

Vidiśā had fallen to ruin during the Gupta period and had been superseded by Bhilsā (Bhailasvāmin); but, though the latter town played an important part in local history during Muhammadan times, and though it was thrice sacked by Moslem conquerors and its temples destroyed for a fourth time in the reign of Aurangzeb, yet amid all this devastation the monuments of Sāñchī, in spite of their prominent position on a hill only five miles away, were left unscathed, and when rediscovered by Gen. Taylor in 1818, proved to be in a remarkably good state of preservation. At that time three of the gateways of the Great Stūpa were still standing erect, and the southern one was lying where it had fallen; the great dome was intact; and a portion of the balustrade on the summit was still *in situ*.¹ The second and third stūpas were also well preserved, and there were remains of eight minor stūpas, besides other buildings, in the vicinity of the Second Stūpa, but no record of their condition exists. The beauty and unique character of these monuments was immediately recognised, and from 1819 onwards there appeared various notes, illustrations and monographs descriptive of their architecture and sculpture, though too often marred by the fanciful ideas or inaccuracies of the authors.² Most notable among these works were

¹ See J. Burgess, *The Great Stūpa at Sāñchī-Kāñākheda*, *J. R. A. S.*, Jan. 1902, pp. 29-45, where a succinct account is given of the history of the site since 1818.

² A list of these publications is given at the end of this guide-book.