CHAPTER III

POLITICAL HISTORY
Vidisha was counted among the well known cities of ancient India. It was the capital of Daśarha or Ākara, i.e. eastern Malwa. No archaic rock-shelters are known from Vidisha or its vicinity. Only stone-tools are reported from the river beds of Betwa and Bes.

According to the Purāṇas and the epics, the Haihayas dominated this area from early times. They are stated to have suffered a set-back at the hands of the kings of the solar race (Sūrya Vāsā) of Ayodhya. According to the Purānic tradition, Haihayas founded the great city of Māhishmatī (Maheśvara in the Khargone district of M.P.).

The Haihayas soon re-asserted themselves. They raised their ancestral land to the position of a great kingdom, particularly under their most powerful king Kārtavirya Arjuna. This king, after conquering the city of Māhishmatī, made it his capital. He had five sons, one of whom was Avanti, after whom probably the territory of western Malwa was known as Avanti.

The Haihayas later on were divided into a number of branches. One of the branches ruled at Vidisha during the
later Vedic Period. When exactly the Haihayas retired to
obscurity is not definitely known.

According to the Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa Subāhu, son of
Satrughna, was appointed ruler of Vidisha.¹

THE PRADYOTA DYNASTY :  

In about 600 B.C. a powerful dynasty of the Pradyotas
was ruling over this territory, then well known as Avanti. The
greatest king of this time was Chanda Pradyota, under whom the
city of Ujjayinī rose to prominence and in due course became
one of the most sacred cities of India. Chanda Pradyota was a
contemporary of the Buddha, and in his time Avanti became a
powerful and flourishing kingdom, as is known from the early
Buddhist literature.² According to the Purāṇas this king ruled
for 23 years. His daughter Vasavadatta was married to king
Udayana of Kausāmbi. After Pradyota four rulers of this dynasty
are said to have ruled over Avanti one after the other. The
last ruler was defeated by the Sāivismāgas of Māgadha.³

There was in this period a brisk cultured movement
between Avanti and other cities of Madhyadesa. During the reign
of the Pradyota dynasty the cities of Vidisha, Mahishmati and
Ujjayini made great progress. With the extinction of the Pradyota-
tas by the beginning of the 4th century B.C. Avanti lost the
high prestige of an independent kingdom. It henceforth became
only a part of the Viceroyalty of the succeeding Magadhan empire,
first of the Nandas, and subsequently of the Mauryas.
Avanti continued its economic and cultural progress even after the rule of the Pradyotas. According to the Mahābodhivāmśa, the Śākyas took shelter at Vidisha, being afraid of Viśuddhabha.  

**THE MAURYAS**

The Maurya emperor, Aśoka stayed at the city of Vidisha while he was on his way to Ujjayini to join the post of Viceroy of Avanti. At Vidisha he married Devi, daughter of a banker of Vidiśā named Deva. According to the Mahābodhivāmśa, she was honoured as Vediśā Mahadevi. In the Buddhist works she is called a Śākya Princess. She gave birth to Prince Mahendra and Princess Sanghamitra. Devi liked Vidisha and she stayed on there. Her children in course of time went to live with their father when he succeeded his father Bindusāra as emperor. According to some Buddhist texts, Sanghamitta was married to Agnibrahma, a nephew of Aśoka. A son was born to them called Sumana. Sanskrit legends and the inscriptions of Aśoka are, however, silent on this point. Vedisamahādevī was by his side at the time of Aśoka's coronation.

Aśoka caused to be constructed a Stūpa at Sanchi and a pillar bearing his edict was also erected near the Stūpa. His wife Vedisamahādevi is credited to have constructed a monastery at Sanchi, called after her name.

