

Ancient History of Madhya Pradesh

Pre-Historic Era

- In the pre-historic times, this region was inhabited by the primitive people. Fossils, pre-historic paintings, and sculptures are the 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 the food. They used stone tools for hunting. Various proofs of these tools have been found at various places in Bhopal, Raisen, and Handia.
- Various paintings can be seen on the walls of ancient caves and rocks. Caves near Hoshangabad, Bhimbetka, and rocks near Sagar are some such proofs.

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 civilization.
- Maheshwar, Ujjain (Nagada), Sagar (Eran), Indore (Azadnagar), Todi etc were some major areas of the civilization.
- The 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 practiced 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.

Aryans

- The arrival of Aryans marked a change in the history of 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'.

- The capital of Avanti was Ujjain and comprised of 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 the western Malwa. Vidisa on the banks of river Betwa was the biggest town of the eastern Malwa and Eran was the military headquarters.

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.

Post Mauryan

- After the decline of 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 Kushan period can be found in Jabalpur. Satvahana dynasty of the north and Saka dynasty of the west fought for the control for the region during first and third century BCE.
- Satvahana King, Gautamiputra Satakarni defeated the Saka rulers and conquered parts of Malwa in 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.

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 Gupta dynasty and ruled in north and south India. He also defeated Sakas in the west.
- The rock-cut temples at Bagh caves in Madhya Pradesh prove the presence of Guptas in the region.
- Later Chandragupta II uprooted the Sakas from Malwa plateau. He also established marital alliances with Vak and Vakatekas ruling 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 Gupta empire followed the rule of Harsha Vardhan of Kannauj.

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 attached central India under the leadership of Toramana. Around 530 AD Yashodharma, son of Toramana defeated Hunas and ruled the region till late 5th Century.

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.

Gurjara-Pratiharas

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

Kalchuris

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

Paramaras

- 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.
- 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.

Chandela

- From AD 925 to 1370, Satvahana 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 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 few small rulers were last one to rule the Madhya Pradesh in the Ancient period of history.