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HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF RAISEN DISTRICT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SANCHI STUPA

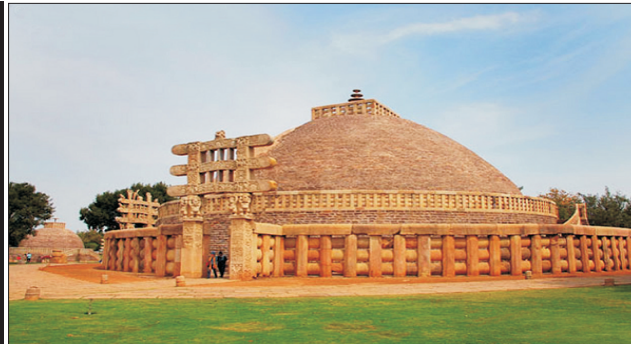
Iftikar Sharief

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ABSTRACT

Raisen District has historical importance because it is rich ancient Monuments. It has historical as well as Archaeological significance. The sanchi has the advantage of being in a better state of preservation than many other early Buddhist stupa-monastery sites. sanchi has historical value.

Sanchi is a Buddhist stupa, which was built by Asoka around 283 BCE. The Sanchi is surrounded by a railing with four carved gateways facing towards all four directions. Sanchi is famous in the World for Stupas, Monolithic Ashokan pillar, temples, monasteries and Sculptural wealth. The Mouryan King ashoka who built the Sanchi Stupa, which has a religious importance. It is believed that he built it for the Sake of his Queen Devi, who the daughter



of a merchant from Vidasha. Sanchi was got much importance during the 7th-12th centuries A.D. When shrines and Monasteries were continued to be added. Thus Sanchi Stupa displays harmonious co-existence of Hindu and Buddhist faiths. The General Tayler founded it in 1818. During British period the Director general of Archaeology sir John Marshal established an Archaeological Museum in 1919. The scholars from different parts of World came to Sanchi for Buddhist study. Sanchi stupa 1 has a large of brahmi inscriptions. Most of them are small and mention donations, which have great

historical importance. Now the sanchi is under the project of UNESCO. the Satdhara site which near about 10 km south-east of Sanchi will be further excavated, and will be developed.

KEYWORDS: Origion, Development, art Architecture and importance.

INTRODUCTION –

The Buddhist Vihara at Sanchi, is famous for its great Stupa is located at sanchi Town in Raisen District of the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, it is 46 Km north-east of Bhopal. It is believed that sanchi was birthplace of ashoka, wife, it is one of the oldest and constructed

by ashoka in the 3rd Century BCE. The Sungha King Pushyamitra shunga has destroyed the original stupa and later son Agnimitra constructed it again. The stupa which means mound is the earliest form of Buddhist monument. The sanchi stupa were deserted by the Buddhists in the thirteenth century AD. In due course, they were engulfed by jungle and completely forgotten till they were discovered by General Tayler in 1818, who found stupas 1, 2 and 3 intact. An effort to repair and restore the great stupa was made by Major Cole in 1881 who succeeded in filling up the breach in the dome of the stupa and setting up its fallen west and south gateways. In the bas-reliefs on the gateways of the sanchi stupa, scenes from the life of the Buddha find a prominent place. Here Buddha is not represented in human form; only certain

