

Bharhut Gallery

The red sandstone remnants of the Bharhut Stupa were created all the way to their current location and re-created there by Alexander Cunningham, who excavated the site in 1873. The gallery shows the architectural remains – railings and the only surviving Eastern Gateway or ‘Torana’. Jataka tales, stories of Lord Buddha’s life, numerous animal and geometric motifs, and several demigods – Yaksha and Yakshi figurines are depicted in the gallery. Next to the Bharhut remains, there are fragments of railings (some original pieces with cast replicas) from the site of Bodhgaya exhibited.



The Bharhut Gallery is one of the prominent attractions of the Indian Museum in Kolkata, showcasing ancient Indian art and sculpture. Here are the full details:

Overview

- **Location:** Indian Museum, 27 Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

- **Established:** The Indian Museum was established in 1814, making it the oldest and largest museum in India.
- **Gallery Focus:** The Bharhut Gallery is dedicated to the ancient art and sculptures from the Bharhut Stupa, an important archaeological site in Madhya Pradesh, dating back to the 2nd century BCE.

Historical Significance

- **Bharhut Stupa:** The Bharhut Stupa is an ancient Buddhist monument known for its intricate railings and gateways, which are adorned with detailed carvings depicting Jataka tales, Buddhist symbols, and scenes from daily life during the time of the Maurya and Shunga dynasties.
- **Discovery:** The remnants of the Bharhut Stupa were discovered by Alexander Cunningham, a British archaeologist, in the 19th century. These remains were later transported to the Indian Museum for preservation and display.

Exhibits

- **Railings and Gateways:** The gallery features sections of the original railings and gateways of the Bharhut Stupa, showcasing detailed reliefs of various deities, animals, and narrative scenes.
- **Sculptures:** There are several statues and reliefs depicting Buddhist iconography, including depictions of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Yakshas, and Yakshinis.
- **Narrative Panels:** The gallery also houses narrative panels that illustrate scenes from the life of Buddha and Jataka tales, which are stories of the previous lives of Buddha.
- **Inscription Panels:** Several panels with inscriptions in Brahmi script, one of the earliest writing systems used in ancient India, are also on display.

Cultural Importance

- **Artistic Style:** The art of Bharhut is characterized by its elaborate and intricate carvings, which reflect the early development of Buddhist art in India. The style is significant for understanding the transition from aniconic to iconic representations of Buddha.
- **Educational Value:** The gallery offers deep insights into the early Buddhist art and iconography, serving as a valuable resource for historians, archaeologists, and art enthusiasts.

Visitor Information

- **Timings:** The Indian Museum is generally open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Tuesday to Sunday. It is closed on Mondays and national holidays.
- **Entry Fee:** There is a nominal entry fee, with separate charges for Indian citizens, foreign visitors, and students. Photography inside the museum may require an additional fee.
- **Facilities:** The museum offers guided tours, educational programs, and special exhibitions. There is also a museum shop where visitors can purchase books, replicas, and souvenirs related to Indian art and history.

The Bharhut Gallery is an essential destination for anyone interested in ancient Indian art and the early history of Buddhism.

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