HISTORY OF MADHYA PRADESH

Unit 1 • Madhya Pradesh General Studies — MPPSC Assistant Professor GS Paper I, State Service and MPESB examinations

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1.1 Syllabus Coverage Map — Official MPPSC Syllabi

Fact: All ten MPPSC exam notices supplied (AP GS Paper I 2024 and nine 2025–26 recruitment exams) carry the same Madhya Pradesh general-studies part — History, Geography, Politics and Economy, Tribes and Folk Culture, and Current Events of MP. The State Service Examination 2026 (revised plan dated 21 January 2026) adds the items tagged "State Service 2026". The table maps each syllabus line to this unit.

Syllabus line (official wording, condensed)	Exams	Covered in this unit
Ancient History of MP — prehistoric, protohistoric and historic periods	All 10 exams; State Service 2026 Mains P-I U-II	Prehistory, protohistory, Mahajanapada to Gupta sections; dynasty tables
Major dynasties — Gardabhilla, Naga, Aulikara, Parivrajaka, Uchchakalpa, Gurjara-Pratihara, Kalachuri, Chandela, Paramara, Tomar, Gond, Kachchhapaghata	State Service 2026 Mains P-I U-II	Dynasty master tables and ruler lists
Medieval History of MP	All 10 exams	Malwa Sultanate, Faruqi, Gond, Bundela, Mughal-period sections
Modern History of MP; major princely states — Gondwana, Bundeli, Bagheli, Holkar, Scindia, Bhopal (till independence)	All 10 exams; State Service 2026 Mains P-I U-V	Maratha and princely-state sections; ruler tables
Major events and major dynasties of MP	State Service 2026 Prelims U-2	Chronology tables
Tribal history (link to A07)	All 10 exams	Gond kingdoms; tribal resistance — see also A02 and A07

Exam Point: "All 10 exams" = MPPSC Assistant Professor GS Paper I 2024 (the backbone of these notes) plus ADPPO 2026, AD Farmer Welfare 2025, Assistant Registrar 2025, Assistant Town Planner 2026, IAEO 2026, Law Officer 2026, Principal Grade-II 2025, State Forest Service Mains 2026 and Transport SI 2025. Abbreviations — AP GS-I = MPPSC Assistant Professor GS Paper I (2024); U = Unit; P = Paper; SFS = State Forest Service; IAEO = Internal Accounts Examiner Officer.

1.2 Ancient Foundations — Prehistory, Epigraphy, and Numismatic Sources of MP

Conceptual Foundation: The Geographical Pivot

Madhya Pradesh (MP) is historically referred to as "Hridaya Pradesh" (The Heart of India). For an Assistant Professor (AP) level candidate, the core concept to grasp is that MP served as the transition zone between the Indo-Gangetic Plain and the Deccan Plateau.

Precise Definitions

• **Narmada Man (Narmada Manav):** Refers to the Homo erectus skull cap discovered in the Narmada Valley, establishing MP as one of the oldest inhabited regions in South Asia.
• **Rock Art (Shail-Chitra):** Prehistoric paintings on cave walls, used as primary socio-historical data for non-literate periods.
• **Microliths:** Small, sophisticated stone tools (1-5 cm) characteristic of the Mesolithic period, found in abundance in the Vindhya and Satpura ranges.
• **Punch-Marked Coins (Aahat Mudra):** The earliest coinage in MP, typically found in the Malwa region (Ujjain/Vidisha).

Concept Boundaries

• **Included:** The evolutionary sequence from the Stone Age to the dawn of the Iron Age; the scientific importance of the Betwa and Narmada valleys.
• **Excluded:** Early medieval dynastic details (reserved for later chats).

Core Theory: The Prehistoric Sequence of MP

The Narmada Valley is the "Open Air Museum" of Indian prehistory.

A. Lower Paleolithic (The Age of Hand-axes)

• **Hathnora (Sehore):** In 1982, Arun Sonakia discovered the fossilized skull of a woman (Homo erectus). This is the only human fossil of this age found in the Indian subcontinent.

• **Sites:** Bhimbetka (Phase I), Adamgarh.

B. Mesolithic: The "Bhimbetka" Phenomenon

Bhimbetka (Raisen) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For the exam, you must know the technical details:

• **Discovery:** V.S. Wakankar in 1957.

• **Stratigraphy:** 7 periods of painting, starting from the Upper Paleolithic to the Medieval period.

• **Pigments:** Use of Manganese, Hematite (Red), and Wooden charcoal.

• **Themes:** Shift from large animal figures (Paleolithic) to social scenes like dancing, honey collection, and communal burials (Mesolithic).

