CHAPTER V

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The emergence of the cities like Videsa and Ujjayini in Malwa during the post-Maurya period is a phenomenon of political interest. The shifting of the centre of political gravity from Magadha to Malwa and political changes centering round newly emerged cities of Malwa may be studied at depth from an economic perspective.

Physical features of Malwa

Malwa is described as a high table land, consisting of a gently undulating inclined plain, in general open and highly cultivated, varied with small conical and numerous rivers and small streams and favoured with a rich and highly productive soil, and a mild climate, conducive alike to the health of man and the liberal supply of his wants and luxuries.¹

River system

The country is watered by many rivers like Chambal, Parvati, Betwa, Narmada etc. which are again fed by numerous tributaries like Kali Sindh, Mahi etc. Such a river system in Malwa has fertilized the country in every direction.

Climate

The temperature of Mālwa is in general mild, excepting during the later part of the year, when great and sudden changes often take place. The climate on the whole is pleasant and invigorating.

Soil

The plateau of Mālwa, though interspersed with curiously shaped low-flat topped hills, and its soil, though generally of little depth, is celebrated for its fertility. It is covered with tenacious black soil - a very rich loamy earth possessing an unusual power to retain moisture. This black soil is very fertile for the cultivation of cotton. There are in Mālwa and adjoining districts many forests, several of which in the lower tracts to westward abound in fine timber, particularly the teak.

These physical features of Mālwa have considerably influenced the history of the country. They have affected the lives and habits of the people, influenced their character, and make-up, and invested them with distinctive characteristics.

2. C.S. Vankatachar, Census of India, 1931 (Delhi, 1933), Vol. XX, P.2.
As the climate is good and soil is fertile in Mālwa, most of the people have taken to agriculture and other peaceful pursuits such as cotton crafts. Mālwa was so famous for its cotton industry in early times, that it was exported to the West in a large quantity. Although India had imported silk from China, the 'Periplus' shows that Indian muslins and mallow cloth were brought down from 'Oxene' to 'Barygaza', when silk cloth was exported. This statement in the 'Periplus' clearly indicates how important was the position of Mālwa in the field of cotton industry. The fertility of the soil, suitable for the cotton fabrics being coupled with rich resources of the country, brought for this country prosperity in abundance. This was one of the principal factors behind increasing importance of Mālwa in the centuries preceding and succeeding the Christian era.

Mineral resources

The cities of Mālwa like Ujjayini had their own mineral resources which served as the store-houses of wealth. This is evident from the Periplus. It is recorded there that

"agate and carnelian are exported from Barygaza and its inland city of Ozene". 4 Ujjayini must have possessed the minerals of such precious stones, otherwise it would not have been possible for her to export such commodities to the western countries. That Ujjayini was the store-house of such precious stones as pearls and coral is also evident from a passage of the "Meghadūta" of Kālidāsa. The relevant sloke is quoted below:

Hārāṃstārāṃstaralagūṭikān koṭiśeḥ sānkhaśuktih
Sāspāśyāmānmarakatamaṇānunmayūkhpṛarohān
Dṛiṣṭvā yasyāṁ vipāṇirachitān vidrumāṇāṅca bhaṅgān
Saṁlakṣyante salilanidhayastoyamātrāvasēṣāh. 5

The wealth of the city is described here. The shops of Ujjayini contained so many pearls and coral that it appeared, as it were, that the very oceans had lost all their treasures. The description suggests that Ujjayini had her mines of such precious stones.

4. Ibid. Sec. 49.
5. Kālidāsa, Meghadūta, Pūrva Megha, ed. & translated by Rajsekhar Basu (Calcutta, 1950), Sl. 34, P. 32.
There were also mines of iron at Ujjayini and adjacent regions where iron industry reached an advanced stage. Different iron objects have been discovered at Ujjayini, Nagda, Eran, Kayatha and Avra.\(^6\) Ujjayini has also yielded evidence of some kind of bowl furnace for smelting iron. The prevalence of large quantities of argonite and calcite and deposits of slag, point to the fact that they served as a flux or catalytic agent in the smelting process. The blacksmith's forge consisted of a furnace with an opening for introducing the nozzle of the bellows for the fire. There were miniature iron vessels for drawing water in small quantities, and some finished iron objects. Mammilated lumps of limonite readily available in the veins of the trap in the neighbourhood, were employed at Ujjayini as ores for preparing iron objects. Iron had also penetrated into the sphere of agriculture, in the form of hoes, choppers, hooks and sickles which were found in the excavation site of Avra.\(^8\) The limitless

