

EARLY TEMPLES OF VIDARBHA

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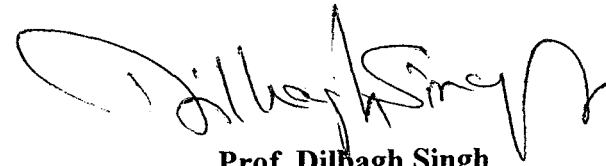
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation 'THE EARLY TEMPLES OF VIDARBHA' submitted by TRIPURESH DHAR DIWIVEDI is in partial fulfilment of the Master of Philosophy degree from this University. The work presented is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree to this or any other University, to the best of our knowledge. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


20.7.2001

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TO

**Daddy
And
Mummy**

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

Issues

Temples were the monuments expressing the sacred space of the community that believed in a theistic God having some anthropomorphic form. These were the abodes of God and the centres of the community worship. These were the religious centres around which the community's religious life was centred.

Our attempt in this work would be to focus on the early temples of Vidarbha. The issues, amongst others, which we would like to discuss, would be the genesis of these temples. The temples we chose to work upon might not be the earliest temples in the sub-continent, but these are the earliest extant examples of theism in our area. We would like to emphasise the need over here of studying temples with a long-term perspective in mind. What is suggested here is that if we were to study a set of temples that might have emerged in the fourth-fifth century AD, it would be worthwhile to look at the preceding time span. This would throw light upon the internal dynamics, external influences on the one hand and internal-external constraints on the other. It were these changes brought about in a dynamic system, working within the constraints, that the early temples emerged. We thus need to study the material context, the ritual context within which these temples emerged. Thus, there is a need to study the socio-economic, the religious and the political identity of the region

in which these temples emerged and subsequently got integrated into its identity.

We therefore emphasise the need to broaden the temporal dimension of our study, to include a time span from the pre-history, right up to the emergence of these temples. That this would also be necessary to understand the archaeological context of the region that lay at the intersection of influence zone of the north and the peninsula. Here we would like to point out that the temples shared the traditions of ritual and sacred space. As an example we see that the site of Mansar is both a buddhist and a temple site shared with the vedic tradition. Mansar also lies in a region that was the core area in terms of megaliths in Vidarbha. Just as the stupas were monuments sanctifying the sacred space, so were the temples. This process also acts in the reverse direction with the temples, stupas inheriting the sacredness of an already existing sacred site, sacred from the earlier iron age perspective. Summing up this argument we would emphasise the fact that these temples should not be seen as growths in isolation. They were the products of processes of internal churning which characterises the dynamics of a region like Vidarbha.

The emergence of temples has been linked with the processes of sanskritisation/brahmanisation. Noting the earliest core of the brahmanical tradition, Kumkum Roy states ‘ The Ganga-Yamuna doab and to a lesser extent, the middle Ganga valley was recognised as central areas, surrounded, especially to west, south and east, by people or settlements which were viewed

as with merely peripheral, but as possibly antagonistic'¹. There was a spread of brahmans into the newer/peripheral areas and in the process land grants were made to them, with the brahmans being settled in these areas. All this led to agrarian expansion. In this process of agrarian expansion, there occurred the peasantisation of various tribes. The Gods and Goddesses of these tribes were appropriated by the brahmanical religion. In this process of acculturation and the interaction between the great and the little traditions, the tribal deities were associated with the brahmanical pantheon. This then led to the emergence of temples. R.N. Nandi holds that 'the feudal condition led to decentralisation of administration and economic power, helped the spread of temples. Local leaders in the provinces, districts, subdivisions, villages vied with one another in building temples, establishing cults and providing for their proper maintenance'².

'Feudal economy of the period also favoured the spread of the temples, particularly in the countryside'³. Further he notes that 'inscriptions show that temples were entirely financed by land revenue, managerial staff being paid in land revenue and the maintenance of rituals of temples by land revenue'³.

Thus scholars like R.N. Nandi, see brahmans, the temples, feudalism, agrarian expansion etc as the part of the same process. That these temples received patronage from the royalty and the elite of the region is suggested.

There is, in this whole argument an apriori assumption linking up the

¹ Kumkum Roy, 'Where did the brahmanical tradition take its form', *Studies in History*, 9,1 ns (1993). This is in the continuation of the trend set by D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma

² R.N. Nandi, 'Religious Institutions and Cults in Deccan', Delhi, 1973, Pg. 10.

³ *ibid*, Pg. 13-14.

temples with the brahmans. Another assumption is that the temples were receiving royal patronage and that this differed from the community patronage, enjoyed by the buddhists. One significant question we would like to examine would be as to whether the brahmans were being settled in the newer areas.

We would like to question the largely Ganga valley centric notion of sanskritisation and brahmanisation. In fact Shrimali observes whilst recounting the agents of transformation that ‘we see this problem (of agents of transformation) in the light of the processes of sanskritisation of tribal areas, the thrust for which came mainly from the Guptas’⁴. For such arguments ignore the internal dynamics of the region. Further we would demonstrate the ways and the means of legitimacy and patronage and how the royalty utilised multiple modes to gain legitimacy in the process of patronisation. Further the rise of theistic-brahmanism is seen as being both the cause and the effect of decline in Buddhism. In this context empirical data with regards to decline in Buddhism, too would be examined. We would like to emphasise upon the importance of rituals, rituals linked the royalty, the ruling elite with the people. The rituals are the visible aspects of a religion, a means of legitimisation. Temples perhaps did not fulfil this need in this early a period, which perhaps at this moment was perhaps being provided by the vedic tradition, the local cults and a whole range of images/deities. This we would like to examine with respect to Vidarbha. We would thus like to argue against the homogenising tendencies. An argument against homogenous brahmanical group and an

⁴ K.M. Shrimali, *Agrarian Structure in Central India and the North Deccan*, Delhi, 1987, Pg. 27.

argument against the assumed ability of homogenising tendencies of the processes of sanskritisation and brahmanisation.

Temples have often been a subject of study for the art historians. Art historians however, tend to study the temples primarily from an architectural perspective, emphasising upon its style. The temples were often categorised as belonging to either category- the Dravida, Vessava, Nagara. The temple is generally described in its anatomy, its decorations and sculptures. They make little attempts at linking up consciously the prevalence styles of a temple with its socio-economic context, as to why the style was preferred. Temples are the abodes of God, they are thus known as *devalaya*, *shivalaya*, *devyatana* or even *devasthanam/devakulas* (as in Vidarbha). The deity dwelling in the temple often symbolises the King of Kings and is consequently offered regal honour, consistent with the concept of God as the supreme ruler of the universe. Art historians like Krishnadeva, identify the symbolism of royalty with that of the deity: Many parallels have been drawn between the deities and there abode on the one hand with the king and his palace on the other.

It has thus been observed that the terms like Prasada mean both a palace and a temple. The deities provided with the royal paraphernalia of a throne, an umbrella and fly-whisk. The worship of deity is attended by music, dance, lighting of lamps, parallel to the royal pageantry. Just as the royal palace has a throne room, a private audience hall and a public audience hall, similarly, the temple has a sanctum, an inner hall and at times an outer hall. In course of time, the temple came to possess many subsidiary structures for the various temple rites and rituals. Clueing-in on the parallels drawn between the

royalty and the deity, the historians linked up the royalty and the deity through the mediating processes of legitimisation and patronage. Thus the doctrine of Bhakti, calling for the complete offering of the self and absolute devotion, a personal one-to-one relationship between the God and the devotee, was seen as parallel in ideological terms in to the feudal model. The theistic cults, emphasising personal relationship of the deity and the devotee was seen as parallel to and making space for the personal one-to-one feudal relations, when the feudatories were expected to offer their all to the overlord. Thus scholars like R.S. Sharma, R.N. Nandi etc tend to identify the doctrine of Bhakti as significantly suited to material conditions of the feudal society.

The argument of similarity and subsuming of the power structure and temple organisation within that of royalty is difficult to sustain, for the early temples. The relative simplicity of early temple architecture, as in Vidarbha, tend to break down the basic assumption that right from the very beginning the deity was identified with the ruler, that right from the very beginning temples served the basic purpose of providing legitimacy to the monarchy in a society which was becoming increasingly feudal. In fact the relatively simple, instead of ostentatious structures suggest that to begin with the temples had little link with the royalty. In fact the temples enjoyed- to begin with- community patronage and perhaps it was only at a much later stage that the temples came to be identified with the rulers. Perhaps, during this early- a stage many other modes of legitimisation were available to the royalty- in the form of Vedic tradition, Buddhism etc. The royalty took recourse to these multiple modes, rather than identifying itself, primarily with the temples. Perhaps the temples

gave all persons, high or low, an opportunity to serve god and aspire for liberation, the local deity could be rendered by constructing and renovating the temples. It could be obtained by clearing the temple premises and by collecting flowers for ritual worship. Perhaps by singing in the praise of the deity and also dancing for his entertainment. All this however presupposes the existence of temples and hence the construction of temples and their maintenance became popular. Perhaps the temples provided for opportunities of get together, fostering community organisation in a more structured manner than would otherwise be possible. This community organisation would then have provided for the building up of irrigation channels, drinking wells, tanks, as much as places of public gathering. The monacism of sects like Saivas would have popularised the temples by admitting new classes of people to the performance of ritual services of Gods and Goddesses.

Further we would like to emphasis the popular element of the society that these temples represented. That these were a product of years of community's growth and development and not mere implants, providing legitimacy to the elite-ruling section of the society. Next we would, in short, like to sum up is that the trends in history writing of the region of Vidarbha, before we go on to discuss its historical geography.

Perhaps the two significant trends in history writing in Vidarbha follow the lines of :

1. Delineating the political history of the region.
2. The second trend is of developing an understanding of the region in its socio-economic perspective.

In terms of political history, the region sees emergence of Satavahana control in post-Mauryan period. V.V. Mirashi in fact argues for a Vidarbhan origin of the Satavahanas. After Satavahanas, the focus of political historians shifts to the Vakatakas, a dynasty that originates from this region.

To the second trend, one may identify the works of V.V. Mirashi and K.M. Shrimali. Both the works are based on an analysis of the Vakataka inscriptions, found in the region. Mirashi in the course of editing/translating the inscriptions wrote a lengthy introduction, dealing with the society, economy, religious affiliation and the political history of the Vakatakas. K.M. Shrimali's work, written from a Marxist perspective has completely differing concerns. He does a tabulated study of the Vakataka inscriptions from the point of view of place of issue, objective, villages these were donated to, donee, gotras mentioned, terms of grants, administrative divisions etc. He thus talks of the emergence of large scale mechanism of land grants, of paucity of coins. In his view, the two centuries of Vakataka rule, marked by a de-monetised economy, declining urbanism, presented a milieu in which the beginnings of feudalism were made. His work thus is an attempt to choose a region and then to show the emergence of proto-feudal trends in the region.

The Region and its Historical Geography: -

Our methodology involves the selection of a region and then to focus upon the internal dynamics, which led to the growth of its socio-religious political entity as also to the external influences that might have affected in certain ways the internal dynamics- of the region under study. For the purpose

we choose the region of Vidarbha. This choice was effected because of certain considerations. These included:

1. Vidarbha as a region lies in the centre of the sub-continent .As suggested earlier it acted as a conduit, as a corridor for actual movement from the north to south and vice-versa. It also acted as a zone which was geometrical intersection of influence zones of the north and the south transmitting influence either-ways
2. Vidarbha as a region has a particular identity in the religious context. It in fact provided the ground of interactions for the interplay of the processes of contestation and negotiation amongst the various religious entities.

Geographically delineating our region is an important part of this whole exercise. The region of Vidarbha, as we have chosen to delineate it, constitutes the modern revenue districts of Nagpur, Bhandra, Chandrapur or Chanda, Wardha, Yeotmal, Akola, Amravati. Th region is drained by a large number of river and rivulets, most of which are tributaries of larger rivers. The important rivers of the region are those of Wainganga, Wardha ,Penganga, and Purna. The region has a good water potential, however the utilisation of this enormous potential has been limited by the undulating topography of the region. This region is one of regular and sufficient rainfall for example in the districts of Buldhana average rainfall is 898 mm per year, Nagpur with 1237 mm is the highest in the region.

The Vakataka inscriptions mention about a total of six rivers. These are Benna, Madhu, Mayasini, Hiranya, Rajatintinika, and Uma. Of these Benna is

the Wainganga, Madhu is the Chandrabhaga, Uma is Wunna, Hiranya is Erai. The Rajatintinika seems to be one of the streams in the vicinity of Masod and in the Wainganga-Penganga system. The soil of Vidarbha is characterised by the deep black, so typical of this part of deccan, the shallow black as also parts of the leached mixed red soil. The use in Vakataka inscriptions of names like Lohanagra, Hiranyapura for the names of the Bhogas, suggests some kind of harnessing of mineral resources. Present day iron-ore mining is undertaken in the Chanda district. Shrimali notes that 'from the point of view of agricultural resources of the region, people of the land, nowadays, cultivate wheat, millets, gram, rice, cotton, oil-seeds and ground nuts'⁵. He further finds corroboration for this in some of the place names mentioned in the Vakataka inscriptions such as the Krishnaleshalikataka⁶ (village with cultivation of black transplanted paddy) and Lavantilaka⁷. The topography of the eastern half of the region- (78° E) is characterised by the Vindhya plateau, whose general level ranges between three hundred to five hundred metres. Forest covered rocky surface characterises the landscape. At Hoshangabad, the Vindhyan ranges come quite close to the Narmada and present a terraced slope built of hard sandstone, alternating with shale. Such terraces can also be seen at the southern and eastern edges of the Kaimur range built of limestone as well as sandstone. South of the Narmada rises the much higher plateau (six hundred to thousand metres) bordered on the north by the Satpura range and on the east by the

⁵ K.M. Shrimali ed. *'Agrarian Structure in central India and the northern Deccan'*, 1987, Pg. 2.

⁶ Pauni grant of Pravarasena II.

⁷ Mandhal plates, 'A' of Prithvisena II.

Maikal range. This in turn is divided by the Wainganga valley in to two blocks. To the south of the Satpura plateau and the west of the *Dandakaranya* lies the fan shaped, lowland of the Pranhita valley (one hundred fifty to three hundred metres). This valley is limited on the east by *Dandakaranya* and on the east by the Telangana plateau. The lowlands are watered by the Penganga, Wardha and Wainganga. These east flowing rivers (like Penganga) have given rise to terraced and scarped by the character of the trap landscape. The trap rocks of Maharashtra plateau on weathering have formed the fertile black cotton-soil and despite deficiency ion rainfall, this soil accounts for the high percentage of area under cultivation. The region may be further delineated as lying between the hilly Satpuras on the north, the Maharashtra plateau on the west, on the east runs the low continuous hills starting form the Maikal ranges. The southern limits border around the Telangana region of Andhra.

The earliest sign of human activity in the region is indicated by the presence of a large number of sites, yielding the tools of various stages of the Stone Age. The region does not undergo a chalcolithic phase, unlike the adjacent regions of western Maharashtra and Malwa, which are characterised by the presence of chalcolithic cultures.

Before beginning our discussion on the historical geography of Vidarbha, we would like to specify that Vidarbha was known as a region to the Vedic people. Th earliest reference to Vidarbha is found in the Rigveda. Here is mentioned the marriage of sage Agastya with Lopamudra- the daughter of king Nimi of Vidarbha⁸; this association is also reinforced in the later period

⁸ *RV*, (I, 179, 4).

epics. This earliest reference is found in the latest strata of the Rigveda. Rigveda mentions the Dakshinapatha⁹, as a place where the banished were sent. *Aitreya* brahmana alludes to Bhima as the king of Vidarbha at the time of Nagnajit, a king of Gandhara¹⁰. *Aitreya* brahmana also refers to Satvatas as the southern people ruled by Bhoja kings. Asoka's inscriptions refer to the people of Bhojas along with Andras and Pulindas¹¹. *Jaiminiya* brahmana refers to hunters of Vidarbha whose dogs killed tigers¹². The *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad refers to the sage Vidarbha Kaundinya. The *Prashna* Upanishad mentions a sage from Vidarbha named Bhargava as a contemporary of Asvalayana¹³.

Similarly the Puranas are full of references to the region Vidarbha. Vidarbha is thus stated as a southern state¹⁴ founded by the princes of yadu lineage. *Markandya purana* holds that Vidarbha, the eponymous heir of the Vidarbha was of yadu¹⁵ lineage. Vidarbha is referred to in *Vayu purana*¹⁶, *Matsya purana*¹⁷, and *Vamana purana*¹⁸. The *Jataka* stories refer to Vidarbha in the *Vedabha jataka*¹⁹, where reference to the Vidarbha charm is made.

The find of Deotek inscription in the regions hints at Vidarbha being under the Mauryan influence during that period. In fact the Bhojas of this

⁹ *RV*, (X, 61-8).

¹⁰ *Aitreya Brahmana* (VII, 34), Bhima alluded to have received instructions regarding the substitute for Soma juice through a succession of teachers from Parvati and Narada.

¹¹ Hultzsch, *CI*, Vol. I, Pg. 70.

¹² *J.A.O.S.*, 19, 100.

¹³ Cf, Raychaudhari, *PHAI*, Pg. 86.

¹⁴ *Vayupurana*, ad. 45, s'loka 126, mentions Vidarbha as Dakshinatya king of Bharatavarsha.

¹⁵ *Markandeya*, ad. 54, Venkateshwara Press, edn. Bombay, 1909.

¹⁶ *Vayupurana*, 94.52; 95.18; 96.1-2.

¹⁷ *Matsyapurana*, 43.48, 44.46-48.

¹⁸ V.S. Agarwala, *Vamanapurana- A study*, Pg. 32.

¹⁹ Fousboll, *Jataka*, Vol. I, pp 253-256.

country find reference in Asokan inscription²⁰. Bhojakata region is also referred to in the Chammak²¹ plates. That the region was under the Satavahana control is suggested amongst other evidences by the Satavahana coin hoard at Tārhalā²². Amongst the various regions recovered by Satavahana ruler Gautamiputra from the Khsatrapas, Vidarbha was one of them. Thus we see that both in archaeological and in terms of literary data, we find the existence of Vidarbha. The region seems to be known to the later vedic writers with mounting references to sages, kings and hunters. Antiquities of the pre-historic- proto-historic and the early historic have been recovered in the region. Some of these early settlement sites will be dealt with in the first chapter. This exercise was necessary to prove that the identity of the region of Vidarbha that we have so chosen to study was already established in the eyes of the writers of later-vedic and post-vedic texts. That the region's identity has not been based on an apriori demarcation of the region in mere geographical terms. In the next section we shall be dealing with the kinds of sources utilised and the pitfalls therein.

Sources: -

A significant way in which our work differs from any other work in the said area is in the way the sources are to be utilised. The work is not based on only one or two kinds of sources. In fact an attempt has been made to use a variety of sources to substantiate our points. We have attempted to use the

²⁰ R.E., XIII, mentions Bhoja-Pitinikas.

²¹ Chammak Plates, CII, Vol. III, Pg. 236.

²² *JNSI*, II, Pg. 83.

archaeological, the inscriptional, the literary, the iconographical and to a limited extent even the anthropological data. That the use of multiple sources was a necessity in developing a long-term perspective and to develop a better understanding of the various issues that we attempt to deal with. This usage of multiple sources is essential to arrive at a better understanding of the multiple trajectories that the religious identity of Vidarbha develops in- in the period we are dealing with.

The region is rich in terms of archaeological data. We have a large number of excavation reports, as on megalithic and the historic sites. Thus Takalghat-Khapa excavation report provides information on a megalithic-cum-habitational site. In this sense this is an exceptional report- for very few such reports of a habitation-cum-burial sites have been made, for the megalithic period. We also have the Mahurjhari report dealing with excavation of megaliths. For the early historic and the subsequent periods we have excavation reports on sites like Kaundinyapur, Paunar, Pauni. The site of Pauni in fact was excavated twice, once in the sixties and then in the nineties. Besides the excavation reports, we have partial excavation reports, from journals like Purattatava, Man and Environment, the site of Adam worked upon is extensively reported in such journals. Thus also have been reported sites like Mansar, Arambha etc. The Indian archaeology- a review provides a cursory overview of the various sites discovered in the process of regular surveys conducted by the ASI. It further provides information on the 'antiquities' recovered from some of the said sites. Perhaps one problem with the IAR's is that quite often the exact location of the said sites are not given.

The data provided at times is so sketchy and the context of the finds is not always clearly mentioned. Also a large number of early historic-historic mounds though referred to, have not been excavated as yet- either vertically or horizontally. Thus it is that within these resources and the existent constraints that we will try to tabulate, contextualise, quantify and analyse the available archaeological data.

The region of Vidarbha is rich in terms of its epigraphic sources in the Vakataka period. The *Corpus-Inscriptionum-Indicarum* V edited by V.V. Mirashi was one of the earliest collection of inscriptions on the inscriptions in this area. Most of the inscriptions we shall utilise for our study of Vidarbha belong to this period. The previous Satavahana period has left little in case of the inscriptional sources. Besides the seventeen inscriptions of the main branch of Vakatakas, the Vatsagulma branch and those of their feudatories mentioned in the *Corpus-Inscriptionum-Indicarum* V, at least twenty other inscriptions have been reported in the subsequent period. Some of the inscriptions were reported in course of archaeological excavations- as at Mandhal. We have to keep in mind that there are no inscriptions- made by the non-ruling section of the society in our region. Thus most of these inscriptions are the issue of the political elite of the region. We have to use these inscriptions keeping this fact in mind. In fact we have to guard against and use critically, the information made available from the inscriptions. Thus the inscription meant for maintenance of the two temples at Vatsagulma, is found far away at the site of Mandhal, and further the two villages it purports to donate to the said temples

are almost three hundred km away from the temple. Some of the Vakataka inscriptions are also incomplete and therefore of little use.

Besides the archaeological and the iconographic, we shall also use the literary data available for the region. There are very few literary sources available for the region for the period we intend to deal with. *Gathasaptasati* believed to have been compiled by king Hala is one such work that we can refer to. King Hala is believed to be one amongst the various poets believed to have been its composers. The rivers of deccan, seem to be the only ones mentioned in the text of the *Gathasaptasati*. The Godavari, the Narmada and the Tapti are thus mentioned. 'These geographical references indicate the fact that the subject matter of the rural community' found in this context 'belonged to southern and western India of the time'²³. The texts depicts rural life, there are descriptions of the farming communities, of the resources of the region. There are descriptions of the housewives, the community headman etc. These all provide a useful source into developing an idea of the community organisation as also the community's social, legal, customs and religious instructions etc. The text in fact is full of numerous references to the various strands of religious entities that grew in the period under study. Other texts used by us include a few sections of the epics, as also Pravarasena's *Setubandha* or *Ravanavaho*.

A study of the religious entity of the theistic religions involving image worship can never be studied without a proper study of the iconography

²³ R.G. Basak, translated *Gathasaptasati*, Calcutta 1971, Introduction, Pg. 4.

involved. We thus also utilise the iconographic data available from the various sites across the region of Vidarbha.

Finally we mention the use of ethnographic sources. Ethnography has to be utilised carefully and critically, especially where we do not have extant records. Ethnography is especially useful in understanding the societal and the functional aspect of belief structures as represented by the megaliths. Further ethnographic data is also useful in the study of the processes of acculturation of the various cults and the formation of brahmanical pantheon. At another level, the ethnographic data also helps us show, as to how the little tradition adapts the greater one, to its needs.

Plan of the Dissertation: -

Whilst the first chapter sought to introduce the various issues involved in the discussion on early temples in Vidarbha, it also detailed the region in both its geographical and its historical geography. A further discussion on the sources, to be utilised for our study followed the previous two sections.

The second chapter is titled: Early Historic Temples: The Archaeological Background. This chapter attempts to trace out the processes which led to the emergence of the temple. In this chapter we seek to trace out the socio-economic transformation occurring in the region of Vidarbha, the product of which were the early temples. Thus we contextually examine the distribution of the various sites in the region, from the pre-historic to the historic. Thus would be identified the emergence of core areas, clusters emphasise in this chapter would be on the continuities in the archaeological

culture, spanning the region of Vidarbha. Finally the temple's location, affiliation, time period as also the architecture of temples would be discussed. This chapter, as the title suggests, uses primarily the archaeological data.

The third chapter titled as Royalty, Brahmans, Temples: Patronisation and Legitimation, attempts to answer the who, why and what of the temples, earliest extent in the region of Vidarbha. This chapter would be primarily based on a discussion of the inscriptional data, available for the period of the Vakatakas, the inscriptions contemporary to the period of the temples.

In this chapter we shall discuss the inter-linked processes of patronage and legitimacy. This process was in effect mediating the relationship between the royalty, the brahmans and the temples. In this chapter we talk of the different kinds of patronage, we also seek to compare the patronage enjoyed by the temples with that of the Buddhist monacism.

The fourth chapter titled Community Belief Structures and Temples, is an attempt at identifying the multiplicities of community belief structures and there on to locate the temples within these multiplicities of belief structures. In this chapter we attempt to utilise the iconographic, the archaeological, the literary as well as the inscriptional data to emphasise on the multiplicities and their inter-relationship.

The fifth chapter comprises of the conclusion. In this chapter we sum-up the various arguments put forth in the previous chapters. This chapter attempts to tie up the threads of various arguments into a logical whole.

In concluding one may say that the attempt of this work would be to trace out the multiplicity in the religious identity of the region of Vidarbha.

Further we would try to study the multiplicity in context and in relation to the early temples of Vidarbha.

Whilst analysing different sources, positioning the archaeological, the literary and the epigraphical, one against the other to come up with a better understanding of the early historic and the subsequent, historic period. The work focuses on the internal dynamics and the external influences, which brought about the emergence of the temples.

Chapter 2

Early Vidarbhan Temples: The Archaeological Background

In the first chapter we had emphasised upon the need to study the early temples of Vidarbha. Vidarbha being a region of contact occasions that there is a need to study a larger area-specific context in which the temples emerged. A region like Vidarbha provided the interface between the north and the peninsular south. The study of archaeological context would provide an appreciation of the existent contacts between Vidarbha, the north and the peninsula and the shifts in the region that might have been occasioned in the processes of contact. This then provides the focus onto the larger internal dynamics within which the early temples of Vidarbha emerged. We begin by examining the archaeological background of the emergence of the Early historic-historic temples in Vidarbha. In this chapter an attempt will be made to survey the archaeological situation preceding as well as coterminous with these structural remains. This exercise is- to be done keeping in mind that these temples did not appear suddenly- as a result of patronage provided by a certain section of the society. Rather these temples were a product of the emerging complexities in the socio-economic situation and the belief structure of those times. By looking at the archaeological context one may find the expressions of these emerging complexities. The archaeological situation may be discussed in terms of Pre-historic- Megalithic – Early historic.

Pre-Historic: -

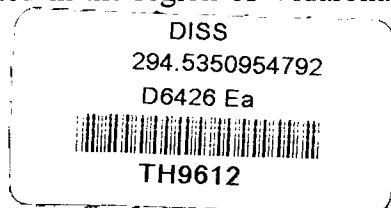
The palaeolithic horizon in Vidarbha is evident in at least ninety four sites out of a total of one hundred and forty sites i.e. sixty seven percent¹ of palaeolithic sites are in Chandrapur district of Vidarbha. The adjoining areas of the district Yavatmal has another fifteen sites i.e. another ten percent. Thus clearly the south western part of Vidarbha region was inhabited in the palaeolithic period, even today a large part of this area is considered as a part of the reserve forest. These sites have been identified based on the finds of tools. All these upper, middle and lower palaeolithic tools have been found in Vidarbha suggesting continued inhabitation for thousands of years.

