CHAPTER IX

CULTURAL HISTORY

(From Proto-historic Period to the Paramara Period)
The Sānci-Vidishā region occupies an important place in India from the historical and cultural point of view. The ancient town of Vidishā was situated on the confluence of two rivers, Betwā and Bes. From very beginning to the period of the Paramāra rule in Mālwā, Vidishā played a significant role in the development of Indian culture in various forms.

Pre-and Proto-historic Culture:— The recent discoveries have shown that during the pre-historic times, parts of the Chambal, Betwā and Narmadā valleys were inhabited by the people of non-Āryan tribes. Names of some of these are preserved in the Vedic literature, the epics and the Purāṇas as Nisadas, Sabaras, Vānaras, Riksas etc. Relics in the form of stone implements, rock-caves (many of them bearing paintings) have been discovered from the rivers of Betwā and Bes. Kothā, Korwāi, Khejurī, Gamarākar, Gyāraspur, Gohd-wāsī, Teelā and Badoh-Patbārī (all in Vidishā district) have furnished the stone Age tools. A few Palaeolithic tools including choppers, handaxes, cleavers, scrapers, bifaces, discs were recovered in the valley of the Betwā, Bīnā, Dhasān and Kaithan give ample evidence of the palaeolithic culture which the district must have passed. These people generally lived under the shady trees and also the natural rock-caves. The means of their sustenance were
fruits and roots of trees and the animals killed by them. They prepared stone tools of different shapes for hunting and other daily requirements.

With the knowledge of the agriculture and other rudimentary craft obtained by the nearby plain-dwellers, the taming of animals and use of pottery was known to the cave-dwellers also. Some of the cave-dwellers learnt the art of painting the walls and roofs of their rock-shelters. Examples of their pictorial art are preserved to this day in a large number of cave-dwellings found at Ahmedpur, Māser, Neemkherā and Bānkhāra in Vidishā district, on the banks of the river Betwā and its tributaries.

Archaeic Paintings: — The subject matter of the paintings is the same as at Bhāmbetkā as also the colours used. But the number of paintings belonging to the earliest phase of Bhāmbetkā are proportionally less, while those associated with Period II (middle palaeolithic – C. 40,000-20,000 years) are more in number and display greater motion. The earliest phase is identifiable by stick like human figures and animals in green colour. In some shelters superimpositions of paintings are also discernible.

The largest figure of an elephant is about 2 m. long and 1 m. high. Another unique feature of Ahmedpur (Vidishā) rock-shelters is the abundance of microliths and
total of palaeoliths on the slope in front of the shelters on south-western side and the presence of only palaeoliths on the south-eastern slope. The multistoried character of the shelters reminds us the 'overhang' type of shelters of Mediterranean region.

These paintings were made by thin brushes, probably made of chewed sticks or fur. It appears that almost every process known to us today was developed during the first light of Visual arts.

The glimpses of life and culture projected through the various types of tools of the stone age cultures and the rock-paintings ever inspiring. In fact this made of appreciating the life and culture is uniquely romantic and realistic at the same time. The rock-painting is the real life of the primitive man. Perhaps it was the fear of wild animals that prompted man to draw their figures on the rugged surface of these shelters. Singing and dancing were part of preparing for a hunt and celebrating its success.

The value attached by any society to artistic activity as a whole can be judged by the social condition of the artists and more specifically by the way in which his works are received understood and handed.

Since most of the rock-shelters are associated with
stone stage arte-facts, excavations were conducted in a few rock-shelters notable being those of Pachmarhi, Modī, Adamgarh and Bhimbetkā.

It is evident that these paintings narrate the story of how, through the ages, men individually and collectively conceived of humanity.