6. K.C. Jain, Mâlwa Through the Ages (Delhi, 1972), P. 141.
potentialities of this new metal led to the quickening and expansion of agriculture, the utilization of forest wealth, and the exploitation of mining. It resulted in a surplus of wealth and prosperity. There are traditions that the iron workers of Avanti became so famous that they were called to execute the iron works in the palace of a Tamil King. This fact is recorded in the Tamil works, "Manimekalai" and "Perungadai", of the early centuries of the Christian era.

Animal Products

Mālwa was rich in her animal products. One of them was ivory. Ivory was one of the most important articles of trade between the east and the west. The Greek term, "elephas" for ivory may be taken to be derived from the Sanskrit "ibha" meaning elephant and this may suggest the export of ivory to the Greeks in high quantity. It was used for ornamentation by the Romans since earliest times. It was considered as one of the most important riches as good as gold. India supplied Rome with ivory. It is further

known from the 'Periplus'\textsuperscript{12} that ivory was supplied from the districts of Ariaca, Ozene, Dosarene and from the Ganges. 'Ozene' and 'Dosarene' corresponded to Ujjayini (in West Mālwa) and Dosāma (in East Mālwa) respectively. From the ruins of Ujjayini were discovered ivory hair-pins, an ivory seal marked with Ujjayini symbol and bearing the inscription \"...gathajas\" in Brāhmī script of 3rd Century B.C.\textsuperscript{13} Not only Ujjayini and Dosāma, but Vidisā in eastern Mālwa was also famous for ivory industry. This is evident from a record on the railing of Sāncchī.\textsuperscript{14} The inscription records that \"the carving was done by the Vedisaka workers in ivory\" ('Vedisakehi dantakarehi rupakamam kalam'). This indicates that the ivory workers had been settled around Vidisā, as it was an important centre of ivory industry. The manufacture of ivory and shell bangles was a flourishing industry in Āvrā, located in the Garoth Pargana of the Mandasor district. A burnt ivory sealing inscribed in Brāhmī letters of about 3rd Century B.C. has been discovered from this place.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[12.] Periplus., Sec. 6, 49, 62.
\item[13.] I.Ar., 1957-58, P.36.
\item[14.] Lüders, 345.
\item[15.] JMPIP., 1962, No. 4, PP. 18, 25.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
This industry had also brought for Mālwa abundance of wealth. Works of ivory fetched such a high price from foreign markets that the elephants were taken special care of, even when they moved freely in the forests.16 Kālidāsa also refers to the existing law of the land that even the wild elephants who do positive harm should never be killed.17

Natural Products

Mālwa also had the natural products which brought her prosperity. These included nard and spike-nard which were exported to the western countries. Nard is the root of the ginger grass, native in West Punjab, whereas spike-nard is a perennial native of the Himalayas. Oil extracted from nard or spike-nard was used in Roman trade as medicine and perfume. Pliny18 observed that spike-nard held the first place among the ointments of this day. The commodities like nard and

16. Kauṭilya, Arthasāstra, II, II.
17. Kālidāsa, Raghuvamśa, V, 50; IX, 74.
spike-nard were thus in great demand in the Roman market. Ujjayini was one of the suppliers of these commodities. The Periplus\(^9\) records that nard was exported from Barbaricum and spike-nard was exported from Barygaza which was again supplied from 'Ozene' and from the upper country through 'Poclaïs'. Pliny\(^20\) also called Gangetic spike-nard as 'Ozaenities' which, however, raises doubt whether it came from 'Ozene' (Ujjayini) as mentioned in the Periplus.\(^21\)