The Mesolithic cultural horizon has a total of fifty-five sites that have been reported in archaeological surveys across Vidarbha. Of these a total of thirty-four sites are in the Chandrapur district. Thus a total of sixty two percent² of the sites of mesolithic period are to be found in this part of Vidarbha. District Nagpur which merely had a mere two percent of palaeolithic sites, now in the Mesolithic period has about fifteen percent sites. Most of these Mesolithic sites are identified with the help of microliths found at these sites.

Very few Neolithic sites have been reported from Vidarbha. In fact one site from the district Nagpur and another from Chandrapur each has been reported. No Neolithic sites have been found in other districts. Likewise there are very few chalcolithic sites reported in the region of Vidarbha. A total of

¹ Refer to Table I.

² Ibid.



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five chalcolithic sites have been reported from this region with two sites being reported from Nagpur and one each from Chandrapur, Amravati and Wardha.

Earlier it was believed that Vidarbha did not have a chalcolithic horizon at all 'near Paunar there have been reports of the find of a chalcolithic site, near Marda in district Chanda which has yielded Black painted red-ware shard'³.

The painted pottery in the earliest occupation at Paunar has been found in horizons which are devoid of iron. The shapes associated with black and red ware are non-megalithic. The black and red ware bears traces of a dull white painting. Thus the contexts shows that Paunar painted pottery is essentially non-megalithic and could be chalcolithic. 'The occurrence of painted Pottery and the Black and Red in a non-megalithic, non-iron context indicates the colonisation by a people whose antecedents could be chalcolithic'⁴.

Statistically speaking very few Neolithic/ chalcolithic sites have been reported from the region of Vidarbha in comparison to the Palaeolithic sites. Scholars like M.K. Dhavalikar have linked this with change in climate over the centuries⁵. This however needs more investigation before an absolute cause-link can be drawn. Also perhaps more detailed and extensive surveys need to be conducted across Vidarbha.

Vidarbha as a region brings into question the larger division of time spans based on technological level- as used by Gordon Childe etc. As we shall

³ S.B. Deo, 'A New painted pottery from Deccan' *Purattava*-1967-68, Vol I Pg. 36.

⁴ Dhavalikar links deteriorating climate with shifting subsistence strategies, 'Early Settlements and Subsistence patterns in Deccan', *Recent Advances in Indo-Pacific pre-history*, V.N. Mishra and P. Bellwood ed. Delhi, 1984, Pg.133-158.

⁵ *Ibid*, Pg. 38.

see in Vidarbha, the iron usage immediately follows the use of stone and at some times is contemporaneous with it (iron slag and mesolithic tools found together). The intermediate period is not characterised by the use of copper or bronze. In fact the people using iron are also using copper (as we shall see in the next section). This perhaps is because in the earlier period, Vidarbha as a region is integrated in the larger peninsular system: peninsula being typically characterised by a shift from the stone age directly to the iron age. By early historic, however, the nature of settlements in Vidarbha undergoes a transformation, in the course of its interactions with the early historic north.

Megalithic Antecedents: -

To identify the context of emergence of early historic Vidarbha settlements, it would be fruitful to look at the culture preceding the early historic phase in the area. As such, we would then be looking at the megalithic culture. Moorti justifies the continued usage of the term 'Megalithic' by giving it a new connotation. For him the term Megalithic means 'a socio-religious expression of burying the deceased in a grave which may or may not have lithic appendage'⁶. Further he notes that the usage of iron broadly coincides with this cultural period, forming an adjunct of this culture. The megalithic people raised a variety of monuments of both sepulchral and non-sepulchral nature. In fact across the peninsula, pit-burials, chamber-burials, urn-burials of several varieties, as also non-sepulchral monuments including dolmens,

⁶ U.S. Moorti- *Megalithic cults of South India. Socio-economic perspective*, Varanasi, 1994, Pg. 1.

menhirs, stone alignment are found. There exists a debate as to whether these monuments were nearly commemorative in nature or did they include other functional values, as being territorial markers for people on the move. Internment in cemeteries or monuments emerged in periods of imbalance between the society and the critical sources that the society wanted to use.

Such imbalance may arise in many ways but in all cases the society perceives the spatial and temporal variation in important resources to have approached a critical level and devises new mechanisms to regulate the access to these resources. The emergence of territorially based descent groups is a response to this process and the new social order may be symbolised to the community at large by the use of formal disposal area, through which a permanent claim to the use and control of critical resources is established by the presence of ancestors. The emphasis over here is on socio-cultural change and their reflection in the archaeologically discernible human behaviour.

In the context of Vidarbha we find that the regions' megalithic culture is more or less homogenous, with stone circles defining the identity of iron age Vidarbha. Just as iron, Black and Red ware seems to be the most common pottery type in Vidarbha. The beginning of craft specialisation and exchange network was probably established in south India as early as the closing of second millennium BC by the Neolithic- chalcolithic⁷ communities. The material repertoire of megalithic communities shows an intensification of this very process during the iron age. A correlation of iron age location of larger

⁷ Illustrated in the context of Western Deccan by Dhawalikar (1984 b: 72:76).

megalithic settlements with known ancient highways, trade routes shows that many of them were situated on these routes of communication. Thus larger sites like Khairwada⁸, Kahali lie on the Dakshinapatha⁹.

Besides the monuments, the megalithic sites throw up a large number of other objects. Thus we have evidence of agricultural/horticultural implements, weaponry, as also the archaeological-botanical and archaeo-zoological evidence. We thus have evidence for axes, hoes, stone-weights, sickles¹⁰ and multiple shapes of pots. Evidence is there for usage of black gram, wheat, rice, kodo-millet and many types of pulses. Horse/horse-bits are quite regularly found in Vidarbha. Cattle¹¹, sheep/goat, buffalo, pig, horse, dog remains too have been found.

The finds of beads, iron-tools, copper vessels, pottery, iron slag, copper slag etc suggest craft specialisation. Thus smithy, bead making and pottery manufacturing seem to have been important industrial activity of those megalithic times. Thus the Wainganga basin and the Wardha-Penganga plain form a region where the major industrial activity included working on iron, copper, semi-precious bead making.

The location of several large megalithic sites on the known early historic trade routes leaves a strong possibility of these acting as the exchange centres, although the organisation of exchange mechanism and the patterns of consumption still need to be understood, the hierarchical nature of sites is

⁸ U.S. Moorti, Khairwada in fact is the largest Vidarbhan megalithic sites with 1496 stone circles- Pg. 78.

⁹ N.H. no. 2.

¹⁰ Naikund.

¹¹ Cattle remains form 70.7% in Naikund and 63.5% in Takalghat.

suggested in terms of relative size and occurrence of non-local prestige goods such as gold, lapis-lazuli in megalithic burials- along with marine shells leaves little doubt about the inter-regional circulation of these goods. Besides indicating long-distance trade it also shows growing acquaintance with new areas of resource rich zone of deccan and further south.

Moorti has shown that megalithic habitation and habitation cum burial sites are located on the major tributaries of the river¹². P.V. Prakash and K. Gopikrishna have tried to explain the lesser number of habitation sites in comparison to burial sites by suggesting that usually the habitation sites would be located contiguous to the water bodies like river-courses, lakes, tanks etc. For example Takalghat is along the river. Unlike the graveyards which were to be located a distance away from the habitational sites towards the more elevated part of the site. The habitation areas therefore were prone to greater destruction in comparison to the mortuary sites¹³.

Here we may wonder as to why the formal disposal was to be in the form of megalithic structures. Renfrew suggests that these monuments might be intended as territorial markers, as conspicuous signalling devices, in relation

¹² U.S. Moorti, Pg. 12.

¹³ P.V. Prakash, K. Gopikrishna, 'The impact of Geo-morphological changes on archaeological sites', *Man and Environment*, Vol XXIII, no. VI, 1998:50.

to the land, to the territory and perhaps to the most frequent critical resource¹⁴. The megalithic people followed a particularly distinct religious ideology. This is evident from the mortuary structures that they had built. The very fact that megalithic monuments were constructed of durable materials indicates that they were built to be seen not only by the contemporaries but also by future generation¹⁵. These rather durable monuments stand out in stark comparison to residential areas where no such durable material was in use. Post-holes have been found, indicating that the living quarters may have been built of modest material, such as mud, wattle and daub. To quote the excavator of Takalghat 'From the fragmentary nature of the evidence it appears that the habitation of phase IA (i.e. Megalithic) of occupation, consisted of houses with ramped clay floors in which wooden posts were sunk which supported light roof above'¹⁶. The floor being made of a mixture of lime and clay.

The megalithic culture that flourished in the Vidarbha region in the early part of the first millennium BC, shows remarkable features, bespeaking some contact resulting out of trade and migratory habits, with the Andhra-Tamil Nadu megaliths. These pertain to some ceramic shapes, iron-tools, and etched beads from Brahmagiri, Maski, Sanur and Adi-chanallur. Certain ceramic shapes, the patterns on etched carnelian beads, geometrical marks on

¹⁴ C. Renfrew, 'Megalithic territories and Populations' in De Laet, S.J. (ed). *Acculturation and continuity in Atlantic Europe, papers presented at Fourth Atlantic Colloquium*, Brugge, De Temple, 198-220.

¹⁵ S.B. Darsana, 'The Megaliths of the Upper Palav basin, Tamil Nadu- A New Perspective', *Man and Environment*, Vol XXIII, no. VI, 1998:59.

¹⁶ S.B. Deo, *Excavation at Takalghat and Khapa*, (168-69), Nagpur, 1970, Pg. 5.

B.R.W. and some items in the iron artefacts bear close resemblance between Takalghat-Khapa and the southern sites referred to above¹⁷.

The copper dishes with covers having bird or bud finial, as mentioned in Brecks (1873, primitive tribes and monuments of the Neel-Giris) in which the Khapa bird lid has a parallel in terracotta. This is culturally significant as such lids are distinctive and have not so far been reported in any other context except in the megalithic as at Khapa and Adi-channallur. The concentration of the megalithic remains in the south as also in the adjunct region of Andhra, which has open borders with the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, therefore assumes significance which has relevance for cultural dynamics. Sankalia observes in respect of Poona dolmens that the 'dolmens were used as the shrine of a local deity called Chidoba, by the local people in Bhosavi- Near Poona'. He adds that 'even today Kurumbha's, a shepherd caste bury their dead in dolmen-like tomb inside which are placed round stones painted with sindoor'. It appears therefore that megaliths and megalithic material equipment/ritual have been a legacy of tribals in deccan and south¹⁸. The megalithic burials have been attributed to tribal behaviour, though this would be like using 'tribal' in a very loose manner. However, the emergence of a centre-for surely the cemetery is at least in ritual and burial terms, a centre – hints at something beyond the symmetrical and mechanical solidarity of the tribe. It is the essence of a chiefdom society that is centred, asymmetrical and has some elements of organic solidarity. We thus observe the emergence of a centre. Sontheimer has

¹⁷ Ibid, Pg. 58.

¹⁸ BDCRI, 1939-40, Pg. 184.

worked on the pastoral deities in western India. In his study of the nomadic Dhangar's rituals, he observes that 'only simple stones are devoted to the ancestors, a small shrine to the somewhat more famous Bhaktas'¹⁹. In Pattankudoli, there is an entire collection of ancestor stones. Sontheimer notes that in Huljanti (Sholapur District), numerous ancestor worship shrines are noted. Even more numerous here are shrines about thirty cm high, open in front with a flat stone as a roof, these acting as memorial stones. These shrines each of which contains a simple stone, resemble miniature megalithic graves²⁰. Thus the work of Sontheimer suggests the currency of Megalithic practices in modulated form even today amongst the nomadic tribes of Maharashtra.

Interestingly there occurs an almost complete absence of such stone-circles in the western and southern Maharashtra. From their early date in Vidarbha as attested by C14 dates, it is apparent that Vidarbha in very early times came under the impact of megalithic culture, though it seemed to have enriched it by adding its own painted pottery tradition. This painted pottery tradition, completely like the known chalcolithic painted pottery of Maharashtra has been so far reported from the earliest horizons at Kaundinyapur in Amravati district and Paunar in Wardha district, both in the region of Vidarbha.

At the former site i.e. Kaundinyapur, the painted pottery has been found in the megalithic context in a full fledged iron-age complex as has also been the case at Paunar, though at both these sites no stone-circles have been

¹⁹ G.D. Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities in western India*, Delhi, 1993, Pg. 138-139.

²⁰ *ibid.*

reported so far. Whosoever are the authors, the knowledge of a well developed iron and bronze technology and the use of a distinct painted ceramic in the early centuries of the first millennium BC seems to have given an archaeological/cultural individuality to the Vidarbha region. These megaliths as funerary monuments also provide us insight into the social organisation, petrological knowledge-levels²¹, engineering and technological skills, size of the population as also their belief and customary practices.

Transition to Early Historic: -

The transition from the megalithic to the early historic also marks the shift in the region from the primacy of peninsular influence to that of the influence of the north. Here many different agents of change and transformation have been identified. Kosambi argues that Mauryan intervention lead to the growth of first state structures in the region, which then lead to the growth of the Satavahana state in post-Mauryan period. The presence of a 'Mauryan' inscription at Deotek and the find of NBP at sites like Pauni are cited by historians as an evidence in this regard. Trade perhaps seems to be an agent of change. The development of an elite section of the society, which promoted trade and consumption of such elitist ware as the NBP, seems to explain better the finds of NBP in the area. This hardly suggests Mauryan expansion. Vidarbha as a region is known to the later Vedic texts such as the Jaiminiya Brahmana, suggesting the antiquity of contact. Perhaps

²¹ K. Rajan, 'Further excavations at Kodumanal, Tamil Nadu', *M&E*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, Pg. 65-76.

the coming in of the Buddhist monks and the growth and intensification of trade contributed to the changes in the society. The growth of trade not only created a new elite capable of controlling critical resources and having better access to trade routes which were necessary for the establishing of a trading network. This in turn lead to an intensification of the process of exploitation of resources, leading to the growth and trade. It were these processes of expansion of trade, emergence of the new elite and the coming of the Buddhist monks that lead to the transformation into the period known as the early historic. In this phase Vidarbha forms a part of the north Indian cultural sphere acting as a conduit of its influence into the peninsula. In this section we would detail in archaeological terms the transitional phase.

The megalithic phase was immediately followed by the early historic. The process of transformation reflects a further intensification of resource mobilisation, tapping of ecological niches and a further grater and larger trading networks effecting a transition. In some of the early historic sites, the earliest layers exhibit strata belonging to the megalithic period. All this suggests a chronological as well as a spatial continuity. In fact district Bhandra has a large number of megalithic sites and the same is true for the district Nagpur. On the other side, district Chandrapur having twelve megalithic sites has very few early historic sites- in fact only three early historic sites.

Not all early historic sites of Vidarbha have been excavated; there is a need for more intensive focus on the excavation of the other early historic sites. We have a large number of early historic sites, noted in concise in form of remarks in the case of Vidarbha in the IARs and a few archaeological

reports. We will therefore have to rely on the representative sample of the few early historic sites that have undergone intensive horizontal excavation.

Let us begin by examining the chronological sequence of Paunar, Period I, characterised by Layer 9, yielded Black and red pottery, coarse red-ware, painted black on red pottery, circular clay hearths and floors of compact clay²². Period I of Paunar is considered pre-Iron Age. Period II(A) of Paunar is considered to be the phase when iron was introduced and is equated with megalithic-iron age phase. Now, the thin BRW of previous phase is replaced by a thick BRW. The painted pottery of previous phase disappears, iron is introduced along with lime and clay floors. These lime and clay floors are similar to those found at the site of Taklaghat-Khapa megaliths²³. Period II(B) clearly shows the overlap of the megalithic with the early historic. In this phase BRW and RPW and amphorae shards co-exist. Thus the ceramic tradition and cultural equipment of the previous period continue with the interaction of the RPW, amphorae assignable to first century BC- 2nd/3rd century AD suggesting the shift from megalithic to early historic. This lime flooring, considered typical of early Satavahana site as at Paunar- Kaundinyapur, seems to be an adaptation of Megalithic-lime clay flooring suggesting structural continuities. Kaundinyapur excavator too notes megalithic-habitational antecedents for the site. Period I equivalent of layers 12-25 yields BRW, associated with Megalith builders. Crucibles used to make copper and silver

²² S.B. Deo, *Taklaghat and Khapa Excavations*, Nagpur, 1970, Pg. 5.

²³ S.B. Deo and M.K. Dhawalikar, *Excavation at Paunar*, Nagpur, 1967, Pg. 61.

items seem to have been found²⁴. The pattern on these is characteristically south Indian in origin and confined to the megalithic complexes. Period II marks the transformation from the megalithic to the early historic. This phase marks widespread use and in some respects the continuity of the BRW technique of the preceding period. During this period there exists a sterile layer because of the flood, though the site continues to be inhabited, as exhibited by the continuities in the cultural equipment in the pre-flood and the post-flood layers. Period III marks the early historic Mauryan period with punch marked coins, NBP etc.

The site of Pauni too has a megalithic phase which is immediately followed by the early historic-Mauryan Phase. We may quote the excavator with respect to what he comments on the Phase I, 'The occurrence of black and red pottery and ochre-painted red ware and BRW afford some workable parallels with other sites of the region. A number of iron-age (megalithic) sites in the region have yielded such design elements from its later levels, coeval with the one reported here. Incidentally this horizon has been succeeded by the Mauryas at a number of sites of this region²⁵.

The site of Mahurjhari is one of the largest megalithic-cairn circle sites of Megaliths it yielded early historic seals, intaglios, baked bricks²⁶. Similarly the site of Arni yielded continuous occupation from the megalithic to the Early historic (i.e. Mauryan)²⁷. Similarly the site of Arsoda in district Gadchiroli,

²⁴ M.G. Dixit, *Excavations at Kaundinyapur*, Nagpur, 1968, Pg. 17.

²⁵ Amrendranath, *Excavations at Pauni*, 1994, Pg. 134.

²⁶ G.A.P. Hunter, *The antiquities of Mahurjhari, Saradasrama Varshika*, Sake 1855, ed by Y.K. Deshpande, Yeotmal, 1933, Pg. 30-35.

²⁷ IAR, 1978-79.

the pottery over here reveals presence of megalithic and the early historic period²⁸.

Before concluding this section we would like to especially note the case of the site of Adam. The site of Adam has been recently worked upon, intensively by A.Nath. The horizontal-cum-vertical excavations reveal a five-fold cultural sequence. The period I is identified by the finds of microlithic industry free form pottery. The next phase is identified as the Vidarbhan-chalcolithic, this period having six pottery types, varying from the medium to coarse fabric. This phase has only (about 10 percent) Black and Red ware whilst Red ware is in majority (sixty four percent), copper ring, crucible, bone-stylus are found. The next phase represents the introduction of iron. In this phase the BRW increases in percentage with the white painted pottery, red ware etc. getting reduced in terms of relative percentage. Iron pieces (rusted), copper rings, typical megalith-association etched carnelian bead were noticed, even shell bangle fragments were noticed. Find of pot-burials in upright position of secondary nature, noticed in habitational area suggests that the practice of disposal of the dead- of these people differed from those of the megalithic people. Still, the megalithic-cultural markers found in this site can be explained by the possible trade and exchange relations that people of this site might have with the megalithic people.

This site shows an abrupt transference from the pre-early historic to the early historic. There is an abrupt change in the cultural content. The houses are

²⁸ IAR, 1984-85.

square/rectangular rather than circular/oval. Though BRW continues and NBP appears in the cultural horizon.

A proper series of horizontal and vertical excavations across Vidarbhan regions could lead to identification of many more such sites of overlaps. Thus we see a clear phase of transformation, chronological/spatial continuities between megalithic settlements and the early historic inhabitations.

Early Historic Vidarbha: -

This section will be divided into two. The first part will deal with the urban centres while in the second the religious centres would be discussed. A survey of the available archaeological literature on early historic Vidarbha suggests that a total of fifty-eight early historic-historic sites have been noted. Nagpur and Bhandra have the maximum number of the early historic-historic sites. These two districts have forty early historic-historic sites and almost sixty nine percent of sites come from these two districts. Early historic phase in Vidarbha is equated with a period defined as Mauryan intervention and the historic being equated with Satavahana.

The early historic at Paunar is characterised by use of new items in the material equipment. Amphorae brought Roman wine, a new beautifully made bright red pottery was brought in, newer form of worship as evidenced by the votive tank came into vogue and rotary querns were introduced. Side by side came the houses with excellent foundations and soakage pits for sanitation. The habitation of this period was better planned and equipped. The houses

were equipped with ring-wells for drainage, storage jars for storage purposes²⁹ and tiles for roofs. The houses of Satavahana period were constructed with the wooden posts-supporting a tile roof above, an architectural mode widely in vogue in this period. The excavation notes finding of a seal with *Namo-purushottama* written on it, palaeographically dated to the period II (b) of the early historic³⁰. The epithet purushottama is applied to Vishṇu; the seal therefore has a religious import and points to the prevalence of the Vishṇu-cult in Vidarbha in a period that is earlier than the Vakatakas, most of whom are supposed to be Shaivites. It is therefore not clear who patronised Vaishnavism in this region, prior to the Vakatakas. The early historic at Pauni is characterised by finds of punch-marked (silver) coins, NBP shards, discovery of one copper cast coin of Taxila type and a few typical Sunga terracottas define this phase of early historic period. The site has also yielded punch-marked, die-struck and cast coins of Satavahana period, a pillar inscription of a Mahakshatrpa Rupiamma was found. During the early historic-Maurya period, the site gained the status of a major garrison settlement encompassed by one of the largest defences of that era³¹. It consisted of massive build-up of laterite gravel, reaching a maximum height of 8.25 m and width of 48.9 m, automatically a moat (55m-x 8-m) was constructed in the process of rampart building. The habitational area revealed an oblong-mud-walled house with an improvised porch. Kiln, u-shaped Chulha, mud floors, bin platform and ring

²⁹ S.B. Deo and M.K. Dwaliker ed., *Paunar Excavations* (1967), Nagpur, 1968 Pg. 9.

³⁰ *ibid*, Pg. 15.

³¹ A. Nath, *Further Excavations at Pauni*, 1994, Pg. 8.

wells were found.

Enlargement of the rampart during the period implies some kind of organised living and affluence resulting out of profitable exploitation of the natural resources in the region. Pauni, perhaps, was an important centre, linking the Mauryan north with the southern urban centres like Sannati and Amravati.

The prosperity of this site was at its apex during the Satavahanas rule. The major cottage industry which flourished at the site was lapidary, smithy (gold, silver, copper, iron), besides spinning, weaving, agriculture and animal husbandry, getting primacy amongst the subsistence strategies available for the early historic society. Almost all the contemporary sites in Wardha-Wainganga valley became affluent under the period of the Satvahanas influence, a period of brisk hinterland and overseas trade³².

The site of Kaundinyapur to sees the first occurrence of coins and sophisticated jewellery in the form of elaborate beads and earplugs. Association of punch-marked coins and the well-known NBP ware marks this period as belonging to the Mauryan stratum. The Mauryan phase is followed by the Satavahanas where we find Satavahana coins, specialised pottery and beads of the previous period continue. Like other sites, the buildings in Kaundinyapur were built by the usage of bricks. The site of Kaundinyapur yields soakage wells³³ and brick built houses³⁴.

³² *ibid*, Pg. 115.

³³ M.G. Dixit, *Excavations at Kaundinyapur*, Nagpur, 1968, Pg. 26.

³⁴ *ibid*, Pg. 23.

The early historic is marked by the emergence of new habitational structures. This phase also witnesses an appearance of structures that served community utilitarian purpose and were subject to the control of certain sections of the society. This indicates a different type of organisation of power structure within the early historic society. There occurred emergence of new elite groups involved in the acts of consumption of elite articles and goods. These elite articles included NBP ware, the use of Roman wine (as suggested by the finds of amphorae). This lead to an intensification of long-distance trade, which in turn was characterised by a greater monetisation of economy, evidenced in increased circulation of punch-marked, cast and other coin types as indicated by their increased occurrence in the archaeological remains. The spread of long-distance trade in the early historic was coterminous with the spread and increase in popularity of Buddhism. The Buddhist monks must have either preceded or followed the traders. We do not have substantive evidence to support such an argument either ways. However, we do have evidence for both increased trade and spread of Buddhism in early historic Vidarbha.

Next we discuss the religious situation, during the early historic period. The focus here will be to deal with the religious centres. Pauni also revealed two stupas one at Jagannath Tekdi and another at Hardolala Tekdi, these will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. Thus during the early historic, Buddhism and its institution spread to Vidarbha, with Pauni acting as a corridor for its expansion to other urban centres in the peninsula. Apparently the strategic location of Pauni and better resource management of the trans-

peninsular trade route led to establishment of the first Buddhist order in the entire Wardha-Wainganga divide, which dominated the society till the decline of the Satavahana³⁵. We have no extant temples of Satavahana phase in Vidarbha. In view of recent excavations at Veerapuram, Kudavelli, Sangameshvaram, Siddheshvaram, it has been established that even during the Satavahana periods there was temple building activity. These were built in eastern Deccan along the banks of sacred rivers like Krishna, Tungabhadra etc. The earliest activity discernible in the excavations is dated to the first century AD and consists of temples, square in plan and approached by a step. These were entirely brick-built shaivite shrines (for example Pauni stupa was brick-built) with the linga fixed into the floors³⁶. In light of evidence of the existence of the shrines of the pre-Satavahana and Satavahana periods, both in the north and in the eastern deccan, their absence in Maharashtra- the nucleus of Satavahana power- is astonishing. The *Gathasaptasati*, a text with Satavahana context in fact mentions temples dedicated to Chandika³⁷ and other divinities. Moreover, Nanaghat inscription of queen Nayanika refers to the worship of Sankarshana and Vasudeva. Putting these evidences together, it can be surmised that a large number of temples must have existed in Maharashtra during the Satavahana³⁸ period. Perhaps the Satavahana temples in Maharashtra were basically built of perishable material such as bamboo, wood

³⁵ Amrendranath, *Further Excavations at Pauni*, 1994, Pg. 114.

³⁶ I.K. Sarma, *The Development of early Shaiva Art and Architecture*, Delhi, 1982, Pg. 92.

³⁷ S.A. Joglekar ed., *Gathasaptasati, with a Marathi commentary*, Pune, 1956, Gatha number 172.

³⁸ G.B. Deglurkar, 'The Structural temples under the Satavahanas' in A.M. Shastri ed. *The Age of the Satavahanas*, Vol II, Pg. 469.

and clay, which explains their disappearance. It appears from the description in various *Gathasaptasati* that the temple of this period had tapering and pointed shikharas and white courtyard in front³⁹, though the basic structure was by no means very large.

