CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: Importance of the Subject;
Sources; Scope
Malwa forms one of the four entities in Madhya Pradesh. It comprises the western part of the State. The region abounds in historical relics, and monuments. They give a glimpse of the development of the region in the past. The archaeological material discovered in this region has given ample proof to the advancement of art and architecture in this area.

The territorial unit, now called 'Malwa,' was named after the Malavas, who were an important ancient republic of northwestern India. They finally came in the region of Avanti and settled there. The territorial name 'Malava' was given to Avanti by these Malavas. By C. 400 A.D., the Malavas had settled around Mandsaur. The Mandsaur stone inscription gives the dated 493 (436 A.D.) in the Malava era.¹ The Aulikaras, who began to rule with their capital at Desapura, from about the close of the fourth century A.D., were probably a clan of the Malavas. It seems that from the seventh century A.D., the name 'Malava' denoted a wide region, consisting of some parts of north-eastern Gujrat, the old territory of Avanti around Ujjayini and Akara or Daśārṇa (eastern Malva). In the Sanchi inscription of the seventh century A.D., 'Mahāmātara' is mentioned in a territorial
sense meaning a big unit of Malwa. 2

The territory of Malwa region may be divided into the following divisions: (I) The Central Malwa plateau, (II) The North-East plateau, (III) The North-West plateau, and (IV) The Narmada Valley.

In the present work we are concerned with the second part, viz. the North-East plateau of Malwa as main town around was Vindisha. This region was famous under the name of 'Dharmā' due to its main river Dharmā (modern Dhasan).

Cunningham was the first to work on this important region. He did the pioneering work in Vindisha region by focussing his attention on the vast archaeological material found here. Besides him other notable names in this respect are those of D.R. Bhandarkar, John Marshall, Naisetty and M.B. Garde.

Every step of the territory in the eastern region bears the imprint of cultural glory of the past. The area in and around Sanchi, Vindisha and Udaigiri attracted attention of these and other scholars.

SANCHI:

The discovery of the Buddhist monuments at Sanchi during the last century marked a turning point in the history of Buddhism. John Marshall, in calls the Sanchi Stupas as "The noblest of all the monuments which early Buddhism has bequeathed to India". After Cunningham, Marshall, Fergusson, Naisey,
Cole, Burgess, Grunwedel, Pouucher, Coomaraswamy and others wrote on the art and architecture of Sanchi. The river Betwa flows between Sanchi and Vridha. The ancient town of Vridha was located on the confluence of the rivers Betwa and Bhes. Vridha, (presently spelt as Vridha) the head quarter of the district, lies at a distance of about 10 kms. north-east of Sanchi.

DAśĀRṆĀ:

Dasarna was the ancient name of modern eastern Malwa. It was also known as Akara and had its capital at Vridha. The river Daśārnā (modern Dhasan) takes its rise in the Bhopal area and flowing through the district of Sagar, it empties itself into Betwa river. The name Daśārnā denotes a country having ten forts. The Rāmāyaṇa mentions and connects Daśārnā with the Mekalas and Utkalas. The Māhābhārata mentions two countries by the name of Daśārnā. Pargiter thinks that Daśārnā was a Yēdava kingdom during the period of the Kurukshetra War. It is mentioned in Kālidāsa’s Meghadūta. ‘Periplus’ mentions the region as ‘Dosarenc’.

Daśārnā was famous for manufacturing sharp swords as known from the Jātakas. The name of its capital at the time of Aśoka is mentioned as Cetiya (Cetiyagiri). Daśārnā janapada is mentioned in the Mahāvastu.

In the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana, Avanti and Mālava are mentioned separately. Its commentary identified Mālava with
Pūrva-Malava and gives the name Avanti to the Ujjayini region. Bāṇa's Kādambarī supports the same tradition when it associates Malava ladies with the Vetravatī (modern Betwa) surrounding Vidisha. Bāṇa speaks of Ujjayini as a city of the Avanti country in the present western Malwa.

**VIDISHA**

The ancient name of the present Vidisha was Vidiśā, (Prakrit Vediśā or Veddīsa) (Sanskrit Vaidiśā). Till recently the town was called Bhelsa. This name seems to have been given to it due to the temple of Sun god Bhillaśvāmī located there. The ancient city was situated on the confluence of the Bes (Vediśā) and the Betwa (Vetravatī). The name Besnagar appears to be the corrupt form of Vidiśā nagar.

Vidisha is at a distance of 55 kms. from Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh and 10 kms. from Sanchi. The strategic and geographical position of the town made Vidisha the pivot of political, commercial and cultural activities (Plate I - Map).

