Abstract: The ancient trade route from Kausambi to the South - Eastern Sea Side i.e. Jagganath Puri, Odisha were followed via Bharut, Bandhavgarh, Amarkantak of M.P. and Kharod, Malhar, Sirpur in C.G. The Malhar is located in Bilaspur district, CG towards South East, about 32 km. distance and lies in geographical Latitude North 21°55’ and East longitude 82°20’ in Masturi Tahsil. Under Natural Heritages, the environment of Malhar is surrounded by three rivers, Arpa in the West, Lilagar in the East Shinvath in the South. The landscape shows undulating plains (250 m AMSL) with gentle slope towards lowlying, river drainage channels, due to presence of Sedimentary Horizontal Bedded (SHB) rock Formations of Chhattisgarh (Proterozoic) Supergroup. The excavations at Malhar by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) designated as ASI code - NCT - 17, and Archaeology Deptt. of C.G. State, considered continuous inhabitation, ancient civilization from Ancient period to Medieval period in Indian History. The ancient fort - Ramparts in Kosala Village and Ferry Potnlar, still exists at present, indicates its antiquity to Pre-Mauryan reign period (600 BC). The coins of Kanishka Dynasty Ruler VimcadiFisys and Sealings of Kosala village inscriptions in Brahmi Script “Gamās Kośaliya” (Kosali Gram) indicates age of 2nd century AD. The extensive remains of Hindu Temples, Stone Pillars, Planned way of Town Building Sequences (PTBS) and Royal Accomodation Palaces two nos. (Rajmahal) in Garhi Area (Fort Region) reveals the Architectural Glory of Malhar since Satvahan Dynasty (2nd Century AD). Many temples of Lord Shiva, sculptures symbols - Padma, Chakra. Gada Images of Garuda, Kedarshwar Mahadeva Temple and Goddess Dindeshwari Temple (Maa Parvati) i.e. 6 to 12th Century AD belonging to Later Somyanshis and Kalachuris Dynasty rulers of Malhar region. Lord Vishnu sculpture with four arm figure holding shankha, Chakra and Gada, dated to 2nd Century BC, was Found in Malhar. The Pandava Sahadeva ruled south of Indogangetic Plains and Kusha Son of Lord Ram Chandra received South Kosala and made Kushasthalipura as Capital which is identified near Malhar. The Remote Sensing Satellite Image interpretation shows the circular precincts of fort, circumferences by two layers of water filled Moat. Fort lies at the center of the Fort Premises, Rajmahal (Palaces) in two numbers located at the south of Fort. The Ancient Hindu Temples had been constructed in Malhar City Zone i.e. outside of the fort region, mainly in south & east wards. Conservation of Archaeological, Architectural, Historical, Cultural Art and Natural Environment of the region, its Geomorphic - Geologic heritages have own importance and assets of Hindu sculptural wealth of Nation: It increases the prestige and proud of India internationally.

Keywords: MALHAR MUD FORT, DINDESHWARI TEMPLE, GEOLOGIC- GEOMORPHIC, ARCHAEOICAL ASSETS, ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION, HERITAGE, MOAT, SHIVNATH RIVER, SOUTH KOSALA, HINDUART, ANCIENT MONUMENTS.