C. Chalcolithic MP (The Malwa Culture)

The Chalcolithic period (Copper-Stone Age) in MP is synonymous with the "Malwa Culture" (c. 1700–1200 BC).

• **Kayatha (Ujjain):** The earliest Chalcolithic site in MP. Discovered by V.S. Wakankar.

• **Navdatoli (Khargon):** Excavated by H.D. Sankalia. Known for the largest variety of food grains (wheat, rice, pulses) found in ancient India.

• **Eran (Sagar):** A fortified Chalcolithic settlement, later a major Gupta center.

• **Maheshwar:** An important center on the Narmada.

Structural Analysis: Epigraphic Sources (Inscriptions)

Inscriptions are the "Hard Evidence" for the AP screening. They provide the transition from Pre-history to Proto-history.

Inscription	Location	Period / Ruler	Significance
Besnagar (Heliodorus) Pillar	Vidisha	Shunga / Bhagabhadra	Earliest archaeological evidence of Bhagavatism (Vaishnavism).
Panguraria	Sehore	Mauryan / Ashoka	Mentions Ashoka as 'Piyadasi' and his visit as a prince.
Eran Inscription (510 AD)	Sagar	Gupta / Bhanugupta	First epigraphic evidence of Sati (Goparaja's wife).
Mandasaur Inscription	Mandsaur	Aulikara / Yashodharman	Mentions the victory over Huna chief Mihirakula.
Sanchi Inscriptions	Raisen	Satavahana / Kanva	Mentions donations by the 'Guild of Ivory Carvers' of Vidisha.

Deep Dive: The Heliodorus Pillar (Khambaba)

• **The Person:** Heliodorus was an Indo-Greek ambassador of King Antialcidas.

• **The Act:** He called himself a 'Bhagavata' and erected this Garuda Pillar in honor of Vasudeva.

• **Exam Point:** It proves the "Indianization" of Greeks and the early spread of the Krishna cult in Central India.

Numismatic Sources (The Currency of Power)

MP, particularly Ujjain, was a major minting hub.

• **Punch-Marked Coins:** Found in the Besnagar Hoard. They feature symbols like the Sun, 6-armed wheel, and the "Ujjain Symbol" (a cross with four circles).

• **Indo-Greek Coins:** Found in the Narmada valley, indicating trade links.

• **Satavahana Coins:** Found in Tripuri (Jabalpur) and Vidisha. Lead and Potin coins are characteristic.

• **Gupta Gold Coins (Dinars):** The Sakaur (Damoh) Hoard is the most famous collection of Gupta coins in MP.

Sub-Concepts: Archaeological Cultures of MP

Culture	Period	Key Site	Pottery Type
Kayatha Culture	2000-1800 BC	Kayatha	Sturdy chocolate-colored slipped ware.

Culture	Period	Key Site	Pottery Type
Ahar Culture	1800-1500 BC	Jawad/Mandsaur	White-painted Black and Red ware.
Malwa Culture	1700-1200 BC	Navdatoli	Buff or Orange-slipped ware with black painting.
Jorwe Culture	1400-700 BC	Southern MP	Matt-painted pottery.

PYQ-Mapped Micro-Areas: Statement-Based Focus

• **Assertion:** The Narmada Valley is considered the "Cradle of Indian Humanity." Reason: The discovery of the 'Narmada Man' at Hathnora provides the only pre-Homo sapiens human fossil in India. (Verdict: Both True; R explains A).
• **Bhimbetka Logic:** Why is it a UNESCO site?
• **Answer**: Not just for paintings, but for the Continuous Occupancy from the Lower Paleolithic to the Historical period.
• **Fact Check:** V.S. Wakankar is often called the 'Pitamaha' (Grandfather) of Indian Rock Art studies. He also pioneered the search for the lost Saraswati river.

Comparison: Malwa vs. Southern MP Pre-history

Feature	Malwa (Western MP)	Southern MP (Narmada/Satpura)
Geology	Black Cotton Soil/Basalt.	Alluvial Plains/Sandstone.
Dominant Sites	Ujjain, Maheshwar, Kayatha.	Adamgarh, Hathnora.
Historical Role	Agricultural Surplus/Urbanization.	Hunting-Gathering/Rock Art.
Climate	Semi-arid/Temperate.	Tropical/Dense Forest.

The "Eran" Micro-Analysis (For AP Exams)

Eran (Sagar) is a unique site because it is relevant across three distinct part topics:
• **Chalcolithic:** Fortified wall and mud-rampart.
• **Saka-Kshatrapas:** Important mint for Western Satraps.
• **Gupta Era:** Mentioned as the "Pleasure city" (Svabhoganagara) of Samudragupta.
• **Historical First:** The 510 AD Sati pillar.