This tract of land had a significance of its own with the fertile plateau of Malwa proper, easily accessible to the west and its proximity to the fertile Gangetic plain of east. The region of Vidisha was prosperous and flourishing, a fact borne out by the richness of its monuments. In the early historic period Vidisha rose to a great importance politically and
economically. Because of its central situation it was a great trade emporium connected with regular trade routes to the flourishing cities of Ujjayini, Kaushambi, Varanasi and Patliputra. It was also connected with the busy ports of Bharukachha (Broach)\textsuperscript{14} and Sarparsaka (Sopara) on the western coast and to the city of Pratishtana (Paithan) in the Deccan.

Professor K.D. Bajpai opines that the ancient site of Vidisha derived its name on account of its being centrally situated from where roads passed to various directions (Vividhāḥdiśah).

**LITERARY REFERENCES:**

Vidisha is mentioned in the Vedic literature, the Sūtras and Smritis, the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini, the epics, the Mahābhāṣya of Patanjali, the Arthasastra of Kauṭilya, the Jātakas and other Sanskrit and Pārśkrit works.

The Buddhist and Jaina works and the foreign accounts contain references to Vidisa.

According to the Rāmāyaṇa the city was given by Rama to Satrughna.\textsuperscript{15} The Meghaduta mentions it as the capital of the Daśārha country\textsuperscript{16} and of the sixteen Janapadas of Jambudvipa.\textsuperscript{17} The Daśārha's figure in the Mahābhārata as one of the people who fought with the Pāṇḍavas in the great Kurukṣetra war.\textsuperscript{18} According to the Mahabharata there were two countries by the name of Daśārha: (1) Western Daśārha, representing eastern and
the kingdom of Bhopal, forming a part of the Chhattisgarh district in M.P. The Markandeya Purana refers to the Dasaarna river which gave its name to the country. The same Purana mentions Vidisha and Vetravati among others rivers issuing from the Pāripātra mountain. The Skanda Purana refers to Vidisha as a tirtha or holy place.

According to a Jātaka, Vidisha was famous for sharp edged swords. The Satyamipata mentions sixteen Brāhmaṇa pupils of Bāvari who visited Vedisa among other places. There were eighteen donors belonging to Vidisha, who contributed substantially towards the construction of Buddhist religious edifices at Bhilsa. In the Bharhut Stūpa the votive label on pillar No. 1 shows that it was the gift of Cāpādevī, wife of Revatimitra, a lady from Vidiśā. This Revatimitra seems to have belonged to the Royal Mitra house of Vidiśā. There are also references to the gift made by Vāsanīṭhī, the wife of Venimitra, from Vidiśā, the gifts of Phagudeva, Amrātha and Bhattarakṣita all from Vidiśā.

Vidiśā was famous for its ivory work. The southern gateway at Sambhi was the work of the ivory workers of Vidiśā. The Periplus mentions Dsearena as famous for ivory work.

According to Fargiter, Vidiśā was one of the early kingdoms of the Yādavas. The Mahābodhiśāna mentions that the city was built up by a branch of the Sakya, who being afraid of Vāḍūḍabha, fled from their home town to Vidiśā. The Garga Purana describes it as a city full of wealth (Sarvasampatpann-
Kalidāsa and several other writers have referred to Vidiśā. The people of Vidiśā were called Vaidīsas.

The name Bhillaśwāminipur for Vidiśā was due to the temple of god Sun here. Dr. Hall has pointed out to a temple of the Sun, under the appellation of Bhaila, which was erected by Vāshaspati, the minister of Rājā Krishna, who lived on the banks of the Vetravatī or Betwa river. This Krishna has been identified with the Rāṣṭrakūta King Krishna II (939-98 A.D.). Dr. Hall states: "the sun as Bhaila was once an object of worship The word has been formed anomalously from bha, 'light' and the Vaidika root it, defined by the grammarians "to throw" - 'the thrower of light', The Bhailā add īṣa, and the combination is Bhailīsā soften this, and we easily account for Bhalsa".

Several traditions associated with Bhilsa have been narrated by Cunningham. The inscription of V.S. 935 (878 A.D.) at Bhilsa, is the earliest among the known inscriptions mentioning the temple of Bhailasvamin. A copper plate grant, dated V.F. 1190 (A.D. 1134), to a Chandella prince, Nandavarman to have made a grant of land while residing in the temple site of Bhailasvamin.

A stone inscription dated A.D. 1173 in the temple of Udayesvara at Udaipur (district Vidishā) speaks of Udaipur as being situated in the Bhailasvāminahādvādāsā (i.e. a group of twelve villages of which Bhailasvamin was the principal one).
These references indicate that the town had received its name from this deity. Bhaila or Bhailasvamin was originally the name of an image of the Sun god worshipped in a great temple at the place which became gradually famous under the deities. The word Karpasigrana occurs in three inscribed labels on the railing of the Senahi Stupa I, it seems to represent a village within Akaraavanti and was noted for cotton and cotton industries. Since the time of Aśoka Vidiśā became an important centre of Buddhism and later on of Vaishnavism. Aśoka was appointed as Viceroy of Malwa during the reign of his father. Vidiśa and Ujjaini was selected as the capitals in the central India due to their strategic importance.