A. INTRODUCTION -

The state Chhattisgarh is rich in cultural heritage and natural diversity in form of landscape, Litho -rock units ranging from Archaean, Proterozoic, Paleozoic Gondwans, Cretaceous Traps and recent fertile alluviums of river and streams of Mahanadi system, also Indravati River of Godavari System in Baster Plateau. The state is full of ancient monuments, carved temples, palaces, rock shelters and Caves, Mekal Mountain Ranges, hillocks, Plateaues, Mounds and wide agricultural plain fields. The Malhar region has its own ancient historical, archaeological, cultural and natural importance, since it lies in the midst of Arpa (W), Lilagar (E) and Shinath (S) fluvial region, about 32 kms. S - E of Bilaspur city, C.G. The ancient city Malhar is also known as Mallapattana, Sharabhnpur, Mallar and Mallari in historical inscriptions and Indian Literature. It was a Capital Town in 1st Millennium i.e. during Maurya and Shunga Rulers. The Archaeological Significance and Architectural importance of Structures found in Mounds and Ruins of an Ancient Fort in village Kosala. The ancient fortress rampart and the Ferry (Potnar) still exists at present and its antiquity is considered contemporaneous ages of Maurya Dynasty. The coins of Kanishka Dynasty ruler VimcadiFisys and sealings of Kosala village (in NW) inscriptions in Brahmi Script “Gamās Kośaliya” (Kosali Gram) indicates age of 2nd century AD. Lord Vishnu sculpture found in Malhar ages to and century BC. And Hindu Epics Ramayana and Mahabhahrat also described it as Dakshina Kosala and Kushasthalipura, Ruler Kush, son of Lord Ramchandra of Ayodhya. Also the military campaigns of Sahadeva (Pandvas) defeated the kings of Kosala and Kantarakas of Eastern Kosala.

B. STUDY AREA -
The Study area Malhar Region was considered as a region of Ancient Dakshina Kosala Janapada territorial Jurisdiction of Chedi (cheti) Reigns of Kalachuri Dynasty. Malhar city (Mallalapattana) lies in geographical N latitude 21° 55’ and E longitude 82° 20’E in Bilaspur district of state C.G. India. Bilaspur is the traditionally known as Cultural Capital of the state comprises the Tehsils Bilaspur, Pendra Road, Lormi, Kota, Mungeli, Takhatpur, Bilha and masturi. Malhar is situated, in Masturi Tehsil, about 32 km to the SE of Bilaspur

C. METHODOLOGY -

Under methodology, the S.O.I. toposheets have been utilized as base map. The Remote Sensing data Satellite imagery has been interpreted with inductive and deductive reasoning of recognition Criteria tone, texture, color, size, shape, association etc. and mapped in terms of Geomorphic features and units with limited ground truth. The terrain conditions of the region have been correlated with the structures of the fort remains, its construction and chronological details of historical events described in the literature. The Architectural features of Hindu Temples and Sculptures of Malher region has been analyzed and categorized in correlation with the historical chronology.

D. CLIMATE, PHYSIOGEOGRAPHY - LANDSCAPE - GEOMORPHIC CONDITION -

The Malhar region, lies in the south - East of Bilaspur, C.G. The subtropical climatic conditions is prevailing in the region with av. rainfall of 1350 mm annually. The temperature rises up to 46°C during Summer. period and reaches to 4°C in winter season. The landscape formed by fluvial erosion of Precambrian (Protoreozoic) sedimentary rock formations of Chhattisgarh Supergroup. Hence the terrain exhibits vast undulating plains with thick soils covers. The study area Malhar is encircled in three sides by drainage lines of Arpa (West); Lilagar (East) and major river Shivnath (South) belonging to Master Mahanadi River channel. Regionally, the general slope of ground surface tends towards Mahanadi river course flowing from West to East direction, in further S - E of Malhar. The fort Precincts and Ancient old city is situated on the Water Divide of Arpa and Lilagar rivers. These rivers follows the South wardly lineament with straight course and join major Shivnath river channel. The area is dominated with Buried Pediplain geomorphic units and minor erosional geomorphic features.

E. LITHOLOGIC SETUP -

The Precambrian (protoreozoic) sedimentary rock formations of Chhattisgarh Supergroup lies in the study area - The major rock formation containing dolomite, limestone, sandstone, shale, affected by structural lineaments in N-S directions leads trend of river channels. The generalized geological succession, is given in Table. The fluvial processes is dominated in the region and soil, alluvium covers the underneath rocks.

F. HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE -

The Malhar region shows continuous inhabitation and antiquity from the protolithic age, 2nd Century BC to 12th Century AD evidenced by discovered sculptures, archaeological materials i.e. various copper, lead and silver punch marked coins were found in Fort Area of Malhar. Also Stone inscriptions of Elephant, Peacock, Kartikeya and Ujjain Symbol carved by Artists of Ruler kingdoms. The chronological sequence of historical and cultural evidences indicates five stages of urban development can be commonly categorized in the region (Table). I. Protolithic Period (1000 BC - 350 BC), II. Maurya, Shunga and Satavahana (350 BC to 300 AD) III. Sharab purias and Somvanshis (300 AD to 650 AD) IV. Later Somvanshis (650 AD to 900AD) and V. Kalachuris - Dynasty (900 AD to 1300 AD). The archaeological importance of excavated materials expressed the glory of Malhar as Trade Route Center and Hindu Cultural Growth (HCG) in Ancient India. The Hindu religious temples mainly constructed, using Stone Materials, dedicated to Lord Shiva, Vishnu, Goddess Durga and Parvati Mata. The Stone sculptures of Fine Arts exhibit many Hindu dieties and symbol of Wild Fauna, also carved with rows of elephants, flowers and carved Nandi Chamber. The Ardhhamandap Pillar Stones, exhibits holy River Yamuna and Narmada rides their Vahana.

G. MALHAR MUD FORT-Fortification Style -

At Malhar there is a prominent Mud Rampart in the Fort Area, which is encircled by two ditches, in a semicircular pattern. The Fort site lies in the middle center of the Circular Fort precincts guarded by two Big Lenticular Moats. There are Two Rajamahal Palace Buildings towards south of Fort. The residential zone, Deur Temple, Pataleshwar Temple, Dindeshwari Temples are located nearer to these palaces but these lies outside of the Fort precincts, peripheries in southern and eastern part of Malhar city. The Fort Building structure does not exist physically in a complete form. Only remains of its structure with building - materials (Stone, Bricks, clay, soils, mud soils, etc.) scattered throughout the Malhar Area. At present the Fort precincts is fenced and dense mixed forest lies in the ground of premises of the Ancient Fort. The Remote Sensing Satellite Interpretation of Malhar region indicates that shape of Fort Precincts is Circular Form and a Road Pathway runs E - W at Center of the fort Circular Premises. Inside the Precincts the semicircular internal ditches or water filled moats acts as a mount layer covering. the main constructional structure (Mud Ramparts) known as Garha (Fort). The Fort area shows two Layers of Protection, the external layer protects the Rajmahal (Palaces) whereas the Fort itself lies in the center of circular designed second or internal peripheries made by moats (fig.) The Quartzitic White Siliceous sandstone and conglomerate stones had been utilized for intact fortification of mud walls, joints, cracks
were filled with clay and soil slurry. The excavations have been carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India and the rampart and remainants of Malhar fort have been considered as a Pre Mauryan fort constructed about 600 BC Era. (Ref. Bajpai:1978)

H. HINDU TEMPLES-ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES -

(i) DEOR TEMPLE - The Deor or Deur temple is situated nearer to the Rajmahal but outside of the Fort precincts i.e. in the Southern Settlement part of Malhar (Fig.) The temple is north facing, also known as Pandava-Kichak temple. The Deor o Deur Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and in the Garbh - Grih the West facing Shiv Linga is an evidence that the temple had been constructed originally dedicated to Lord Shiva. The Shikhara of the temple is absent and only half of the partion of the temple is preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India. At the main entrance gate, Goddess Gangai and Goddess Yamuna Devi stone sculptures had been carved, riding their Vahana. Also one stone platform carved with rows of elephants, flower pattern and other decorative mythological styles. Apart from this a huge sculpture of "Ardhanarishwar" is also found at this temple Premises. The antiquity of this sculpture determines to the Kushan Dynasty Period i.e. 3rd century AD of Vimcadiysis reign.

(ii) PATALESHWAR TEMPLE - The Pataleshwar temple is also known as Kedareshwar Temple and it is dedicated to Lord Shiva of Kedarnath. The Pataleshwar Temple is situated in the residential zone, outside of the Fort premises. It lies in the NE of Deur Temple and West of Goddess Dindeshwari Temple. It was constructed by Brahmin Somraj during Kalachuri King Jajjaldev of Ratapur State in 1167 AD. The Shivaling shows Gomukhi Shape pattern and carved Nandi Chamber exist in Mandapa Area of Temple. At the Entrance of Temple Stone columns Carved, Shows images of Goddess Gangai, Yamuna and Narmada, riding in their Vahanas. Also the stone platform depicted with Figures like Rows of Elephants, Flower pattern and other decorative mythological scenes. It require detailed investigation regarding Sculpture Arts and themes of the carved sculptures decorated in the temple.