The Historic Period: -

As in the previous section, we have divided the discussion into that of the urban sites and the religious sites. In case of the religious sites the focus will be on the early temples of Vidarbha. This period may be identified to begin in the post- Satavahana period and continues till the early medieval period. This then primarily includes the Vakataka period of control over Vidarbha. At Paunar this period is equated with Period III. Brick structures of this period seem to have well planned foundations⁴⁰, with use of bricks and brick-bats, construction of ring-wells, the employment of tiles on a large scale and floors of compact clay, sometimes mixed with fine gravel. The characteristic ware of this phase is identified as the bright-red-ware, sculptured plaques in Vakataka art idiom and brick construction were found⁴¹. The foreign wares like amphorae are absent. The site of Kaundinyapur seems to have undergone decline just before the Vakataka period, its Period V, 200-250 AD, is very thin after which there is an absence of habitation till late medieval. At Pauni, a cyclopean wall was added over the remnants of brick fortification

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ S.B. Deo and M.K. Dhavalikar, *Paunar Excavation*, Nagpur, 1969 '80 cm deep foundation', Pg. 10.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, Pg. 7.

of the Satavahana age. In the process it further gained an additional height of 1.1 m. The Vakataka copper plate of Pravarasena II's period was found near the present cutting over cyclopean walls. Though no new stupa was built during this period, there is little to suggest that the stupa worship had gone out of vogue. Jamkhedkar surveyed the Garuda stambhas of Pauni, which depicted the incarnation of Vishnu⁴². The excavator notes the following two structural remains belonging to this period:

1. Those of stone, which can be, classified as public-work types.
2. Others of domestic type structure made of reused bricks.

The excavators note that the phenomenon of utilisation of the re-used materials in construction is one that is generally noticed in the Gupta-Vakataka age. 'It may not be out of place to record that during this period utilisation of fresh burnt bricks was largely confined to religious edifices. This fact has been verified at a number of excavated sites of upper India and also at sites situated in the Wainganga valley'⁴³.

The Vakataka period pottery reflects the prosperity and variety of the said period. The excavators traced almost fifteen fabrics. The maximum concentration of copper objects from the Paunar excavations was from the Vakataka period layers. In Paunar, weaving, as a craft is known from Vakataka levels as suggested by the finds of spindles. The immense variety of Vakataka period as reflected at Paunar is in the finds of Puranic religion, the Lajjagauri

⁴² A.P. Jamkhedkar 'The Garuda-Khambs of Pauni', *Archaeological Congress and Seminar paper*, S.B. Deo ed., Nagpur, 1972, pp. 13-20.

⁴³ A. Nath, *Further Excavations at Pauni.*, Nagpur, 1994, Pg. 14.

as well as the triratna amulet, which reflects the continued Buddhist associations in the region.

Thus the vibrancy reflected in the material culture of Vidarbha- in the Vakataka period- in terms of crafts specialisation⁴⁴ and multiple choices available to the people so far as articles of social consumption were concerned, formed the background for the emergence of temples. A society that had surplus- potential capable of supporting growth of temples, stupas, and belief structures satisfying the non material, spiritual, ideological and political needs of the community in its shades of stratifications.

District Nagpur, which has the most continuous and consistent (in terms of number) archaeological, cultural sequence also becomes the focus point in which the complex temple sites emerged, does not come to us as a surprise.

Perhaps the excavated sites of Adam, Pauni, Paunar and Kaundinyapur would be some of the contemporaneous sites vis-à-vis the temples. The usage of bricks as the basic building material in both the religious and non-religious architecture is quite significant. At one level they represent the fulfilment of the needs of the society, rather than 'monumental', architectural forms providing legitimacy to the ruling elite while the brick wells, soak wells, brick houses, forts, drains are some of the significant non-religious architecture identified in the various sites in Vidarbha.

⁴⁴ Shell bangles, iron, cooper, bead making, seal making, glass industry, terracotta industry, weaving, pottery etc. were the various crafts specialisations of this period.

In the subsequent section we shall discuss the location, the time period, the affiliations and the architecture of the early temples of Vidarbha. We may remember, however, that a number of Buddhist sites have been reported from the region, stupas have been reported at Pauni, Adam, Mansar etc, Buddhist caves as also the Tirthankara images have been reported from various sites. All this gives a picture of a very complex society emerging in the region, complex in terms of its needs and requirements, in terms of community belief structures and all this seems to get reflected in the architecture of the region. This diversity and complexity would be discussed in the last chapter.

Location of Early Temples in Vidarbha: -

Most of the early temples of Vidarbha are not to be found in the shape they originally would have been in. Some have been located during the course of excavations. Some others have been located in the course of renovations and some of these sites have yielded just one temple. Some others indicate the existence of temple complexes. For example the site of Ramagiri yields at least seven different temples of the Vakataka period and two others of the Yadava period. Most of the Vakataka temples at Ramtek are outside the fort area⁴⁵; Ramtek temples were built on hilltop emphasising the locative strand of piety⁴⁶ associated with personalised worship of Puranic deities.

⁴⁵ Fort was identified to be of the Yadava period built over the previous fortifications of the Vakataka period.

⁴⁶ Locative strand of piety, its tradition of ritual and reverence are primarily linked to places such as hilltop, rock outcroppings, head waters, pools, groves etc', D. Eck, *Indias Tirthas "Crossings" in Sacred Geography History of Religions*, Vol. XX, no. IV, 1980-81, Pg.323.

At the site of Mansar is another temple complex, which is associated with rock out cropping (in fact an artificial cave was dug out inside the temple complex). In fact nearby in the course of mining operations, evidence for Ashwamedha Yajna was found. Mansar has more than sixteen temples. Amongst the other sites having temples are Nagardhana, Nagra, Mulchera, Paunar, Wakeshwar and Mandhal.

Affiliations: -

Affiliations of the various temples can be determined by identifying the principle deity of the temple. The temple complex at Ramagiri/Ramtek is primarily Vaishnava. The temple complex at Mansar - as the excavations show - is primarily Shaivite in affiliation. The site of Mandhal too seems to have been of Shaivite affiliation. The site of Nagardhan is Vaishnava in affiliation. For other sites we do not have any evidence with regards to their religious affiliations.

Time Period of the Temples: -

Generally the myths associated with the origins- mythologisation of a temple site tend to ascribe the temple to a much earlier period than it may actually belong to perhaps in an attempt to enhance the sacredness of the site by giving it greater mythical ascription. These may be noted in Sthalapuranas or located in oral literature associated with the site/sacred- complex. We may take the example of Ramtek and its associated lake Ambara. The ruins and the

monuments related with this sacred site are called Tapo Giri and Sindura Giri. The site of Ramtek is identified with an incident in Ramayana. It is considered as a place where Sambuka, the sudra ascetic was killed by Ramadaśrathi⁴⁷.

A temple's definite time period may be determined in three ways:

1. Identifying the building style of the temple and comparing it with the already developed chronology- based on style.
2. Find of the inscriptions, which may refer to its construction or donation of land for the purpose.
3. Determination based on iconographic grounds.

Beglar as we will see later, was one of the firsts to survey the Ramtek temples in 1871-72 and tended to dismiss most of the temples as of the sixteenth-eighteenth century. He ascribed a few older ones to the Hemadpant style. Hemadpant was a minister of Yadava rulers- believed to have patronised a new temple style for the region of Maharashtra. It was V.V. Mirashi who in fact was the first to identify the early temples of Vidarbha. He identified these temples based on stylistic grounds. He thus observed that, stylistically, these Vidarbhan temples were similar to the Gupta temples. Since, Vidarbha at this time was ruled by the Vakatakas, he had no hesitation in calling them the Vakataka temples.

⁴⁷ Cf. AR, ASI Vol VII (report of a tour in Bundelakhhand and Malwa, 1871-72 and in the central provinces. 1873-74, by JD Begalar, under the superintendence of Major General A.

H.T. Bakker⁴⁸ attempted dating of the idols/icons found in Vidarbha. Thus Dikpala, found in the debris of RudraNarsimha temple on Ramagiri has been dated by him to the first quarter of the fifth century AD, Visnu icon found at the same site is similarly fixed in the second half of the fifth century. He identifies the Śiva, found at Mansar with Pravarasena II's period. The statue of Maheshwara and Nandiswara at Mandhal has been identified with the last quarter of fourth century AD. The idol of Viṣṇu from Nagardhan is also identified by H.T. Bakker to be of the first half of the fifth century AD.

Based on find of an inscription that was an eulogy to Prabhavatigupta at one level and referring to renovation of the temple it was found in it that the temple at Ramgiri was built either just before or during the time of Vakatakas. Thus these temples seem to be dated between the fourth and the sixth century AD. This dating is based on three criteria as stated earlier. Though it is difficult to apply the same method for each and every temple especially to the excavated ones when some of them are in an extremely dilapidated state and little associated remains that could help build the chronology are found. In Mandhal temple excavations was found RPW and copperplate records dated to the fourth/fifth century AD. We can therefore conclusively state that the early extant temples of Vidarbha seemed to belong to the fourth/fifth century AD.

Cunningham), Calcutta, 1878, pp 109-114.

⁴⁸ H.T. Bakker ed. -: *An Essay in Hindu Iconology*, Egbert Forsten. Groningen-1997.

Architecture of the Temples: -

We have discussed the archaeological background, the location, the affiliations and time-period of the early temples of Vidarbha. Next we would like to discuss the architectural style of Early temples of Vidarbha. Except for the relative simplicity of style and the usage of bricks there is little that could suggest that the Vidarbhan temples had one uniform style of architecture. Thus each temple needs to be studied in its specificities. This is what will be attempted in this section.

Beglar was perhaps one of the first to visit the Ramtek hill complex in 1872, whilst surveying the antiquarian remains of the districts of the Central Provinces. Although he was not allowed to enter the most sacred places on the Ramtek hill, yet he made a good survey of the area surrounding the Ramtek hill. He refers to the Ambara Lake as also the two steps well (bavali).

Beglar dated the shrine temples around the Kapur bavali to the sixteenth century⁴⁹. He dates the Rama Chandra temple on the hill to late Kalachuri period. The temple of Varaha is considered by him to be dated before the Rama Chandra temple⁵⁰. Contemporary to the Varaha incarnation temple is the Trivikrama temple. He ascribes the Shantinatha temple as also the two Narasimha temples to the latter part of the eighteenth century AD. Besides noting the temples, water-bodies, Beglar also collected legends surrounding the

⁴⁹ Beglar in A.R., ASI, Vol VII, Pg. 114.

⁵⁰ Beglar in A.R., ASI, Vol VII, Pg. 114.

monuments on the hill, linking it up with Rama Dashrathi of the epic and Sambuka vadha by him.⁵¹

‘Begalar however missed out on the Kapatarama temple, the Bhogarama temple (now taken over by the Mahanubhavas), and the Devi temple near Jaina group’⁵².

Whilst noting the lack of a thorough survey in Vakataka territories, V.V. Mirashi observes ‘ On a spur of that hill, north-east of the Vidarbha Gate there are still some remains of an ancient building which may go back to the Vakataka age’⁵³. There seems to have been a large structure erected at this place, but of it only a small Mandapa open on all sides is what now remains. Like the ‘Gupta’ temple this early temple too has a flat roof, which in turn is supported by six pillars (four of these are decorated with Lotus Motif). Professor Mirashi thus was the first to point out that the sculpture as also the remains of the shrine-mandapa both belong to the Vakataka age. A.P. Jamkhedkar notes that Prof. Mirashi missed out on architectural features, which pointed to the early date of the temples (Narasimha, Bhograma, Guptarama). These are the:

1. The row of lion-heads on the inner side of the architecture.
2. Purnakumbha motif on the inner face.
3. On the outer face of the dwarf wall, the depiction of a row of dancing Gana as having parallels in the Mahayana caves at Ajanta.

⁵¹ AR, ASI Vol VII (report of a tour in Bundelakhhand and Malwa, 1871-72 and in the central provinces. 1873-74, by JD Begalar, under the superintendence of Major General A. Cunningham), Calcutta, 1878, pp 109-114.

⁵² A.M. Shastri ed., *The Age of the Vakatakas*, 1992, Pg. 155.

⁵³ V.V. Mirashi ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. V, Introduction.

Amongst the distinguishing architectural features the most apparent feature observed is the pillar type. Square pillars with full /half lotus medallions with neck-like mouldings at the top were very conspicuous in shrines of Varaha, Bhogarama, Narsimha, Kapatrama, 'these medallions compared well with those from Mahayana caves at Ajanata'⁵⁴(no. 19). On pillars, railing patterns, and ceilings of Kevala-Narasimha, Bhogarama, Narasimha, Varaha temples were noted a number of motifs - ganafigures, rosettes, creeper patterns, lozenge and square, rounded and square, padmadala patterns. The clearance work at Kevala-Narasimha temple revealed the original plan. Like other early temples, this temple too did not have a separate antarala in between the closed hall and the cella. There was only a pair each of pilasters and pillars introduced in the wall separating the two. There were stambhajalas, a similar device, introduced in the windows; the levels of the closed hall and the cella were different, the latter being on a higher level and the pillars were made of sandstone.

The Rudra Narasimha temple though reconstructed during Bhosla times has image and pillar pavilions in the hall and the cella as the parts of the original shrine. There are eight projections in the original outline of the temple body whose purpose remains unknown. Corresponding to the eight projections were eight water cisterns, all at the ground level. Further the original plan conforms to the Kevala Narasimha temple.

Conservation of the Varaha temple revealed architectural members like

⁵⁴ A.M. Shastri ed., *The Age of the Vakatakas*, 1992, Pg. 159.

pillar fragments which were recovered along with an amalaka. This along with other four smaller amalakas perhaps decorated the previous roof. Further Padmadala pattern was noticed as on one of the slabs.

The Bhogarama temple has two-cella separated by a metre wide space, an oblong closed veranda which is prefaced by an ardhmandapa. 'Besides the railing pattern on the outer surface at the shrine walls and on that of the inner closed hall, the other noteworthy characteristics were the chatushkas in the cella, the stambhajala on the side walls of the cella and the five rosettes on its ceiling. This last feature has been noticed in some Gupta temples also'⁵⁵.

The Kapatarama temple is a cave-cum-structural shrine, wherein an image of a four-armed divinity has been recovered. Jamkhedkar thus talks of 'an independent sculptural style'⁵⁶ developing in Vidarbha in Vakataka times under the Nandivardhana branch and that this style expressed itself both in brick and stone. He notes that 'The works at Ramtek must have been one of the early experiments in such architecture as a variety of temple forms are found here :

1. Open mandapa.
2. Shrine with a closed mandapa and cella.
3. Temple with twin cellas.
4. Cave-cum structural temple'⁵⁷.

Mansar is an important site yielding remains of early temples in the region. T.A. Wellsted mentions the remains of Asvamedha etc found in the

⁵⁵ A.M. Shastri ed., *The Age of the Vakatakas*, 1992, Pg. 161.

⁵⁶ A.M. Shastri ed., *The Age of the Vakatakas*, 1992, Pg. 161.

⁵⁷ A.M. Shastri ed., *The Age of the Vakatakas*, 1992, Pg. 161.

course of mining operations⁵⁸. The ASI successively excavated by the University of Nagpur and following that the site. At the end of the Satavahana period and the beginning of the Vakataka period, two sacrificial altars one in the shape of a *syenaciti* and the other a *kurmaciti* made of bricks were exposed. The *Syenaciti* was made after smashing the cross walls of an earlier stupa, which had gone out of use by then.

‘ Adjoining the *Kurmacitis* in the southern side there is a stone staircase comprising of eight steps, leading towards a small Havana Kunda, a lime kiln, a square shrine made of bricks which apparently appears to have been a Shaiva shrine as there is a hole for outlet of water’⁵⁹.

In the next period that is two hundred and fifty to five hundred AD on the top of a mound was built a temple with plinth of dressed sandstone blocks with a superstructure of bricks. This temple was built in two phases. Sculptures show impressive head-dress and jewellery typical of ‘Vakataka art’.

The temple facing east consists of a large mandapa as well as a garbhagriha. In the centre of its western wall there exists a brick platform, however most of the temple is concealed underneath the walls of a later stupa. The side entrance of this temple has five courses of dressed rough grained whitish sandstone. The temple being built on a hillock, there was a need to strengthen the northern and southern slopes of a hillock. Thus huge boulders were used to

⁵⁸ J.B.B.A.S., 1935.

⁵⁹ J.P. Joshi and A.K. Shrama, ‘Excavation at Mansar’, *Purattatva*, 30, Pg. 127-131.

raise massive pitching walls (sixty meter on each side). Successive enlargements in height and length of the staircase suggest that the number of the devotees must have increased in subsequent periods.

On the northwest and southwest slopes of MNS-3 mound was excavated a large temple complex. Most of these being Shaiva shrines, belong to two phases. Dressed and undressed stone blocks and bricks were used to raise a flat platform on the top of a hill in which the temples were constructed. Around the temple on the northern side, shrines were constructed, one of the shrines was made by laying bricks on a cave-floor, plastered with lime and finally coated with a red ochre. Another cave was reformulated by constructing a concave brick walled approach, identified by the excavators as a meditating chamber.

On the western and southern side, a row of Saiva shrines built of bricks were exposed. Out of sixteen shrines exposed, six had siva-lingas resting on pedestals and (not the yoni-pitha). However one of the shrines itself was built in the shape of the Yoni-pitha. Vertically all the shrines seem to have been built in the form of "Lotus buds". The lotus buds were built by adopting the triangles as also inverted triangles. This method helped in raising petals that ultimately closed into a pointed end making the close roof of the shikhara. The whole complex was typically plastered over with lime.

A burnt wooden yupa was found for offering sacrifices to the deities. Almost each of these shrines has a small mandapa, as also a small semi-circular/triangular kunda for water storage near the steps. On the southeastern corner, in front of shrines, a pair of havanakunda was exposed. In front of the

havana kundas, towards the north a shrine was constructed housing a 'swayambhu' deity, which was actually a huge natural rock and if one could speculate the original sacred spot.

The sculptures were primarily, Saivite images, some of them belonging to tantric cult. Shiva-Paravati, Uma-Maheshwara, Ganas, Lajjagauri, Kinnara etc. A nearby factory site of clay ceiling was discovered at the north-eastern corner. The find of clay-ceilings bearing a '*Praveshvarasya*' etc in Brahmi suggest that this might be a kind of 'workshop' producing mementoes which worshippers could take back along with them. Whilst at one level this is suggestive of the importance of Mansar- in religious terms, at another level it also pushes back- in terms of date- the whole concept of 'tirtha' development as argued by R.N. Nandi to be a follow up of urban decline that set in after the fifth-sixth century and that some of the urban centres survived primarily because of the tirtha status- to an earlier period.

On the western side, on foot of the Siva shrine, a huge hall measuring 9.6 m x 9.6 m (square shaped), with attached veranda (8.0 m x 1.6 m) and corridors on the southern side linking it to cave shrine is found. The excavator does not elicit the nature of usage for this hall, perhaps it would have been used on occasions of community gatherings or at times of important rituals when the elite would have to be involved perhaps it could have served as a place for community gathering or a place where Vedic learning could have been undertaken.

Another important observation that one may make over here, with respect to both Ramtek and Mansar, is the presence of water-tank, cisterns etc.

Archaeological excavations have also reported the presence of stone channels used for the transport of water to and from the brick built cisterns at Nagra⁶⁰ The presence of these 'water-bodies' suggests that the temples might have had an important role to play in the whole process of water-management surrounding the temple area. One can only speculate on the nature and the actual process of water-management but the centrality of the temple's role is definite.

The site of Mandhal was first reported in IAR, 1970-71. At Mandhal was discovered a historical mound. On surface exploration, coins of Maharathis, black and red ware as well as soakage wells and brick structures were observed. Earlier, three Shaiva images of Gupta-Vakataka period were discovered by the forest department in the process of digging a pit. Excavations at Bholahudki Tekdi-1 yielded a rectangular brick structure (90 m x 10 m) oriented east west with a flight of steps running north south. Brick sizes used were of two dimension types:

1. 44 cm x 23 cm x 8 cm.
2. 40 cm x 24 x 8 cm.

Ceramic industry was found comparable to Paunar's Vakataka levels suggesting that this temple structure belongs to that period. Also found were a dozen sculptures of gods and goddesses of the pantheon all broken and stylistically of Gupta-Vakataka period. Whilst Bholahudki Tekdi-1 was one km from Mandhal itself, the Mandhal-II trench laid at Mandhal itself, too revealed a brick structure of 11.5m x 10.0m oriented north-south with a couple

⁶⁰ IAR, 1976-77, 1981-82.

of projections in the west. Wells built of wedge shaped bricks were observed as well. Here also Red Black slipped ware were found during excavations. The temples were dated to fourth-fifth century AD⁶¹.

The Bholahudki Tekdi-1 of Mandhal was raised on a rectangular platform of dimensions 18.0 m x 10.6 m x 1.2 m. In the middle of the platform were found the traces of what the excavator reports to be a small shrine. This was represented by an altar (2.1 m x 0.95 m). This had three courses of bricks, semi-circular brick platform was found to its west. Also found was a fragment of a wall possibly going round the altar.

A flight of steps on the north, leading to the platform was observed. A brick built cistern (2.3 m x 2.5 m x 1.59 m). on the east of the platform and a couple of brick chambers were exposed on the western side. At Mandhal itself, remains of another brick temple were uncovered.

This temple was built of massive brick walls, it was first renovated in the late Vakataka period. Once again around the twelfth century AD, it was provided with a rubble wall, raised on the remains of an earlier stone wall.

Another temple excavated at the same site was built on a massive platform (11.7m x 14.7m) with a garbha-griha of 4.5 m x 5.6 m. The mukha-mandapa was of 4.0 m x 3.3 m. Megalithic stone circles were noticed around Mandhal, yielding fractional burials. I.K. Sarma observes about Mandhal 'the brick sizes conform to 44 cm x 23cm x 8cm and 40 cm x 24 cm x 8 cm admirably tally with the brick shrines exposed at Siddeswara (Kurnool district)

⁶¹ IAR 1976-77, Pg. 39.

and Kudavelli, below the structural stone temples of the early Chalukya vintage'⁶². 'As in the lower deccan the post Satavahana period in Vidarbha is characterised by a prolific raising of brick temples for the Brahmanical deities'⁶³.

The site of Paunar has a four-fold cultural sequence, the first phase being around thousand to eight hundred BC, marked by BRW. The fourth phase being around ten-fifteen centuries AD. The site of Paunar thus remains continually inhabited. What is significant is the presence of the Gupta-Vakataka remains on the other side of settlement across the river. A large number of sculptures/panels depicting scenes from Ramayana, an early representation of the 'Andhakasuravadhā'-murti of Shiva⁶⁴, life-size image of Ganga (Gangabhagwati written on it) of the sixth century AD too was observed. Here one may quote V.V. Mirashi -'There was a temple of Ramachandra at Pravara-pura i.e. modern Paunar, near Wardha. It was decorated with several panels some of which are discovered from time to time in the fields round the Sri Vinobha ji's Ashrama on the left bank of the river Dham'⁶⁵. The Bharata-bheta panels seems to 'afford a key to the understanding of the other panels found near the ashrama, it shows that the temple to which it was affixed must have been dedicated to Rama'⁶⁶. Thus on panels are depicted

⁶² I.K. Sarma, *The Development of Early Saiva Art and Architecture*, New Delhi, 1982, Pg. 91-92:

⁶³ I.K. Sarma, 'Some Unique Representation of Siva' in the A.M. shastri ed. *The Age of the Vakatakas*, Pg. 222.

⁶⁴ Datable to 4th/5th centuries AD.

⁶⁵ V.V. Mirashi ed., *CII*, Introduction, LX.

⁶⁶ V.V. Mirashi ed., *CII*, Introduction, LXI.

the birth of Rama, death of Dasratha, Rama's departure into the forest, Valin-Sugriva yudha etc.

The site of Nagara in district Bhandra was excavated in the year 1979-80, 1981-82. The excavations revealed the presence of brick built temple of the Vakataka period. The plinth which is the only extant part of the temple is 28.75m x 26.30m with an extant height of three m. The outline of this rectangular plinth is oriented east west. It is broken by alternate projections and recesses, which are respectively 2.15m and 1.45m wide. The vertical face of the plinth consists of different moulding at the base with niches at the top. The niches on the projection rest on the railing patterns and those in the recesses have pilasters in their frame.

Another structure linked to the temple was the brick-built cistern with the traces of a stone cut channel spilling water into the cistern. A human faced Makara-pranala too was unearthed. Also a crystal seal with the legend *Naryano* in Brahmi characters datable to Vakataka times. The evidence for the temple was from east where there existed a brick passage of 4.25-m width. Balustrades on the site protected this. Small lamps of Red ware were attached to the balustrades. The site of Wakeshwara has a tenth/eleventh century AD temple having Saptamatrika panels, Mukha-mandapa etc. What is significant however is the existence of an earlier brick structure of the temple⁶⁷. At Mulchera in district Chandrapur⁶⁸, was noted the presence of a brick built stupa

⁶⁷ IAR 1987-88.

⁶⁸ IAR 1987-88.

with walls running in circle, one within the other of thickness 65 cm. Two walls bisecting these two circular walls was also exposed (36 cm x 18 cm x 17 cm). BRW was found at this site, the site being dated to second-fifth century AD. Subsequent excavations⁶⁹ however corrected the picture. The site was a temple rather than a stupa. The temple had an oblong plan, 6.4-m at its larger axis in the north-south direction and 2.6 m in the east-west direction. Around this structure were found a number of walls forming boxes. The approach to the main structure was from the east. The steps of an earlier period, which provided access to the entrance, were covered with earth-murram in the later period to prepare a ramp. The entire structure seems to stand on a well-ramped foundation with a cyclopean wall around the structure for its protection. The site thus being identified as belonging to late Satavahana-early Vakataka period. One may here clarify that whilst all the above mentioned complexes of temple/temples are representations of the early temples emerging in Vidarbha, it needs to be qualified that the list is not exhaustive. The list is based on the available archaeological records and that many more such sites may come to light in the course of further extensive excavations in the near future.

Conclusion: -

Here we conclude the exercise of studying and analysing the available archaeological data pertaining to the background of emergence of temples. We also examine the archaeological evidence, contemporaneous with the period of

⁶⁹ IAR, 1988-89.