The sandstone caves of central India reflect changes in the culture and conditions of the artists tribes. Most of these paintings show an economy of line, a sense of grace-ful motion, an elegantly accurate observation that make them significant work of art. 7

PROTO-HISTORIC CULTURE:— The proto-historic phase of Madhya Pradesh is undoubtedly very interesting. Apart from the painted rock-shelters, which have furnished a rich source-material for our knowledge, the excavations and ex-plorations conducted at several sites have brought to light valuable material pertaining to this phase. The recent studies have shown that it was on the banks of river - Chambal, Betwā and Namaddā, that various facets of culture could cherish an unhampered growth from about the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. to 600 B.C. 8

Mahesvara—Nāvdāalā, Rāja, Kāyatha, Kran, Piplyā—Lorkā, Avarā, Manotā, Azādānagar, Dangawā, Runījā, Besnagar, Rangai, Gilaulīkherā (in Morenā district) and a few other
chalcolithic excavated sites have yielded sufficient mater-
rial for the study of the protohistoric culture spread
over in the part of central India. Now the picture is
more clear.

Mahesvara-Nāvdātolī, on the river Narmāṇā, were
the first chalcolithic sites of Mādhyā Pradesh, which were
excavated under the direction of Dr. M.D. Sankalia. Period
-I at these sites go back to about 1700 B.C. The typical
pottery of this period has been called the 'Mālwa Ware',
which is akin to the one found at Kāyathā, Bān, Rangai,
Pipłyā-Lorka and a few other sites.

Kāyathā, near Ujjain is an important chalcolithic
sites. The excavator of Kāyathā, Dr. V.S. Wakankar, has
designated the earliest phase at Kāyathā as 'Pre-Harappan
culture-complex', it may, however, be pointed out that the
relevant material, as known to us from Harappā, Kālībangan
and some other sites, has practically nothing in common
with the material of period I at Kāyathā. In the opinion
of Prof. Bajpai, "the earliest phase at Kāyathā represents
the basic ingredients of the Mālwa chalcolithic culture.
It can better be termed as the 'Mālwa chalcolithic complex'.
The regional variations in fabric, types and painted designs,
known from Kāyathā and other chalcolithic sites should be
studied on a comparative basis.
Eran (district Sagar) excavated under the direction of Prof. K.D. Bajpai\textsuperscript{12} and U.V. Singh\textsuperscript{13} (1960-65), Prof. (Dr.) Sudhakar Pandey and Dr. V.D. Jha\textsuperscript{14} (1985-86) andagain by Dr. Jha in the year 1988, have yielded sufficient chalcolithic material in the form painted pottery, Neoliths, copper-celts, microliths, channel spouts, dish-on-stand, mud-structures, rammed-floors, hearths, ovens, and the terracotta human and animal figurines and stone beads etc.

A remarkable feature of the chalcolithic culture at Eran was the construction of a thick mud defence-wall and a moat.

The developed devices of chalcolithic pottery were continued by the people of Pipłyā-Lorkā, Sāchet (both in Raisen dist.) adjacent to Vīdisā are the other important chalcolithic sites in the Betwā source-region. The site called 'Sāchet' is still unexcavated, but it has furnished the chalcolithic painted pottery and other antiquities have been collected from the surface exploration\textsuperscript{15} of the habitational mounds, situated on the Palakmatī river (a tributary of Betwā). The site of Pipłyā-Lorkā has been excavated by the Directorate of Archaeology & Museum, M.P. Bhopal, which yielded the painted pottery of a fine variety with the depiction of flora and fauna, T.C. figurines, beads and microliths etc.
In a total deposit of BSN-1 nearly 200 cms. consisting of two layers belonged to period I, (chalcolithic). The lowest layer resting on the natural soil was thicker and yielded more pottery than the upper layer. Quite a few microlithic flakes, some cores and an animal tooth were picked up from the lower levels. From the upper levels were also collected a few red ware other than shards and some grey ware.

RANGAI:— During the year 1975-76, the mound situated on the river Betwa, near village Rangai was excavated by Sri M.D. Khare. 16

A large number of proto-pottery microliths, mostly of chalcedony, agate, quartz have been recovered from a deposit resting over the natural soil. As many as 300 artefacts including the flakes and cores have been collected from a control pit.

The pottery of this site consists of three wares, viz. red, black-and-red and grey. Red ware carrying most of the paintings in black, displaying horizontal or vertical bands, triangles, cheques, dots, horns of antelopes, bulls etc.