**THE SUNGAS**

The Maurya rule was followed by the rule of the Sungas in eastern Malwa. Pushyamitra Sunga, the originator of the
dynasty made his eldest son Agnimitra the ruler of Vidisha.
According to the Purānic literature nine kings of the dynasty
of Agnimitra ruled over Vidisha. Their names and ruling periods
are given in the Purānas as follows:

1. Agnimitra - 8 years.
2. Vasujyestha - 7 years.
3. Vasumitra - 10 years.
4. Odraka or Bhadraka - 2 years.
5. Pulindaka - 3 years.
6. Ghoṣa - 3 years.
7. Vajramitra - 17 years.
8. Bhāgavata - 32 years.
9. Devabhūti - 10 years

Total 92 years.\textsuperscript{12}

After the rule of the Sungas the Kāñva dynasty ruled over the
region. The Kāñva dynasty had 4 rulers. Their names with the
periods of their reigns are mentioned as follows in the Purānas:\textsuperscript{13}

1. Vasudeva - 9 years.
2. Bhūmimitra - 14 years.
3. Nārāyaṇa - 12 years.
4. Suśarmā - 10 years.

That Vidisha was within the Sunga domination is confirmed
by the Besnagar pillar inscription of Heliodoros. The pillar
was set up by him during his stay there. Heliodoros is
mentioned there as having come as the ambassador of the
Indo-Greek king Antialkides of Taxila to the court of king Bhāgabhādra of Vidiśā. This Bhāgabhādra can be identified with the 8th Śunaga ruler of the line mentioned above.

The Mālvikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa refers to a battle between Agnimitra, ruler of Vidisha, and his contemporary ruler Yajñasena of Vidarbha (Berar) in which Agnimitra was victorious. 14

**THE SĀTAVĀHANAS**

After the Śunagas, the next powerful dynasty which ruled over eastern Malwa was that of the Sātavāhanas. Coins and several inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas are known from Malwa. There was a constant struggle for supremacy between the Sātavāhanas and the western ksatrapas during the early centuries of Christian era. This is attested to by the Nasik inscription of Gautami Balkārī and the Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman. According to the Nasik prasasti the territories conquered by Gautamiputra Satakarni from Nahapāna included Anūpa (the country on the Narmada about Nimar), Ākara (east Malwa).

Some copper coins bearing outlandish names, such as Hanugama and Valāka, have been discovered in Malwa. These foreign chiefs rules over some parts of Malwa during the 2nd - 1st centuries B.C.

Gautamiputras successor, however, failed to maintain his hold over the conquered region for long. The Scythian power was revived under Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman I. In the Junagarh
rock inscription, Rudradēman is represented as the lord of many countries including Ākara, Avanti and Anūpa. This reign continued to remain under the Saka possession.

The Saka ruled in the Ujjayini region from the middle of the 2nd century A.D. to almost the end of the fourth century A.D. Thus the western Kṣatrapas ruled over Malwa for about 260 years, till their power was finally crushed by Chandragupta II, of the Gupta dynasty.

About the middle of the third century A.D., there were not only internal dissensions among the Saka of western India but they were also threatened by the external enemies, such as the Mālavas, the Ābhiras and the Nāgas.

**The Nāgas**

After the Sātavāhana rule, eastern Malva (Ākara) was ruled over by the Nāgas. They had their main capital at Vidisha, apart from other political seats, such as Mathura, Padminā, Kāntipurī and Eran. The Nāgas of Padminā ruled over Vidisha during the 2nd–3rd centuries A.D.

The Nāgas of Vidisha and Padminā must have become aggressive neighbours of the Kṣatrapās at this time. Some coins bring to light the name of Mahārāja Ganendra or Ganaga, who was probably the most illustrious ruler of the Nāga dynasty. His coins have been found in large numbers from Vidisha also the Nāgas were Śaivites. During their rule, there was some
artistic activity in eastern Malwa. Nine Nāga rulers are mentioned in the Purāṇas.

GUPTA DYNASTY

In the fourth century A.D. a new power, the Gupta dynasty arose in northern India. By the middle of the fourth century A.D., the authority of the Nagas was supplanted by the newly rising power of the Guptas. This is attested to by the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta who finally vanquished them. The inscription also claims his victory over a number of ruling tribes and dynasties in northern India, such as the Mālavas and the Sanakānikas.

Samudra Gupta is credited to have uprooted two Naga rulers named Canapati Nāga and Nāgasena. He, however, married his son Chandra Gupta II to Kuberanāga, a Nāga princess.

In the course of his expedition Samudra Gupta conquered eastern Malwa and appointed his son Rāma Gupta to look after the newly conquered territory. The Śakas of western India submitted to the suzerainty of Samudragupta.