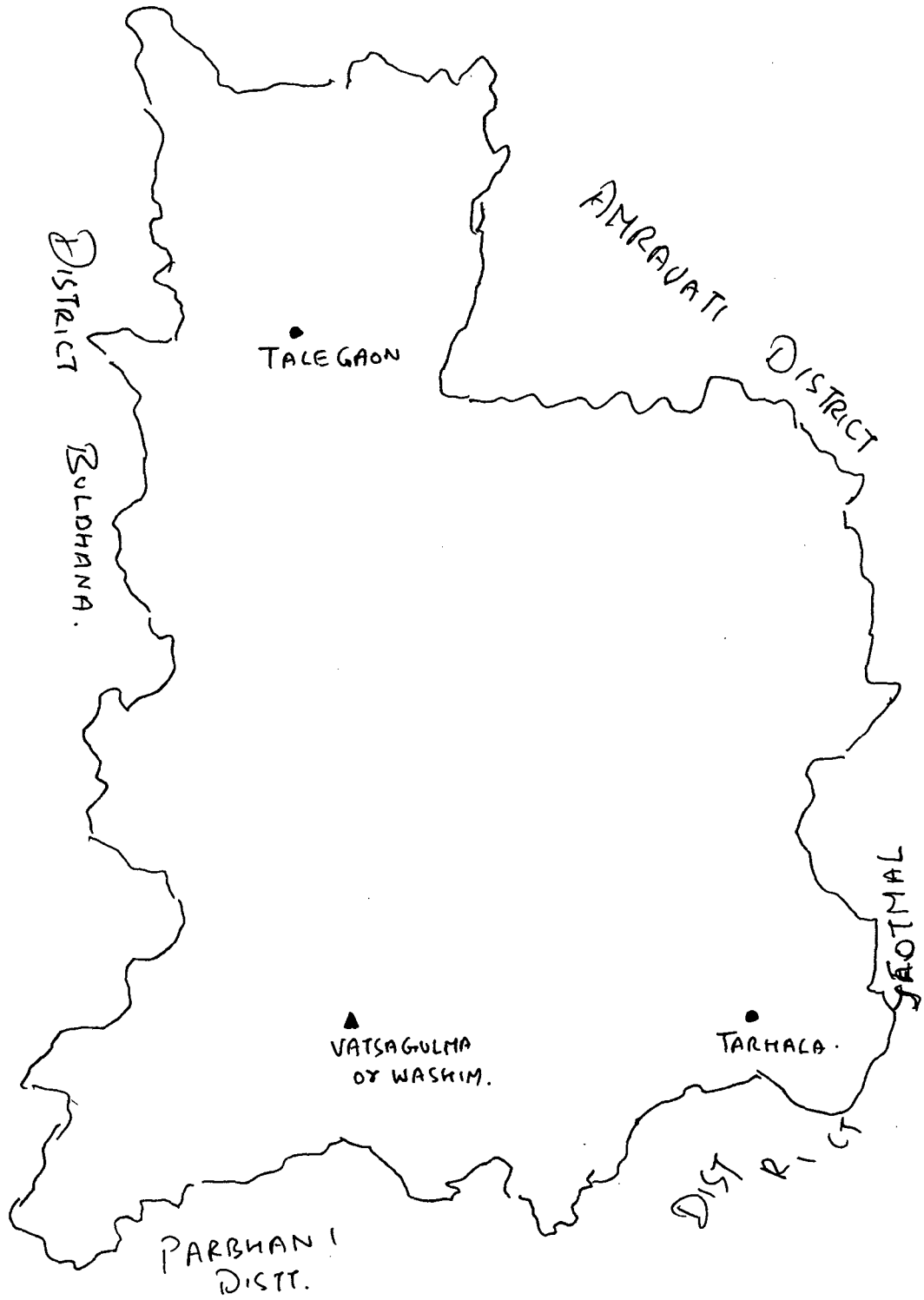
the temples from the settlement sites. That an appreciation of the archaeological background and study of the immediate context is necessary for coming up with a better understanding by which the early temples emerged in Vidarbha. If we look at the concentration of megalithic sites we find that a large section of Vidarbha megaliths are concentrated around the districts of Wardha-Nagpur. In fact it is in this concentrated nuclear region that some of the largest temple complexes emerged- Ramtek, Paunar, Mansar, Mandhal. Whilst, chronologically speaking, the emergence of temples is far removed from the end of the megaliths, as a practice. What is important is that some sites have evidence for both the temples and megaliths. That the temple building people were aware of the presence of the megaliths is indicated by their choice of the site of Mandhal. That these megaliths would have formed a part of the cultural-memory scape of the people in the form of continued denotation of a site as a sacred site. Perhaps, a detailed survey around sites like Ramtek, Mansar etc would reveal similar associational links.

The site of Mansar is significant in terms of mapping the inter-relationship between the various belief structures. Archaeologically we have evidence of existence of multiple belief structures in the same site. Thus Vedic tradition, Lajjagauri, Goddess, Saivism, Buddhism are all to be found in this sight. Just as the Puranic religion continues to flourish and expand in the site, so does Buddhist religion. Just as the complexities in the temple complex increases so does the number and dimensions of the stupa. Perhaps the site was used for Vedic sacrifices as is evident from Purusamedha evidence, the existence of *citis* etc. The site was a shared sacred complex. Its sacred

connotation lead to co-habitation of various religious structures. Perhaps, a detailed survey and multiple excavations of Early historic mounds would yield many more such sites.

That whilst these temples might have emerged in the fourth and the fifth century, we have to keep in mind that their appearance was not sudden. They in fact emerges as a part of the process of growth in settlements, trade, agricultural intensification and the corresponding growth in the ideological needs of the community whose satisfaction was to be provided by the emergence of these temples, for the Vedic sacrifices owing to their ostentatious nature could not have provided this. As we shall show in the later chapters, the temples provided community patronage, just as the stupas did for the Buddhists. If we examine the archaeological ground with regards to the Buddhist monuments and the temples, we find that some sites show the sharing of the sacred space (as at Mansar) and some others which had little to do with Buddhism (as at Ramtek). In fact we shall show in the later chapters that both Buddhism and the Brahmanical temples seem to be co-existing in the fourth and the fifth century and even beyond. A study of the temple architecture suggested to us their relatively simple nature, which in turn is suggestive of the largely community patronage nature of the Brahmanical temples in the region of Vidarbha.

DISTRICT AKOLA



MEGALITHIC SITE → +
EARLY HISTORIC -
HISTORIC SITE → •
Temple site → ▲
(Referred to in the)
inscription

DISTRICT AMRAVATI

MADHYA



MEGALITHIC → +
E. HISTORIC - HISTORIC → •

DISTRICT BHANDRA.

MEGALITHIC SITES - +

EARLY HISTORIC - HISTORIC
SITES → •

TEMPLE SITE → ▲



DISTRICT CHANDRAPUR.



NAGPUR DISTRICT.

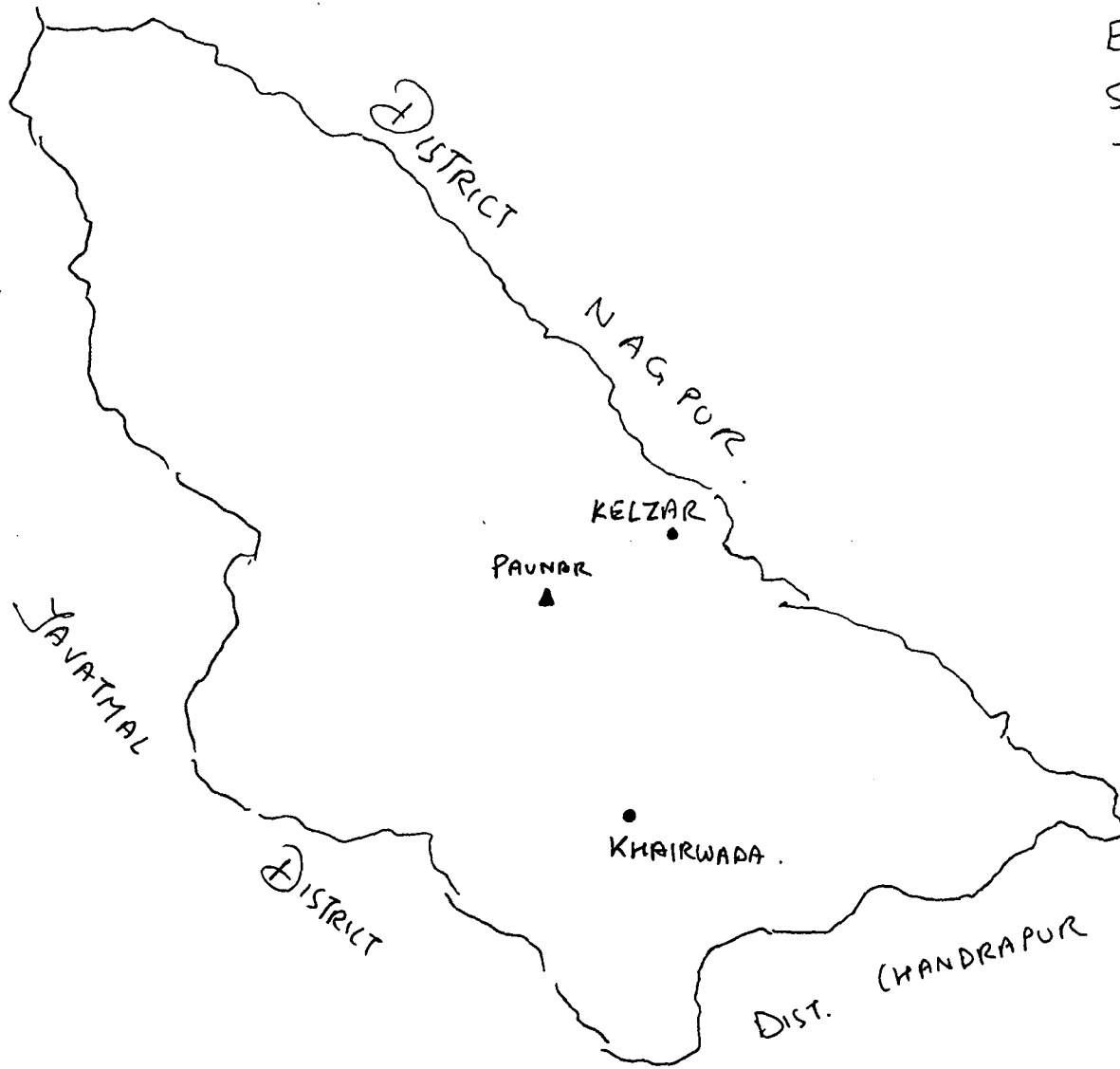
MEGALITHIC SITES → +

EARLY HISTORIC - HISTORIC SITES → ●

TEMPLE SITES → ▲



DISTRICT
WARDHA.



EARLY HISTORIC - HISTORIC
SITE → •
TEMPLE SITE → ▲

DISTRICT JEOTAMAL.

EARLY HISTORIC
- HISTORIC SITE - •
MEGALITHIC SITE
→ +



Table I.

District wise distribution of Archaeological sites in Vidarbha

District	Palaeolithic	Mesolithic	Neolithic	Chalcolithic	Megalithic	Early-historic
Nagpur	3	5	1	2	50	19
Wardha	7	1	-	1	3	4
Akola	7	3	-	-	-	1
Amravati	5	2	-	1	2	8
Bhandra	9	3	-	-	1	2
Yeotmal	15	3	-	-	1	2
Chandrapur	94	34	1	1	12	3

Table 2: Site Details, District-wise.

District Amraoti

Site	Reference	Material Culture/Sequence	Structures
Assnegaon	IAR 1965-66	Early Historic site yielding red slipped pottery, BRW with graffiti.	-----
Bahadarpur	IAR 1965-66	Early Historic site yielding red slipped pottery, BRW with graffiti.	-----
Belora	IAR 1965-66	Early Historic site yielding red slipped pottery, BRW with graffiti.	-----
Budruk	IAR 1965-66	Early Historic site yielding red slipped pottery, BRW with graffiti.	-----
Chendo	IAR 1965-66	Early Historic site yielding red slipped pottery, BRW with graffiti.	-----
Dhamantri	IAR 1962-64	Middle stone age	-----
Kaundinyapur	IAR 1958-59	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lower & middle palaeolithic tools reported. 2. Six periods reported during excavation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Megalithic:- BRW with post firing graffiti, etched carnelian beads, tablet bead with radical strokes around margin (b) Pd II:- Pre-Mauryan, when BRW continues. (c) Pd III:- NBPW, punch marked coins, spools of polished Jasper, glass, and terracotta. (d) Pd IV:- Satavahana coins, coarse red ware, 	Brick lined soakage wells of Pd IV.

		RPW, carnelian and glass beads, tortoise shaped amulet of fiance. (e) Pd V-: Age of deterioration, terracotta votive tank. (f) Late medieval.	
Kholapur	IAR 1979-80	Black, red, coarse red wares. Fragmentary terracotta leg of human figure with red slip. Terracotta beads, carnelian crystal, terracotta bead, Indo Sassanian Bull.	-----
Manjarkhed	IAR 1960-61	Middle palaeolithic, Series ii tools and microliths	-----
Meghwari	IAR 1960-61	Middle palaeolithic Series ii tools	-----
Morsi	IAR 1960-61	Middle palaeolithic Series ii tools	-----
Ritpur	IAR 1965-66	Points, Borers, Scrapers, Cores, flakes of chalcedony and chert. The tools show evolution from middle to late Stone age.	-----
Salbardi	IAR 1979-80	-----	Three early rock-cut caves, originally belonging to Hinyanists-cave hall, with cells dug along the cave wall.
Tulajgarhi	IAR 1965-66	Chalcolithic pottery (painted pottery of N. deccan chalcolithic culture complex). Early historic pottery found too.	-----

District Akola

Site	Reference	Material Culture/Sequence	Structure
Brahmanwara-Thadi	IAR 1965-66	Middle palaeolithic & Mesolithic site.	-----
Deurwara	IAR 1965-66	Middle Stone age site.	-----
Kurankhed	IAR 1965-66	Middle Stone age site.	-----
Kurla	IAR 1965-66	Middle Stone age site.	-----
Nimhor	IAR 1965-66	Middle Stone Age Palaeolithic site.	-----
Phupgaon	IAR 1965-66	Middle Stone age & late Stone age site.	-----
Sangawi	IAR 1965-66	Late Stone age site.	-----
Talegaon	IAR 1963-64	Sculptures of Shiva, Vishnu, and Parvati of early Medieval period.	-----
Tuljapuri	IAR 1965-66	Middle Stone age site.	-----
Washim	IAR 1963-64	Two Khsatrapa coins, one Stone inscription of Vakataka king Devasena, issued at Hisse Borla.	-----

District Bhandra

Site	Reference	Material Culture/Sequence	Structure
Adyal	IAR 1990-91	Shiva, Parvati, Surya.	Historical mound.
Belagaon	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Betala	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Bhandra	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Bhandra	IAR 1990-91	Stray sculptures of Ganesha, Shiva-linga, Shiva-Parvati.	-----
Bhawar	IAR 1991-92	Burial site, habitation down to Satavahana period	-----
Chakara	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Chargaon	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Chicholi	IAR 1990-91	Shiva-linga.	-----
Chowa	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Dauripar	IAR 1990-91	Naga, Nandi	-----
Dhorwada	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Gaeshpur	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Golewari	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Hasapur	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Jogikhera	IAR 1991-92	Iron-slag	-----
Kachargarh cave	IAR 1991-92	Stone age, Neolithic, historical period.	-----
Karajkhera	IAR 1990-91	Shiva Linga and Nandi	-----
Kardha	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Kawadsi	IAR 1990-91	Iron-slag	Historical Mound

Kawarsi	IAR 1990-91	Microliths	-----
Khairi	K.P. Rao, A. Ghosh edt. Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology.	Megalithic period.	Cairn circles
Khairi	IAR 1990-91	microliths	Historical mound.
Khamri	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Khapri	IAR 1990-91	Iron-slag	Historical Mound
Kosi-khurd	IAR 1991-92	Microlithic	-----
Kothurna	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Lawesar	IAR 1990-91	Shiva Linga	-----
Lohara	IAR 1990-91	Microliths	Historical mound.
Mandawi	IAR 1990-91	Microliths	-----
Manwi	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Mendha	IAR 1990-91	Iron-slag	Historical Mound
Nagara	IAR 1976-77, 81-82.	Human faced Makara, Pranala, crystal seal with the legend Narayano in Brahmi.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stupa structure was located. 2. Remains of a brick-temple of Vakataka period with a passage protected by Balustrades found. Plinth size (28.75 x 26.3 x 3.0) 3. Brick built cistern with traces of stone channel.
Pandhi	IAR 1990-91	-----	Historical mound.
Panjra	IAR 1959-60	Series II tool, middle palaeolithic period.	-----
Pauni	Excavation report (1969-70), S.B. Deo and J.P. Joshi edt.	Three broad ceramic groups: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Painted NBP and punch-marked coins of 4th/3rd century BC. 2. NBP, B&R, Sunga culture. 3. RPW, red slipped 	Stupa I built in three phases. Stupa II built in one phase and is much later.

		ware, Satavahana & Kshatrapa coins, inscriptions in early Brahmi.	
Pendhri	IAR 1990-91	-----	Early historical mound
Pimpalgaon	K.P. Rao, A. Ghosh ed. Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology.	Megalithic period.	Cairn circles
Pipalgaon	ASI- AR, 1930-40.	Megalithic period.	Dolmen
Ramtola	IAR 1969-70	Site with RPW, stone plates of mother goddess in relief. (Early Christian period).	-----
Shelari-maruti	IAR 1969-70	Microliths	-----
Silli	IAR 1990-91	Shiva, Parvati, Ganesha, Nandi	-----
Sirsala	IAR 1991-92	Mesolithic	-----
Takri	IAR 1990-91	Nandi	Historical mound.
Tilota	K.P. Rao, A. Ghosh ed. Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology.	Megalithic period.	Cairn circles
Usargondi	IAR 1990-91	Microliths	-----

District Chandrapur

Site	Reference	Material Culture/Sequence	Structure
Abanpalli	IAR 1961-62	Early Stone Age	NA
Adegaon	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic	NA
Alijunga	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic	NA
Ambeneri	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Amboli	IAR 1962-63	Late Stone Age	NA
Andhli	IAR 1968-69	Fluted cores, blades, lunates. Points.	NA
Arkapalli	IAR 1961-62	Early Stone Age	NA
Artudi	IAR 1967-68	Megalithic	Stone circles
Balapur Khurd	IAR 1962-63	Mesolithic	NA
Belagaon-Bhoyar	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Bhamragrah	IAR 1961-62	Early Stone Age	NA
Bhari	IAR 1961-62	Early & Late Stone Age.	NA
Bhari	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic and Mesolithic site.	NA
Bhatala	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Bhatti	IAR 1962-63	Pebble tools comprising pebble choppers, early Acheuvlian Handaxes	NA
Bhoyar	IAR 1962-63	palaeolithic	NA
Bikli	IAR 1967-68	Mesolithic	NA
Bothli	IAR 1967-68	palaeolithic	NA
Chak Bhammi	IAR 1958-59	Mesolithic	NA
Chakalpet	IAR 1958-59	Megalithic	Stone circles
Chandala	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Charpalli	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Chichapalli	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic	NA
Chichghat	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Chimur	IAR 1959-60	Mesolithic	NA
Chin Chala	IAR 1967-68	Mesolithic	NA
Chinch Gundi	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Dabka Heti	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Deoghat	IAR 1969-70	Mesolithic	NA
Dhamaram	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Dhanora-Darachi	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Dongar Saongi	IAR 1969-70	palaeolithic	NA
Dongargaon	IAR 1960-61, 70-71	Mesolithic and Megalithic Site	Stone circles
Donghar Saongi	IAR 1969-70	Mesolithic	NA
Dosi	IAR 1969-70	Mesolithic with Microliths	NA
Dungar Tamashi	IAR 1968-69	Fluted cores, blades. Burins	NA
Erai	IAR 1969-70	Mesolithic	NA
Garchiroli	IAR 1970-71	Mesolithic	NA
Gewardha	IAR 1961-62	Blades and cores.	NA

Ghonar	IAR 1991-92	Early Historic Sites	NA
Ghosri	IAR 1971-72	palaeolithic	NA
Ghugus	IAR 1991-92	Microliths, Early historic	Unexcavated Mound
Golakharji	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Hirapur	IAR 1963-64	Megalithic	Stone circles
Indaram	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Jadholi	IAR 1962-63	Megalithic	Stone circles
Jhamela	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Jhari Mangrul	IAR 1961-62	A succession of lithic industries found over here. Bifacial pebble choppers, Achevlian Handaxes, cleavers, Blade/Burin industry.Microliths.	NA
Kanepalli	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Kaneri	IAR 1970-71	Mesolithic with Microliths	NA
Kanpa	IAR 1967-68	palaeolithic and Mesolithic site.	NA
Karegaon	IAR 1967-68	palaeolithic and Mesolithic site.	NA
Karpara	IAR 1967-68	Mesolithic, Microliths found too	NA
Kawdi	IAR 1960-61	Microliths	NA
Kemjai	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Khandala	IAR 1962-63	Microliths	NA
Khaparla-Khuru	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Khemjai	IAR 1967-68	Megalithic	Stone circles
Khutwanda	IAR 1970-71	palaeolithic and Mesolithic site.	NA
Kitadi	IAR 1970-71	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Kodepar	IAR 1970-71	palaeolithic and Mesolithic site.	NA
Kolara	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Kolpalli	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Kottur	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Kurah	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Kuthegaon	IAR 1970-71	Mesolithic	NA
Kuthegaon	IAR 1970-71	palaeolithic	NA
Lakameta	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Lakhapur	IAR 1962-63	Mesolithic	NA
Lingam Palli	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Lonhar	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic site, scrapers, blades, points.	NA
Mahagaon-Budrukh	IAR 1962-63	palaeolithic and Mesolithic site.	NA
Mahalgaon	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Mainpurcheek	IAR 1960-61	Fluted Site	NA
Mandholi	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Mane Mohali	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic	NA
Marigudem	IAR 1962-63	palaeolithic	NA
Masala Buzruk	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Masala Tukum	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Minjhari	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA

Mohagaon-Budruk	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic, series I tools	NA
Mojhari	IAR 1968-69	Flutes caves and Points	NA
Mowada	IAR 1967-68	Mesolithic	NA
Mudum Torna	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Muhtola	IAR 1970-71	Mesolithic	NA
Mulchera	IAR 1991-92	Temples of Vakataka Period	NA
Munta Gura Ritah	IAR 1968-69	Blades, points, Lunates	NA
Murpar	IAR 1962-63	Mesolithic	NA
Nagram	IAR 1991-92	Microliths	NA
Nandara	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic	NA
Nandgaon	IAR 1969-70	palaeolithic	NA
Nandigaon	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Nandori	IAR 1991-92	Early Historic Sites alongwith Microliths	NA
Nawkhala	IAR 1962-63	Mesolithic	NA
Papamiya Tekdi	IAR 1960-61	Bifacial pebble choppers, Achevlian Handaxes, cleavers, Blade/Burin industry. Latest in series is the microlithic industry, including parallel-sided blades, points, Lunates, crescents, fluted cores of chalcolithic association.	NA
Paradpur	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Paraspatar	IAR 1963-64	palaeolithic, also found were microliths.	NA
Pardi	IAR 1963-64	palaeolithic	NA
Peth Bhansuli	IAR 1963-64	Microliths	NA
Pipalgaon	IAR 1967-68	Mesolithic	NA
Pudiyal Mohda	IAR 1970-71	palaeolithic and Mesolithic site.	NA
Pulkhal	IAR 1970-71	Mesolithic	NA
Pusukpalli	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Rajnpalli	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Rajoli	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Rajura	IAR 1960-61	Microliths	NA
Ranparsodi	IAR 1962-63	Megalithic	Stone circles
Ravi	IAR 1960-61	Megalithic	Menhirs
Rengabodi	IAR 1960-61	palaeolithic	NA
Repanpalli	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Salebhatti	IAR 1961-62	palaeolithic	NA
Sanapur-Padsa	IAR 1962-63	palaeolithic	NA
Saradpur	IAR 1959-60	palaeolithic	NA
Sindhala	IAR 1959-60	Megalithic	Stone circles
Sironcha	IAR 1958-59	Neolithic implements	NA

District Nagpur

Site	Reference	Material Culture/Sequence	Structure
Koradih	IAR 1959-60	Factory site, flakes, flake blades with plain, narrow striking platforms were found	-----
Khaira	IAR 1959-60	Scraper, flakes, blade assemblage found in situ. Tools made of chert, scrapers, points, discoidal, tortoise cores, choppers.	-----
Nawegaon	IAR 1961-62	Middle/late Stone age sites.	-----
Dhamangaon	IAR 1961-62	Middle/late Stone age sites.	-----
Maroli	IAR 1961-62	Middle/late Stone age sites.	-----
Bhami wara	IAR 1961-62	Middle/late Stone age sites, also an early historic site.	-----
Takalghat & Vyad	IAR 1961-62	Chalcolithic site, finds of BRW, thick micaceous ware similar to Junapani.	-----
Seminary hills	IAR 1961-62	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	-----
Nagalwadi	IAR 1961-62	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Sangam	IAR 1961-62	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Sukli	IAR 1961-62	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Takli	IAR 1961-62	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Wanna Dongari	IAR 1961-62	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Aturdi	IAR 1968-69	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Khemjai	IAR 1968-69	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Amgaon	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Badegaon	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Chicholi	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Deoli	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Hingnakinhi	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Nagalwadi	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW	Cairn circles

		pottery.	
Raipur-Hingna	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Sonegaon	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Dongar Mouda	IAR 1977-78	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Kuhi	IAR 1977-78	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Udasa	IAR 1977-78	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Umrer	IAR 1977-78	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Wag	IAR 1977-78	Megalithic, BRW pottery.	Cairn circles
Naikund	IAR 1979-80	Megalithic BRW, micaceous red, Plain red ware, Painted Black on Red Burnished Blackware.	Iron smelting furnace, semi-circular on outline iron slag, crucibles. Circular huts with circular wooden posts on periphery, floor of huts made of rammed clay plastered with thick lime coating.
Buregaon	IAR 1979-80	BRW, Black Burnished ware, micaceous red ware, iron sickles, chisels, adzes, copper dish, horse skeleton, gold earring, arrowheads, tridents of iron, querns, nail parers, axes, copper bangles, rice, kodo millet, field pea, lentil, black gram, jujube, suggested by palaeontological evidence.	Forty-eight stone circles.
Raipur	IAR 1968-69	Megalithic Culture	391 Cairn circles
Chakki Khapa	IAR 1968-69	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Chicholi	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Deolipeth	IAR 1970-71	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Dudha	IAR 1968-69	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Durgamna	IAR 1959-60	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Kamptee	G.G. Pearse, J.E.S. 1869.	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles at Wureegaon
Nagalwadi	IAR 1961-62	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Bhamiwari	IAR 1961-62	Early historic site.	-----
Nagardhan, Hamlapuri, Nandapuri.	IAR 1981-82	Stone images of Ganapati, Lajjagauri and other fragmentary stone sculptures of Vakataka	-----

		period.	
Gavali	IAR 1981-82	BRW site.	-----
Chandala forest near Mandhal.	IAR 1971-72	Two line inscription recording gift of Apala, son of Vandalaka 2 nd c. BC	
Nagpur	IAR 1972-73	Four armed Jambhala sculpture of 5th century AD.	-----
Mandhal	IAR 1977-78 IAR 1971-72 IAR 1975-76	Megalithic culture Coins of maharathis & BRW pottery. Three Gupta-Vakataka period Saira images RPW, BRW. Ceramic industry comparable to Paunar's Vakataka level. Twelve broken Pantheon sculptures earthen pot containing two royal inscriptions. Agate, arecanut shaped beads of terracotta, tiles, iron nails. This section shows two phases of occupation:- 1. Satavahana period. 2. Gupta-Vakataka period.	Cairn circles
Tekadi	IAR 1975-76	Slipped red ware, terracotta sculpture of Narasimha	-----
Tharsa	IAR 1975-76	Potsherds from proto-historic to historical periods & sculpture of Narasimha.	
Brambi	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Ghorad	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Gondi	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Hingna	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Kohala	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Neel Dhoa	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Vathora	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Vadgaon	K.P. Rao	Megalithic Culture	Cairn circles
Junapani	IAR 1961-62	Iron objects, gold ornaments, stone pestle, forty-four carnelian beads with twenty-four being of the etched variety. Silver stud, copper objects Black & Red, all black, plain red wares found. Dagger, spear, lance chisel,	150 Stone circles 7-18 m in diameter

		ladles. Iron . Six anklets, bell copper	
Khapa	IAR 1968-69	Vases with flaring or funnel shaped mouth in red ware, BRW bowls Chalice in red ware. Etched & plain beads of carnelian agate, jasper, crystal. Lamps with vertical handles, axes, rings, knives and dagger.	Megalithic stone circles.
Bhagimohari	IAR 1982-83	Habitational levels had many floors each made of a bedding of black clay covered with compact brownish clay, the surface plastered with lime. Circular house plan 3.25m x 3.8m inside the house were observed semi-circular hearths. For the first time stone construction with stone circles were observed.	Seventy stone circles. Animal bones, burnt grains of wheat, barley, Black gram, rice. Animal bones of horse, cattle, sheep, goat, pig, partially burnt bird bones. B&R, micaceous red, Black burnished & painted Black on Red. Iron axes, knives, fasteners, daggers from habitational deposits.
Mahurjhari	Mahurjhari Excavation report, S.B. Deo, Nagpur, 1973.	Stone circles with head oriented in N-S direction. One twin burial, BRW, iron/copper objects, gold ornaments, etched beads, horse bits. Early historic seals, intaglios, baked bricks 41 x 43 x 25 of Gupta period. A seal reading apumda, an intaglio in Vakataka characters, one red sandstone seal, seal in rock crystal, naga seal each. Agate, carnelian, quartz, rock crystal, glass, turquoise, garnet, jade, jasper beds. One headless female sculpture known as Nagnakabandha.	

