

Ancient History of Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh history dates back to prehistoric times when life on planet Earth was still in its nascent phase. This region belongs to Gondwana land, which was a part of the super-continent called Pangea, which existed about 300 million years ago. The name Gondwana derives its name from a tribe named Gond, which primarily inhabited here and still lives here.

Pre-Historic Era

- In pre-historic times, this region was inhabited by primitive people. Fossils, pre-historic paintings, and sculptures are evidence of their presence in the region.
- The early tribes used to live in caves or on the banks of the river.
- They were dependent upon hunting for food. They used stone tools for hunting. Evidence of their living has been found in Bhopal, Raisen, Chhanera, Nemawar, Mojawadi, Maheshwar, Dehgaon, Barkheda, Handia, Kabra, Singhanpur, Azamgarh, Panchmarhi, Hoshangabad, Mandsaur and Sagar in Madhya Pradesh.
- Various paintings can be seen on the walls of ancient caves and rocks. The sculptures obtained from the gulls near Hoshangabad, the Kandras of Bhimbethka near Bhopal and the hills near Sagar are the proofs of this.
- These rock paintings are also found abundantly in the hills along the banks of Shivni river of Mandsaur, Narsingharh, Raisen, Azamgarh, Panna Rewa, Raigad and Ambikapur.

Chalcolithic Culture

- The early civilization used copper and stone. It flourished around 2000 BC in the valley of Narmada.
- This civilization was contemporary to the Harrapan and Mohenjodaro civilizations.
- Maheshwar, Ujjain (Nagada), Sagar (Eran), Indore (Azadnagar), Todi, Kayatha, Barkheda etc were some major areas of the civilization.
- Archaeologists have unearthed many things like stone and copper tools, pottery, utensils, beads, clay pots etc from these areas. In Balaghat and Jabalpur, copper utensils and tools were found.
- The various tools and agriculture equipment found in this area shows that the people of this civilization were dependent not only on hunting rather they practised agriculture too.

- Besides agriculture, they knew the art of pottery, made tools and stored their agricultural produce. It is also found that they domesticated the animals. And some events show that they even had foreign relations with countries like Iran and Baluchistan.
- Dr H.D. Sankalia discovered Maheshwar, Nawada, Todi, Choli and Dr B.S. Vakankar discovered it in Nagda-Kayatha.

Major sites of Chalcolithic Culture-

Kayatha-

This was the first Chalcolithic settlement, which existed before 1380. Kayatha was the birthplace of Varah Mihir.

Eran-

It is in Sagar district and its ancient name was Arikin. The time of this copper spot is believed to be from 2000 BC to 700 BC. From here, evidence of copper axes, round pieces of gold, pottery, copper carpet, etc. have been obtained.

Navdatoli -

It is situated on the Narmada coast in Maheshwar, whose existence is believed to be between 1637 BC. From here, evidence has been found of slum-like mud houses, which were square or rectangular.

Awara -

Various stages and related materials have been found in the village of Awara in the Mandsaur district, ranging from the Chalcolithic to the Gupta period.

Dangwala-

It is located in Basti, 32 km from Ujjain.

Nagda-

It is on the banks of the Chambal River in Ujjain district. Arms of pottery and miniature stones etc. have also been obtained from this Chalcolithic colony.

Khedinama-

It is located in the Hoshangabad district, which is an old copper settlement town 1500 years ago.

Aryans

- The name of Madhya Pradesh is mentioned in the Rigveda as "Dakshinapath" and "Revantar".
- The arrival of Aryans marked a change in the history of the civilization of India and Madhya Pradesh too.
- They settled in this region and Madhya Pradesh became thickly populated.
- They resided mostly in the Malwa plateau. Malwa has been ruled by many rulers from time to time in history. With roots in the Neolithic period, Malwa was established as one of the first powerful empires in the region, 'Avanti'.
- Avanti had two capital - Northern Avanti with its capital Ujjaini and Southern Avanti with its capital as Mahishmati. The Netravati River flowed between these two regions.
- The capital of Avanti was Ujjain and comprised of a major part of western Malwa. It was one of the sixteen Mahajanpadas of northern India.
- It became a key region for the establishment of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.
- Mahismati was also a big town in western Malwa. Vidisa on the banks of river Betwa was the biggest town of the eastern Malwa and Eran was the military headquarters.
- The two famous cities of Avanti, Kurradhar and Sudarshan Pur are described in the Buddhist text.
- In the book titled 'Periplus of Erythrian Sea', Ujjain's name is written as 'Ojini'.