Among scholars there has been a keen controversy about the historicity of Rāmagupta. No official Gupta genealogy ever mentions the name of Rāmagupta as the son of Samudragupta and the predecessor of Chandragupta II. But the discovery of a large number of copper coin of Rāmagupta at Vidisha, Eran, etc. has proved that he issued these coins in Malwa. The coins are
of three main types, namely the Lion type, the Garuda type and the Garuda-dhvajas type. P.L. Gupta, Altekar and K.D. Bajpai have attributed these coins to Ramagupta, son of Samudragupta.

The inscriptions on three tīrthankara images recently discovered at Vidisha record that these were caused to be installed by Mahārājādhirāja Rāmagupta on the advice of Chelukshamana, who was the grand pupil of the Jaina teacher Chandra Kshamasharya. K.D. Bajpai, C.S. Gai, and others have identified this Ramagupta with the Gupta ruler of the imperial dynasty. He had assumed the title of Mahārājādhirāja like other Gupta monarchs. Chandragupta II, who became emperor, in about 350 A.D. emulated the military career of his father Samudragupta. Chandragupta II married a princess of the Naga family, and his daughter Prabhāvatī was married to the Vakāṭaka king Rudrasena II.

Chandragupta II launched an attack against the Śaka Kshatrapas of Western India. The Udaigiri hill inscription, of one of his ministers, states that the latter had accompanied his master to Udaigiri. The inscription alludes to a big military campaign undertaken by Chandragupta II towards the south-western part of the empire. In addition to the record of the minister Vīrāsena, we also have the inscription of Sansakānaka Mahārāja, a feudatory of Chandragupta II. This inscription gives the genealogy of the Sansakānaka dynasty ruling in this area. It gives the name of Phala, the son's
son of Mahārāja Chhajalaga and the son of the Mahārāja Viṣṇu-
dāsa. Then it mentions Āmrakāṛddava, who was an official of
Chandragupta II. 24

The presence of a minister, a feudatory and a military
officer of Chandragupta II for the prolonged time in the same
locality of Eastern Malwa clearly indicates that it was an
organised campaign against the Western Kṣatrapas.

The success achieved by the Gupta emperor is attested
to by his silver coins. After his victory over Malwa, Chandra-
gupta II seems to have had a residence at Vidisha, and later on,
after his western conquest, at Ujjain. It seems that he had
deputed for sometime his son Govindagupta, to govern eastern
Malwa.

Chandragupta had a number of feudatories and ministers
to help him. He may have been one of the governors in charge
of parts of eastern Malwa earlier conquered by Samudragupta.

The Udaigiri stone inscription of G.E. of 82 (401 A.D.)
was issued by his Sanakanika feudatory. The Senehi stone
inscription of G.E. 93 (412 A.D.) was issued by the kings
minister called Āmrakāṛddava "a hero of many battles".

Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Kumāragupta I
(414-55 A.D.). The earliest known date of his reign is given
as Gupta Year 96 (415 A.D.) in the Bilsad inscription (No. 10
of Fleet).
The Udaigiri cave inscription of Gupta year 126 (445 A.D.) of the reign of Kumāragupta I mentions the construction of an image (akriti) of Tīrthāṅkara Pārvāṇa.

Towards the end of Kumāragupta's reign, in his old age, the empire was threatened by the Hūnas and the Puṣyamitrās. The crown prince Skandagupta successfully repelled these enemies.

Skandagupta ruled from 455 to 467 A.D. After him the glory of the Gupta empire began to fade. During the reign of Budhagupta the region between Yamunā and Narmadā was under the control of the Guptas. Gold and silver coins of Budhagupta are known.

Budhagupta was succeeded by his younger brother Narasimhagupta in about 496 A.D. No silver coins of Narasimhagupta have been discovered and this suggests that he did not rule over eastern Malwa. The rule of Budhagupta in fact marks the end of the imperial epoch.

THE HŪNAS

The Eran inscription of the time of the Gupta King Bhanugupta dated in Gupta year 191 (510 A.D.), refers to the defeat of Coperāja the chief of Bhānugupta, at the hands of the Hūnas. This is borne out by an inscription of the Hūna King Taramāṇa found at Eran. After Taramāṇa his son Mihirakula ruled over eastern Malwa for sometime. He was given a crushing
defeat by Yasodharman, the ruler of Dassapura, with the help of the Gupta ruler Narasimhagupta Bālāditya. This occurred in the year 528 A.D.

