

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL AND ARTISTIC

The history of Sāñchī starts during the reign of Aśoka in the third century B.C., and covers a period of some thirteen centuries, thus synchronising almost exactly with the rise and fall of Buddhism in India. The political story of Eastern Mālwā during these fourteen centuries is known to us only in the barest outline, and is beset with many uncertainties. Such as it is, however, it enables us to follow the chief dynastic changes and the chief religious movements which affected this part of India, and which are necessarily reflected in the changing character of the monuments.

To make this history and its bearing upon the architecture and sculptures of Sāñchī more easily intelligible, I shall divide it into three periods; the first extending from the reign of Aśoka to the overthrow of the Kshatrapa power, about A.D. 400, by Chandragupta II; the second from the advent of the Imperial Guptas to the death of the Emperor Harsha in A.D. 647; and the third embracing the later mediæval period.