symbols such as horse without a rider but with an umbrella held above throne, wheel, foot-prints, three commemorate his presence.³ The Sanchi Stupa began as an eastern burial mound, which was reserved by the local population, and we have seen that the cult of stupas was taken up by Buddhism, and that Ashoka raised stupas in the Buddha's honour. In the 2nd century B.C. the old Sanchi Stupa was enlarged to twice its original size, becoming a hemisphere of about 120 feet in diameter. It was then faced with well-cut masonry laid in regular courses, and besides the lower path on ground level, an upper terraced path some 16 feet from the ground was added. The old wooden railings were replaced by stone ones 9 feet high, tenoned and mortised in imitation of carpentry. Finally, towards the end of the 1st century B.C., four glorious gateways were added at the four cardinal points.⁴ An important stupa site that definitely dates to Ashoka's time is Sanchi in the Raisen district of M.P. This was situated on the outskirts of ancient Vidisha, one of the great cities of Ashoka's empire and also, according to Buddhist legend, the birthplace of his wife, Devi. The remains on the Sanchi hillside include many stupas, shrines and monasteries. The brick core of the largest stupa, known as Stupa No. 1 or the Great Stupa which was built in Ashoka's time. The stupa was about 60 ft in diameter at the base, and was a low dome, mounted on a low cylindrical drum. It was probably surrounded by a wooden fence and had entrances at the four cardinal points. In the 2nd century BCE, this stupa was encased in stone: other additions were made over the next few centuries.⁵ The Buddhist monastic sites in central India include Bharhut, Sanchi, Satdhara, Anther, Sonari, and Bhojpur. Of these, those of Bharhut and Sanchi have been best studied. Sanchi is referred to as Kakanava or Kakanaya in early Brahmi inscriptions found at the site. In the 4th century CE, it was known as Kakanadabota, while an inscription of the late 7th century refers to it as Bota-Shripavata. The site is not associated with any event in the Buddha's life. It was located near Vidisha, one of the greatest cities of the Maurya empire. This was also the birthplace of Devi, with whom, according to legend, Ashoka had a serious romance. The remains at Sanchi include stupas, pillars, shrines and sculptures ranging from the 3rd century BCE to the 12th century CE. These provide a remarkable history of Buddhism in stone, spanning some 15 centuries. It may be noted that recent excavations at Sanchi have revealed ancient dams made of mud faced with dressed blocks of stone. These created reservoirs for storing rainwater, suggesting that the monks were involved in water harvesting, not only for providing drinking water, but also for irrigating the surrounding fields.⁶ It is said that the Buddha had allowed the construction of a stupa over his mortal remains in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Dighanikaya. He says that the body of Tathagata is to be created like that of a Chakravarti King. Besides Chakravarti kings the other three eligible for stupa constructed over their mortal remains were Samyak Sambuddha, Pratyeka Buddhas and Sravakas of Tathagata. After the death of Buddha there were wars among the various Kingdoms for relics. Ultimately the relics were divided into eight parts and a stupa was constructed over each. Later on Asoka distributed these mortal remains in the 84,000 newly constructed stupas.⁷ The bone relics of Buddhist Masters along with the reliquaries, obtained by Maisey and Cunningham were divided by them and taken to England as personal trophies.⁸ Maisey's family sold the objects to Victoria and Albert Museum where they stayed for a long time. The Buddhists in England, Sri Lanka and India, led by the Mahabodhi Society demanded that they be returned. Some of the relics of Sariputta and Moggallana were sent back to Sri Lanka, where publicly displayed in 1947.⁹ In a nationalistic sense, this marked the formal reestablishment of the Buddhist tradition in India. Some of the relics were obtained by Burma.¹⁰ The Stupa No. 1 has a large number of Brahmi inscriptions. Although most of them are small and mention donations, they are of great historical significance. James Prinsep in 1837, noted that most of them ended with the same two Brahmi characters. Prinsep took them as "danam", which permitted the decipherment of the Brahmi script.

CONCLUSION:-

The District of Raisen is rich in world heritage especially for Archaeological sites. The scholars from different parts of the country as well as from different parts of World come to Raisen district for the Buddhist study. The Sanchi has historical as well as archaeological importance. The Sanchi is situated about 10 kilometres south-west of Vidisha in M.P, India crowning the hilltop of Sanchi nearly 91 metres in height. It is unique not only in its having the most perfect and well-preserved stupas but also in its offering a wide and educative field for the study of the genesis, and efflorescence and decay of Buddhist art and architecture for a period of about thirteen

hundred years, from the third century B.C. to the twelfth century A.D. The Mauryan king Ashoka who built a religious centre at Sanchi, fascinated probably by the location of the hill. He erected the Stupa No. 1 after redistribution of mortal remains of Lord Buddha for erecting stupas all over the country in order to spread Buddhism. This great stupa served as a nucleus to the large Buddhist establishment during the later period. The entire stupa comprises symbolic representation of the gifts of nature as if explaining the Buddhist doctrine by reflecting the people's love for the nature. The use of lotus in stupa symbolizes the rise of people from the mud of materialism to the reality and spirituality of life. Similarly, the female tree spirits depicted in the gateways are symbols of fertility. Sanchi is famous throughout the world for its stupas, monasteries, temples and pillars, which dates back to the 3rd century BCE to the 12th century CE. Besides the famous Sanchi Stupa, the place has several other monuments as well. Presently Sanchi is under UNESCO Project, the Satdhara site which is 10 km in South-east of Sanchi will be further excavated and developed.

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