POST-GUPTA ERA:

During the 6th 7th centuries A.D. Vidisha was a flourishing city as is attested to by Varāhamihira in his Brihat-Samhitā, and by Bana in his Kādambari.

The Aulikara dynasty of western Malwa gradually became powerful. The rule of this dynasty lasted from about 350 to 550 A.D. The Aulikaras seem to have been a branch of the Mālava people. They always used the Mālava era in their inscriptions. In an inscription from Bihar Kotara, this era has been called the "Aulikara Samvat". From the seventh century A.D., Mālava denoted a wide region, including also some parts of north-eastern Gujarat. In a Sanchi inscription of the seventh century A.D., the word 'Mahāmālava' has been used in a territorial sense meaning an extended unit of Malwa.

On the basis of the two separate terms 'Ujjayinī' and 'Mālava' used in the commentary of Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra, K.C. Jain suggest that Ujjayin denoted western Malwa and 'Mālava' stood for eastern Malwa. The Rāstrakutas of Deccan extended their sway for sometime over the Mālava region in the 9th century A.D.

After the rule of the Aulikaras the most important dynasty which ruled over the Mālava country was that of the
Paramāras,

In the first half of the eight century A.D., there emerged three imperial dynasties - the Pālas, the Pratihāras and the Rastrakūtas. The tripartite struggle among these powers began and continued for generations. In the struggle, Malwa also had played some part due to its strategic location.

In the tripartite struggle Malwa first came under the influence of the Rastrakūtas, and thereafter under the Chandellas.

The 10th century A.D. witnessed the decline of two rival empires of Pratihāras in the north and the Rastrakutas in the Deccan. This made possible for other powers to gain their independence. As a result, the houses of the Paramaras and the Kachchhapaghātās came into limelight.

The Paramāras:

The Paramāras were formally feudatories of the Rastrakūtas in Gujarat. After the downfall of the Rastrakutas, the Paramaras shifted themselves from Gujarat to Malwa. From the ninth century A.D. onwards, the Paramaras established an independent state and expanded their territory.

During the course of nearly five hundred years of their political existence, the Paramāras ruled over a number of territories, which, besides Malwa proper, included the important adjacent districts of Vīdīśa and Sagar in the east.
A territory called Roḍapadi is mentioned in a fragmentary inscription from Vaidisha, wherein Vāchaspati, the minister of King Kṛṣṇa, is said to have restored the chiefs of Ratananandala and Roḍapadi to their dominions. The founder of the family was Upendra-Krishnarāja who ruled near Mt. Abu with his fort of Achalgarh and extended his territory by conquest of Malwa and other territories.

HARṣASIMHA:

Upendra was succeeded by four unknown kings, Vairasiṃha I, Siyaka I, Vākpati I, and Vairasiṃha II. The next king to reckon with was Harṣasimha-Siyaka, also known as Simahhata. He won victory against Rāḍūpati, a Rana king and Khottiga, taken to be Rāstrakuta king of Manyakheta. His last victory is referred to in Dhanapala's Pañvalashashti stating that Manyakheta was plundered by the lord of Malwa in A.D. 972.

VĀKPATI II (974-75 A.D.):

The next important king was Vākpati II, also called as Mūnja-Amoghavarṣa-Prithvi-Vallabha. He was a very ambitious ruler.

The Khajurāho inscription dated 956 A.D. claims that Yaśovarman Chandella was like the god of death to the Mālavas (Kālavān-Mālavānām). From the same inscription we know that in V.S. (956 A.D.) the Chandella kingdom extended as far as
Bhasval (i.e. Bhilsa), which was situated on the bank of the river Betwa (Vetrawati in Malwa).

**Bhoja (1010-1065)**

Munja was succeeded by Bhoja, the son of Sinduraja. Bhoja was the greatest Paramara ruler of Malwa. The Paramara power reached its zenith and Malwa rose to its highest glory under his rule. Bhoja had a long reign of 55 years. Dhar, the capital of the Paramaras achieved great fame during the rule of Bhoja. An inscription from Udaipur mentions his conquest extending from the Himalaya to Malabar, including the countries of Chedi, Gurjara King Bhima, Lata, Karnata, Turushkas, Chitor, Banswara, Dungapur and Vidisha. About 1047 A.D., Someśvara the Chalukya ruler of Karnataka, defeated Bhoja and destroyed the city of Dhara.