(iii) DINDESHWARI TEMPLE - The Goddess Dindeshwar Temple lies in the Eastern direction about 1km from the Fort precincts. This temple was constructed by Kalachuri Ruler Jajjaldeva of Ratapur State in 11th century AD The architecture of Hindu temple follows the North Indian Style “Nagara Architecture " Towards the northwards margin a rectangular shaped Water Lake Pond exists which serves as a permanent source of water.

I. MALHAR MUD FORT - HERITAGE -

The Architectural Design of Malhar Fort in terms of Fortification is Pioneer and Unique in C.G. (south Kosala region). The fortification with the buildings of Rajmahal in southern part of Precincts was constructed to reach quickly, in short time and distance to the General Residential Area (GRA) of Ancient Malhar City. The Fort Premises Covers a large area, enough to accomodate Royal - ruler’s families and their relatives, Servants, Sepoys, guards etc. during invaders attacks or adverse conditions. The internal moats circle also provide water harvesting system facilities for long term residence of peoples. The Fort Building premises constructed at central part of the precincts. It’s distance is very far from the Rajmahal no.2 which provide permanent residence to Royal families. The Fort site of Malhar represents an authentic architectural ability evidenced by its construction plan and layout form - configuration and related components. The Malhar region exhibits important changes over a span of time within cultural segment of South Kosala, particularly on development of Architectural - elements and monumental arts, Town-Planning Landscape design etc. Also it had been influenced by architectural development by Maurya Shung, Satvahan to Kalachuris i.e. 600 BC to 1000 AD The similar pattern was followed by Rulers of South Kosala in fortification of Water Forts Dhamda (Durg), Ratapur and Kosagaigarh, Kotagarh, KotmiFort etc.

J. CONSERVATION OF ANCIENT HINDU MONUMENTS AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES -

The Malhar Fort site and Rajmahal Structures Monuments lies in the inner part of Fort precincts whereas the Residential zone / settlement zone of Ancient Urban City Malhar and Ancient Hindu Temples Deur Temple, Pataleshwar Temple and Goddess Dindeshwari Temple located outside of the Fort precincts, both needs conservation practices. Under protective measures, the Mound Zone of fort should be cleared from forest weeds and clean planation of ground Surrounding the fort is necessary. Extensive repair work is needed on Stability of Fort walls and other small monuments, Temples, scattered remains reconstruction through professional Archaeologists/ Conservation Architects, NGOs/ Public Awareness Programmes etc. Water Reservoirs, Moat, small ponds, drainages require less treatment and can be carried out more systematically by local Govt. Agencies The protection of Monuments and Archaeological sites and Remains (Declaration of National Importance) Act, 1951 (AMASR) and Amendment 2010 provides unlimited protection to Monument of its framework and also give rise 200 meters as protected zone around the designated monuments of National importance. Malhar Fort is designated as NCT-17, under Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) Protection Code.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION -

The Cultural Traditions of Hindu Religion, their Arts, Literature leads over centuries in South Kosala i.e. C.G. The Planning and Defence mechanism through Urban Development and fortification precincts Walls reflect their Ruler Power of State. The Architectural evidences in form of Temples, Monuments Structures and Clay Sealings, Coins, Stone, Beads. Ornaments, Pots, Iron implements archaeological evidences like stone inscriptions exhibits the Cultural Growth and Urban Settlement, Forts,
Temples, Stone sculptures i.e. Architectural development during Mauryan, Shung, Satavahan, Kalachuri Dynasties/ Rulers between 600 BC to 1000 AD The original structures losses the material Substances and get delapaediated/ ruins conditions. The Heritages of Monuments, temples, stone sculptures, needed conservation and protective measures under AMASR, 1951 and Amendment of 2010. Since the National legislation provide unlimited protection to the Ancient Monuments eg. 200m. protection distance zone established by this Act. The Heritage structures eg Water Reservoirs, Moats Wells, require less treatment whereas the small monuments Temples, scattered remains. can be conserved only by Professionals such as Archaeologists and Conservation, Geologists & Architects. The NGOs, Local Govt., Cultural and Archeology Dept. of State can be engaged in Conservation Programmes of Forts and Ancient Monuments, to survive the Heritages of the Region.