The Vedner plates of the Kalachuri year 350 (608 A.D.) was issued from Vidiśā. Varahamihira in his Brihatsamhita (about 500 A.D.) and Rajasekara in the Kavyanimasa earlier part of the tenth century refer to Vidiśā. This shows that the old city retained its importance even in the post-Gupta period.

Another inscription discovered at Bhilsa contain an eulogy of the Sun god.

About (1020 A.D.) Alberuni mentions the city of Bhilsan (Bhailla or Bhailasvamin) and locates it somewhere on the road between Mathura and Ujjayini. He further says that it was a place most famous among the 'Hindus' and that 'the name of the town was identical with (that of) the idol worshipped there'. A charter of the Chandella King Madanvarman dated V.S. 1190
(1133 A.D.), was issued from his camp near Bhäillasvāmin, appar-
ently meaning the deity who seems to be mentioned as Bhanat
on the bank of the Malavandi (Vetranati) in an earlier Chandella
record of V.S. 1011 (964 A.D.). 47

The above mentioned references point out to the existence
of the Bhäillasvāmin temple in Vidisha as early as the second
half of the ninth century A.D. According to Badāmis Munta-
khabout - Tavārikh during the reign of the Khilji Sultan
Jalaluddin Mīrūs of Delhi, his nephew, Alāuddin, governor of
Karra, obtained permission in 1292 A.D. to proceed to Bhilsa. 48
He attacked it and brought much booty from there to present it
to the Sultan. The idol which was the object of worship of the
Hindus was caused to be cast down by him in front of the gate of
Badaun to be trampled upon by the people. Thus ended the worship
of the god Bhillasvami, the great deity of Vidisha.

In the Gwalior museum, there is a stone inscription dated
V.S. 935 (878 A.D.) collected from Mahalghat at Bhilsa. 49

The inscription is fragmentary; on a careful examination
of the record, it was found by D.C. Sirkar, that it contained
the earlier reference to the temple of Bhäillasvāmin at Bhilsa. 50
The inscription records the grant of an akshayanika made in
favour of the temple of the illustrious Bhāillasvāmin.

The importance of the inscription lies in the fact that
it refers to the existence of the temple of Bhāillasvāmin at
Bhilsa as early as 878 A.D. 51 Dr. Sirkar writes "In regard to
the name of the god Bhāillasvāmin, it is possible to suggest that the deity was originally installed by and named after a person called Bhailia).

The present work deals with the stone sculptures from Vidisha exhibited in the Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior and the Sanchi Museum. The art pieces from Vidisha, now exhibited in the Indian Museum, Calcutta and in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, have also been dealt with. Terracottas coins, seals and inscriptions from the area have also been studied.

Vidisha played a prominent role in Indian history right from the Mauryan period to the time of the Paramāras. The town witnessed the rise and fall of rulers of various dynasties.
REFERENCES TO CHAPTER I

1. GII, III, p. 83
4. Rāmāyaṇa, IV, 1. p. 41
8. Jātaka III. 326, VI. 228.
10. Mahavastu - I, 34.
13. Meghadūta; Purvamegha, 26
15. Rāmāyaṇa, Uttarakanda, Ch. 121.
17. Mahavastu, I, 34.
18. Lalitvistara; p. 22; 'Sarvasmin Jambudvipa'
19. Kāvamadhyam; Ch. 22. 3
   Bhishmaparva; Chs., 95, 41, 43.
   Drnavahaparva; Chs. 25, 26.
20. Mahābhārata, Ch. 30.
22. Markandeya Purana, 57; 21-25.
23. Markandeya Purana; 57; 19-20.
27. Luder’s list, Geographical index for references.
28. Barua and Sinha; Bharhut inscriptions. p. 3
   Vedisa Capadevaya, Revatimitrabhariyaya Patnamo danam.
   Vedisa Vasilhiya Velumitabha riyaayadanam.
30. CHI; p. 523.
31. Ibid; p. 643.
33. Pargitter; Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, p. 237.
34. Mahabodhivamsa, pp. 97-98.
35. Law, B.C.; Vidisa in Ancient India,
36. JBAS. - XXXI, 112, Note
38. Ibid., p. 34
39. E.I; XXX, No. 4, p. 3
40. Luder’s List Nos. 260, 515; Law, Ujjayini, p. 8.
41. Law, B.C.; Vidisa in Ancient India, p. 4,
   JG JRI, Vol. IX, Part I.
42. Bhandarear’s list, No. 1207.
43. Brihatasamhita - Ch. XVI, Verse 32.
44. G.R.S. (ed.), p.9


47. Sircar, D.C., Epigraphia Indica, p. 211, Vol. 30, Part VI, No. 36.


51. Ibid., p. 213.

52. Ibid., p. 213.