The entire pottery except the Neolithic vases, which are turned on a slow wheel, has been made of fine clay on a very fast wheel. The plain red ware has sturdy appearance.
The other antiquities are beads of semi-precious stones, micro-beads of paste, archaic bulls of terracotta with very long horns, prominent hump, short legs and very delicately carved tail. Copper is however, conspicuous by its absence. The analogies come from Kāyathā, Nāḍḍā, Abār, Eran and Nadvātolī.

Inter-Relations:— The foregoing account shows that the chālcolithic people inhabited this area for several years, but long after the disappearance of the pre-pottery micro-lith using people. The earliest chālcolithic occupation is contemporaneous with Kāyathā II, which has been dated to 19th -18th century B.C., while the latest, as revealed from the finds of 1963-65, with the painted Grey Ware using culture, assignable to the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C. Secondly, the chālcolithic folk settled on the right bank of the river Betnā. Thirdly, the Neolithic pottery here has a greater affinity with that of south India and finally, the use of fine Grey Ware, with occasional painting in brown pigment in one site and the contemporaneity of P.G. Ware with the last phase of this culture in another, has added new dimensions to the central Indian chālcolithic complex. 17

Prof. Bajpai 18 concluded that the "Eran pottery types indicate that there were contacts between the people
of Kāyathā and those of Ahār (near Udaipur in Rājasthān). The Ahār people after establishing themselves at Kāyathā, may have migrated to Bān. The inter-relations among these people can be ascertained after a thorough comparative study of the material-culture known from the various chālcolithic sites in Madhya Pradesh and the contiguous regions of other states."

In central India, eastern and south-eastern parts of Mālwa made a more rapid cultural development during the proto-historic times than other parts of the region. Apart from enjoying a bracing climate, these parts of Mālwa were located on the direct north-western links. From Harappā, the chief centre of the proto-historic culture, one main route seems to have passed through Kālibāngā, Ahār and other sites in the Rājasthān-Mālwa region.

After making a close study of Protohistoric pottery of Eastern Mālwa, Prof. Singh19 concluded that "the Eastern Mālwa and its comparision with other contemporary sites in India has amply proved that the proto-historic culture of the region, with all its regional differences and peculiarities, forms apart of the Mālwa or central chālcolithic complex. This is borne out not only by the ceramic industries, but also by their other material equipment and mode of living similar to that of Nāgdā, Navadāti11 and other sites of western Mālwa."
Besides western Malwa, these people also had contacts with Rajasthan and Saurashtra as shown by some of the common ceramic forms and fabrics from Anjar and Rangpur.

As regards their contacts with sites in the Deccan, the occurrence of Malwa ware at Chandoli (probably through Navdatoli) has established the contacts between the two regions. Besides this ware, the discovery of mud-rampart at Eran and Daimabad and the occurrence of three neoliths from the stratified digs and one from the surface at Eran, shows two common features of these two regions. The sources of this neolithic trait at Eran is uncertain at present, but does evince contacts with the Neolithic-chalcolithic folk.

It seems, at a later stage, the chalcolithic people of eastern Malwa had some contacts with the Gangetic valley. This has been for the first brought to light by the occurrence to two shreds of the well-known painted Grey Ware from the upper levels of the chalcolithic deposit at Besnagar. However, the ware does not occur at Eran.

As regards the origin of the proto-historic culture in eastern Malwa, nothing can be said with certainty. The affinities with Iran or west Asia, so well established in all the phases of the chalcolithic culture at Navdatoli appear at Eran, Vidishā (Besnagar), Rangai only in the late
levels in the form of Channel spouts. However, the occurrence of white painted black-and-red ware in all the levels of the chalcolithic culture in eastern Malwa is important. At Navdholi, the ware is restricted to phase-I only."

The chalcolithic settlement at Vidisha and Rangai revealed that the people used to live slightly away from the river and formed another half-circle within the semi-circle provided by the curve of the river. At Rangai and Bhan, the semi-circle of ditches and mud-defence-walls in surroundings of the habitational mounds are most significant.