District Wardha

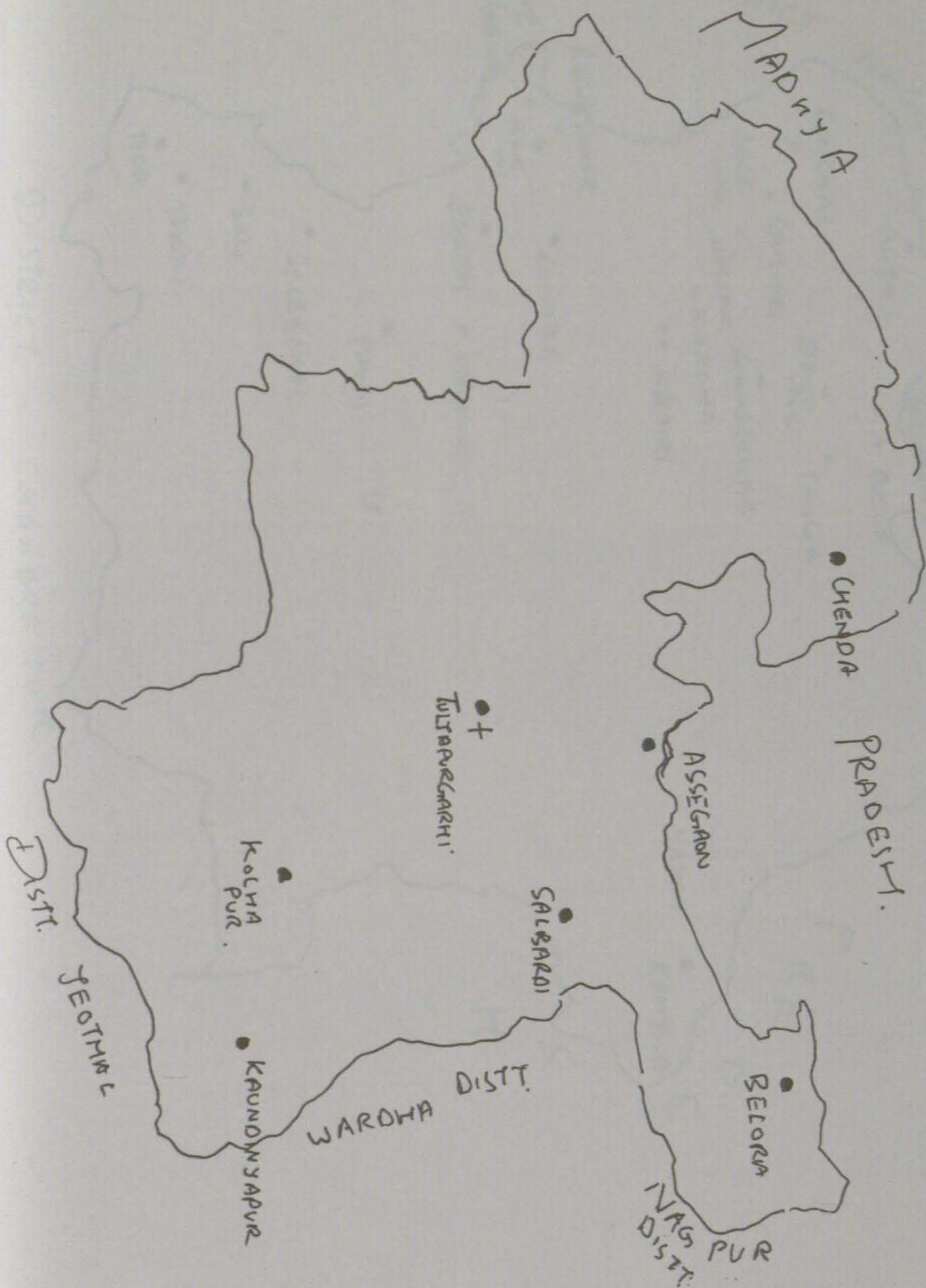
Site	Reference	Material Culture/Sequence	Structures
Arambha		Microliths, Chalcolithic, Megalithic, Early Historic-Medieval	-----
Daroda	IAR 1959-60	Series II, Middle Palaeolithic tools thick blades, notched scrappers, crescent like tools, borers, triangular points, all made of chert.	-----
Galamb	IAR 1959-60	Series II, Middle Palaeolithic tools thick blades, notched scrappers, crescent like tools, borers, triangular points, all made of chert.	-----
Kandhali	IAR 1959-60	Series II, Middle Palaeolithic tools thick blades, notched scrappers, crescent like tools, borers, triangular points, all made of chert.	-----
Keljhar		Parsvanath Neminath idols, hero stones depicting Surya, Chandra, Linga, Pillars having Tirthankara Figures.	-----
Khairwara		Megalithic period.	Dressed stone circle 1400 , also habitational deposits.
Kondghat	IAR 1959-60	Series II, Middle Palaeolithic tools thick blades, notched scrappers, crescent like tools, borers, triangular points, all made of chert.	-----
Pardi	IAR 1959-60	Series II, Middle Palaeolithic tools thick blades, notched scrappers, crescent like tools, borers, triangular points, all made of chert.	-----
Patala	IAR 1959-60	Series II, Middle Palaeolithic tools thick blades, notched scrappers, crescent like tools, borers, triangular points, all made of chert	-----
Paunar	IAR 1967	Four-fold cultural sequence unearthed:	A Gupta temple's remains have been

		<p>Pd I Pre-iron phase, 1000-800 BC - BRW, coarse red ware with black painting typical of Vidarbha.</p> <p>Pd II 4th/3rd c. BC : BRW, iron technology introduced.</p> <p>Pd IIA- RPW.</p> <p>Pd IIB- Amphorae.</p> <p>Pd III- 3rd-8th c. AD :- Bright slipped red ware, structure of kiln-burnt brick, domination of Vishnukundis whose coins have been found.</p> <p>Pd IV 10th-15th c. AD</p>	<p>found on the other side of the river, sculpture, depicting episodes of Ramayana, early representation of Andhakasuravadha-murty of Shiva.</p> <p>Stylistically datable to 4th/5th c. AD, life-size Ganga image, with Gangabhagwati inscribed on it dated to 6th c. AD</p>
Shaikapur, Sirni	IAR 1959-60	<p>Series II, Middle Palaeolithic tools thick blades, notched scrappers, crescent like tools, borers, triangular points, all made of chert</p>	-----

District Yeotmal

Site	Reference	Material Culture/Sequence	Structure
Aita	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Arni	IAR 1977-78	BRW, NBP, RPW, red and Painted Black on Red pottery ware, di-struck coins, beads of semi-precious stones, iron slag. Three fold cultural sequence:- Pd I- megalithic. Pd II –Mauryan. Pd III-Post-Mauryan	Remains of backed-brick structure of size 58 x 29 x 9 . Period II sees use of massive baked-bricks. Big boulders as foundation for house plan, wells, bathrooms, wedge-shaped bricks used for well.
Bilayati	-----	-----	-----
Bitregaon, District Yeotmal.	IAR 1959-60	Middle stone-age implements	-----
Chimta	-----	Palaeolithic, mesolithic	-----
Ghoti	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Guda	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Kalamb	IAR 1982-83	Stone pestles, BRW, Plain red ware of Satavahana period, red-slipped ware, coarse red ware, red micaceous, BRW shards with graffiti.	-----
Kapesar	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Kawatha	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Manushdhari	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Ratnapur	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Sadoba	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Sawali	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Umari	-----	Palaeolithic, microlithic, Ganera.	-----
Virul	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Waruda	-----	Palaeolithic	-----
Zari	-----	Palaeolithic	-----

District AHRAVATI



MEGALITHIC → +
E. HISTORIC - HISTORIC → •

DISTRICT AKOLA



MEGALITHIC SITE → +

EARLY HISTORIC -

HISTORIC SITE → •

Temple site → ▲

(Referred to in the
inscription)

DISTRICT BHANDRA.

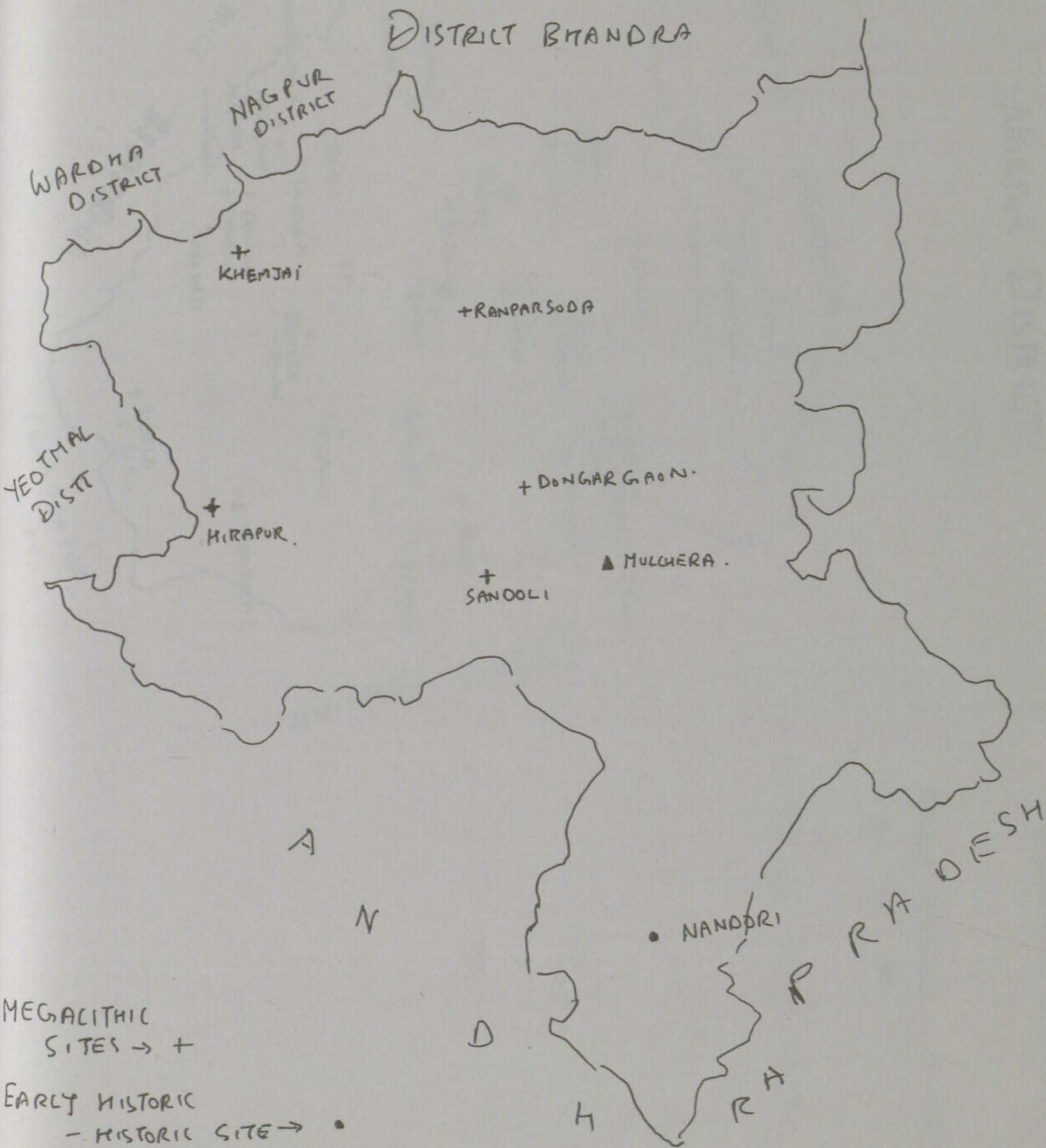
MEGALITHIC SITES - +

EARLY HISTORIC - HISTORIC
SITES → •

TEMPLE SITE → ▲



DISTRICT CHANDRAPUR.



- MEGALITHIC SITES → +
- EARLY HISTORIC - HISTORIC SITE → •
- Temple Site → ▲

Royalty's Non-Vedic Rituals: -

The dates on which the various land grants were issued have been analysed by V.V. Mirashi, who notes that at least nine land grants mention the dates when the gifts were actually recorded.

'From these we can in some cases conjecture the occasion of the gift. For instance if a gift is recorded on the twelfth or the thirteenth of the bright or dark fortnight of a month, it would not be wrong to conjecture that it was made on the occasion of the Parana after observing a fast on the preceding ekadashi', thus of the thirteen complete grants as many as nine were made at the time of Paranas of the following ekadashi. Thus one grant each was made on the ekadashis of Jyeshtha¹⁸, Bhadrapada¹⁹, Aswina²⁰, Magha²¹ and Phalguna²², a total of four land grants have been made on Kartikka ekadashi²³. Kartikka ekadashi is also known as Prabhodhini ekadashi, this ekadashi seems to be the most sacred in comparison to the other ekadashis.

Mirashi notes that there is no mention whatsoever of any land grant being made on the occasion of solar or a lunar eclipse. It may be noted in this connection that the eclipses and the sankrantis were the usual occasions when land grants were to be made to the Brahmanas in later times, while gifts on completion of the ekadashi Vrata are very rare. Talking of Brahmanical

¹⁸ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Chammak Plates, Pg.22.

¹⁹ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Bamani Plates, Pg. 82.

²⁰ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Jamb Plates, Pg. 10.

²¹ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Tirodi plates, Pg. 48.

²² V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Sivani Plates, Pg. 28.

²³ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Poona Plates, Pg.50), Vellore plates (Pg.16), Riddhapur Plates, Pg. 33.

religion, one would need to study the relation of Vakatakas with the brahmins of their realm. This then would be the focus of our next section.

Patronage to the Brahmins: -

Just as we differentiate between the Vedic religion and the theistic religion, we need to differentiate between the Vedic Brahmins and the theistic Brahmins. Whilst Vedic Brahmins specialised in the performance of Vedic sacrifices and rituals, the Theistic Brahmins would be involved in reciting epics/puranas to the people, as also officiating in the Pujas that characterised religious activity in the newly emergent temples.

We shall examine the evidence on patronisation of these two categories in the Vakataka inscriptions. Of the total thirty-seven inscriptions, twenty-four are in the form of land grants to the brahmins. We observe that all these land grants were made in favour of Brahmins belonging to Vedic branches of learning.

Amongst the land grants we may observe two categories:

1. Those in which the branch of learning to which the Brahmin(s) belonged to, are referred to.
2. Those in which the branch(s) of learning are not referred to- at all.

Thus a total of twelve²⁴ land grants mention the Vedic branch of learning, the other twelve merely mention the names and the Gotras of the Brahmanas.

Further analysis reveals that of the twelve inscriptions referring to some 'school of learning' almost eight inscriptions are towards Brahmanas belonging to the Taittirīya śākhā of Yajur Veda. Three refer to the Vajasaneyi sakha and another two to Atharvana Āraṇa/Atharvedins. So do we have here the evidence that a particular branch of learning was receiving patronage? In this case, it overwhelmingly seems to be the Taittirīya branch.

In fact the Patna plates refer to donations being made to three Brahmanas. The author of the plate in fact considered it significant enough to emphasise upon the fact that one of them belonged to the Taittirīya śākhā. One could speculate at the reasons for such a differential reference. Either the other two Brahmanas were not involved in the act of transferring of learning or perhaps the other branches were not considered significant enough as to deserve a mention.

One thing then works out very clearly is that Brahmanas are not acting as a uniform homogenous group involved in acts of patronage-receiving and in the act of legitimisation. In fact the Vakatakas received their legitimisation from a certain group of brahmins of the Taittirīya śākhās. Are we then seeing here promotion by the royalty of a certain branch of learning at one level and

²⁴ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Basim, Jamb, Belora, Mandhal, Siwani, Riddhapur, Tirodi, Pattan, Pandhurna, Patna, Ramtek, Mahurjhari.

monopolisation of space at another? Or is it that the Vedic ritual was of a greater significance for the polity than the community worship at modest sized temples.

In fact if we are to analyse the Vakataka inscriptions in chronological perspective, seven inscriptions are in pre-Pravarasena II, eighteen inscriptions are of the reign of Pravarasena II and another eight of post- Pravarasena II and another three of inscriptions are of their feudatories. In pre- Pravarasena II period, we do not have a single instance of grants being made to the Brahmanas of the Taittirīya śākhā. In fact the Basim plates of the reign of Vindhyashakti II and that too of Vatsagulma branch (380-400 AD) is the earliest reference to any branch of learning in the Vakataka inscriptions. Thus thirteen brahmanas of the Atharvana Ācarana of Atharva veda benefited from Vindhyashakti II's patronage.

In the reign of Pravarasena II-a period for which the maximum number of inscriptions- a total of eleven references to some branch of learning or the other were made. We see a clear pattern of dominance of the Taittiriya sakha during the thirty-two years of his reign. Thus eight land grants were made over to brahmanas of Taittirīya śākhā, whilst two land grants (Pandhurna and Mahurjhari) were made over to the Vajasaneyi śākhā. One grant i.e. of Tirodi was made over to an Atharvedin. Thus we have here a, clear evidence of Vakataka ruler Pravarasena II patronising a particular group of brahmanas- not all the brahmanas. One wonders whether this would have lead to dissatisfaction

amongst the brahmans? Perhaps we may have the evidence in the form of Chammak plates.

Chammak Plates are record land grants to a large chunk of brahmans (thousand in number), though only forty nine of them are mentioned by name/Gotra. This grant is the only grant that is made instead of certain negative obligation on the brahmans these obligations were as follows.

‘As long as the sun and the moon will endure, provided that they commit no treason against the kingdom consisting of seven constituents²⁵ of the future Kings; that they are not found guilty of murder of a brahman, theft, adultery and high treason etc; that they do not wage war; that they do no harm to other Villages. If they act otherwise or assent to such acts, the King will commit no theft if he takes the land away’²⁶.

Now this grant was made in eighteenth regnal year of Pravarasena II, almost in the middle of his reign. It was perhaps an attempt to diffuse the seething dissent which could have caused acts of high treason ,waging of war ,even leading to the harm of other villages. Perhaps this dissent could have been the result of undue favour shown by the ruler Pravarasena II to a particular section of brahmans. We may note that indeed there are instances where brahmans have taken to assuming royal powers, anointing themselves as kings- the point is that the brahmans were no strangers to the craft of kingship. Thus if any royalty had to fear being uprooted brahmans could be a significant

²⁵ Saptanga theory of State- Seven Angas being King, Ministers, Ally, Territory, Treasure, Fortress and Army.

²⁶V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Chammak Plates, lines 39-43, Pg. 26.

section to be fearful of. In fact of the forty-nine brahmans mentioned in the Chammak grants, not one is of Taittirīya śākhā. Whilst one may concede that a lot is being read into the inscriptional evidence, it is entirely impossible to brush aside the above conclusions i.e. that consequent to a particular section of the brahmans gaining/cornering a sizeable chunk of royal patronage, there was disaffection amongst other brahmans. Fearing disaffection with negative consequences, the ruler Pravarasena II used liberal patronage-laced with negative obligations and a threat of withdrawal as a means to placate the disaffected. In fact his effort was successful and at least five other grants were issued after the Chammak inscription, to the brahmans of Taittirīya śākhā.

Often an argument is made that brahmans were settled in new areas as a part of the process of agrarian expansion being promoted by the state and this lead to agrarian expansion, brahmanisation/sanskritisation of local tradition by the greater tradition in the process of emerging peasantisation. That this argument is more often than not based on the assumption that new areas are being settled, with brahmans acting as the foci-nucleus from where 'expansion' and 'civilisation' radiate. We would like to examine whether brahmans are actually being settled in new areas or not. If yes then it would suggest that in Vidarbha, the land grants and settling of the brahmans is actually a part of the process of agrarian expansion. If however, they are not being settled in new areas, it indicates a very different process, perhaps the process of agricultural intensification.

In fact K.M. Shrimali did a detailed cartographic plotting of donated villages in the Vakataka land grants. He notes that five of the six donations of the pre- Pravarasena II period are in areas of altitude of three hundred to six hundred metres and only one is in the relatively plain area (Danguna). Most of these being in the western half of the Vakataka dominions in the Maikal ranges. In Pravarasena II's period of the total twenty villages donated, eleven are in lands below three hundred metres altitude and nine in areas of three hundred to six hundred metres, with Wardha-Wainganga system accounting for fifteen of twenty donations. We however have little evidence to suggest that these areas were being newly settled. In fact in most of the grants, villages to the north/south/east/west of the so donated area/village are mentioned suggesting that the area was already under inhabitation. If this were the case then no new areas were being settled. In fact if we read Shrimali's evidence a little differently we find that the brahmans in the early part of their reign might have been granted land in peripheral areas, they subsequently focussed on the nuclear areas allotting land in the nuclear region of the Wardha-Wainganga plains and later in the western section of the Tapti plains. Thus land grants were being made in hitherto-cultivated areas. Thapar suggests that the brahmans were to act as the foci of royal influence and control. One would like to suggest a very different role for the brahmans. If brahmans are to be considered as an important element in the organisation of the community life of a settlement there is a need to carefully assess their secular role as much as the religious one. Perhaps they were not just performing ritual/religious

activities but also imparting education to the local elite, helping organise community control over village resources like irrigation. Only such a role would justify intensive patronage that the Vedic brahmins were receiving from the Vakatakas²⁷.

In fact the transfer of revenue and privileges would be an attempt at augmenting the capabilities of the brahmins so that they could better organise community life. This is a possible way in which patronage-legitimacy did operate to strengthen the control of the Vakatakas. Thus Hisse-Borala inscription refers to the construction of Lake Sudarshana, besides this direct evidence we have the evidence of Ganj stone inscription of Vyagra-deva, engrained on the walls of a dam. Further as Shrimali/K.V. Ramesh observe, the suffix 'viraka' means barrage/irrigational dam, as evidenced in Karanajarivaka (Siwan Plate), Siddivirivaka (Poona plates), Darbhaviraka (Patna museum).

Often it is argued that the brahmins were settled by the royalty in new areas, having been invited to come from outside. In fact the Ganga valley is seen as the region of origin from where brahmins travel to settle in newer areas, consequently sanskritising them. Shrimali thus talks of the process of sanskritisation of tribal areas in this context, seeing brahmins as an agent of this social transformation. He further cites instances of King of Vidarbha stealing wives of others²⁸ (Epic legends), suggesting that Vakatakas, to begin

²⁷ We in fact have in the Prabhavati memorial stone, inscriptional reference to building of a tank (by Pravarasena II), half of whose merit was to accrue to Brahmanas (Brahma-arapna) and other half to his parents.

²⁸ K.M. Shrimali, *Agrarian structure in central India and northern Deccan*, 'These are traits of Tribal Origin', Pg. 27.

with, were 'untouched by Sanskritic Culture of the north plains'²⁹. Thus some of the donees- like Gondaraya are cited as an example of the brahmins sanskritising a section of tribals. He further goes on to suggest that some of the settlements' names had some totemistic origins³⁰. Further A.M. Shastri analysing the place names suggests that there was an increase in brahmanical settlements in Vidarbha in the Vakataka period. He cites the names like Brahmapuraka (Siwani and Patna plates)/Brahmavatika (mentioned in the Vakataka inscription) in support of his thesis. We may, however note that none of the Vakataka inscriptions positively refers to the emergence/settling of new villages. Further we also note that in quite a few cases the brahmins from within the region are being issued the land grants. In fact nowhere it is mentioned that the brahmins came from far off places like the Ganga valley. Thus Gondaraya, the son of Visakharya, the donee of Indore plates, already resided at Aramaka with six of his sons at the time the grant was made. In fact Pandhurna plates of Pravarasena II refer to the donation of Dhuravataka in the exchange of the village of Vijayapalli-vataka which had earlier been gifted by Prithvisena I. Also the Patna Plates refer to the grant of the village of Sripamaka in exchange for the previous gift of village of Manapallika. Similarly the Pauni plates refer to the gift of a plot of land along with a house site (Nivasana) in exchange of some other land (Bhumipraivastu) at Achalapura to Duggaryya, a student of Rig veda. Thus a lot of grants are as a

²⁹ *ibid*, Pg. 27.

³⁰ Thus Kollapuraka (Siwani Plates⁰ and Millukadratha (Patna plates) are cited as evidence of the fact that these were in fact the settlements of the Kols and Bhils respectively.

renewal of older grants- we do not know who made the original grant- or in exchange of some older grants made by someone. The point being made here is that the Vakatakas followed a practice that existed and it is equally possible that the brahmins already settled in the local villages were being moved to other areas. Whatever the case, we have little evidence to prove that at this stage they were inviting new brahmins from outside. Also the mention of just two settlements with brahmins as a prefix out of a total of one hundred and thirty four made in Vakataka inscriptions, hardly proves the fact that the Brahmana settlements are increasing. Thus we observe that the Vakataka royalty patronised brahmins to gain religious merit or as a 'payment' for some kind of ritual/sacrifice being performed by the brahmin that is as a sacrificial fee³¹, as a part of a process 'Pāranā' of a fast³², as a fee for reciting of sacred texts on occasion of the Vishnu-Mesha Sankranti³³. As granting request of some important person³⁴ or for the maintenance of a student³⁵. Prabhavatigupta in her Poona plates- as a mark of devotion in fact first offered the land as a gift to the Bhagvat and then made it over to Acharya Chanalaswami- one wonders whether this Acharya was a Pujari/Purohita of some temple.

We began by differentiating the two types of Brahmins, the Vedic brahmins and the theistic Brahmins. Vakataka inscriptions provide us with proof for the existence of first category but what about the second category?

³¹ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Jamb Plates, Pg. 11.

³² V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Poona Plates, Pg. 5-9.

³³ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Wadhgaon, Pg. 159.

³⁴ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Four Hundreded Nivartana on request of Narayanraja, Pattan Plates, Pg. 57-59.

³⁵ Pauni Plates, student Duggaryya of Rig Veda.