Changed name of the ancient district	
Avanti (Avantika)	Ujjain
Watts	Gwalior
Chedi	Khajuraho
Anoop	Nimar (Khandwa)
Darshana	Vidisha
Tundiker	Damoh
Nalpur	Narwar (Shivpuri)

Mauryan Empire

- Around 320 BCE Chandragupta Maurya united north India and established the Mauryan Empire.

- Mauryan Empire included all modern-day Madhya Pradesh. The rock edicts of Ashoka have also been discovered from many parts of Madhya Pradesh.
- One was found at Rupnath in the Jabalpur district and another from the Datia district.
- Ashoka's name is mentioned as 'Devanan Priy Piyadassi' in Ashoka's short inscription at Gujjara, located in the Datia district of Madhya Pradesh.
- In the Mauryan era, there were four trade routes, the third of which was from Pratishtan in the south to Shravasti in the north, in which Mahishmati Ujjaini and Vidisha Nagar of Madhya Pradesh were located. The fourth route was Bhargukachh to Mathura area, whose route was located in Ujjaini.
- Mahishmati Maheshwar of Avanti had a centre for making cotton textiles.
- Inscriptions inscribed in the Mauryan period Brahmi script have been found at Karitalai, Kharkai, Kasrawad, Arang Ramgarh place of Madhya Pradesh.
- Apart from this, there is a statue of Mauryan Yaksha from Besanagar Vidisha.

Minor Rock Edict of Ashoka obtained from Madhya Pradesh
Roopnath- Jabalpur
Gujari - Datia
Ashoka's Minor Pillar Edicts obtained from Madhya Pradesh
Sanchi-Raisen
Saromaro-Sehore

Post Mauryan

- After the decline of the Mauryan dynasty, Sungas and Satvahanas ruled Madhya Pradesh.
- Till 100 BC Satvahanas ruled the region. During this time Shakas and Kushanas also ruled here.
- Some statues of the Kushan period can be found in Jabalpur. Satvahana dynasty of the north and Saka dynasty of the west fought for control for the region during the first and third century BCE.
- Satvahana King, GautamiputraSatakarni defeated the Saka rulers and conquered parts of Malwa in the 2nd century CE.

Sunga

- Pushyamitra Sunga overthrew Mauryans and became the new king of Magadha.
- His empire extended to the Narmada and included Patliputra, Ayodhya, Vidisha. Merutunga incorporated Avanti into the dominions of Pushyamitra.

- The kingdom of Vidarbha was divided between Yajnasena and Madhavasena who acknowledged the supremacy of Pushyamitra.
- Pushyamitra Sunga made Vidisha his capital and built the Bharhut Stupa.
- Pushyamitra Sung had built a stone altar (Vedika) in place of the wooden altar (Vedika) of Sanchi Stupa.

Gupta Period

- In the 4th century CE, Samudragupta emerged as a great power in Central India.
- According to Prayag-Prashasti he made a countrywide conquest and conquered up to Betul. He established the Gupta dynasty and ruled in north and south India. He also defeated Sakas in the west.
- The rock-cut temples at Bagh caves (Dhar) in Madhya Pradesh prove the presence of Guptas in the region.
- Later Chandragupta II uprooted the Sakas from the Malwa plateau. He also established marital alliances with Vak and Vakatekas ruling the Southern regions of Narmada.
- Later Pushyamitras and Hunas attacked the Kingdom and defeated the Skandagupta, the son and successor of Kumaragupta I. The fall of the Gupta empire followed the rule of Harsha Vardhan of Kannauj.
- The copper coins of the Gupta ruler Ram Gupta have been received from Vidisha and Eran in Madhya Pradesh, on which Ram Gupta is written in the Gupta script.
- Garuda was the official emblem of the Gupta dynasty.
- Three inscriptions of Chandra Gupta II have been obtained from the eastern Malwa region from Udayagiri hill near Bhainsla (Vidisha).
- Udayagiri caves and the Vaishnavite temple of Kidwa were built during the Gupta period.

Hunas

- After the decline of Guptas, many rulers attacked the region and ruled for some time. Hunas were one of them.
- The Hunas were considered a barbaric tribe of Central Asia.
- They attacked central India under the leadership of Toramana. Around 530 AD Yashodharma, son of Toramana defeated Hunas and ruled the region till the late 5th Century.
- The Gwalior inscription of the fifteenth year of Mihirkul's reign gives evidence of the rule of the Huns in Madhya Pradesh.

Rashtrakutas

- In the 7th Century after the rule of various small empires like Mahismati, Rashtrakutas came to the power. Their capital was Vidharba and they further conquered Malwa.
- Another family of the Rashtrakuta dynasty was also ruling in the Betul region in the 9th century.
- One of their kings Yuhasur's copper plates inscriptions (Tamaspatra) found in Tisarkhendi and Multai (Betul)
- King Govind III of Manyakhet defeated Nagabhata and placed a court in Ujjain.