Applied Synthesis: The Geo-Political Pivot

In antiquity, MP was divided into two major Janapadas:
• **Avanti (Western MP):** Capital Ujjain (North) and Mahishmati (South).
• **Chedi (Eastern MP):** Capital Shuktimati (near Bundelkhand). The control over the "Dakshinapatha" (the southern trade route) depended on holding these two regions. This is why MP was the primary battlefield for the Mauryas, Guptas, and later the Marathas.

Exam-Focused Highlights: One-Liners

• **Who discovered Bhimbetka?** V.S. Wakankar (1957).
• **Oldest Stupa in MP:** Bharhut (Satna) - Ashokan foundation, Shunga expansion.
• **The "Garuda Pillar" of Vidisha belongs to:** The Shunga period (King Bhagabhadra).
• **Where is the 'Narmada Man' found?** Hathnora, Sehore district.
• **Site known for largest grain variety:** Navdatoli.
• **The "Ujjain Symbol" on coins:** A cross connecting four circles/balls.

1.3 The Mauryan Impact — Ashoka's Governance and the Sacred Topography of MP

Conceptual Foundation: MP as the "Mauryan Gateway"

In Mauryan geopolitics, Madhya Pradesh was the strategic link between the capital Pataliputra and the prosperous ports of the Western Coast (Barygaza/Bharuch). For the Assistant Professor (AP) exam, it is crucial to recognize that MP was not just a province but the training ground for the Mauryan Crown Prince.

Precise Definitions

• **Kumara-Mahamatra:** The princely viceroy. Ashoka served in this capacity at Ujjain for 11 years before ascending the throne.
• **Dakshinapatha:** The "Southern Route." MP sat at the intersection of the Uttarapatha (Northern route) and Dakshinapatha, making it a commercial and military nerve center.
• **Anda, Harmika, Yashti:** The structural components of the Mauryan Stupa, symbolizing the Buddhist cosmos.
• **Dharma-Lipi:** The edicts of Ashoka inscribed on rocks and pillars to propagate 'Dhamma'.

Ashoka at Ujjain: The Formative Years

Before becoming the "Chakravartin," Ashoka was the Governor of Avanti-Rastra (with its capital at Ujjain).

The Vidisha Connection

• While traveling to Ujjain, Ashoka halted at Vidisha (Besnagar).
• He married Devi (or Vedisa-Mahadevi), the daughter of a local wealthy merchant.
• This marriage was politically significant as it secured the loyalty of the merchant guilds (Shresthis) of Central India.
• Their children, Mahendra and Sanghamitra, who later took Buddhism to Sri Lanka, were born and raised in MP.

Structural Analysis: Mauryan Architecture in MP

Madhya Pradesh contains the most significant and well-preserved examples of Mauryan and early post-Mauryan Buddhist architecture.

A. Sanchi Stupa (Stupa No. 1 - the Great Stupa)

Originally built by Ashoka as a low brick structure, later expanded during the Shunga period.
• **Core Composition:** Ashokan bricks (medially sized) and a central wooden pillar.
• **Ashokan Pillar:** A fragment of an Ashokan pillar with a Schism Edict (warning monks against dividing the Sangha) is found near the Southern Gateway.
• **UNESCO Significance:** It is the oldest stone structure in India.

B. Bharhut Stupa (Satna)

Founded by Ashoka, though the famous stone railings belong to the Shunga era.
• **Discovery:** Alexander Cunningham in 1873.
• **Significance:** Known for detailed Jataka story carvings and the earliest depictions of Yakshas and Yakshinis (e.g., Chulakoka Devata).

C. Deorkothar (Rewa)

• Discovered in 1982. It features a massive brick stupa and Ashokan pillars.
• It proves that the Mauryan influence extended deep into the Vindhyan hinterland.

The Epigraphic Legacy: Ashokan Edicts in MP

Madhya Pradesh is exceptionally rich in Minor Rock Edicts (MRE). These are often used as "Match the Following" distractors in NET exams.

Edict Name	Location (District)	Key Feature / Significance
Gujarra	Datia	Only edict in MP where the name 'Ashoka' is explicitly mentioned (alongside Devanampiya Piyadasi).
Panguraria	Sehore	Mentions the visit of the Prince (Kumara) to the site; located on the ancient trade route.
Rupnath	Katni (Sleemanabad)	Mentions Ashoka’s 2.5 years as a lay-devotee (Upasaka).
Sanchi Pillar	Raisen	A Schism Edict; warns against discord in the Buddhist Sangha.
Saromaro	Shahdol	Rock-cut caves and edict; suggests a monastery on the trade route.