**Cotton Industry**

As we have pointed out above, the fertile black soil of Mālwa was favourable for the cotton fabrics. That Ujjayini was one of the important centres of cotton industry is also evident from the 'Periplus'. India's wealth was enhanced by cotton industry which rose to its highest stage of advancement. Indian muslin was held in high esteem and fetched high prices from Roman markets. It is significant to note that Ujjayini was one of the centres wherefrom muslin and ordinary clothes were exported to foreign countries.\(^22\) Not only Ujjayini

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19. Periplus., Sec. 49.
22. Periplus., Sec. 48.
in West Mālwa, but also Vidiśā in East Mālwa was a centre of cotton weaving industry. This is evident from an epigraphic record from Sāṇchi\textsuperscript{23} which records the gift of the weaver (Sotika). The reference to the weaver in the present record indicates that the weaver had concentrated themselves in and around Vidiśā. The reference to a village called 'Kapāśi-grāma'\textsuperscript{24} in the close vicinity of Vidiśā, noted for cotton and cotton fabrics, is significant.

Bangle industry was one of the flourishing industry in Mālwa. Conchshell bangles have been recovered by an excavation at Kayatha, situated just 15 miles eastward of Ujjayinī-Maski Road.\textsuperscript{25} A few exhausted cores of the shells have been found indicating that bangle industry flourished locally and the raw-material was exported either from Ujjayinī or from distant sites on the sea-coast.

The above description would make it clear how Mālwa was rich in animal, natural and mineral products. These were, no doubt, some important factors which contributed to the prosperity of Mālwa and thereby furnished her with a position of eminence.

\textsuperscript{23} Lüders, No. 331.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. No. 515.
\textsuperscript{25} WJWU., 1967, P.36.
Factors responsible for the growth of cities

The factors behind the growth of cities like Ujjayinī and Vidiśā may be investigated. There might have been various circumstances in which the transition from rural to urban economy was possible. Probably a particular city used to grow out of several hamlets clustering around a market place. Alternatively, the advantages of natural resources like a mine, a bed of flint, some animal or natural products might have furnished with specialisation a village in some arts and crafts leading to the growth of a township out of it. Villages on trade routes had a tendency to grow into market-towns. A locality having important connections of overland or riverin routes used to be naturally involved in trade and commercial transactions.

The "Śabdakalpadruṇa" gives us the following synonyms of 'Purāṇ', the Sanskrit equivalent of a city, a house (geha), a place containing a market and the like (haṭṭādi-visishta sthāna), a place of intercourse between and including many villages (vahu-grāmiya vyāvahāra sthāna), a place of palace or royal residence (purī), a town (nagara), an emporium (pattan).
a local fortress (sathaniyanam), a camp (koṭakam), a crossing of great highways (pattam), a commercial centre (nigama), a place on a river side (putabhedanam). The above synonyms reveal the following main characteristic of towns or cities:

Firstly, a centre of trade or commerce, great or small, situated either on the bank of a river or on the crossing of highways, might have formed a town, a township or a port. Secondly, an administrative head quarter, or a military base, strategically situated, with easy means of communication, either by land or by water, used to be called 'Pura' or 'Nagara', i.e. city. The definitions, as enunciated above in the light of the "Sabdakalpadruma" do not preclude the possibility of a trade centre being an administrative headquarter or vice versa.

Ujjayinī connected by important trade-routes

Ujjayinī and vidiśā occupied position of commercial importance being situated on the crossing of trade routes,

that stretched in all directions of the sub-continent. In the 'Suttanipāta' the route connecting Śrāvastī in the north with Pratiśthāna in the south via Ujjayinī and Vedisā may be traced. The route beginning at Pratiśthāna of Alaka, ran to Māhismatī, Ujjayinī, Gonadāha, Vedisā, Vamsābhavya, and again to Kausāmbī, Sāketa and Śrāvastī. From Śrāvastī a route went to the south-east and touched Setavya, Kapilavastu, Kusinārā, Pāvā and Vaisālī, Rājagriha and Pāṭaliputra. This route was further extended to the south and touched Tāmralipta, the trade-emporium of the east. Ujjayinī in West Mālwa was thus connected with the city of Pāṭaliputra and the sea-port of Tāmralipta in the east. Ujjayinī was also connected with Barygaza, the trade-emporium of the west. Ujjayinī was again connected by a caravan route with Patala on the Indus Delta. From the Periplus it is known that Mathurā was connected by a route with Barygaza which passed through Ujjayinī.