Prof. Jain concluded that "the transition from stone Age to chalcolithic is a great landmark in history, because it led the foundation of civilization. It brought about great revolutionary changes in economy, from the hunting and food-collecting stage to a pastoral and agricultural stage. The self-sufficiency of the stone age people was broken, and trade in raw-material and finished goods started. As a result of this, relations between isolated regions were established. The discovery of metal is also an important factor, because it led to great technological advancement."
No regular plan of their houses could be dis-covered at the chalcolithic sites except at Maheshwar and Nāvdātolī. The houses were framed by thick wooden posts, and round these were put bamboo screens, which were then plastered with clay from outside and inside. The houses were of different shapes, circular, square and rectangular. The floor was made of clay mixed with cowdung. They were made smooth, firm and insect proof by spreading lime, on the black soil or yellow silt.

Besides manufacture of different types of ceramics with designs, the people started to produce various kinds of grains viz. Masur or lentil, Urad or black grain, Mung or green grain, Mutter or green peas etc. Gradually, they seem to have got used to, or discovered the use of rice. Though wheat was known from Mohenjodaro, these are the ear-liest examples of rice, two kinds of grain, Masur (lentil), Kulathī and beans, and oil-seeds like linshead. The distribu-tion and antiquity of wheat, lentils and linshead, suggest western Asian contacts, whereas rice is believed by most authorities, to be indigenous to India.

It is quite possible that a number of heavy stone rings, which have been found, were used for digging sticks. The stocks of the grains were probably cut with sickles set with stone teeth, as thousands of such stone tools have been
been found. They crushed them either dry or wet, in deep, basin shaped stone called saddle querns, with the help of a pounder or rubber. A number of such saddle querns were found at Navadatoli, Avra and Eran."

The food was cooked on hearts or chūlhās. In the debris of their houses remains have been found of pig, sheep, goat and deer. All these seem to be domesticated and eaten. Economically, they seem to have been essentially farmers, but they might have lived by hunting and fishing.\(^{21}\)

Preparation of fine painted pottery with the depiction of flora and fauna of Malwa and various geometrical designs, well levigated and turned pottery on the fast wheels, blade industry, copper implements, semi-precious stone beads and production of grains to some extent; modelling of the baked clay terracottas hunting and painting etc. were included in the main activities of the chalcolithic people, but in fact many chalcolithic customs reflected in the rock-paintings are not found in any chalcolithic excavation.

**Authors of Chalcolithic Culture:** Dr. Nakankar,\(^{22}\) suggested a possible clue regarding the authors of the chalcolithic culture. "The earliest people, who brought agricultural settlements were Māndhātra Haihayas. They defeated the jungle tribes and established their settlements on Malwa plateau and in the Narmada valley. They came in conflict, while
expanding their sovereign rule over the parts of Gujarāt, with the Bhārgavas. The Bhārgavas vanquished not only the invasions of the Haihayas but uprooted them from Malāwī under the leadership of Pārsurāma. They fled eastward and established themselves in the country beyond the Betwā. They returned after mutual understanding and the Bhārgavas went southward. The Haihayas returned to Malāwī and from there they entered Maharāshtra.

By the mid of the 1st millennium B.C. to Pradyotās came to Malāwī and thus chalcolithic Malāwī (including Vidishā region) was transferred to iron-using culture."

The jungle tribes whom the Haihayas replaced were Karkoṭkas and they can be identified as ancestors of Korku tribe of these days. Gonds and Bhīls are new comers to Malāwī Vindhyan hills. Gonds came from Chhattīsgarh and Bhīls from Rājasthān and Gujrāt."

**THE IRON AGE CULTURE:** The early Iron Age which is bracketed between 1100-700 B.C. embraced two ceramic industries. Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black polished ware. They were nurtured by two distinct areas in respect of the territorial establishments structured and expanded by the people which marked the formation of towns and rise of Empire. During the former period the use of iron mainly characterised for the defense and war purposes because of its need.
In the historical period that began with the epoch of Buddha, the centres of the Ārya-Jana settlements which had emerged with the emphasis on cultivation, initially were made encomonents of the civil and military officials of the Mahājanapadas but quickly these capitals grew into cities owing to the concentration of the slaves and to shape them the craftsmen, artisans and labourers moved in. The emergence of the towns synchronized with the beginning of the metallic currencies, the rise of markets, the collective enthusiasm of 'śrestha', the travel of the sārthavānas to the distant places, formation of guilds, the invention of new pottery-industry (N.B.P. ware) in fine texture, the intensive and extensive use of iron, the surplus in production, the import of silver and export of iron implements and the greater role of the intermediaries, the Madhyadesa attained gravitation. It was an age of the utilitarian development and multiplication in the productions. However, all these were achieved in the course of the formation and expansion of the Magadhan empire. 24