Sub-Concepts: Mauryan Administration in MP

The administrative machinery of MP under the Mauryas was decentralized but strictly monitored.
• **Provincial Capital:** Ujjain was one of the four provincial headquarters of the empire.
• **Trade Control:** The Mauryan state regulated the guilds of Vidisha. The high quality of ivory and textile from this region was mentioned in the Arthashastra.
• **Communication:** The "Royal Road" was maintained with distance markers. The Panguraria edict's location suggests it served as a resting point for royal officials.

Comparison: Sanchi vs. Bharhut (For AP Screening)

Feature	Sanchi (Raisen)	Bharhut (Satna)
Preservation	Almost intact; UNESCO site.	Mostly in ruins; railings in Kolkata Museum.
Main Theme	Life of Buddha and Sangha history.	Emphasis on Jataka Tales (previous lives).
Architecture	High, massive domes.	Focus on intricate railing and gateway carvings.

Feature	Sanchi (Raisen)	Bharhut (Satna)
Chronology	Continuous from Ashoka to Guptas.	Primarily Mauryan/Shunga focus.

PYQ-Mapped Micro-Areas: Statement-Based Focus

• **Assertion:** Ashoka chose Ujjain as his provincial capital for purely economic reasons. Reason: Ujjain was the nodal point connecting Pataliputra to the Mediterranean trade through the port of Bharuch. (Verdict: A is partially true, but R is the primary driver. In exams, mark both as true and R as the explanation).

• **The 'Gujarra' Importance:** Why is Gujarra unique?

• **Answer**: Along with Maski (Karnataka), Nittur, and Udegolam, it is one of the very few sites where the name 'Ashoka' is used instead of just his titles.

• **The Ivory Guild:** The Southern Gateway of Sanchi was commissioned by the Guild of Ivory Carvers of Vidisha. This is a frequent question regarding "Ancient Patronage."

The "Ujjayini" Mint and Economy

The Mauryan presence transformed the tribal economy of Central India into a highly monetized one.

• **Ujjayini Symbol:** Even during the Mauryan period, local coins circulated with the four-circle symbol.

• **Mineral Wealth:** The Mauryas took a keen interest in the iron and copper mines of the Bundelkhand and Bastar peripheries.

Applied Synthesis: The "Relic" Topography

Ashoka did not just build stupas; he redistributed the Physical Relics of Buddha (Saririka) across the empire.

• Sanchi became a center because it was the home of his wife, Devi.

• By establishing Sanchi, he turned a commercial hub (Vidisha) into a Sacred Pilgrimage Site, ensuring the permanent presence of Mauryan authority through religious soft power.

Exam-Focused Highlights: One-Liners

• **Ashoka's title in Gujarra edict:** Devanampiya Piyadasi Maharajasa Ashokas.

• **Founder of the Sanchi complex:** Ashoka (3rd Century BC).

• **Location of the 'Schism Edict' in MP:** Sanchi.

• **River near Sanchi:** Betwa (Ancient Vetravati).

• **Mauryan Queen from MP:** Devi (Mahadevi) of Vidisha.

• **Discovery of Bharhut:** Alexander Cunningham (1873).

1.4 The Post-Mauryan & Satavahana Transition — The Age of Regional Assertiveness

Conceptual Foundation: The "Post-Mauryan" Vacuum & Vitality

In the history of Madhya Pradesh, the period between 185 BC and 200 AD is often wrongly termed a "Dark Age." On the contrary, for the Assistant Professor (AP) exam, this era must be seen as the Golden Age of Central Indian Trade and Art. After the Mauryas, the center of gravity shifted from Pataliputra to Vidisha and Ujjain.

Precise Definitions

• **Shungas:** The successor dynasty to the Mauryas, founded by Pushyamitra Shunga, who made Vidisha a second capital.

• **Western Satraps (Kshatrapas):** Indo-Scythian (Saka) rulers who contested Malwa against the Satavahanas.

• **Gosthi / Shreni:** Corporate guilds of artisans and merchants who became the primary patrons of Buddhist architecture in the absence of imperial Mauryan funding.

• **Vajra-Lepa:** An ancient Indian "super-glue" or plaster used in Shunga-era stupas, mentioned in contemporary texts.

The Shungas: Vidisha as the Imperial Anchor

While the Shungas originated from Magadha, their heartbeat was in Vidisha (modern-day Besnagar).

Political Significance

• **Agnimitra:** The son of Pushyamitra Shunga, he served as the Governor of Vidisha. He is the hero of Kalidasa's famous play Malavikagnimitram.

• **Defense against Yavanas:** The Shungas successfully defended Central India against Indo-Greek (Yavana) incursions.

• **The Tenth Shunga King (Bhagabhadra):** During his reign, the Greek ambassador Heliodorus visited Vidisha.