27. Sutta nipāta, Vs., 1011-1013.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
There was a Royal Road built by Chandra Gupta Maurya which connected Pāṭaliputra with Taxila and further west. This Royal Road was constructed in eight stages, from the frontier town of Peukelaotis (Puṣkalāvati) to Taxila, from Taxila, across the Indus to the Jhelum then to the Beas; from here it went to Sutlej; from the Sutlej to Jamna, from Jamna, probably via Hāstinapur to the Ganges; from the Ganges to Kalinipaza (probably Kanyākubja or Kanauj); from Kanauj it went to Prayāg, from Prayag to Pāṭaliputra; from the capital it continued its course to the mouth of the Ganges, probably at Tamluk. It was through this channel that the trade with the north-west was carried on. The Royal Road, referred to above, was not disconnected with the south. The Sarthavāhos from Taxila would at first reach Mathurā, therefrom follow the route running up to Ujjayinī. The route from Ujjayinī to Pratisthāna has already been mentioned above.

With the growth of India's trade with the western world by sea through the port of Barygaza, the two cities of

31 Rawlinson, Intercourse between India and the Western World (Cambridge, 1906), P.42, fn.3.
of Mālwa, Ujjainī as well as Vidiśā gained unprecedented importance since the beginning of the Christian era.

Commercial intercourse between India and the Western World had its beginning since early times. The Roman merchants used to carry on their trade with the east and south Asia by following the overland route running from West Asia through Parthia in the east. But political rivalry between the Arsacid rulers of Parthia and the Romans ultimately blocked the overland route for the Western merchants. Attempts, however, were made for exploration of a sea-route to India, so that it would be possible for the Westerners to reach the Western coast, and therefrom follow the overland route running through the north-west of India as far as the frontiers of Central Asia.

During the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius, an epoch-making geographical discovery was destined to revolutionize the character of the sea-borne trade between India and Rome. This was the discovery of Hippalus in A.D. 45, of the monsoon winds, blowing regularly across the Indian ocean during the summer months. The discovery of Hippalus,

32. Ibid. P. 110.
that brought Alexandria nearer to the Indian coast in point of time was attended with an expansion of maritime trade between India and the Roman Empire. 33

A brisk Indo-Roman trade that had its beginning in the 1st Century A.D. led to the rise of sea-ports like 'Barygaza' and 'Callienae' on the Western coast and along with them the inland market towns like Ujjayini and Vidiśa. The Roman coins discovered in India, a study of which was made by Robert Sewell, help us to determine the date of the beginning of the vigorous Indo-Roman trade. In the light of the evidences, available so far, it would be quite reasonable to suggest that commercially important cities like Ujjayini and Vidiśa witnessed growth and prosperity a little before the middle of the 1st Century A.D., when the Śatavāhanas had come to power.

It is stated in the 'Periplus' of the 1st Century A.D. that the imports of Barygaza were wine, principally Italian, Laodicean wine and Arabian, brass or copper, tin and lead, 33

coral and gold stone, or yellow stone, cloth plain and mixed of all sorts, variegated shades half a yard wide, silver specie yielding a profit when exchanged for native money. The exports comprised agriculture, animal manufacture and mineral products. Rice and wheat, clarified butter, sesame soil and sugar were carried from 'Ariaceae' (Aparânta) to the west. Indian sandal wood, teak wood, timbers and logs of blackwood and ebony were regularly shipped from Barygaza. Among Indian animals lions and tigers, apes and monkeys and specially parrots found a ready market among the Roman people. The exported goods included costus, beddium lycium, nard, turquoise, lapis lazuli, seric, muslin, silk yard, indigo, spikenard, ivory, agate and carnelian etc.

It has already been said that Barygaza was directly linked by a caravan-route with Ujjayinī that had been again connected by land-routes with different parts of India. From Ujjayinī lay a route to the south-east of India as far as Dhanyakataka by way of Māhistamī, Nāsik, Pratištâna, Tagara and Amaravati. To the north east Ujjayinī was connected with Śrāvastī, to the north with Mathurā and to the west with Patala.