### TABLE I

MALHAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGES – HINDU TEMPLES & SCULPTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>TEMPLE/SCULPTURE</th>
<th>Construction Yr.</th>
<th>Dynasty/Ruler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Lord Vishnu – Oldest Known sculpture with four Arm Figure holding Shankha</td>
<td>200 BC</td>
<td>Mauryan Empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Pandra – Bham – Kichak</td>
<td>6th Century AD</td>
<td>Srabha Purianns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Deur Temple</td>
<td>6th-7th Century AD</td>
<td>Somvanshis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Pataleshwar Mahadeva Temple</td>
<td>11th Century AD</td>
<td>Kalachuris (Somraj)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Dindeshwari Devi (Mata Parvati Uma Devi)</td>
<td>11th Century AD</td>
<td>Kalachuris (Jajjaldeva of Ratanpur)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE II

MALHAR: ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGES AND CONSTRUCTION - STUCTURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Construction Structures</th>
<th>Material Used</th>
<th>Architectural Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>FORT</td>
<td>Block stones (undressed) Mud Slurry clay and soil</td>
<td>Pitching of stones on walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>MOAT</td>
<td>Digged soil Earthen Trenches</td>
<td>Outer form Lenticular Shaped, Large Area encircled Big Size Moat 2 Nos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>OPEN GROUND</td>
<td>OPEN Plain GROUND Covered with soil mantle</td>
<td>Almost Plains Landscape with Natural soils growth of scrub and vegetation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>PALACE</td>
<td>Block stones and Baked Bricks</td>
<td>Independant Structure in peripheries high security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE III

MALHAR: GEOHERITAGES AND NATURAL FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Geoheritages</th>
<th>Natural Features</th>
<th>Geoheritage Elements in Malhar Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Water Bodies (Surface)</td>
<td>Ponds, Water Tanks, Talao, Streams, Rivers, Lakes</td>
<td>Outer and Inner Moats Surrounding the Fort Area Ponds, Tanks in habitat area Lilagar, Arpa, Shivanath Rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Landscape (Erosional Geomorphic Features)</td>
<td>Hillocks, Ridges, Ditches, Slopes, Valleys, Plains</td>
<td>Malhar Situated on water divide Undulating Plains Open Ground Plains- Agricultural Fields and habitat/settlement Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Rocks and Stones (Geologic formations)</td>
<td>Litho rocks, Outercrops, Strata horizontal Limestone, Sand Stone, Rock Blocks, Bedding Planes.</td>
<td>(i) Fort Region- Building Material for Fort Stone, Mud, Soils (ii) Temples – Building materials undressed stone, blocks (iii) Sculptures – Huge Blocks of Stones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Flora/Fauna Forest</td>
<td>Deciduous Trees (Sal &amp; mixed Forest)</td>
<td>Dense Forest in Fort Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIG. I MALHAR FORT: LOCATION INTERVEINING, ARPA, LILAGAR AND SHIVNATH RIVER, (MAHANADI SYSTEM)

FIG. II MALHAR FORT: FORT AND TEMPLES (Based on Satellite Data) (2020 AD)
FIG.III MALHAR FORT: CONFIGURATION AND SURROUNDING-temples
(Based on Satellite Data)

FIG.IV(A) MALHAR FORT: LAYERS OF STONE WALLS EXCAVATION OF DEEPER LEVELS
FIG. IV(B) MALHAR FORT: PRESERVATION OF ANCIENT STRUCTURE REMAINS IN IRON SHADES PLATFORM (PATALESHWAR TEMPLE)

FIG. IV(C) MALHAR FORT: FRONT VIEW OF DEOR HINDU TEMPLE HERITAGE (TEMPLE PANDVA BHIM-KICHAK) (NAGRA STYLE)
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