The inscriptions do not refer to any priest taking care of the temples with the exception of one reference to the Vachaka (Wadhgaon plates). So was it that the earlier temples of Vidarbha were not being 'officiated' by the brahmans or was it that consequent to the temple priest being considered lower in hierarchy – in comparison to the Vedic brahmans- they failed to corner any of the patronage. Another possibility exists that these early temples were not being 'officiated' by brahmans at all.

Whatever the case, the pattern of patronage distribution is very clear, with the Vedic Brahmans especially- the Taittiriya and the Vajasaneyi (to a lesser extent) sakha ones- cornering most of the benefits. All the while the royalty seems to be focussing in identifying itself in some manner or the other with theistic deities.

We are thus observing a very complex relationship even amongst the different groups of brahmans, with some having greater access to levers of power and therefore having hold over a larger chunk of patronage. The brahmans then do not appear as a uniform social group controlling access to the resources their rather exist differential layers amongst them.

Royalty and Temples: -

Let us begin by saying that of the thirty-seven of the Vakataka inscriptions only two are found in the context of a temple. The Deotek inscription was found near a dilapidated shrine Rudrarsena I's inscription refers to this spot as a special place of religious worship of Rajan Rudrasena

I³⁶, who was born in a family of Vakatakas. K.M. Shrimali notes this as an instance of temple construction by Vakatakas when it merely mentions the fact of it being a place of religious worship for the Vakataka ruler.

The other is a detailed inscription found in the Kevala Narasimha temple. This inscription was found engraved on a group of three rectangular stones slabs (1.04 m x 0.56 m) fixed on the right wall of the mandapa of the temple which is now a well known religious centre of pilgrimage in the Nagpur district³⁷. The record describes a pious act performed by Prabhavatigupta's daughter to perpetuate the memory of her mother. This inscription refers to the three acts:

1. That of building a temple in place of an old one (by the daughter).
2. That of purchasing of land for the purpose of construction of lake.
3. That of excavation of Sudarshan lake (by Pravarasena II).

Half of whose merit was to accrue to brahmans (Brahma-arapna) and other half to his parents (Mata-pitribhyo). Another instance of construction of lake is found in the Hisse-Borala inscription recording construction of lake Sudarshana by certain Aryya Summilladeva, described as an obedient servant of Vakataka king- Devasena. This inscription was found on a structure, which was a remnant of an ancient dam. Archaeological finds suggests association of temples with water-cisterns/tanks. Obviously these temples were significantly linked with some kind of association with water management. Perhaps this

³⁶ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol.. V, Deotek inscription-2, Pg. 4.

³⁷ Ramtek has also been identified with Kalidadasa's *Meghadutas* Ramgiri.

acted as a 'secular' function of the temples with resource management being organised around it. In that case the temple priest would have played an important part in its construction and management.

The lord Prabhavatiswamin has been identified with lord Narasimha, to which the Kevala Narasimha temple was dedicated. Similarly we find reference to Pravareshvaraya in the inscription of Pravarasena II. Thus Pandhurna plates of this ruler were issued from the temple of Pravaresvaraya (Pravaresvara-deva-kula-sthanat)³⁸ which perhaps was a Shiva-linga established by Pravarasena I in Pravaresvara-sadvimsati-vataka referred to in the Bellora plates³⁹.

The Mandhal plates referred to another god whose attributes match those of Visṇu but the name is of a local God that is Mondasvamin. Mondasvamin is described as the one carrying a conch shell, wheel, sword resting in Yoganidra on the body of snake king Ananta. In fact the description of Sesasayin Visnu under the name of Mondaswamin is of iconographic interest as it is one of the oldest datable description of this form. God Mondasvamin commanded that the grant of villages be made to brahmins belonging to different Gotras/Caranas engaged in study. Herein we have the curious but significant interlacing of Vedic religion, of Epic religion with a local deity after whom the local village was named (even today there exist villages by the name of Mauda and Dongarmouda in the region).

³⁸ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Pandhurna Plates, Pg. 64.

³⁹ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Belora plates, Pg. 16-21.

So do we have here the evidence of the process of greater tradition coming in contact and appropriating the local/lesser tradition, as suggested in the anthropological model of Milton Singer or do we find the local God adopting the attributes of Vishṇu and coexisting in his own right? In fact the grant also refers to exclusion of the area already to the monasteries of the Satvata schools, originally belonging to the Vatsagulma. A.M. Shastri goes on to suggest that 'The reference of Satvata Charana seems to indicate that there Vedicism had become established among the Panchratras by the Vakataka period'⁴⁰. Thus the Washim region for him seems to be an important centre of the Satvata school.

Thus in concluding the relationship between the Vakatakas and temples we may observe that very few temples were actually built by them. In fact the temple of Kewala Narasimha was actually an act of renovation. Indeed the Vakatakas had the tendency to name the God of the shrine in relation to the ruler-Prabhavatisvamin/Pravareshvarayya.

In fact some of the land grants were made from Vaijyika Dharmasthana⁴¹ or from places of worship like Ramagiristhana (Mandhal Plate). They perhaps were attempting to ensure that the land grants enjoyed an additional religious sanctity (as they were being granted from the feet of the lord), besides royal sanction. It was perhaps through these acts of inter-lacing their authority with the religious, the interlacing of religious with secular that

⁴⁰ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Pg. 87.

⁴¹ V.V. Mirashi ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Dudia Plates, Pg. 43-47.

the royalty derived its strength, whilst legitimising and re-legitimising its control.

In some cases the grants were made at places which have been identified as Tirthas. Thus Indore plates of Pravarasena II issued from Tripurivasakata suggest that the ruler went on a pilgrimage to Tripuri⁴². Another such instance is the Tirodi plates of Paravarsena II issued from Narattangavari. A.M. Shastri has identified this as a place of Tirtha where the ruler went in the month of Magha which is specially praised in the Puranas as very sacred. The legends suggesting accruing of great merit by bathing at a holy place during that month. Thus Pravarsena may have gone to Narattangavari tirtha to bathe and there on the Shattila Ekadasi day, making the grant the next day on the breaking of his fast.

Thus the link between royalty and temples at this stage stands at a very tentative level. Undoubtedly they were trying to associate themselves with Epic deities, deriving power by association. They were not into large-scale building of monumental architecture in the form of temples. In fact just one out of thirty seven inscription refers to the building of temples, which too is actually a renovation. One of the land grants was for the maintenance of the temples, none for the priests officiating at these temples⁴³.

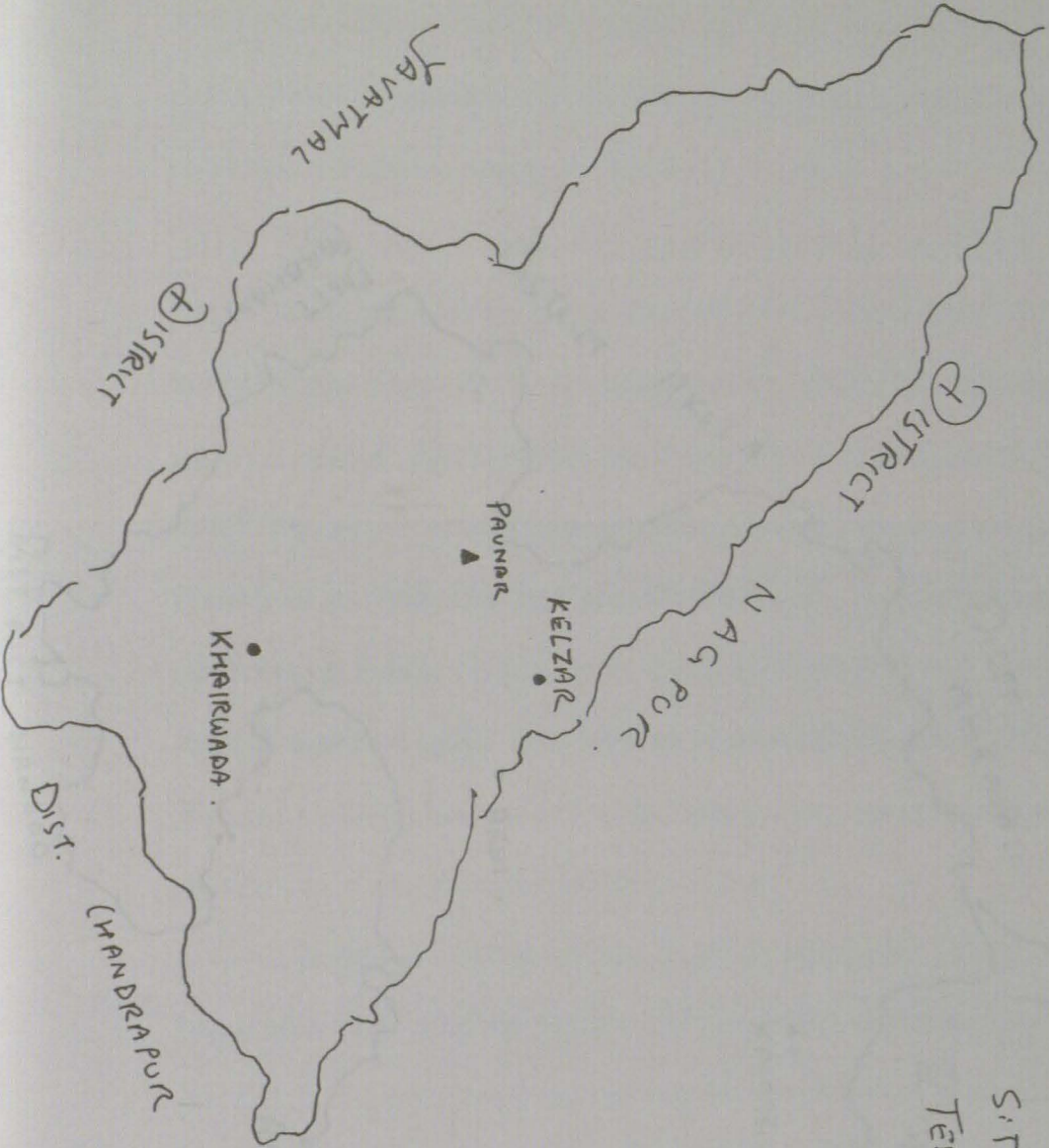
Thus early temples of Vidarbha have little to do with the royalty, they in fact were the products of community patronage (for if royalty did not

⁴² A.M. Shastri ed., *The Age of the Vakatakas*, Pg. 94.

⁴³ Mandhal Plates of the period of Rudrasena II, This information is based on a short notice in *Mahamahajan 'Administrative Division under the Vakatakas'*.

DISTRICT

WARDHA.

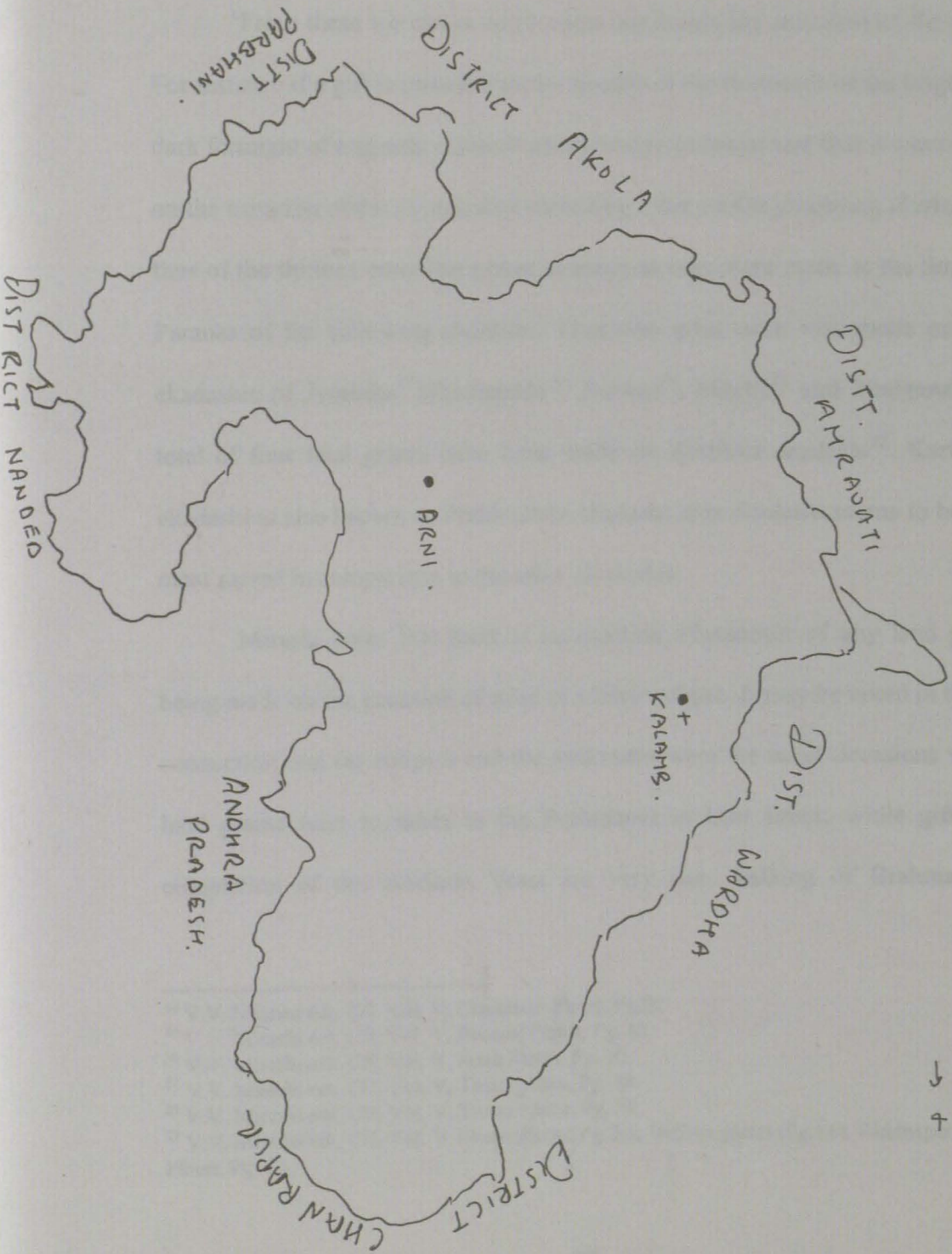


EARLY HISTORIC - HISTORIC

SITE → ●

TEMPLE SITE → ▲

① DISTRICT JEOTAMAL.



EARLY HISTORIC
- HISTORIC SITE -
MEGALITHIC SITE
→ +

1. At Chikkamburi, which is defined as a place of worship for the ruler.
2. One temple which was renovated at Ramtek.
3. At Vatsagulma where a couple of villages were allocated to the temple.

Besides these three instances no other reference to the temples is found. In fact the Mandhal plates referring to grant of four villages to Vatsagulma temple are peculiar. If they were for the maintenance of the temple, then we should expect these to be near the temple, in fact on a map these four villages are separated from the temple by at least three hundred Km. How then was the tribute to be transferred? Similarly the Chikkamburi temple is a mere marker of a ruler's place of worship, where as Ramtek inscription records an act of renovation. Obviously, these temples were existing before the Vakatakas came. Also unlike as Thapar suggests, the temple does not seem to have been patronised only by elite social section. The sculpting of images and the building of temples hardly initiated a new pattern of patronage as was suggested by Thapar⁵⁵. In fact the temples or the Devakulas housed the deities who became the centre of dana, being a representation of the deity. The evolution of the concept of Bhakti or devotion brought the worshipper and the deity into a special one to one relationship. This would have necessitated regular, daily visits to the Devakula and offerings, which might be perishable- flowers, fruits etc. That such kind of patronising by the community would have left little in

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

form of votive inscriptions. This kind of community patronage was a cultural/social innovation of this period and was intricately linked to the social identity as also the religious identity of the community, just as amongst the Buddhists. In its formative period, the temple did not receive royal patronage, then who patronised it? The Devakula would need a certain a minimum for its normal functioning. This certain-minimum-resource would have come from daily visiting devotees and from the community at large. One basic assumption over here is that patronage is essential in form of providing resources for the running of such religious institutions. Perhaps the act of patronage was in the form of craftsmen who actually worked on the object of patronage- thus Mansar temples utilising the lotus technique were suggestive of high level of skilled and planned construction.

Thus at a basic level both the temples and Buddhist stupas were receiving community patronage. At least in the case of the early temples of Vidarbha it holds true. For both served the purpose of enhancing the social status of the visiting devotee as also serving to reinforce the community identity by becoming the focal centre of community identity.

Conclusion: -

While concluding this chapter we may point out that in Vidarbha, the Vakataka royalty resorted to all the three kinds of patronage i.e. categories (1), (2) and (3), both directly and indirectly. If patronage were an integral part of the processes of legitimisation then the Vakatakas resorted to all the three

modes of patronisation suggesting the 'overwhelming' need for legitimisation of their own institutional structures, as also pointing to a relatively unstable political scenario.

That repeated declaration of their affiliations and regular reference to their alliance with Śaiva-Bharasaivnagas and later with the Bhāgvata-Guptas, indicates their desire and perhaps a compulsive need for maintaining a peaceful northern frontier. This ensured the possibility of unhindered expansion in the south whilst guarding their frontiers till Baghelkhand/Bundelkhand. At another level this also provided legitimacy to the Vakataka ruling house- with matrimonial alliance linking- them with two of the most powerful ruling houses of their time.

In this context it is difficult to support the argument that the land grants were supposed to implant brahmans in the form of a backup administration where the grant was in settled areas and to introduce the system where new settlements were being established⁵⁶. We have little evidence to suggest that new settlements were being established as a part of the process of issuance of land grants. The need of a backup administration rises where there exists a shortage of administrative officials or the state is too weak to establish its control and therefore needs – a subordinate structure to sustain itself. That most of these land grants were addressed to the officials indicates that there was no shortage of officials. Further transfer of grantee from one land grant to another is hardly suggestive of a weak state structure. Further the grant of land

⁵⁶ Romila Thapar, *Interpreting Early India*, Delhi, 1997, Pg. 131.

was not a monopoly of the state as is suggested by the grant of half a village land to Brahmanas by a merchant called Chandra⁵⁷. There is then a need to study the relationship of the grantee and the state from a very different perspective. Perhaps these grants were for the express economic reason of the intensification of agrarian production, as is evidenced in most of the land grants being made in river valleys which were already settled.

What also emerges from the analyses of the affiliations of the brahmins and the relative share of patronage they got from the royalty is that brahmins can no longer be seen as a homogenous group garnering all the patronage. In fact there were conflicting sectional interests in the race for cornering the largest chunk of patronage- in the form of land grants- as they did in later period of history. We just have one instance of land being made over to the temple at Vatsagulma (Mandhal caves) and even in this case as Shrimali notes, the villages donated were very far off from the said temple areas. These temples were obviously then being maintained through community patronage- rather than depending on total patronage of the royal house. This then is very similar to the kind of patronage that the Buddhist monuments received. The only difference lies in the fact that the laity left the evidence of their presence on the sutis, railings, coping stones etc of the stupa, whilst no such instance is found in the case of the temples except in the form of unbaked clay ceilings (as at Mansar).

⁵⁷ V.V. Mirashi, ed, *CII*, Vol. V, Indore Plates, Pg. 39.

Table I.: **Inscriptions before Pravarasena – II.**

Inscriptions	Reference to Buddhism	Issued to which branch of brahmanas	Reference to vedic sacrifice or vedic deities	Theistic /Epic deities	Reference to temples
Deotek stone inscription I (amacha of asoka)	Prohibits capture and slaughter of animals	-----	-----	-----	-----
Deotek stone inscription II (RudrasenaI)	-----	-----	-----	-----	Chikamburi reffered to as dharmasthan
Nachne ki talai stone inscription I(vyagrahad-eva)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Nachne ki talai stone inscription II(Vyagraha deva)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Ganj stone inscription (Vyagrahdev a)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Mandhal plates (Rudrasena I)	-----	-----	-----	-----	For the maintenance of two temples at Vatsagulma
Poona plates(Prabh avatigupta)	-----	-----	Samudraguptas Ashvamēdha is referred to	Vishṇu, the donee is called Bhāgvata	-----
Basim plates (vindhya shakti II of vatsagulma branch)	-----	Atharvana carana	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Jyotiṣṭoma, bṛihsapatisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor.	-----	-----

Table II: **Inscriptions of Pravarasena II.**

Inscriptions	Reference to Buddhism	Issued to which branch of brahmanas	Reference to vedic sacrifice or vedic deities	Theistic /Epic deities	Reference to temples
Jamb plates (second regnal year)	-----	Taittirya śākhā for performance of a gaṇayāga	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashwamēdhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Mahēśvara, Śambhu, Chakrapāṇi	-----
Belora plates(a)(eleventh regnal year)	-----	Taittirya śākhā	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashwamēdhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Mahēśvara, Śambhu, Chakrapāṇi	-----
Belora plates(b)(eleventh regnal year)	-----	Taittirya śākhā	-----	-----	-----
Mandhal plates(sixteenth regnal year)	-----	Taittirya śākhā	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are	Mahābhairava, Mahēśvara, Śambhu, Chakrapāṇi	-----

			ten ashvamedhas of bharasivas		
Chammak plates (eighteenth regnal year)	-----	Taittirya śākhā	Agnistoma, Apt oryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shodaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Brihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashvamedhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Mahēśvara, Śambhu, Chakrāpāṇi	-----
Siwani plates (eighte enth regnal year)	-----	Taittirya śākhā	Agnistoma , Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shodaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Brihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashvamedhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Mahēśvara, Śambhu, Chakrāpāṇi	-----
Riddhapur plates (ninete enth regnal year)	-----	Taittirya śākhā	-----	Bhāgvata, foot prints of lord of Rāmagiriswam i	-----
Indore plates (twenty- third regnal year)	-----	-----	-----	Chakrapāṇi, Mahēśvara, Padamula of Bhāgvat	-----
Dudia plates (twenty third regnal year)	-----	-----	Agnistoma, Apt oryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shodaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Brihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by	Mahābhairava, Mahēśvara, Sambhu, Chakrapāṇi	-----

			the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashvamedhas of bharasivas		
Tirodi plates (twenty third regnal year)	-----	Atharvedin <u>carana</u>	Agnistoma, Apt oryama, Vajapeya, Ukthya, Shodasin, Vajapeya Atiratra, Brihsa patisava, Sadyaskra, four Ashwamedha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashvamedhas of bharasivas	Mahabhairava, Maheshvara, Sambhu, Chakrapani	-----
Wadgaon plates (twenty fifth regnal year)	-----	A vishuva vachaka	Agnistoma, Apt oryama, Vajapeya, Ukthya, Shodasin, Vajapeya Atiratra, Brihsa patisava, Sadyaskra, four Ashwamedha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashvamedhas of bharasivas	Mahabhairava, Maheshvara, Sambhu, Chakrapani	-----
Yavatmal plates (twenty sixth year)	-----	Taittiriya <u>sakhā</u>	-----	Maheshvara Mahabhairava, Chakrapani, Shambhu	-----
Pattan plates (twenty seventh year)	-----	Taittiriya <u>sakhā</u>	Agnistoma, Apt oryama, Vajapeya, Ukthya, Shodasin, Vajapeya Atiratra, Brihsa patisava, Sadyaskra, four Ashwamedha performed by the donor. Also mentioned are ten ashvamedhas of bharasivas	For the maintenance of a feeding house of Vishnu also refers to Mahabhairava, Chakrapani, Shambhu, Maheshvara	-----

Pandhurna plates (twenty ninth regnal year)	-----	Vajasaneyi śākhā	are ten Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaśin, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsapatisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamedhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Chakrapāṇi, Shambhu, Mahēśvara	-----
Masoda plates (twenty ninth regnal year)	-----	-----	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaśin, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsapatisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamedhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Chakrapāṇi, Shambhu, Mahēśvara	-----
Pauni plates (thirty second regnal year)	-----	-----	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaśin, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsapatisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamedhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Chakrapāṇi, Shambhu, Mahēśvara	-----
Ramtek plates	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Patna plates	-----	Taittirīya śākhā	-----	Shambhu	-----

Table III: Post- Pravarasena II Inscriptions.

Inscriptions	Reference to Buddhism	Issued to which branch of brahmans	Reference to vedic sacrifice or vedic deities	Theistic /Epic deities	Reference to temples
Durg plates	-----	-----	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shodaśin, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsapatisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamēdhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Śiva	-----
Balaghat plates (Prithvisena I)	-----	-----	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shodaśin, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsapatisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamēdhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Chakrapāṇi, Shambhu, Mahēśvara	-----
Mandhal plates (a) (Prithvisena II)	-----	Taittirīya śākhā	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shodaśin, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsapatisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamēdhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Chakrapāṇi, Shambhu, Mahēśvara	-----
Mandhal plates (b)	-----	-----	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya,	Mahābhairava,	-----

(Prithvisena II)			Ukthya, Shoḍaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamēdhas of bharasivas	Chakrapāṇi, Shambhu, Mahēśvara	
Mahurjhari plates(PrithvisenaII)	-----	Vajasaneyi śākhā	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamēdhas of bharasivas	Mahābhairava, Chakrapāṇi, Shambhu, Mahēśvara	-----
India office plates (Devasena)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Hisse-borala plates(Devasena)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Thalner plates (Harisena)	-----	-----	Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryama, Vājapēya, Ukthya, Shoḍaś in, Vājapēya Atiratra, Bṛihsa patisava, Sādyaskra, four Ashwamēdha performed by the donor. Also mentioned ashvamēdhas of bharasivas	Hāritī	-----
Ajanta caves inscription (varahadeva)	Buddha, budhist sangha	-----	Indra	Viṣṇu, Rāma, Hara, Naga	-----
Ghatotkacha inscription (varahadeva cave)	Buddha	-----	-----	Brahma	-----

Ajanta cave XVI inscription	Buddha	-----	-----	-----	-----
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Chapter 4.

Community Belief Structures and Temples

In the previous chapter we emphasised upon the importance of community patronage in setting up and the maintenance of the early temples of Vidarbha. We also suggested that in this form, the patronage was no different from that extended to the earlier buddhist-monastic sites. It is also evident that the Vedic ritual played a significant role during the Vakataka period in the processes of legitimisation. This suggests a complex mix of the means of legitimisation adopted by the royalty. In this chapter we attempt to contextualise the existence of early temples vis-à-vis the community belief structure. We shall for this purpose utilise inscriptional, archaeological, iconographical and textual evidence.

A community belief structure is an edifice of community consciousness. It is both an expression and a satisfaction of its felt needs of existence. Whilst belief structures are essentially the symbolic dimension that lead to emergence of temples, stupas, caves etc. and its in the conversion of symbolic to significant that patronage comes into play.

Further a community's belief structure may not necessarily constitute a single belief system. The same community may follow multiple belief systems. That each of these belief systems maintains their hold over the same community, is the result of a process of negotiation through the multiple contestations amongst these belief systems. That this contestation is very different from confrontation is suggested in archaeological terms by the fact

that the sacred nature of a site may continue over time, that the same site is shared by contesting belief systems in context of its sacredness. The sacred space continues though its nature might undergo a transformation. In this chapter an attempt will be made to discuss the available evidence regarding the existence of different belief systems in Vidarbha's early historic to the early medieval period. It is in this context that we would situate the belief systems whose material expressions turned out to be the temples, the stupas, the chaitya, and the viharas. In this chapter we shall then discuss, to begin with, the megaliths followed by a discussion on the spread of Buddhism in Vidarbha. This shall then be followed by a detailed account of the Goddess and specifically the Lajjagauri. Following this we would discuss the evidence regarding Theistic religion and we shall conclude by discussing the popularity of epics in our region.