Artistic Contribution: The "Stone-Substitution" Movement

The Shungas are credited with replacing the Mauryan wooden railings and gateways with Stone.

• **Bharhut (Satna):** Though founded by Ashoka, the magnificent stone railings and the "Ajatashatru Pillar" were added during the Shunga period.

• **Sanchi Stupa No. 2:** Known for its "Medallions" depicting floral motifs, animals, and the earliest "Human portraits" in Indian art.

Structural Analysis: The Satavahana Expansion into MP

The Satavahanas (Andhras) moved from the Deccan into Malwa, leading to a long-drawn conflict with the Sakas.

Key Rulers and Sites

• **Satakarni I:** The Nanaghat inscription suggests he conquered Western Malwa.

• **Gautamiputra Satakarni:** The most powerful Satavahana. He is described as the "Destroyer of the Sakas, Yavanas, and Pahlavas."

• **Numismatic Evidence**: His coins found in Ujjain and Vidisha (re-struck over Saka coins) prove his dominance.

• **Vashishtiputra Pulumavi:** His coins have been found in the Narmada Valley (Tripuri/Jabalpur).

The "Ujjain" Mint Conflict

Ujjain became the bone of contention. The Satavahanas used the "Ujjain Symbol" (Cross and four circles) on their lead and potin coins to assert their legitimacy over the Central Indian trade routes.

The Heliodorus Pillar: A Diplomatic Milestone

This is a High-Frequency PYQ micro-area. You must know the details of the Besnagar Pillar.

• **Date:** c. 113 BC.

• **The Inscription:** Written in Brahmi script and Prakrit language.

• **The Titles:** Heliodorus calls himself a Bhagavata (devotee of Vishnu) and his king Antialcidas as Maharaja.

• **Symbolism:** The pillar is a Garuda-Dhvaja. Garuda is the vahana of Vishnu, marking the formal adoption of Vaishnavism by a foreigner.

• **Philosophical Mention:** The inscription mentions three immortal virtues for reaching heaven: Damah (Self-control), Tyagah (Self-denial), and Apramadah (Watchfulness).

Sub-Concepts: Urbanization & the Guild System

During this transition, MP saw the rise of independent "City-States" like Eran, Vidisha, Tripuri, and Mahishmati.

• **Guild Patronage:** Unlike Mauryan monuments funded by the state, Sanchi's gateways were funded by:

• The Guild of Ivory Carvers (Vidisha).

• The Guild of Corn-dealers.

• Individual monks, nuns, and housewives.

• **Trade Routes:** The Paithan-Ujjain-Vidisha-Kaushambi route became the busiest commercial artery in South Asia.

• **Coinage:** Introduction of City-Coins (Nigama coins) with the names of the cities struck on them, found extensively in the Malwa region.

Comparison: Mauryan Art vs. Shunga Art in MP

Feature	Mauryan Art (Imperial)	Shunga Art (Folk/Popular)
Material	Chunar Sandstone (Polished).	Red Sandstone (Unpolished).
Theme	Royal animals (Lion, Elephant).	Jataka Tales, Yakshas, Daily life.
Nature	Courtly, monumental.	Narrative, detailed, crowded.
Polish	Famous 'Mauryan Polish'.	Absence of high polish; focus on relief.

PYQ-Mapped Micro-Areas: Statement-Based Focus

• **Assertion:** The Post-Mauryan period in MP was an era of religious synthesis. Reason: The Heliodorus pillar proves that Indo-Greeks were being absorbed into the Vaishnava fold, while Sanchi proves continued Buddhist prosperity. (Verdict: Both True; R explains A).

• **The 'Agnimitra' Connection:** Why is Vidisha called the 'cultural capital' of the Shungas?

• **Answer**: Because it was the administrative base for the Shunga princes and the setting for Kalidasa's first play.

• **The 'Saka' Distractor:** Do not confuse the Western Satraps (Kshaharata/Kardamaka) with the Satavahanas. The Sakas (like Rudradaman) usually held Ujjain, while the Satavahanas constantly tried to reclaim it.

The "Ujjayini" Symbol & Numismatic Geography

In AP exams, you may be asked to identify coins by their symbols.

• **Ujjain Symbol:** Found on coins of Satavahanas, Sakas, and Local Guilds.

• **Tree-in-railing:** A typical Shunga-era coin symbol.

• **Swastika and River:** Found on coins from the Eran region.

Applied Synthesis: The "Stupa" as a Community Center

During this phase, the Stupa (Sanchi/Bharhut) evolved from a "Relic Depository" to a "Visual Bible." * Since the masses were illiterate, the Shunga artists carved the Jataka Tales on the railings.