Study of the culture during the Palaeolithic period and Neolithic period, Material culture start with the Pre-Harappan and Harappan culture. And next study of this culture is the chālcolithic culture. This culture was duly attested in south Rājasthān and central India and
Mahārāṣṭra and Madhya Pradesh. This may be now N.B.P. culture included in the Iron Age culture of India. This N.B.P. culture was succeeded by red polished ware on several sites.

N.B.P. culture was first discovered by Sir John Marshall in 1911-12 from Bhītā excavation. Dr. B.B. Lal, exploratory digging at Hastināpur in 1949 observed that the N.B.P. was located at this site a few feet higher up the Painted Grey Ware. However, in the year 1950-52 the excavation at Hastināpur confirmed that N.B.P. was definitively late in the date than the P.G.W. A date of 1100 B.C. to 900 B.C. and 600 B.C. to 300 B.C. were given respectively to the P.G.W. and pointed that N.B.P. was discovered from excavation.25

The N.B.P. culture is found from the excavations at various sites in Madhya Pradesh, Nāgada, Ujjain, Eran, Besnagar, Mahesvara-Nāvātoli, Kayathā, Tripuri, Tumain, Mahār and a few other sites, i.e. Kakrahtā, Gilaulī, Nīna, etc. alongwith the associated finds of terracotta, gold, bone and stone beads and other minor antiquities and pottery.

N.R. Banerjee excavated a mound at Ujjain in the year 1954-55 and presented the findings in detail in his book 'Iron Age in India' but his dates were not supported by any scientific background.
The excavations conducted at Eran, Tripuri, Tumain, Nāgda, Dangwādā, Runījā and Besnagar throw welcome light on the iron Industry in Mālwa and Bundelkhand. From the evidence of Dangawādā and Runījā, there is hardly a break between the chālcolithic and beginning of iron age. At Eran too, some iron pieces said to have been recovered from the top of the chālcolithic layers.26

On the basis of the C. 14 dates, Prof. Bajpai27 and Dr. S.K. Pandey28 have revised the dates of chālcolithic period at Eran (1960–65) as appended below:

Period I–A : C. 2100–1700 B.C.
(Chālcolithic)

Period I (B) : 1700–1300 B.C.
(Chālcolithic)

Period II (A) : C. 1300–700 B.C.
(Introduction of Iron)

The further excavation work at Eran conducted under the direction of Prof. (Dr.) Sudhakar Pandey and Dr. V.D. Jha during the year 1985–86 and again under the direction of Dr. Jha in the year 1988, have resulted that the chalcolithic pottery and other related antiquities were continued at Eran upto 700 B.C. No traces of iron were encountered upto 700 B.C.
Dr. Pandey has quoted the following two C. 14 dates for fixing up the date of iron:

1. T.F. 326 - depth 6.03 m.
   Layer (16) = 2905 ± 105 = 955 B.C.
   = 2990 ± 110 = 1049 B.C.

2. T.F. 324, depth 5.06 m.
   Layer (14) = 3130 ± 105 = 1175 B.C.
   = 3220 ± 110 = 1265 B.C.

On the basis of the above-mentioned C. 14 dates, we clearly noticed that lower layer (16) having a depth 6.03 m. gives a later C. 14 date B.C. 955 and 1049, when the upper layer (14), depth 5.06 m. of the same trench have a earlier date 1175 B.C. and 1265 B.C. The stratigraphy and the original form of the iron antiquities have not been discussed, while fixing up the period of 'introduction of Iron' at Eran (B.C. 1300-700).