34. Periplus., Sec. 48.
35. Ibid.
thus occupying almost a central position on the crossing of the highways. It is probable that the commodities meant for export through the western coast had to be taken by the Sārtha-vāhas to Ujjayinī at first and then to Barygaza. Again the imports from the west had to be carried from Barygaza to Ujjayinī at first and therefrom channelised through various routes in different directions. Ujjayinī's contact with the Roman world as envisaged in the light of classical accounts is confirmed by the evidence of some archaeological finds.

A terracotta coin bears an effigy of the Roman emperor Augustus Hadriapanus. 36 A sandstone head of a lioness resembling Graeco-Roman lioness figure was discovered by Shri V.S. Wakankar in the Bahadurganj area of the Ujjayinī town. 37 Roman influence upon the coins of Ujjayinī is, no doubt, significant. Like Ujjayinī, other cities in Mālwa like Kayatha, Āvra have yielded some archaeological evidences having bearing contact with the Roman world. One Graeco-Roman bullae and one styled Lion of Bronze have been discovered by the excavation at Kayatha.

37. Ibid. 1968, P.66.
At Āvra, another city of Mālwa, situated in the Garoth Pargana of the Mandasor district, Madhya-Pradesh, have been found fragments of Roman pottery and its imitations and a terracotta bullae bearing a very clear impression of Roman coin. 39

The prosperous condition of the people of Mālwa is reflected in a series of records engraved on the Sāñchī Stūpa wherefrom it is learnt that most of the donations and gifts to the stūpa were made by the inhabitants of Ujjayini 40 and Vidiśā. 41

We have a large number of epigraphic records to show the existence of a rich mercantile community in Mālwa. Among those who made donations or religious gifts at Sāñchī Stūpa, we find mention of 'banker' (sethi), merchant (vaniya), foreman of artisans (āvesānin), weaver (sotika), artisans (Kamika),

42. Ibid. Nos. 269, 320, 355.
43. Ibid. No. 346.
44. Ibid. No. 331.
45. Ibid. No. 181.
Viswa Karna (architect). The 'gahapati' is also referred to in a Śāñchi inscription. 'Gahapati' means a 'house holder' and denotes probably a landlord or merchant-prince of high birth and wealth.

That Mālwa reached an advanced stage of economy is evident from the use of coinage as a medium of exchange since 3rd Century B.C. A series of coins, both uninscribed and inscribed have been found at Ujjainī, Vidisā, Eran and other places. A study of the coinage of Mālwa will be made in a later chapter. It may be said in this connection that the early copper coins of Mālwa bearing various symbols and devices, had a definite weight standard. They served the purpose of medium of exchange till the introduction of the dynastic coinage of the Śātavāhanas, Kuśānas and Śakas.

Mālwa may have flourished since 3rd Century B.C. if not earlier, as a prosperous country depending on both agrarian economy and urban economy centering round trade and industry. It is significant that by the end of 2nd Century B.C. the pivot of Indian politics shifted from the

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46. Ibid. No. 173.
47. Ibid. Nos. 193, 201, 202, 405, 469.
east to the west and alternatively Vidiśā and Ujjayinī were treated as the focus of political rivalry. As we have already pointed out above, with the growth of Indē-Roman trade Vidiśā and Ujjayinī occupied prominent places in the economic life of the country sometime before the middle of the 1st Century A.D. It would not be unreasonable to assume that the process that led to the rise of the cities to such an importance, came into effect at least a century earlier than the middle of the 1st Century A.D. In this connection it may be pointed out that the appearance of the Yavanas and Sakas in North-west India was not witnessed by the people of India with much satisfaction. Because the Royal Road of the Maurya period running from Pātaliputra to Taxila and connecting India with Central and West Asian countries had been for all practical purposes blocked to the Indian 'Sārthavāhos'. The mercantile community upon whom the administrators had to depend to a great extent, was inevitably attracted towards the route that led to Barygaza via Vidiśā and Ujjayinī. If we take into account this factor into our consideration, it would be possible to offer a reasonable explanation of not only the shifting of centre of political gravity from Magadha to Mālwa, but also of the so-called commercial rivalry between the indigenous and foreign rulers.