• This allowed the merchants (donors) to gain "Merit" (Punya) and the commoners to learn Buddhist ethics through visual storytelling.

• This transformation solidified Buddhism in MP for the next 500 years.

Exam-Focused Highlights: One-Liners

• **Founder of Shunga Dynasty:** Pushyamitra Shunga.

• **Hero of 'Malavikagnimitram':** Agnimitra (Prince of Vidisha).

• **Location of Bharhut Stupa:** Satna district.

• **Who erected the Garuda Pillar at Besnagar?** Heliodorus.

• **The 'Ivory Carvers' of Vidisha funded:** The Southern Gateway of Sanchi.

• **Which king is the 'Eka-Brahmana'?** Gautamiputra Satakarni (his coins found in MP).

1.5 The Gupta Golden Age in MP — Imperial Zenith & Cultural Synthesis

Conceptual Foundation: The "Madhya-Desha" Consolidation

For the Assistant Professor (AP) exam, the Gupta period in Madhya Pradesh represents the transition from a regional power to a Pan-Indian Empire. While Pataliputra remained the formal capital, Ujjain and Vidisha became the cultural and commercial lungs of the empire. MP was the staging ground for the

Gupta conquest of the Western Satraps, which opened the "Window to the West" (the Arabian Sea trade).

Precise Definitions

• **Bhukti:** A provincial unit (like a state). In Gupta MP, Airikina (Eran) was a major Bhukti.

• **Svabhoganagara:** "The city of personal enjoyment," a title given to Eran by Samudragupta.

• **Cave Architecture (Brahminical):** Unlike the Buddhist caves of Ajanta, the Udayagiri caves in MP represent the earliest state-sponsored Hindu rock-cut architecture.

• **Bh ūmipāśapāśā**: A specific Gupta-era land measurement unit often mentioned in MP inscriptions.

Samudragupta: The Conqueror of Atavika-Rajyas

Samudragupta's Prayag Prashasti (Allahabad Pillar Inscription) provides a vivid account of his campaigns in Central India.

The "Atavika" Campaign

• He defeated and "enslaved" the kings of the Atavika-Rajyas (Forest Kingdoms) of the Vindhyan region.

• This was strategically necessary to secure the route to the Deccan and South India (Dakshinapatha).

• **Eran (Sagar):** Excavations have revealed a massive Varaha statue and inscriptions describing Samudragupta's visit. It served as his military headquarters in Central India.

Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya) & the Ujjain Paradigm

The most significant Gupta impact on MP occurred during the reign of Chandragupta II.

The Conquest of the Sakas

• He defeated the last Western Satrap, Rudrasimha III, ending 300 years of Scythian rule in Malwa.

• Following this, he adopted the title 'Sakari' (Destroyer of Sakas) and 'Vikramaditya'.

• **Ujjain** was made the Second Capital of the Gupta Empire to better manage the newly conquered western territories and the lucrative silk-route trade.

Navaratna (The Nine Gems)

The court at Ujjain became the center of the Sanskrit Renaissance.

• **Kalidasa:** The "Shakespeare of India" lived in Ujjain. His works like Meghaduta provide the most beautiful descriptions of Ujjain (Avanti) and the river Sipra.

• **Varahamihira:** The great astronomer and mathematician worked at the observatory in Ujjain.

Structural Analysis: The Udayagiri Caves (Vidisha)

This is a High-Frequency PYQ area. Udayagiri is the "Signature" monument of the Gupta era in MP.

• **Total Caves:** 20 caves (mostly Hindu, some Jain).

• **Cave No. 5 (The Varaha Panel):** The most iconic sculpture of the Gupta age. It depicts Vishnu in his boar incarnation (Varaha) rescuing Goddess Earth (Prithvi) from the cosmic ocean.

• **Political Allegory**: Scholars believe the Varaha represents Chandragupta II rescuing India from the "chaotic" rule of the Sakas.

• **Cave No. 6:** Contains an inscription mentioning the gift of a local minister, Virasena, who accompanied Chandragupta II on his "World Conquest" (Digvijaya).

Evolution of Structural Temples: The "Birth" of the Mandir

MP is the birthplace of the Structural Stone Temple in India. The transition from Cave to Structure occurred here.

Temple	Location	Architecture / Significance
Temple No. 17, Sanchi	Raisen	Earliest Gupta Temple. Flat roof, square sanctum (Garbhagriha), and a small pillared porch.
Tigawa Vishnu Temple	Katni	Features a flat roof and ornate pillars with "Purna-Kalasha" (overflowing vase) motifs.
Nachna Kuthara	Panna	Parvati Temple. Known for the earliest "Pradakshina-patha" (circumambulatory path) and window-lattices.
Bhumara Shiva Temple	Satna	Famous for the "Ek-mukhi" (one-faced) Shivalinga and Ganga-Yamuna motifs on the doorway.
Dashavatara Temple	Deogarh (Near MP Border)	Represents the Late Gupta Style with a Shikhara (tower).

