

## Reading -1

I took A Visit to A Place of Historic Interest. I had an opportunity to visit the ruins of Taxila in far off North West of India. Leaving Madras, I took four days to reach Lahore. It took me twelve hours to reach Taxila, a distance of four hundred kilometers. The ruins of ancient Taxila are on the mountain sides in the lower ranges of the Himalayas. Getting down at the railway station, I engaged a Horse cart for five rupees to show me around all the places. It was a circuit of six miles comprising five different places and it took me four hours to do it.

The first place I visited was a monastery surrounding as stupa adorned with terracotta figures of Buddha's, life-size and life-like in their artistic execution, different from the massive bold figures of south Indian temples. The artistic perfections reached in these figures was due to the Greek influence in the architecture and sculpture of these parts of India and the softer material used for making those figure, viz. terracotta. The clay figures and bricks of the Himalayan slopes, when baked, are quite as hard as stones.

The figures combined the grace and sublimity of the Indian mind under truly spiritual inspirations with the purely artistic perfections of the Greek sculptor of the classic era, the period of their execution dating 300 B.C. - 200 A. D., i.e., soon after the invasion of India by Alexander.

The next place I visited was a small town. What I saw there was half a dozen streets with the walls of the houses standing alone without any sign of a roof. I learnt that after the streets were destroyed by the Huns by fire, there were only the walls left. The streets were perfectly straight and at right angle to one another and with a perfect drainage system. What must have been palace was a dilapidated pile of building with more spacious rooms. The palace looked much less imposing than the big houses of landlords of these days.

I then visited a fine temple dedicated to Marthand - The Sun. Afterwards I went to Kunala - the capital of Asoka's son, who was sent out by Asoka as the governor of Gandhara.

The last place I saw was a large village where excavations were still going on. In this connection, we must remember that The Takshasila in ancient times was one of the two or three great universities of India. After its destruction by Huns it was completely abandoned and forgotten. And the place was covered with mud for over 1500 years, so that nothing but Mounds of soft mud is to be seen for miles around. About fifty years ago, some villagers who dug in those regions for mud to build their house, had come against stone walls. The matter was reported to the archeological department who have since excavated and unearthed the most celebrated seat of learning in ancient India. This is A Visit to A Place of Historic Interest.