During the re-excavation work at Eran (1985-86 and 1987-88), it has been carefully observed that the iron has no existence even on the upper most layers assigned to C. 2150 B.C. to 700 B.C. 29

As the upper level ending the chalcolithic deposit has been found adequately disturbed due to formation of rampart and also from the other reasons and hence is was
difficult to trace the clear-cut division of the introduction of iron at a such earlier phase. However, it may also be assumed that previously a few pieces of iron may be found mixed up with the late chalcolithic material during excavations (1960-65), as a few pits and deep-cuttings were noticed from the historical levels and up to the Natural soil.

In view of the above facts and the observations made during the further excavations at Eran (1985-86) and (1987-88) and also in view of the over lappings in C. 14 datings referred to above, the Introduction of Iron at Eran can be fixed up between C. 1000-700 B.C.\(^\text{30}\) and not the 1300 B.C.

Dr. U.V. Singh,\(^\text{31}\) one of the excavators at Eran (1960-65) has mentioned that "the people equipped with iron implements might have been responsible for the destruction of the chalcolithic people in central India. If at all, the iron using people destroyed the chalcolithic cultures and a link is established between the early Iron using communities, something could be guessed about the necessity of the construction of a massive mud-defence wall at Eran. The middle phase of the settlement in which the wall was constructed might roughly be contemporary with the early iron using cultures of the gangetic valley. From this it
will follow that the defence-wall was constructed against the enemies, and these enemies in all probability were the "Iron using people".

Prof. K.C. Jain\textsuperscript{32} suggested that "no one destroyed these chalcolithic cultures. But in the 600 B.C. it gradually disappeared when iron, minted money, house of bricks, and towns came into existence. All these factors led to the foundation of a new economy. It thus seems that the disappearance of the chalcolithic culture was natural."

Further it is held by some scholars that the iron using people from Ujjain and Nāgda with their weapons and implements, might have been responsible for the destruction of these chalcolithic cultures in about the 8th or 7th cent. B.C. At Ujjain, iron was found along with the painted Grey Ware.\textsuperscript{33} This painted Grey Ware has been ascribed by B.B. Lal\textsuperscript{34} and others, to the Aryans. This shows that Aryans in their expansion towards the south from the Gangetic Doab, brought about the destruction of these cultures. Sri K.N. Dikshit\textsuperscript{35} has eminently discussed the origin and spread of the iron culture in central Asia.

However, the occurrence of Painted Grey Ware,\textsuperscript{36} followed by the iron slag yielding layers of period II-A from Besnagar excavations suggests that the chalcolithic phase at Besnagar ends between 1100-900 B.C. and the iron
was introduced at the site in about C. 800-700 B.C. The Vidishā (Besnagar) town had developed and enjoyed the changed cultural atmosphere of the Iron using people like the other centres of Malwa.

The Purāṇas and Epic: The Purāṇas and epics give us the legendary and traditional history of Malwa before the 6th century B.C. They mention the names of old dynasties, kings and rishis. As these are late works, and sometimes they give mutually contradictory statements, they cannot be relied upon unless they are confirmed by some other independent contemporary evidence. At the same time, we cannot reject this evidence wholesale, because it sometimes gives valuable information.

During the mythological and classical age we find a Purānic reference to Vidishā as Janapada. Another important reference is found in the pages of Skanda Purāṇa in which Vidishā appears as a holy place (tīrtha), which should be visited after travelling to Someshwar. As per अगुत्तरा मिकाय, Vidishā was included in the Avanti Janapada before the birth of the Buddha. According to traditional history the region was probably under the occupation of the Haihayas, who belonged to the yadu clan. A scion of this dynasty, Kartavirya Sahasrārjuna (of thousand arms) is described in the Purāṇas as a contemporary of
'Rāvana', whom he kept imprisoned in his capital at Mahishmati. As per Kālidāsa Raghuvamsa Satrughna, the youngest brother of Rāma, expelled the Yādavas from this region and placed his son Subhānu at Vīdisā. 40

In Bana's Kādambarī, we find a king named Sūdraka, who ruled over Vīdisā on the bank of the Vetravati (Betwā).

The region around Vīdisā was known in ancient time as 'Dāshāmas' with Vīdisā or Besnagar as its capital. Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta Maurya, referred to this region as 'Dāshāman' and so also did Kālidāsa. Dāshāman (eastern Mālwa) extended over the adjacent Sāgar plateau, dissected by the deeply entrenched valleys of the river Dhasān as its headquarter.

In Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain literature Vīdisā has been called by different names viz. Vessanagar, Vaisvanagar, Visvanagar, Besnagar, Vaidisā, Vīdisā, etc. During the days of the Buddha, i.e., in the 6th century B.C., Vīdisā's place was very exalted in all respects. The economic prosperity was due to its advantageous position on the cross-roads of two important trade-routes. One of these ran from Pratisthān (modern Paithan in the Godāvari region) to Mahishmati, Ujjaini, Gonadā (Guna), Vaidisā (Vīdisā) and Kausambi, while the other connected Bharuka-chhāna (Shroach) and Surparak on the Arabian sea, to
Mathura via Ujjayini. A branch of this route ran from Vrindavan through the valley of the Betwa or Betrawati and then to Pataliputra. 41

In the itinerary of Jivaka (who was sent from the Magdhan court of Ajatasatru to treat the king of Avanti, Chandra Pradyota), Vrindavan, Gomarda, Ujjain and Mahishmati are mentioned. 42 Jivaka must have travelled by one of the trade-routes. Substantial merchandises used to be carried over on these routes, which gradually made Vrindavan one of the richest cities of Ancient India.

In fact, the magnificent Stupa of Sanchi was built largely by the donations from the business community of Vrindavan, though by general belief Asoka erected the grand cupola. The economic prosperity of this place was retained till the days of the Guptas, because in his Meghaduta, Kalidasa has referred to Vrindavan as a place where everybody gets wealth to his heart's contents.

Economic Life: The fertile land of Avanti and Chedi played important role in the development of agriculture and several industries, such as metal and stone work, pottery and ivory work. Towns like Ujjayini, Mahesvara, Dasapura, Vrindavan (Tumain), Airikina (Bran) and Tripuri grew up in these two areas. These towns were situated on the main trade-routes coming from west, North and East. In spite
of the fact that the boundaries of Avanti and Chedi janapadas never touched the sea-coast, the growth of industry and trade in the two regions contributed largely to their progress in various fields. The literary evidence, art-relics and testimonies of foreign writers throw welcome light on the economic advancement of Avanti and Chedi. This is confirmed by the Numismatic and epigraphical evidences.

Quite a large number of ancient and medieval inscriptions have been found in Vidisha district from the Maurya period to the Paramara rule. They throw valuable light on the economic condition of their time. Several inscriptions speak of the importance of agriculture, in Maurya and post Maurya age—Emperor Asoka took keen interest in the economic development of the country. A good number of industrial and commercial guilds were located at different towns and villages. Mention may be made of the dedication of one of the pillars of the southern gate of main stūpa at Sānci by a guild of ivory workers of Vidisha. During that time Vidisha was famous for carving on wood, ivory and stone during the 2nd-1st century B.C.

During the three centuries of the Christian era, the corporate activities became an important feature of the life of the artisan class. Organisations of the corn-dealers (dhānyikas), weavers (kolikas), oil pressers
braziers (kākāras), bamboo workers (vaṁsa-kāras) and of other artisans existed during the period. 44

The Gupta age was the period of all-round development. The prosperous economic condition of the period is attested to by the inscriptions and coins. The Gupta rulers mainly issued coins of gold and silver to cope with the developed business and trade of the period. Several stone inscriptions and copper-plate grants of the Gupta period are known. The Śānci inscription of Gupta year 93 (412 A.D.) mentions a grant made by Amarakārdava, an officer of Chandragupta Vikramāditya. The Udaygiri inscription of Gupta Era 82 (401 A.D.) of Mahārāja Sankānika records a religious gift.

The traces of irrigation canal at Besnagar excavation and the sacrificial kāndas deserves special mention, besides the elliptical temple and Heliodoros Garuddhvaaja (monolithic pillar), assembly hall, relic casket, punch marked, city-state and several other coins and inscriptions, seals and sealings etc. signifies the early historic phase of the Vīdisha.