Epigraphic Milestones: The "Eran" Sati Evidence

The Eran Pillar Inscription of 510 AD is a recurring question in every NET/AP exam.

• **Ruler:** Bhanugupta.

• **Context:** Bhanugupta's general, Goparaja, died in a battle against the Hunas.

• **Historical Fact:** The inscription records that Goparaja's wife burned herself on his funeral pyre. This is the First Epigraphic (Written) evidence of Sati in Indian history.

• **Discovery:** Alexander Cunningham.

Sub-Concepts: The "Malwa Samvat" & Aulikaras

During the Gupta period, Western MP (Mandsaur) was ruled by the Aulikara Dynasty as powerful feudatories.

• **Mandsaur Inscription of Kumaragupta I & Bandhuvarman:** Mentions a Guild of Silk Weavers who migrated from Gujarat to Mandsaur and built a magnificent Sun Temple.

• **Economic Data:** This inscription provides rare evidence of the mobility of labor and the decline of the silk trade due to the Huna invasions.

PYQ-Mapped Micro-Areas: Statement-Based Focus

• **Assertion:** Chandragupta II shifted his focus to Ujjain primarily for maritime trade. Reason: The conquest of Malwa gave the Guptas control over the ports of Bharuch and Cambay, linking the empire to the Roman and Byzantine markets. (Verdict: Both True; R explains A).

• **The 'Dashavatara' Logic:** Why is the Deogarh temple called a "Panchayatana"?

• **Answer**: Because it features a main central shrine surrounded by four smaller subsidiary shrines at the corners.

• **The 'Navaratna' Trap:** Do not assume all "Nine Gems" were historians. They were a multidisciplinary council including a lexicographer (Amarsimha), a doctor (Dhanvantari), and an architect (Shanku).

Comparison: Early Gupta vs. Late Gupta Temples in MP

Feature	Early Gupta (Sanchi/Tigawa)	Late Gupta (Deogarh/Nachna)
Roof	Strictly Flat.	Introduction of the Shikhara.
Plinth	Low or negligible.	High raised platform (Jagati).
Sculpture	Simple, focused on the doorway.	Elaborate panels (e.g., Gajendra Moksha).
Narrative	Minimal storytelling.	Complex mythological narratives on walls.

Exam-Focused Highlights: One-Liners

• **Who is the 'Sakari'?** Chandragupta II.

• **First Sati evidence found at:** Eran (510 AD).

• **Location of Udayagiri Caves:** Vidisha (Not to be confused with Udayagiri in Odisha).

• **The 'Nine Gems' resided in:** Ujjain.

• **Who discovered the Eran Sati Pillar?** Alexander Cunningham.

• **The 'Silk Weavers' Inscription' is found at:** Mandsaur.

• **Oldest Structural Temple in India:** Temple No. 17, Sanchi.

1.6 The Post-Gupta Transition — Aulikaras, Vakatakas, and the Huna Intrusion

Conceptual Foundation: The "Interregnum" of Central India

In the UGC-NET/AP historiography, the period between the decline of the Imperial Guptas (c. 467 AD) and the rise of the Paramaras (c. 9th Century) is often viewed as a "fragmented" era. However, for MP, this was the age of Regional Sovereignty. The "Madhya Desha" became a shield against Central Asian Huna incursions, and the Southern districts of MP (Nimar/Jabalpur) became the northern frontier of the Deccan-based Vakatakas.

Precise Definitions

• **Atavika-Rajyas:** The "Forest Kingdoms" of the Vindhyas that transitioned from Gupta vassals to independent buffer states.

• **Malwa Loka-Samvat:** A specific era (starting 57 BC) used by the Aulikaras in their inscriptions, marking a departure from the Gupta Era.

• **Hunas:** Xionite nomadic tribes from Central Asia who targeted Malwa for its strategic and agricultural wealth.

• **Janapada-Aisvarya:** The "Glory of the People," a political concept found in Yashodharman's inscriptions, emphasizing local pride over imperial dictates.

The Aulikaras of Dashapura (Mandsaur)

The Aulikaras were the most significant regional power in Western MP (Malwa) during the 5th and 6th centuries.

A. First Dynasty (The Vassal Phase)

• **Capital:** Dashapura (Modern Mandsaur).

• **Key Ruler:** Bandhuvarman. He was a contemporary and vassal of Kumaragupta I.

