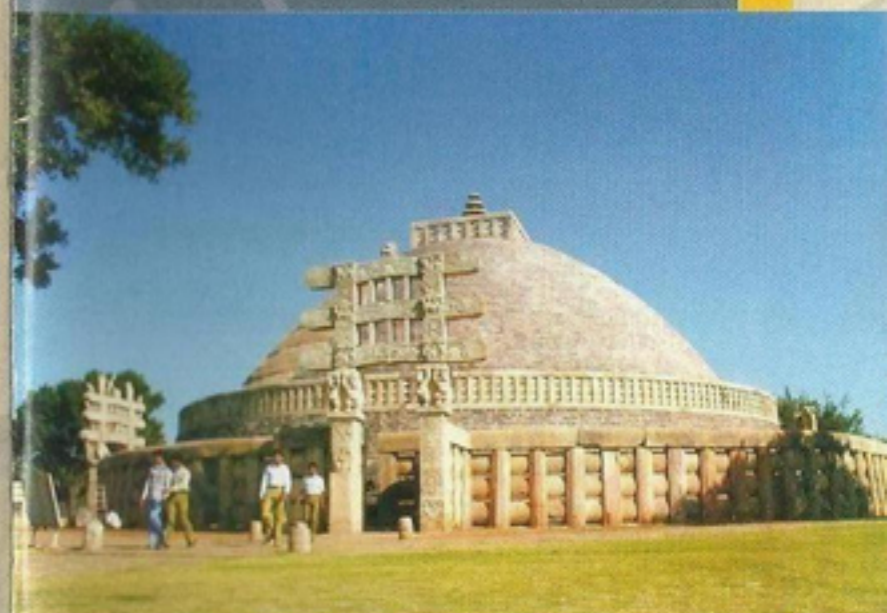
## BUDDHIST MONUMENTS, SANCHI



Superintending Archaeologist  
Archaeological Survey of India  
II<sup>nd</sup> Floor B - Block  
GTB Complex, T.T Nagar, Bhopal  
Ph.no. 0755-2558250, 2558270  
Website-www.asi.nic.in  
E-mail: circlebho.asi@gmail.com



WORLD  
HERITAGE  
SITE



Sanchi

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA  
Bhopal Circle

**Sanchi** in district Raisen is situated at a distance of about 45km. north-east of Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. Vidisa (Vidisha), originally the capital of ancient Akara region is about 10 km north-east of Sanchi. Crowning the hill of Sanchi (91 m.), a group of Buddhist monuments command a grand view of the area lying at the foot hill.



General View

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sanchi variously known as Kakanaya, Kakanava, Kakanadabota and Bota Sri Parvata in ancient times, has a singular distinction of having remarkable specimens of Buddhist art and architecture right from the early Mauryan period (circa third Century BC) to twelfth century AD.

Asoka (circa 273-236 BC) is credited to have erected a few monuments e.g. a Mahastupa, monolithic pillar with characteristic polish and a monastery atop the hill at the instance of his queen from Vidisa. During the Sunga times, several edifices were raised at Sanchi and its surrounding hills which included the enlargement of Asokan Stupa with stone veneering and addition of balustrades along with a staircase and harmika on the top. The reconstruction of Temple 40 and erection of Stupa 2 and 3 also seems to date back around the same time. In the first century BC, the Andhra-Satavahanas, who had extended their sway over the eastern Malwa, caused the elaborately carved gateways to Stupa 1. From the second to fourth century AD, Sanchi and Vidisa were under the Kushanas and Kshatrapas and subsequently passed on to the Guptas. Some fine temples were built and sculptures were added at Sanchi and Udayagiri near Vidisa during this period. Shrines and monasteries were also constructed at this site during seventh and twelfth centuries AD.

From the fourteenth century AD onward Sanchi remained deserted and uncared till 1818 when General Taylor rediscovered the site. Captain Johnson (1822), General A. Cunningham and Captain F.C. Maisay (1851), Major Cole (1881) and Sir John Marshall (1912-1919) explored, excavated and conserved the monuments. Sir John Marshall established an Archaeological Museum in 1919, which has developed into the present site Museum at Sanchi.

The principal monuments are as under:

### STUPAS

The largest among the stupas at Sanchi is Stupa 1 having a ground railing, four entrances and flights of steps leading to upper terraced railing. Its architecture members bear donatory inscriptions datable to the third-second century BC. Four richly carved gateways, depicting Buddhist Jatakas, life scenes of Buddha and other themes, were symbolically added at the four cardinal entrances of the ground railing in the first century BC, of which the south one is the earliest. In the fifth century AD coeval with the Gupta period, four Buddha images were installed, each facing the gateway. The stupa measures 36.68 m in diameter and 16.46 m in height excluding the railing and the chattr, which is within a square harmika at the top. The stupa is supposed to enshrine, Buddha's relics.



Stupa No. 1



Stupa No. 2

The stupa 2 is situated on the western slope of the hill having at present only its dome and ground railing with four fine entrances. The crowning members, berm and stairway balustrades are missing. On the basis of paleographic records on the railing and style of bas-reliefs, the construction is assigned to the last quarter of the second century BC. The inscription on the stone relic-casket found within a relic-chamber records that it contained mortal remains of ten Buddhist teachers.

The stupa 3, situated 45 m to the north-east of stupa 1, with its flights of steps, terrace railing and umbrella on top, was erected in the second century BC. The ground railing is richly carved with a single gateway during the first century AD. The stupa is 15 m in diameter and 8.23 m high excluding the umbrella. As per inscription recorded on the lid of the casket found therein, it was dedicated to Sariputasa and Maha-Mogalanasa, the chief disciples of Buddha.



Stupa No. 3

The stone railing and the torana (gateways) of Sanchi which were designed on wooden models, represent a stage of transformation from timber to stone constructions and the carvings thereon depict contemporary life with its manifold forms, flora and fauna, which are marvelous creations of the Indian artisans. Remains of other smaller stupas are dotted all over the hill.

### MONOLITHIC PILLARS

There are several monolithic pillars erected as memorials, of them, the one caused by Asoka (Pillar 10) at the south gateway of stupa 1 is an outstanding with mirror like polish and is inscribed with a message of excommunication from the Buddhist church of monks or nuns attempting to create schism in the Sangha. Its magnificent lion-capital is now preserved in the Site Museum. Another Pillar (no.35) with a standing figure of Vajrapani is unique having twelve pairs of evenly distributed holes around the edge to receive a metallic halo. Besides there are a number of free standing columns of later dates at Sanchi.

### TEMPLES

Among several temples at this site, most important ones include an apsidal chaitya-hall (circa third-second century BC) buried within the plinth of the pillared pavilion (Temple 40); Temple 17 (circa fifth century AD) comprising a flat-roofed square sanctum and a pillared portico supported on four pillars is the best-preserved example for its perfect form and represents an important phase in the development of Indian temple architecture; a seventh century AD apsidal temple (Temple 18) stands on the foundation of an earlier apsidal hall (chaitya-hall) of the Maurya-Sunga period with a pillared hall and side-aisles. Temple 45 is a large towering temple with an attached monastery. It marks a developed stage of the north Indian temples.



Temple No. 45

### MONASTERIES

Sanchi preserves remains of several monasteries on the top of the hill. Each monastery comprises a central courtyard surrounded by cells. Monastery 51 is the most impressive structure among all the remains unearthed here.



Monastery 51

### THE SITE MUSEUM

The museum consists of a large hall at the northern end of the building and three galleries in a row to its south. Entry to the museum is through the main hall which serves as the key-gallery and the representative art objects from different periods are on display here. As one enters the main hall attention is immediately.