**Udayāditya (1070-86 A.D.)**

Bhoja's death in 1065 A.D., landed Malwa into chaos. Jayasimha I succeeded Bhoja in 1065 A.D. 32 For about fifteen years conditions in Malwa were, however, normal. But at the time of the death of Jayasimha I, they became worse. At that time the emergency of Udayāditya proved a boon to the Paramara Kingdom. The Udaipur prasasti throws light on the situation of Malwa which had regained its old prosperity to some extent.

To King Udayāditya goes the credit of constructing the well known temple of Udayesvara at Udaipur (district Vidisha).
It is regarded as one of the superb specimens of Hindu architecture.

The tank called Udayasamudra, excavated by Udayāditya, is said to have been stood somewhere nearby.  

Udayāditya was a devotee of Śiva. He granted several villages to Śaiva temples. He granted the village Vilapadraka to the temple of Somanātha, which is described as being situated in the fort of Kosavardha (modern Shergarh).  

Several inscriptions of the time of Udayāditya are known. Two of them at Udaipur, one each at Un and Dhāra. These inscriptions range in time between the 1080 and 1086 A.D. It is clear from these inscriptions that Udayāditya's dominions included Jhālārapātan, in the North, Vidisha in the East, Shergarh in the West and Nimar district in the South. He died in 1086 A.D. Udayāditya's reign can be described as the golden age of Śaivism in Malwa. Among the Paramāra rulers Udayāditya occupied an honoured place.

Udayāditya was succeeded by his eldest son Laksmanadeva. In the middle of the twelfth century A.D. a large portion of the Paramāra territory, including Ujjain, was lost to Siddharaja, Jaysingh of Gujarat.  

ARJUNAVARMA (1211-1215 A.D.) :

He was the last able prince of the Paramāra dynasty.
After the death of Jayaraman a large part of the Paramāra Kingdom passed into the hands of the Chālukyas. Their rulers assumed the title of Avantinātha. During this period a junior branch of the Mahākumāras, ruled in eastern Malwa and the Narmada territory. In the twelfth century A.D. several Paramāra princes ruled the Malwa region as feudatories.

YASOVARMAN:

He ruled as a Chālukya feudatory up to 1142 A.D., according to undated inscription. After him Lakshmanvarman ruled in the Bhopal region and not over Ujjain and Dhara. Another son of Yasovarman, named Trailokyavarman established a principality at Bhopal. A fragmentary inscription of Mahakumara Trailokyavarmanadeva has been discovered at Gyaraspur (Vidisha District).

M.P. Chakravarti suggested that Trailokyavarman was possibly ruling as regent during the minority of Hariśchandra with the full power of a chief. This is further confirmed by his recently discovered Vidishā stone inscription, dated V.S. 1226, in which he is called a king. This inscription proves that he also enjoyed titles connected with the princes of the Mahākumāra line.

In so far as the Paramāras of Malwa are concerned, one stone inscription of the time of King Jayasimhadeva was discovered inside the fort of Rahatgarh, district Sagar. It is dated in Vikram Samvat 1312 (= 1256 A.D.). From this record it
appears that the western part of the Sagar district was probably included in the kingdom of the Paramāra King Jayasimha.

After the Paramāras the Chandellas came to power. The important ruler of Chandella dynasty who ruled over Vidisha region was Madanvarman, whose known date is 1163 A.D. He conquered Vidisha from the Paramāras but had to surrender it to the Chālukya king Siddharāja. He invaded the Chandella kingdom and advanced as far as Mahoba, the capital city. Madanvarman was succeeded by his grandson Paramardideva, whose known dates range between 1188 and 1201 A.D. His first campaign was successful and he recovered the Vidisha region from the Chālukyas sometime after 1178.

The Paramāra kingdom of Malwa, with internal dissensions and external dangers, could not survive for long as an independent entity. The Sultans of Delhi raided it more than once, but they returned leaving it to the native rulers. The Paramāra power flourished in Malwa for nearly five hundred years. It reached its zenith during the reign of Vakpati Munja, Rhoja and Udayāditya. During the time of their rule the Paramāra country was prosperous through trade and commerce. In the sphere of art and literature, there was none to compete with them.
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