Vidisha, the ancient mercantile city, was a focal point of various cultures from the Mauryan times to about the Mughal times as is evident from the numerous coins, seals, sealings, inscriptions, architectural & sculptural
remains of the different periods and the ancient literary resources. On the outskirts of the city can still be seen the Garuda pillar, the Udaigiri caves and the Buddhist stūpas at Sānci which is very close to Vidiśā. The excavations at Besnagar and Rangai have also brought to light the significance of the cultural heritage, which was Vidiśā though the ages. The ancient sites and monuments of Sānci Vidiśā, Besnagar, Udaigiri, Gyaraspur, Udaipur, Badoh-Patnārī and several other art centres of Vidiśā district have largely contributed for the propagation of Vaiśnavism, Saivism, Saktism, Yaksha and Nāga worship, Buddhism and Jainism.

Both from the religious and secular points of view plastic art has a profuse growth at the centres mentioned above. Similarly, architecture of both rock-cut and structural types flourished in Mālwa and Bundelkhand regions during Gupta age. In so far as rock-cut sculptural art is concerned, it is known from Udaigiri and Patnārī (both in the Vidiśā district).

Among the art-centres, Vidiśā-Besnagar may particularly be singled out. Vidiśā played a significant part right from the Maurya period to the time of the Para-marās. The early art of Vidiśā bears an eloquent testimony to the aesthetic excellence, original concepts and iconographic details. Like Mathurā, Vidiśā became a centre of the composite Indian culture.
Here the vedic-Purānic religion, Buddhism for a long period found a congenial atmosphere for their growth. The Brahmanical faith developed at Vidishā in its various forms. Another interesting feature of the Gupta art of Central India is noticed in the life-size images of the Buddha, Visnu, Siva, Sūrya, Maṭřikas and of a few other major deities. This is borne out by the contemporary literary, epigraphical and numismatic evidence.

The Paramāras of Mālwa:- The Paramāras ruled over Mālwa in the later part of the early Medieval period. One of the rulers of this dynasty, Bhoja Paramāra, was a versatile genius. A work on art and architecture entitled 'Samarāṅgana Sūtradhāra' is attributed to this ruler. The work deals with architecture, painting and iconographic details of usual interest. Examples of the Paramāra art can be seen at Udayapur, Vidishā, Ujjain, Dhāra, Badōr-Patārī, Gyāraspur, Bhojpur, Ashāpuri and Mixglājgarh, besides several other art centres. The sculpture under this style is marked by the conventional norms and ornamental details. The features had become quite prominent during this age of artistic upsurge. Iconography had by now assumed superiority over the aesthetic side of art.
During the ancient and medieval periods the economic condition of the region was, on the whole, sound looking to the limited population of the area. The fertile land of Malwa produced sufficient food for the people. The business and trade was also progressing, which continued during the late medieval period.  

Due to the natural setting and physical formations of the district, the archaeological remains in the form of stone Age tools, Neoliths, microliths, semi-precious stone beads, T.C. & stone objects, Ivory & Bone objects, metal coins, inscriptions, seals & sealings, pottery of different periods, art & architectural remains, (including building structures of stones and burnt bricks), storage, jars, drainage system and other various factors related to the human beings have furnished ample light on the socio-religious, economic, political and cultural growth, from which the Vidishā region had passed during the Proto-historic, Janapada period, the Maurya, the Suṅga, the Śatavahana, the Nāga, the Imperial Gupta, the Kalkuris of Mānisha-matī and the Paramāra rule of Malwa.  

The socio-religious life, fine arts (paintings), language, classical music and dance, literature and the economic life of the Vidishā people was quite sound. Particularly, from C. 600 A.D. (Janapada period) to the Paramāra
period (about 1300 A.D.), the people of Vidisha had enjoyed
the prosperous and cultural life for quite a long period,
like Ujjayini, Mahishmati, Mathura and Kausambi etc.

The main art and religious centres of Vidisha
district, viz., Besnagar, Udaigiri-Sanchi, Gyaraspur,
Udaipur, Badoh-Pathari, Rangai, Amer, Zafarkhed, Sunari,
Andher, Ahmadpur, Kagpur, Masr, Sironj and Lateri etc.
have largely contributed for the cultural growth of Vidisha
district from the Proto-historic times to the Paramara
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