The Megaliths: -

The megaliths are the earliest expression in archaeological terms of the existence of some kind of belief system prevailing amongst the people of Vidarbha. This region has more than fifty megalithic sites. The date range for these sites of Vidarbha vary from 800 BC to 400 BC¹. The site of Bhagimohari has an upper date of 760+/- 110 BC and a lower date range of 493+/- 118 BC². Takalghat too has a date range from 800 BC to 400 BC. As mentioned earlier in chapter one, unlike other megalithic culture zones of south India, Vidarbha

¹ U.S. Moorti, *Megalithic Culture of South India*, Varanasi, 1994. appendix V, Pg. 121-123.

² *ibid.*

has a marked uniformity in terms of the typology of megaliths in use. Vidarbha thus is marked by the presence of a large number of cairn circles.

Megaliths are an expression of societies belief systems. They are an expression of the way they perceive their dead, the ancestors. And perhaps are reflections of what they expect will happen to them in their other world. Scholars³ argue that ritual activities form an active part of the processes of social construction of reality within social formations and may be conceived as a particular form of the ideological legitimisation of the social order. In the process they serve sectional interests of particular groups. The construction of monumental structures sepulchral or non-sepulchral depends on social mobilisation of resources and societal co-operation.

Ethnographic studies available for tribal communities like Savaras⁴ and Gadabas and the Bondos⁵ and Kodos⁶ practising the megaliths clearly show that these are closely connected with the whole cycle of production-feast-alliances. The occurrence of non-local prestige goods in limited number of megalithic burials suggests the control of long distance trade by local elite groups, the procurement of which eventually depended on alliances and gift exchanges. These relatively affluent burials suggest how the local cycle of prestige building was embedded in the processes of alliance and exchange.

It is widely noticed that the ritualised chiefly organisation of land and lineage through ancestor worship in megalithic tombs is a recurrent

³ Shanks and Tilley, *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology*, Cambridge, 1982, Pg. 130.

⁴ Thurston, *The caste and tribes of Southern India*, Madras, 1909: 304-347.

⁵ Haimendorf, *JRASB*, IX (1), 1943: 149-178.

⁶ Hoskins, 'So my name shall live: stone dragging and grass building in Kodi (West Sumba), *Anthropologica*', (XXVIII), 1986: 31-51.

phenomenon in different parts of the world and occurs both in small scale and the more developed societies⁷. An insight into the functional role of these megalithic monuments could be that these do not just represent burials but are also to be seen as living entities. The deads were not separated from the living but lived as ancestors in their permanent houses amongst the living and that the living could regularly make their visits. They could be approached by opening the chamber or contacted through rites and offerings. There then existed the two-way relationship between megaliths as symbols of belief and megaliths as production of community effort. These were the monuments to heroic leadership of ancestral chiefs and their warriors, legitimising and sustaining the power of their successors.

The uniformities existing in the region of Vidarbha with respect to megaliths suggest that the construction of these was largely structured like common ritual practices. Thus a majority of burials were made in stone circles. Secondly the' placements of the dead in Vidarbha was found to have been oriented in the east-west direction with the head to the east⁸. The find of horse remains along with their ornaments⁹ in Vidarbhan megalithic stone circle sites is peculiar to Vidarbha. It suggests that the horses were significant to the ritual context and perhaps even the contents of Vidarbhan megaliths. Thus we find only the remains of animals of the equidea family inside the stone circles. The study of fauna at Takalghat and Khapa¹⁰ shows that whereas the bones of

⁷ Bloch, 1971: Renfrew, 1973.

⁸ D.P. Agarwal and A. Ghosh ed., *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology*, 'The Dating of Megaliths in Maharashtra: Evaluation of some new evidence', Pg. 135.

⁹ Khairwada, Naikund, Bhagimohari, Mahurjhari, Junapani.

¹⁰ Deo S.B. *Excavation at Takalghat-Khapa*, 1970.

domesticated animals like sheep, goat, bull and pig are common in the habitational deposits at Takalghat, they are absent in the stone circles. Perhaps the presence of symbolic burial megaliths as at Bhagimohari suggests the importance of megalith building as a part of ritual practices and is indicative of their meanings as a ritual, it had acquired in the iron-age society of Vidarbha. Further excavations reveal that the pattern of filling and planning of the stone circles is common in the various excavated stone circles across Vidarbha: below the pebble filling was jet black and sticky clay which in turn capped a reddish soil or disintegrated murum¹¹.

S.R. Walimbe and R.K. Mohanty performed a detailed analysis of the osteological evidence with regards to the Vidarbhan megaliths. They observe that the number of burials in proportion to the populations suggests that the custom of erecting of burial monuments was confined only to certain individuals or groups. The skeletal data indicates a very high percentage of young adults and adults (age group of 17 to 32) while the infant or sub-adult age group is only slightly represented.

Perhaps the megalithic people practised some other method of disposal of the dead for the younger group or in the 'normal' case of death. In fact the traumatic lesions found on some of the specimens¹² and the occurrence of more than one individual in a primary context in many megalithic circles indicates higher mortality in adulthood, implying that this group of population was subject to higher risks. In small population groups such simultaneous

¹¹ IAR, 1977-78, Pg. 39.

¹² Sharp cut marks observed on bones from Khairwada and Raipur indicate intentional human activity on bones (Walimbe 1985,1992).

deaths¹³ should be rare except in calamitous or accidental situations. It is possible that the burial monuments were erected for adults who met a traumatic, accidental or untimely death. The present evidence leads to the conclusion that the megalithic burial practice were restricted to certain group of people and not every member of the community was accorded such a ceremonial departure. In fact the data from Vidarbha, especially from villages close to excavated sites reveals that people bury only those who die in accidents or unnatural circumstances. Otherwise cremation is the normal practice. Bhils of Dhule district in Maharashtra practice cremation as the normal method for disposal of the dead, those who died accidentally are buried along with all their belongings and a memorial stone or a wooden pillar is erected on the grave. Thus we undoubtedly have the evidence of megaliths as memorial sites of those who died in confrontation and consequently commemoration monuments were raised as a part of the belief in hero-worship, perhaps that is also the reason why we find a large number of weapons in the megalithic-funerary remains. If we recall, Vidarbha does not see a substantial chalcolithic phase. Thus Vidarbha would have been a frontier zone-an uninhabited zone with chalcolithic cultures to its west. These megaliths would then be equivalent of the viragal that we find in the frontier zones in the peninsula. Whatever the reason be, the megaliths as a practice went out of use before the beginning of christian era.

Perhaps the chiefdoms that would have been sustained by the

¹³ Most of the buried deposits do not seem to have been reopened, suggesting that most of these deaths were simultaneous.

legitimising role of the megaliths, underwent transformation, perhaps other, terms of legitimisation emerged, substituting this kind of activity. Thus when the needs of a society underwent transformation and perhaps the labour organisation underwent a change, 'tribes' that might have sustained- providing workforce for megalithic activity transformed into peasant societies, fertility cults acquired greater importance in societies with agrarian mode of subsistence. In addition to the internal dynamics Vidarbha is centrally located within the sub-continent and was hence influenced by the developments within the Gangetic plains. Two of these had far reaching implications. First the emergence and the expansion of the Mauryas in the fourth century BC and the second was the spread of Buddhism and trade at about the same time. Of relevance to our studies is the second one viz. the introduction of Buddhism in Vidarbha.

Buddhism in Vidarbha

We may begin by discussing the Deotek inscription. The earlier of the two inscriptions is written in early brahmi alphabets. This inscription purported object was to record the command of some lord- (sami) who is called king in line 4 prohibiting the capture and slaughter of some animals in certain seasons/year- as in Ashoka's fifth pillar edict- declaring some punishment for such as dared to disobey it. These orders were to be enforced by an official called *amacha*. Mirashi notes that a Dharmamahamatra issued this inscription in the 14th year after Ashoka's coronation. If not in specificities, at least in a general sense, this is the earliest reference for Buddhism in Vidarbha. "From

the inscription of Deotek, it may be surmised that Buddhism was preached and practised in Vidarbha in Mauryan times”¹⁴ observes O.P. Verma. Pauni excavation shed light on the fact that Buddhism had acquired popular following in Vidarbha. The illustrious monk, Nagarjuna is associated with the south Kosala. South Kosala is identified by Cunningham as modern Berar. The royal friend Sha-to-po-ha who excavated the monastery on a mountain for Nagarjuna is identified as a Satavahana.

The influence of Buddhism on the masses of Maharashtra at large is shown by the existence of rock-cut cave excavations, their mural decoration as also the finds from Satavahana levels at various sites in Western Maharashtra testify to the depth to which Buddhist religion had penetrated the minds of the people¹⁵. That Buddhism continued to receive patronage even in the post-Satavahana period is evidenced by the records of the Vakataka period. Varahadeva, a minister of Vakataka King, excavated a couple of Viharas at Ajanta. A couple of others seem to have been excavated in Vakataka times.¹⁶

Pauni excavations yielded two stupas, one at Chandakpur Tekdi, another at Jagannath Tekdi. The mode of construction, period of construction and to some extent structurally the two Stupas were not alike.

The stupa at, Jagannath Tekdi has been identified as much earlier, in comparison to the one at Chandakpur Tekdi. The earliest level of the stupa was constructed by usage of bricks, the size of these burnt bricks being 40 cm x 30

¹⁴ J.P. Joshi & S.B. Deo ed., *Pauni Excavation (1969-70)*, Nagpur, 1972, Religious background Pg. 15.

¹⁵ Ray H.P., *Monastery and guild :commerce under the Satavahanas*, OUP, 1986.

¹⁶ Mirashi V.V., *CII*, Vol. V, Pg. xli-xlii.

cm x 10 cm. The diameter of the original stupa was found to be 38.2 m. The height could not be ascertained because of the presence of a temple at the top of this mound. For the earliest phase of construction, the excavation found no definitive evidence for a *pradakshina path*. The excavator, however, suggests the feasibility of a modest *pradakshina path* that was probably altered in the subsequent encasements and elaboration. The stupa was constructed using box-type techniques through various stages. The mode of construction of the Chandakpur Tekdi stupa is very different from the Jagannath Tekdi. We do not however have any chronological framework available to study the development of the various styles of construction. The excavator sums-up the picture of the earliest stupa as “Thus the earliest stupa, associated with painted NBP ware, appears to have been one of the massive construction of large size bricks, set in mud-mortar, in a lateritic horizon”¹⁷. The association of this earliest structure with painted NBP ware, shards, which the excavator claims, comes before the plain variety suggests that the earliest phase of construction be to be assigned to 4-3rd century BC. The first encasement was done in phase II that has been identified as the Maurya-Sunga phase.

The first encasement involved the covering of the dome to a thickness of 1.48-m. Gravel, lime and mica flakes were used to construct the *pradaksina path*. The width of the *pradaksina path* equaled 1.6 m, being marked by wooded postholes (16-cm diameter each). The second encasement of the stupa probably began after the wooden railing and the *pradaksina path* of the previous one had disintegrated. After this encasement the diameter of the stupa

¹⁷ J.P. Joshi and S.B. Deo , *Pauni Excavation*, 1969-70, Pg. 25.

was increased to 41.2 m. a final course of brick ring was constructed around the enhanced stupa. The brick sizes of the two encasements were the same. The renovation of the *pradaksina path* involved the replacement of the disintegrated peripheral wooden posts in the stone pillars. The pillar portion above the ground was hexagonally constructed with once in a while a sculpted figure being carved on the inner railing, Kharamukha Yaksha figure was used as a motif and there existed in all a hundred figures. Copingstones were used on outer railings. These belong to octagonal pillars sculpted with Buddhist motifs such as stupa, caitya, bodhi tree, Bhadrasena, figures of devotees etc.

The new *pradaksina path* and successive enhancements, the embellishment on stone railing- all are indicative of the fact that new and greater resources were available for disposal, on one hand, as also increasing popularity of Pauni amongst people on the other. Even the expansion in the width of the *pradaksina path* is suggestive of the increase in the number of laity visiting Pauni.

The third phase of the stupa has been equated with the Ksatrapa-Satavahana period. In this phase, primarily, repair work of the railings was undertaken. This phase belongs to the early centuries of the Christian era as the palaeographic records on the sutis suggest 'The coping stones in several cases were found to bear inscriptions of different periods which might indicate repair/replacement'¹⁸. The fourth phase of Jagannath Tekdi repair coincided with the building of the Chandakpur Tekdi Stupa (1st century BC to 2nd century

¹⁸ S.B. Deo & J.P. Joshi, *Pauni Excavation*, Nagpur, 1972, Pg. 28.

AD), with a *pradaksina path* of 6.86 m. The Stupa was built using alternate course of clay bricks and burnt bricks. The monument's dimension in its first and only phase of construction were comparable to that of Jagannath Tekdi stupa (41.6 m in diameter and 7.5 m in height). The stupa had revetments to save it from floodwater. The site sees a 'modest'¹⁹ attempt at representing the symbolic aspects of Buddhism. There exist a few historical and Jataka representations of the Yaksha. Thus are depicted the chauri-bearer, Naga Mucalinda is depicted as guarding Bhadrasena, Yaksha Karamukha is depicted on the octagonal pillars, clad in dhoti and in abhaya posture. Fragment number 17 depicts a ruler and his queen travelling on an elephant, carrying a relic casket- this has been identified with Ajatsatru carrying the relics of the Buddha in procession. Symbols like stupa, capped by a lotus flower, an arched caityagraha, dharmachakra depiction, and the use of triratna symbol, all these were the modes of perception that bound the laity, to the stupa. That the visit of laity to the stupa was to remain a sacred memory- a reminder. These depictions were aimed at the community; they were attempts at creating a belief pattern that would bind the community to the Stupa. They were a sort of narrative mode in stone. Their symbolism was to create and to successively reinforce the Buddhist identity amongst laity that took the path of *pradaksina path*.

Even in the choice of the decorations we detect a flavour-specific to Pauni. Thus unlike Barhut- where the focus was on depiction of animals, at Pauni there occurs a predominance of floral designs. A vertical panel scheme

¹⁹ S.B. Deo & J.P. Joshi , *Pauni Excavation* , Nagpur, 1972, Pg. 56.

of representation is used here in low relief, unlike at Barhut. The simplicity of decoration, lack of *vedika* etc is specific to Pauni. This seems to be an attempt to forge a much more local, region oriented identity, in the process, popularising Buddhism within the region.

Scholars like S.B. Deo, J.P. Joshi and A. Nath have attempted to explain the relative simplicity and peculiar features of the Pauni stupa on the lines of identifying them with the Hinayana sect. For them this seems to be an expression of Hinyanism. We have little to prove or justify such a claim. Is the relative simplicity the only criterion of it being a Hinyana production? Whatever the reason be, the 5th century life of Pauni Stupa with repeated embellishments, repairs and renovations, suggests continued community support for the Buddhist religion.

In fact Pauni is not the only Buddhist stupa site of Vidarbha. Mansar too has stupa remains. Similarly Adam site has remains of an earthen stupa, which had two distinct phases of construction. This stupa was circular on plan. The medhi radius was 17.3 m. An L-shaped pathway led to the stupa which was initially demarcated with a single course of shale stone wall which was later replaced by a brick-wall (22.2 m x 1.2 m). This Stupa site brought to light punch-marked coins, as also inscribed and uninscribed cast coins assignable to the later Satavahana rulers (1st century AD). At Arambha was found a Yaksha in low relief and a mould bearing standing salabhanjika in tribhanga: a ramification of Sanchi style²⁰. The Mulchera site in district Gadchirali has a

²⁰ IAR (1988-89).

brick built stupa²¹. The site of Nagara (district Bhandra) too reports a stupa²². The site of Salbardi (district Akola) reports three early rock-cut caves belonging to the Hinayanists. The cave hall had cells dug along the cave wall and Buddha statues could be identified in the caves²³. The Chandala forest near Mandhal (Nagpur district) too has Buddhist rock cut caves with a two-line inscription recording gift of Apala, the son of Vanalaka (second century BC). We thus have a large number of sites across Vidarbha with Buddhist remains. This suggests the intensity of its impact on the Vidarbha people. Buddhism would have restructured the belief systems of many in Vidarbha. The Pauni excavator, after an analysis of the names found in the inscriptions on sushis, railing, coping stones etc, concludes that “The range of names encompassing house-holders, lay followers, monks, nuns as also traders, goldsmiths etc show that the followers hailed from all walks of life”²⁴.

Hala's *Gathasaptasati*, a text which reflects the village life of the region between the Tapti and Godavari profusely refers to Theistic religion and Theistic myths. It however, has one reference to Buddhism.

Thus

“The earth looks splendid with the flowers of Palasha trees
Which resembles the beaks of Parrots.
As if they were the
The congregated monks,
Fallen for worship at the feet of Buddha”²⁵.

²¹ IAR (1987-88).

²² IAR (1976-77).

²³ IAR (1979-80).

²⁴ S.B. Deo & J.P. Joshi, *Pauni Excavations*, (1969-70). Pg. 53.

²⁵ R. Basak, translated *Gathasaptasati* fourth century, verse 8, Calcutta, 1971, Pg. 68.

This metaphorical reference must have been a part of the day-to-day idiom suggesting the popularity of Buddhism in the area.

The period of Vakatakas i.e. post-Satavahana is often seen and referred to as a period of brahmanical revival. This process of brahmanical revival is seen as resulting out of a dual process i.e. firstly the attempts made by an ever-aggressive Brahmanism to regain its territory thus resulting in the growth of Theistic brahmanism. At another level, this process was aided by internal transformations occurring in Buddhism. Here we would like to make two points. With regards to the period of Vakatakas being identified with brahmanical revival we may note that whilst the Vakatakas may not themselves have been patrons of Buddhism, this did not prevent their officials/feudatories from patronising Buddhism. Thus a number of caves at Ajanta²⁶ are ascribed to the Vakataka period. Varahdeva's Ghatotkacha-cave inscription opens with a verse in praise of Buddha. It refers to Dharma and the Sangha. Varahadeva, born in a prestigious Brahmana Vallura family of the south was minister of Harisena (around 475 AD).

The elder brother of Ravisambha, grief stricken after the death of his younger brother began to lead a pious life. He waited upon saintly persons known for their learning, charity, compassion and other virtues and was imitated in his actions by righteous Kings²⁷. He bestowed munificent gifts on suppliants, moved by compassion he released from bondage terrified persons by spending large amounts for the purpose.

²⁶ Caves XVI, XVII, XXVI, Chaitya cave XIX.

²⁷ V.V. Mirashi, *CII*, Vol. V, Inscription in Ajanta Cave XVII, Pg. 123.

He adorned the earth with stupas and viharas, delighting the suppliants with liberal gifts while the Vakataka ruler Harisena of the Vatsagulma branch was protecting the earth- implying that the elder brother of Ravisambha recognised Harishena as an overlord. He also caused a monolith mandapa with a caitya excavated, which was then provided with a cistern, perhaps, to provide for drinking necessities of the monks along with a Gandhakuti.

Secondly we would recount the new evidence found from the site of Mansar. Mansar is an interesting site. It provides evidence for Vedic religion and is identified as the *Pravareshvaraya Devakula Sthanam* of the Vakatakas²⁸. Wellsted had noted the existence of Buddhist monastery near Manser. The site yielded a number of Stupas. The first one was built following the natural contours of the hill, around 200 BC-250 AD. This earliest Stupa had a diameter of 8 m. It was enlarged using the box-type technique used at Pauni type with the diameter increasing to 14 meters. Pradakshina Path and a soapstone casket too were found. Another Stupa of undressed boulders (11m diameter) with a pradakshina path was discovered.

Also found was an oval Caitya built in two phases having a pedestal on the northern side. Another stone stupa of semi-dressed stone was built between (250-500 AD). This one had a diameter of 13.0 m., being enclosed by a 1.1-m pradakshina path. Also excavated was a vihar, built during the period.

Finally between (500-700 AD) was built the last stupa, having a diameter of 18 metres. This being the largest stupa. Along with it was built an

²⁸ J.P. Joshi and A.K. Sharma. *Excavation at Mansar, Distt. Nagpur, Maharashtra-1997-2000, Puratattva-30.*

oval caitya on the south-eastern side, over an earlier caitya. Thus we see that for almost 900 years this site was the centre of Buddhist building activity, belying the fact that by Vakataka times Buddhism had declined. Further the increase in size of the Stupa provides a proof for an ever-greater patronage.

Goddess in Vidarbha: -

The cult of the Goddess had prevailed in the country from much earlier times but it was only in the sixth century that it acquired an outstanding place in the literary traditions of Buddhist, Jaina and brahmanical sects. The goddesses were treated as Śakti or energy female principles and worshipped with the help of tantric fertility rites. This development is called Śaktism, which emerged as a determining religious factor in the sixth century, becoming a strong force by the ninth century. According to Jvalini Kalpa²⁹ the goddesses could be invoked under a big tree, at the cremation ground, at the cross-roads, at the village centre, on the outskirts of the town, suggesting the popular nature of the following of the Goddess.

Vidarbha too has yielded, in terms of archaeological finds, its share of the goddesses. The post-Satavahana phase of Arambha yielded head of a goddess carved in round buff sand stone³⁰. The eyes are wide open *akarnanta netrin*. From Shirkandam, district Nagpur, icon of Goddess along with the Mithunas and Yakshas was discovered. From Adam's Satavahana phase we have the find of a terracotta Goddess³¹. From pre-Satavahana levels of Adam

²⁹ *Jvalini Kalpa*, chapter 3, Volume I.

³⁰ IAR 1991-92.

³¹ IAR 1989-90.

that is Mauryan/pre-Mauryan we find evidence of terracotta fragments of hand modelled figures of goddess with wide-open legs³². Even at Paunar, head of goddess was reported, attributed to Vakataka period and that it compares well with the Mahisa surmaradini stone image retrieved from Mandhal³³, Mansar and Ramtek. The goddess is in essence the fusion of various fertility cults, which in the process of Sanskritisation were identified with the various Theistic deities, by making them- the consorts. In Vidarbha their process of acquiring consorts is visible in the early phases wherein the Shiva is identified with Uma (as in Mansar), Vishnu is identified with Lak~~s~~mi (also found at Mansar) and refer to, quite frequently, in the *Gathasaptasati*. The find of this deity (i.e. goddess) attests to her popular presence in the minds of the communities inhabiting the region of Vidarbha.

In fact if we take the case of Lak~~s~~mi, the Matsya Purana³⁴ shows that the cult of Mahalaxmi is as old as the fourth/fifth centuries, in fact the temple of Mahalaxmi at Kolhapur (south Maharashtra) seems to have been the centre of this cult. Laxmi is often depicted in Vidarbha along with Vishnu, this is contemporaneous or even earlier than the earliest references found in the Matsya Purana³⁵. The goddess was significant, even the city used to have a patron goddess³⁶.

³² IAR 1988-89. Has been placed between (500 BC-150 AD), stratigraphically.

³³ Vakataka period sculpture of Durga found in Mandhal during 1975-77 Excavations conducted by Deptt. Of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University.

³⁴ *Matsya Purana*, Chapter 13, VV 26-53.

³⁵ *Gathasaptasati*, Narayana-Laxmi referred to in the, verse 51, second century, Pg. 34.

³⁶ *Gathasaptasati*, Ninety fourth verse, Second Century, Pg. 44.

We know of Lajjagauri from the finds of a large number of icons across the peninsula. By first century BC a vocabulary of symbolism was established in Indian art including three- paramount symbols i.e. of the Lotus, the brimming Pot, and Srivatsa. Each of these symbols was subtly incorporated into the images of Lajjagauri.

Iconographically, four different forms of the Lajjagauri³⁷ exist:

- **Form I**

None of the images in this form have breasts, arms and head.

Uttanapada legs are joined to a truncated torso so that it may be perceived either as the pudendum, belly and the lower ribcage of a female figure, or as a traditional purna kumbha. A lotus torso tops each pot like lower torso.

This form is absent in Vidarbha.

- **Form II**

In this form the figure is lotus headed, but without arms. The form II figures are like those of Uttanapada- pot of form I except that the torso extends up to the shoulder and includes breast. Lotus is elevated to sit a top the shoulder. Torso is not pot like but more human in form in that the torso includes the abdominal area, which is ornamented with a girdle and has a carefully indicated navel, breasts, necklace, lotus. The legs of form II do not cradle the abdominal area as they do in form I. Images are small in this form just as in form I.

- **Form III**

This is more or less like the form I, the figure is however lotus

³⁷ C.R. Bolon ed., *The Forms of the Goddess Lajja Gauri*, Pennsylvania.

headed with arms. It is considered to be the largest group of surviving Lajjagauris, with most of them being found in areas of Chalukya control and period.

- **Form IV**

This form is totally anthropomorphic unlike those of form II III, with a human female head and all parts with legs in an Uttanapad pose.

This form is common in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

In Maharashtra, Vidarbha region has most of the finds of Lajjagauri. Maharashtra state has had a total of twenty findspots of which almost sixteen sites are to be found in the region of Vidarbha. The region of Vidarbha primarily has two forms, the form II and III. Further there exists the more complex depiction of a multfigurial representation of form II. If we study the district wise distribution of Lajjagauri sites, we find that almost fifty percent of the Vidarbhan Lajjagauris lie in district Nagpur.

Thus Nagpur district has eight Lajjagauri sites, Wardha district has three Lajjagauri find spots. Chandrapur district has two find spots whilst district Bhandra has three such spots. Thus maximum number of find spots of the Lajjagauri in Vidarbha are found in a district which already had a very strong megalithic antecedence and an even larger number of early historic settlements. Thus sites like Paunar having a strong megalithic antecedent, early historic segment and going upto the medieval period have Lajjagauri finds. Mahurjhari, one of the largest megalithic sites has Lajjagauri finds. Similarly Ramtek (discussed in chapter 1), a site with Vaisnava affiliations has also yielded Lajjagauri images. Mansar, Mandhal, the sites with strong Śaiva

affiliations yield Lajjagauri images as well. Pauni, a site, which yielded Buddhist stupas also, yield Lajjagauri of form II. Thus Lajjagauri appears in an area that was the nuclear region of early historic Vidarbha. Surprisingly, however, the Lajjagauri receives little patronage from the Vakatakas. None of the available references suggest existence of Lajjagauri sites in the region of Vidarbha, though the Mansar Lajjagauri was found in the course of excavations its context of find is not mentioned. Was it that like the temples, which were receiving little patronage from Vakatakas (in the form of land grants), the cult of Lajjagauri too was not receiving patronage from the royalty? Perhaps, like the temples the Lajjagauri cult was receiving community patronage in an incipient form.