• **The Silk Weavers' Inscription (437-473 AD):** As discussed briefly in Part 4, this inscription is the primary source for Aulikara history. It highlights the cultural and religious integration of the region.

B. Second Dynasty: The Rise of Yashodharman (The Great Liberator)

By 532 AD, Yashodharman (Vishnuvardhana) emerged as a "Sovereign of North India" from the heart of MP.

• **The Victory Pillar (Vijay Stambha):** Located at Sondhni (Mandsaur). Two massive monolithic pillars (nearly 40 feet high) celebrate his victory.

• **Defeat of Mihirakula:** Yashodharman is credited with inflicting a crushing defeat on the Huna chief Mihirakula, who had terrorized the Punjab and Malwa regions.

• **The Claim:** His inscription boldly claims that he ruled over territories that "even the Guptas or the Hunas could not reach."

The Huna Intrusion: Toramana and Mihirakula in MP

The Hunas were the "Scourge of the Guptas," and MP was their primary target to break the Gupta backbone.

A. Toramana (The Conqueror)

• **Eran Evidence:** The Eran Boar Inscription (different from the Sati one) mentions the "First Year of Toramana's Reign." This proves that by c. 500 AD, the Hunas had annexed the Sagar-Damoh region.

• **Coinage:** He issued silver coins in the Gupta style but with Huna symbols, found extensively in Malwa.

B. Mihirakula (The Tyrant)

• **The Gwalior Inscription:** A Sun Temple was built at Gwalior during the 15th year of Mihirakula's reign by a person named Matrichheta.

• **Legacy:** Known in historical records as a "Persecutor of Buddhism," his defeat by the combined forces of Narasimhagupta (from the East) and Yashodharman (from MP) saved Central Indian culture.

The Vakataka Presence in Southern MP

While the Vakatakas are primarily a Deccan dynasty, they held significant territories in Vidarbha-contiguous MP (Betul, Chhindwara, Seoni).

Structural Analysis: Branches of Vakatakas

• **Pravarapura-Nandivardhan Branch:** Ruled over the Chhindwara-Nagpur belt.

• **Prabhavatigupta:** The daughter of Chandragupta II, she married Rudrasena II. Her copper plates found in MP (Poona plates/Rithpur plates) show the deep Gupta influence on the Vakataka administration in MP.

• **Vatsagulma Branch:** Influence extended to the Nimar region.

Administrative Impact

• **The Village Council:** Vakataka inscriptions in MP provide detailed records of land grants (Agraharas) to Brahmins, marking the beginning of the "Feudal" socio-economic structure in rural MP.

Sub-Concepts: The Parivrajaka and Uchchakalpa Dynasties

In Eastern MP (Baghelkhand/Bundelkhand), small but important dynasties acted as "Buffer States."

Dynasty	Region	Key Feature
Parivrajakas	Panna/Nagod	Claimed descent from "King-Sages." Key King: Hastin. Known for Khoh copper plates.
Uchchakalpas	Satna/Unchahara	Contemporaries of Parivrajakas. Famous for early administrative terminology like Bhoga and Bhaga.

PYQ-Mapped Micro-Areas: Statement-Based Focus

• **Assertion:** Yashodharman of Mandsaur is considered a "Non-Imperial" hero. Reason: Unlike the Guptas, he did not establish a long-lasting dynasty, but his individual military brilliance ended Huna dominance in Central India. (Verdict: Both True; R explains A).

• **The 'Mihirakula' Trap:** Do not assume he was only a Punjab ruler. The Gwalior Sun Temple inscription is the definitive proof of his political reach into the heart of the Chambal-Gwalior region.

• **The 'Silk Weavers' Re-visited:** Why did they migrate from Lata (Gujarat) to Mandsaur?

• **Answer**: Due to the political stability and patronage offered by the early Aulikaras, even while they were Gupta vassals.

Comparison: Aulikaras vs. Guptas in MP

Feature	Imperial Guptas	Aulikaras of Dashapura
Capital Focus	Ujjain / Pataliputra.	Dashapura (Mandsaur).
Religious Focus	Puranic Vaishnavism.	Sun Worship (Saura) & Shaivism.
Era Used	Gupta Samvat (319 AD).	Malwa Loka-Samvat (57 BC).
Architecture	Structural Temples (Sanchi/Tigawa).	Monolithic Victory Pillars (Sondhni).

The "Dashapura" Cultural Hub

Dashapura (Mandsaur) emerged as a rival to Ujjain during this era.

• **Literature:** Kalidasa mentions Dashapura in Meghaduta, praising its women and its beauty.

• **Trade:** It became the primary transit point for silk and textiles moving toward the Roman Empire before the Huna disruptions.