Gurjara-Pratiharas

- In the 8th Century, Gurjara and Pratiharas came into power.
- They ruled under the leadership of the famous Nagabhata. They ruled the Malwa. They were Rajputs.
- Initially, they kept Malwa as their capital then shifted it to Kannauj.

Kalchuris

- Krishna Raj is the founder of Kalchuri dynasty. There were two dynasties with the name of Kalchuris who ruled the different areas.
- These dynasties ruled from the 10th-12th centuries.
- One dynasty ruled over the areas of west Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and was known as Chedi. Others ruled in the parts of Karnataka and was known as Sothern Kalchuris.

Paramaras

- The Parmar dynasty was established by Upendra or Krishnaraja in the northern Malwa (ancient Avanti) region of the Narmada River. From 946 AD Paramaras started to conquest Madhya Pradesh.
- They ruled MP for about 350 years. Their conquest started, when they started challenging Gurjaras and Pratiharas.
- The initial capital of the Paramaras was in Ujjain but later the capital was shifted to 'Dhar'
- In 946 AD under the Varisimha II Paramaras attached and won malwa with the help of Rashtrakutas.
- The great king Bhoj was a later ruler of this dynasty. Bhoja I was a scholar and author, who also wrote commentaries on Yoga Sharta of Patanjali.
- Raja Bhoj built the Saraswati Temple at Bhojtal (Bhopal) and Dhar.
- According to the Mangai inscription (1058), the city of Dhar of Parmar king Bhoja was attacked by the Chalukya king Someshwar II, in which Rajbhoja was defeated.

Chandela

The founder of the Chandela dynasty was Nannuk. Its capital was Khajuraho and initially its capital was Mahoba (Kalinjar).

The first independent and most powerful king of the Chandela dynasty was Yashovarman. The rulers of the Chandela dynasty built Khajuraho temples between 900 and 1130 AD.

Yashovarman attacked on Kannauj and defeated Pratihara king Devpal and got a statue of Vishnu from him, which he had situated in the Vishnu temple of Khajuraho.

According to the records received from Mahoba, the third ruler of the Chandela dynasty, Jayashakti, named the kingdom ruled by him as Jejakabhukti.

Satavahana Dynasty

- From AD 925 to 1370, the Satavahana dynasty also ruled a few regions of Madhya Pradesh.
- To start with Bundelkhand, they stretched till Malwa and went ahead to take Vidisha and Gwalior too. But their disappearance from history was abrupt.
- Soon after the defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauhan, their dynasty declined.
- The temples of Khajuraho were built by the rulers of the Chandela Dynasty between 900 and 1130 AD.
- Madhya Pradesh witnessed up and downfalls of various empires from time to time. It has always been a perfect place for any kingdom to flourish. Chandelas and some small rulers were the last ones to rule Madhya Pradesh in the Ancient period of history.
- Evidence of ruling Malwa by Satavahana dynasty Shatkarini is found in various Puranas.
- Along with this, coins of Satavahana dynasty have been received from Ujjain Dewas, Tevar, Tripuri etc.
- During the period of Satavahana dynasty, trade with Rome is related, the evidence of which is the Roman coins found from Chakar Kheda and Bilaspur.

Pandya dynasty

Around Amarkantak (Anuppur), the Pandya dynasty was founded by Raja Jaibal in the Maikal ranges. Bharat Bal was the last king of this dynasty.

Shail dynasty

The information related to the Shail dynasty in the Mahakaushal region is from Radhauli (Balaghat) copper plates inscriptions (Tampatra). Its first king was Srivardhan and the last king was Jayavardhana. Radhauli Tamapatra was engraved by Jayavardhan.

Guhil dynasty

The Jiran (Mandsaur) inscription confirms the rule of the Guhil dynasty (1000–1050 AD) in Mandsaur. Vighra Pal is its first known ruler.

Kachhapaghat dynasty

Although in three areas Kachhapaghat dynasty was established in Gwalior, Duvakund and Narwar respectively, in the Gwalior, the Kachhapaghat dynasty remained important. This dynasty is mentioned in various inscriptions received from Gwalior.

The first ruler was Laxman, whose son Vajradaman expanded the kingdom by won Gwalior from Kannauj. Kirtiraj (1021 AD) was defeated by Mahmud Ghaznavi. The last king was Madhusudan.

Various inscriptions and dynasties-

Inscription	Dynasty
Inscription of Shridhar	Verma Saka ruler
Samudragupta's inscription	Gupta Emperor
Buddhagupta's inscription	Gupta Emperor
Torbhan's inscription	Hun ruler
Bhanugupta's inscription	Gupta Emperor (Gopraj Sati Pillar inscription or First Sati inscription)