Lajjagauri Find Spots

SITE	DISTRICT	FORM	SIZE	PERIOD	SOURCE
Bhabragarh	Chandrapur	III	NA	4 th -5 th c AD	C.R. Bolon
Chandrapur	Chandrapur	III	NA	4 th -5 th c AD	C.R. Bolon
Hamlapuri Ramtek	Nagpur	II	NA	4 th /5 th c. AD	Pvt. Collection
Mah'jhari(a)	Nagpur	II	NA	7 th c. AD	Maharashtra Shardashram.
Mah'jhari(b)	Nagpur	II	NA	7 th c. AD	Saraswati Bhawan Mahavidyalay
Mandhal	Nagpur	II, multifiig' represent.	3.25 x 4.0	4 th /5 th c. AD	Central Museum Nagpur
Mansar	Nagpur	II	4.0 x 3.25	4 th -6 th c. AD	Central Museum Nagpur
Nagara	Bhandra	III	NA	4 th -5 th c AD	C.R. Bolon
Paunar (b)	Wardha	II	4.5 x 3.0	4 th cent. AD	Pvt. Collection
Paunar (c)	Wardha	II	5.25 x 7.0	4 th -5 th c AD	Pvt. Collection
Paunar(a)	Wardha	II	4.5 x 4.5	4 th cent. AD	Pvt. Collection
Pauni	Nagpur	II	2.625 x 3.0	4 th /5 th c. AD	British Museum (1976)
Ramtola	Bhandra	II	5.0 x 7.75	4 th -6 th c. AD	Central Museum Nagpur
Surera (a)	Nagpur	II	NA	4 th /5 th c. AD	Maharashtra antiquities Deptt.
Surera(b)	Nagpur	II	5.8 x 5.8	4 th -6 th c. AD	Maharashtra antiquities Deptt.
Valad	Bhandra	III	NA	4 th -5 th c AD	C.R. Bolon

Theistic religion in Vidarbha: -

Just as stupas are monumental operationalisation of the Buddhist belief system so the temples were monuments to growth of theistic religion and rituals associated with the worship of a deity. We already have examined the evidence from the Vakataka inscriptions with regards to the patronage received by the theistic religion. In this section we would like to examine the iconographic and literary evidence on theistic religion in Vidarbha in the context of early temples.

Puranic myths are found to be expressed in the iconic depictions of theistic religion in Vidarbha. Thus the image of birth of Rama is found at Paunar (of first half of the sixth century AD). H.T. Bakker has traced this to Vishnu Kundins. Balarama's Dhenukasuravadha murti too is found at Paunar, with Balarama being shown as grabbing the hind legs of the mythical donkey-demon in an act of annihilation. Visnu is represented as a four-arm deity in shyamabhanga posture. This icon was found in the debris of the little rock-cut temple of Kapatarama. The Trivikrama depiction of Visnu's Vamanavatara is shown as having eight arms and taking three strides. The leg seems to be raised in the act of measuring the three strides seems to have been broken in subsequent period. We also have the Narasimha depiction at Ramagiri, in the Kevala Narsimha temple at the hilltop. This depiction has been identified as the Prabhavatiswamin – installed by Ati Bhavati, daughter of Prabhavatigupta.

The Varaha depiction is also to be found at the Rudra-Narasimha temple. At Tharsa, Narasimha depiction was excavated as well. We shall further discuss the popularity of Narasimha cult in a subsequent section.

Coming back to Vaisnavism we note that at the site of Mandhal were found depictions of Vasudeva, the legendary father of Kriṣṇa, the Vrishnivira. Samakarsana, a vrisni hero is depicted in the act of Dhenuka- suravadha. A Vrisni hero depiction too is found at Mandhal. From the site of Nagardhana a number of miniatures were found. These included an iconic representation of Vishnu himself, a Narasimha miniature as also a Vishnupada (perhaps a borrowing from Buddhism). Thus iconographically we have a large number of depictions of the Vaishnava cult. Surprisingly, in most of these depictions, the consort is not to be found. The only depiction, iconologically that is, that we have of Laksmi is to be found at Mansar separate from Visnu. At Nagara, district Bhandra, near a brick temple of the Vakataka period was found a crystal seal with the legend *Narayano* written on it. Another seal worth mentioning over here is the crystal seal found at Paunar with *Namo-Purushottama* written on it. These are representations of the popularity of the Vasinava cult amongst the lay devotees. These seals perhaps must have been acquired in the course of pilgrimage performed by the devotees as a sacred-reminder of the pilgrimage undertaken.

On examining the textual evidence available from *Gathasaptasati*, a text written during the Satavahana period and chronologically appearing much before the various iconic depictions that we find in Vidarbha, we find a large number of references to Vaisnava deities in this text. We have reference to the romantic interludes of Kriṣṇa-Radha³⁸. We also have reference to the childhood of Kriṣṇa at Vraja as also reference to Yashoda and the gopis of

³⁸ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 89, First century, Pg. 21.

Vraja³⁹, a popular myth in the life of the Vriśni hero, Kriśna. Another reference is to the infatuation of the cow-herdess for Krisna⁴⁰. We further have reference to the Mahabharata and Kriśna's role in it⁴¹.

Further reference is found to Madhumanthana (Visnu), he is referred to⁴² in the form of Lakśminarayana, though no iconic representation of the two as depicted together is found in Vidarbha. We have reference to Theistic myth of origin of Laksmi, as risen from the Satrishna⁴³. We also have reference to Hari's three-step myth⁴⁴ (just as we had seen the Trivikrama depiction of Vamana earlier). One reference is to the killing of Madhu and Bali by Viśṇu⁴⁵. These instances are to substantiate the currency and the popularity of myths that later became a part of the puranic tradition, amongst the communities practising Vaiśṇavism in Vidarbha. These myths like any other myths are the ways in which religions expand and get popularised in the process acquiring hold over large sections of the communities. On the other hand, these myths would have reinforced the community identity.

We next move over to Saivism and its depictions both in iconographic and textual data. At Mansar, a red sandstone Śiva-linga is found⁴⁶. At Mandhal we find depiction of Mahéshwara and Nandishwara. At Mandhal were found depictions of Rudra in his destructive Andhakasura-~~Samahara~~ Samahara murti form. At

³⁹ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 12, Second century, Pg. 26.

⁴⁰ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 14, Second century, Pg. 26.

⁴¹ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 43, Fifth century, Pg. 98.

⁴² *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 17, Second century, Pg. 27.

⁴³ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 51, Second century, Pg. 34.

⁴⁴ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 11, Fifth century, Pg. 91.

⁴⁵ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 25, Fifth century, Pg. 94.

⁴⁶ This sculpture was based on Shatrudriya as referred to in A.M. Shastri, ed, *The Age of the Vakatakas*, Pg. 219-221.

Mandhal, an image of Parvati, the consort of Siva, was also found in the course of archaeological excavations.

Between 1997-2000, Mansar site underwent extensive excavations at the hands of J.P. Joshi and A.K. Sharma. What emerged was a very complex site with multiple religious affiliations. The temples excavated over here were mostly of Saivite orientation (based on iconic grounds). Six Śiva-linga having a pranala on the northern side were found. These siva-lingas were found without the associated yonipitha on which the Liṅga is iconographically depicted to be rested upon. This is something peculiar to Vidarbha during this period. Interestingly, one of the shrines itself was built in the form of a yonipitha with the linga kept in the centre of the shrine atop a brick pedestal. The excavator notes: “ The sculptures, mostly Śaivite images, particularly belonging to the tantric cult are well delineated. Sculptures of Shiva-Parvati/Uma-Maheshwari, Ganas, Lajjagauri, Khinnara, Laxmi, with an attendant were found”⁴⁷.

Besides these icons there exist two other finds which may be listed as:

1. Havana Kundas in front of Śaiva shrines⁴⁸.
2. Finding of clay ceilings of *Pravareshvaraya* with the remains of a workshop for working of seals near the temple, where these clay seals could have been produced.

The presence of Havana Kunda sight in front of the shrine suggests that these were for the performance of rituals associated with the saiva cult. That these would have involved sections of communities, following and believing in

⁴⁷ *Purattatva*. 30. Pg.130.

⁴⁸ *ibid*.

Śaivism. The clay seals of *Pravareshvaraya* would have served as mementoes. These would have been the objects that the pilgrims would take away as a sacred-reminder of their pilgrimage to the temple of Pravareshvaraya.

The excavators have identified one main shrine, which they consider to be the *Pravareshvara-deva-kula-sthanat*⁴⁹. Certifying the popularity of this shrine is the fact that the temple sees a three phase expansion suggesting continued and increased availability of resources. Further the development of the shrine into a sacred complex with a large number of subsidiary shrines coming up around the main one is indicative of increased pilgrims. The increase in size of entrances of the temple shrine is another indicator of the increased popularity of the sacred complex.

In a survey conducted in tehsil Bhandra and Pauni, of the Bhandra-district, a number of villages yielded siva-linga – Bela, Bhandra, Chicholi, Karaj khera, Lawesar, Silli, Tiddi, Adyal. At Silli and Bhandra both Siva-Parvati were found. Ganesa sculpture is found at Bhandra, Silli, Adyal. This perhaps, indicates the spread and expansion and the depth to which the worship of Siva had penetrated in this time. However, not in an anthropomorphic form-but in the form of a linga. *Gathaspatasati*, refers to Śiva using the name Pasupati. Thus the *Gathasaptasati* begins by invoking Paśupati and Gauri⁵⁰. The *Gathasaptasati* also alludes to the marriage of Paśhupati with Paravati, a popular incident in the mythical life of Lord Śiva-an occasion revered and celebrated by the believers in lord shiva even today. The *Gathasaptasati* also

⁴⁹ *ibid*, all of the early historical-historical period, in and around suspected early historic mounds.

⁵⁰ *Gathaspatasati*, Verse 1, First century, Pg. 1.

refers to the idol of Ganapati being under the pillow while going off to sleep⁵¹ suggests the intimate association that the bhakta used to have, with his object of devotion, all this in pre-Vakataka days. Perhaps, it was that the theistic myths, theistic deities had gained currency much before the Vakataka temples in the early historic temples came up.

We have already seen in chapter two the evidence from inscriptions relating to Theistic deities. Thus the royalty not only declares its allegiance to various cults, but in fact some temples and the icons enshrined in these temples seem to be named by the names of the members of the royalty. We thus see the evidence of Theistic religion, acquiring a following in the region of Vidarbha, where already Buddhism had and continued to have an increased following. Simultaneously, Vedic tradition continued to flourish in the region. We have both literary as well as archaeological evidence for the existence and continuance of Vedic-practices.

Practice of Vedic tradition in Vidarbha: -

Here we will begin by king Hala's *Gathasaptasati*. In Hala we have reference to Fire and Varuna⁵², the two prominent Vedic Gods. We also have evidence for existence of fire-altars in the *Gathasaptasati*. 'A fire burnt on the sacrificial altar, even after having burnt in a liquor house'⁵³. We also have the evidence for the practice of keeping of domestic fires in the *Gathasaptasati*⁵⁴.

The Journal of Bombay branch of Asiatic society, 1935 mentions the

⁵¹ *Gathasaptasati*, Verse 1, First century, Pg. 1.

⁵² *Gathasaptasati*, Verse 11, Third century, Pg. 48.

⁵³ *Gathasaptasati*, Verse 27, Fourth century, Pg. 51.

⁵⁴ *Gathasaptasati*, Verse 46, Fourth century, Pg. 76.

remains of Asvamedha and other antiquities found during mining operations near Mansar. Further excavations revealed towards the beginning of the Vakataka period, two sacrificial altars. One in the shape of syenachiti and the other in the shape of *kurmaciti*, both made up of bricks. The *syenaciti*, which is in the north, was made after cutting the cross-walls of an earlier stupa. In the *syenacitis*, figure of a purusa, made up of lime has been found with its head smashed. The head of the figure is oriented towards the west and the legs were put towards the east. A vedi in the chest portion with a hole for fixing a Yashti over it was made and an earthen lamp was found kept nearby. Two pots were also to be found near the knee region of the figure, lying on the right while an iron snake was kept near the left toe, looking towards the human figure.

The entrance to the *Syenaciti* and *Kurmaciti* is 2.90 m in width, with a flight of three steps. The entrance has two side arms. While exposing the entrance it was noticed that it was blocked at a later period when a brick wall collapsed over it. The eastern outer wall of the two *chitis*, exposed also display the same triangular method of construction technique as has been witnessed in constructing the inner sides of the *chitis*. Stratigraphically, the purusamedha sacrifice was made at the end of the Satavahana period and the beginning of the Vakataka period. A whitish layer seals the sacrificial altars and other associated structures.

From the Vakataka inscription we find evidence of performance of Vedic sacrifices- Agnistoma, Aptoryama, Ukthya, Sodashin, Atiratra, Vajapeya, Bṛihaspatisava, Sadyaskra and four Asvamedha⁵⁵. Of course only the royalty

⁵⁵ V.V. Mirashi ed., *CII*, Vol. V, Chammak Plates, Pg. 22-27.

could have been in position to finance such extravagant sacrifices. This practice of Vedic-sacrifices was later to be followed even by the Vatsagulma branch of the Vakatakas⁵⁶.

Popularity of Epics in Vidarbha:-

Epics perhaps had acquired considerable popularity in the region of Vidarbha. Thus was built the temple of Rāmāgiriswami in the modern Rāmtek. There was perhaps a temple of Ramachandra at Pravaraपुरा identified with modern Paunar. This was certified by the presence of several panels some of which were discovered while clearing the area for Vinobaji's ashram. One of the panels depicts the episode of Bharat-bheta. Thus Sita, Rāma, Bharat and Lakṣmana are depicted, this panel picturises the instance that had occurred at Chitrakuta. The panel brings out Lakṣman's indifference if not positive hostility, whilst Rāma and Bharat are engaged in a heart to heart talk. This panel is to be seen in the context of the other panels found near the Ashram. The other panels refer to various incidents in the life of Rama. Thus one panel depicts the event of Rāma's birth. The death of Daśratha after Rāma's departure for vanavasa too is depicted. The departure of Rama and Lakṣmana along with Sita is depicted. Another panel shows the Sugriva-Valin battle with Rāma, Hanuman and Lakṣmana in the background, successfully slaying Vali. Vali's face looking up and accosting Rama is clearly shown in the panel. The find of a Ganga image with characters 'Ganga-Bhagwati', written in recognisable characters from the same site and stratigraphy proves that these belonged to the Vakataka period. That *Mahabharata* was a part of Vidarbhan

⁵⁶ V.V. Mirashi ed., *CII*, Vol. V, Basim Plates, Vindhyashakti, Pg. 93-100.

idiom is proved by its mention in Hala's *Gathasaptasati*⁵⁷. In fact we have reference to Vidarbha in the text of *Mahabharata* itself. Particularly, the *Nalopakhyana*, a part of the *Vanaparva* refers to the story of Nala-Damayanti. Damayanti is the daughter of king Bhima- the ruler of Vidarbha 'who was war-like, of immense power and beloved of his subjects'⁵⁸.

Going back to *Ramayana*, we may note that at least one of the Vakataka rulers (Pravarasena II) was aware of not only the epic story of *Valmiki-Ramayana* (which had come into existence by second century AD in its current form) but also of its possible potential. Pravarasena is believed to have composed the Prakrit epic- *Ravanavaho* or *Setubandha*. Banabhatta, Kshimendra and Ramadasa attest to this authorship. He composed his *Setubandha* with the aid of Kalidasa '*Iti Sri Pravara Sena Vira Chit Kalidasa Krii Dasa Mukhavadha Mahakavye Asvaisah Parisamaptah*'⁵⁹.

The choice of Maharashtri Prakrit as a language for the text implies the kind of audience aimed at i.e. the community at large rather than Brahmans learned in Sanskrit.

Every good ruler was expected to take interest in the proceedings of Vidvatasabha, to patronise learning and fine arts and this is what Pravarasena did by choosing a popular epic, he sought to better utilise the popularity potential of this epic. Further that this would please his mother who was worshipper of *Rāmagiriswamin* and also his maternal grandfather. All this to suggest the popularity and currency of *Ramayana* as a text in our region. It

⁵⁷ *Gathasaptasati*, Verse 43, Fifth Century, Pg. 98.

⁵⁸ M.N. Dutt ed., Verse 5, *Nalopakhyana*, *Vanaparva*, *Mahabharata*, Pg. 80.

⁵⁹ A.M. Shastri, *The Age of Vakatakas*, Pg. 94-95.

must have formed a part of belief structures of the people, providing ideal, family values and material for debate, policy and polity. At another level as S.V.Sohani suggests Pravarasena II who had his ambitions- with a guaranteed northern frontier- directed towards south. Thus geography of Rama's expedition up to the stretch of the eastern coast opposite Sri Lanka was stated in simple terms. Rama's expedition was to be an allusion to what he himself aimed at and an expression of his own expression ambitions. Perhaps, this also was the reason behind the fact that the poetry avoided even remotely echoing his ambition beyond Vindhya by starting with Sugriva, rather than from Ayodhya.

Summing up, the Vakataka ruler was using the popular figure of Rama to define and express his ambitions, by likening himself to Rama, he was also to derive a sort of legitimacy and awe in the eyes of day-to-day Maharashtri Prakrit readers whilst ensuring continued neutrality of the Gupta north and the legitimacy it provided through peaceful co-existence.

Cult of Narsimha:-

We would like to conclude our survey with a discussion on the cult of Narasimha. As discussed in the first chapter, at Ramtek complex of shrines, there exists the seated sculpture of Narasimha, in the Kevalanarasimha temple. Some scholars as the *Prabhavatiswamin* (Bakker) have identified this. One such sculpture was also to be found at Paunar. 'Such sculpture are to be found from numerous sites in Vidarbha and others in near and far situated regions such as Kosala, Telangana and Konkan'⁶⁰. This makes it clear that the cult of

⁶⁰ *The Age of the Vakatakas*, Pg. 146.

Narasimha was popular during this period. 'It may have originated as a local folk religious sect as we see the worship of the tiger God- 'Waghoba', still practised amongst the people of this region'⁶¹. The Paunar figure represents this God in theriomorphic form with a Srivatsa mark on his chest. A similar piece was found at Sirpur⁶² (Raipur District). M.P.).

Narasimha was made an avatar of Vishnu and identified subsequently with the Vaishnava pantheon as a part of the puranic process of acculturation of cults.

Conclusion: -

In this chapter we analysed the evidence related to community belief structures within Vidarbha. For this we used literary, archaeological, inscriptional and iconographic evidence. We attempted to map out the belief structures of the community inhabiting Vidarbha.

The picture that emerges is a very complex one, complex not only in its multiple diversity, but also in terms of inter-relationships existing between these belief structures.

Chronologically speaking, the megaliths preceded all other belief structures noted by us. It was related primarily to the treatment to the dead. This treatment of the dead also lead to the creation of the sacred space which would have become the focal centre of the lives of people who would have believed in this practice. That this practice had been discontinued by the

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² Sri Raghunath Sanghi collection. Referred to by C. Gupta in *The Age of the Vakakatas.*

second century BC in Vidarbha, seems to be the consensus amongst the archaeologists and that this was accompanied by socio-economic transformations occurring in Vidarbha.

If we look at the concentration of megalithic sites we find that a large section of Vidarbha megaliths are concentrated around the districts of Wardha-Nagpur. In fact it is in this concentrated nuclear region that some of the largest temple complexes emerged- Ramtek, Paunar, Mansar, Mandhal. Whilst, chronologically speaking, the emergence of temples is far removed from the end of the megaliths, as a practice. What is important is that some sites have evidence for both the temples and megaliths. That the temple building people were aware of the presence of the megaliths is indicated by their choice of the site of Mandhal. That these megaliths would have formed a part of the cultural-memory scape of the people in the form of continued de-notation of a site as a sacred site. Perhaps, a detailed survey around sites like Ramtek, Mansar etc would reveal similar associational links.

The site of Mansar is significant in terms of mapping the inter-relationship between the various belief structures. Archaeologically we have evidence of existence of multiple belief structures in the same site. Thus Vedic tradition, Lajjagauri, Goddess, Saivism, Buddhism, Vaisnavism are all to be found in this sight. Just as the Theistic religion continues to flourish and expand in the site, so does Buddhist religion. Just as the complexities in the temple complex increases so does the number and dimensions of the Stupa. Perhaps the site was used for Vedic sacrifices as is evident from Purushamedha evidence, the existence of *citis* etc. The site was a shared sacred complex. Its

sacred connotation lead to co-habitation of various religious structures. Perhaps, a detailed survey and multiple excavations of early historic mounds would yield many more such sites.

The whole logic of this exercise was to demonstrate that the growth of temples was neither a sudden nor an isolated phenomenon. That these temples were sustained by the growing belief structures of the already popular Theistic religion. When these temples emerged a number of belief systems already existed and were increasing in popularity. Thus even now there exists a pilgrimage circuit of eight sites, around the Ramtek hill (as noted by the Gazetteer). The increase in path ways, entrances and the find of seals with Buddha in relief⁶³ or with *Pravareshvaraya Sri Jai Vridhi* written on them are indications of the fact that common modes were utilised by the various religions in the process of their expansion and spread across the region of Vidarbha.

⁶³ A.M. Shastri ed., *The Age of the Vakatakas*, Found at Paunar, Pg. 139.

Chapter5

Conclusion

We have come to the last chapter of this work. In the previous chapters we not only introduced our topic, that is the early temples of Vidarbha, but we also studied the archaeological background of the region. We next dealt with the inter-relationships of the royalty, brahmans and temples and how these were mediated by the processes of patronage and legitimisation. In our third chapter we attempted to look at the multiplicity of belief structure in Vidarbha.

Our attempt in this work has been to study the early temples of Vidarbha in a particular context. Thus the second chapter looked at the archaeological context, third chapter attempted to analyse the material context of these temples, whilst the fourth chapter analysed the context of belief structures in which these temples emerged. That such a study was necessary in order to develop the long-term perspective in its immediate context.

We have sought to study the early temples of Vidarbha in reference to the available archaeological, iconographic, architectural terms. To a limited extent we dealt with the inscriptional data to understand the material context of these temples. The literary, iconographic and archaeological data was utilised to study the belief structure of these temples and the other belief structure in relation to the early temples of Vidarbha.

The second chapter examined the archaeological background as well as the period co-terminus with the structural remains called temples. This exercise was done keeping in mind that these temples were not sudden appearances,

resulting out of the patronage provided by the elite sections of the society. Rather these temples were a product of the emerging socio-economic complexities that then got reflected in the belief structures of the communities residing in Vidarbha.

The early temples were discussed in context of their pre-historic-protoc-historic-early-historic background. The early temples seemed to have emerged in the fourth/fifth century as a part of the process of growth in the number of settlements in the region of Vidarbha, increased trade and agricultural intensification. The architectural remains of these temples were identified and we came to the conclusion that these were relatively simple structures. Further these were not the only extant religious structures. In fact there were other extant religious structures primarily in Buddhist context. The utilisation of bricks for the building of these structures, just as those of the Pauni stupa and also the usage of bricks of similar dimensions for the domestic structure suggests a common denominator. This common denominator was sought to be unravelled in the third chapter titled Royalty, Brahmans and Temples, Patronage and Legitimation.

For our analysis in this chapter we utilised only the inscriptions. In this chapter we discussed the relationship of royalty, brahmans and the temples. In attempting to arrive at an understanding of the material context, we discussed the affiliations of the royalty, ministers and the so called feudatories and we unravelled the various threads that signify the multiplicity of affiliations varying from Vaiśnavism and Śaivism on the one hand to the Vedic on the other. We found that while the royalty claimed affiliation to the theistic

religions, they continued not only to perform the Vedic sacrifices but also patronised the Vedic brahmins. It was perhaps by this meaningful inter-play of roles that they sought to legitimise their rule in Vidarbha. Further they never prevented their ministers from continuing to patronise Buddhism. We looked into the non-Vedic rituals of the royalty, trying to understand as to what the royalty had for its personal religious practices. We found that this was in turn linked to their visit to the tirthas where they subsequently made land grants. Often these land grants were to the Vedic brahmins. This suggests the prominence of tirthas, before fourth/fifth century AD. Further we also found that the patronage given to the brahmins was primarily to those who belonged to the Vedic traditions. Here too we found that it is wrong to assume that the brahmins were a single social group who were beneficiaries of the total patronage, handed out by the political elite. Instead there were several groups amongst the brahmins who sought to corner a major share of the patronage in the offing. That this led to internal tensions and perhaps even conflicts. Next we analysed the kind of linkages the royalty had with the temples and we found that the link was not as strong as is generally suggested. Perhaps the relation between the royalty and the temples was at an incipient stage. On comparing Buddhist patronage with the kind of patronage that the temples were receiving we found that at a minimal level there existed a certain similarity in the terms of the common denominator i.e. the community patronage. Thus the common denominator that we had sought to find in the second chapter was unravelled. As against the traditional arguments, we found that the early temples of Vidarbha were receiving community patronage, that

they were centres of community get together. As sacred centres, they were the nucleus around which the life styles of the devotees were woven around. That this also supports the fact observed in the second chapter i.e. these early temples seemed to be relatively simple structures. That they served to reinforce the community identity by becoming the focal centre of community identity.

Community belief structure, being the edifice of community consciousness, satisfying its felt needs of the existence, were sought to be studied in the final chapter on a detailed analysis of the available archaeological, inscriptional, ethnographic and the literary data, we found that there were multiple religious identities amongst the people of Vidarbha. The picture that emerged was of complexities and dynamism, complex not just by the number but also by the terms of inter-relationships existing between these belief structures. Whilst megalithic culture preceded all the other belief structures, in some instances, as at Mandhal, it provided the sacred geography around which the later temples were to emerge. The nearness of the site to the megaliths suggests that the temple builders were at least aware of these stone circles. The nucleus of the megalithic sites also became the nucleus of early historic centres and thereon of the temples. These megaliths must have played an important role, for a community deciding upon the choices it had, to select a site for the temple. These megaliths must have formed a part of the cultural memory scape of the people, constructing these temples. A detailed survey around the other temple sites might reveal a similar association.

We have often repeated the importance of a site like Mansar that its multiplicities have been repeatedly referred to. Perhaps in the presently

available archaeological data, this seems to have been the best worked upon, temple archaeological site. It is also significant that when we attempt to map the inter-relationship between the various belief structures existing in the region of Vidarbha. Archaeologically, the site attests to the evidence of existence of multiple belief structures in the same site. Vedic tradition, goddess, even Lajjagauri, Saivism are all to be found at this site which shows the continued construction/usage of stupas for almost nine hundred years i.e. up to seventh/eight century AD. The find of evidence for the *Puruśamedha sacrifice* from the site attests to the continued practice of Vedic religion in a period which has generally been identified with the rise of brahmanical religion in shades of Puranism. In fact this is an important reason, why instead of using terms like Puranic religion, we have used terms like Theistic religion, for it is actually the rise of theistic cults. These cults rose much before the Puranas were written. The Puranas merely attempted to catalogue these various prevalent myths about the various cultic deities. In fact when these theistic cults were becoming important, the Vedic religion continued to be practised and in fact received considerable share of patronage. Also in this period we have no concrete evidence to suggest the decline of Buddhism. In fact we have evidence to the contrary. Further, in this early period we find the evidence of pilgrimage in our sites. Thus the entrance to the temples at some sites seems to have been successively expanded, suggesting increase in the number of devotees visiting the site. This suggests an increase in the popularity of the site with greater number of devotees visiting the temple. The find of a clay-ceiling workshop at the site of Mansar, near the temple and finds of clay-sealings, with

the name of deity inscribed on it, suggests the popular nature of the site and of the temples at large.

Thus we have endeavoured to show, by an analysis of the context of these early temples of Vidarbha, that they were not implants resulting out of acculturation of tribal deities on the one hand and the settling in of the brahmans on the other. These rather were products of the organic growth that the Vidarbha region underwent in the course of transformation from the proto-historic to the early historic and thereon to the historic. Rather than enjoying the royal patronage, they were primarily enjoying the community patronage.

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