CHAPTER- 5

THE FORTS OF BUNDELKHAND REGION

Profile of Bundelkhand

The ancient Vedas record the marriage of King Dasharatha of Koshal, father of Lord Ram of the epic Ramayana with the princess of Dakhin Koshal (a nearby part of modern Bundelkhand). It is believed that the Lord Rama and Sita spent major part of their 14 years exile in Chitrakoot located in the Dandaka forest area, north of the Vindhyas. Archaeological explorations and excavations provide a glimpse of the ancient period from the earliest times to about the 13th century AD. The finds speak of a developed ancient civilization and reflect the glorious and chequered history of its rulers and warriors and a rich cultural past.

One third of the total area of the region is enveloped by forest and offers a unique panorama wild life. Innumerable monuments as exquisitely carved shrines, the majestic forts and palaces are reminders of rich architectural past. The world's biggest stone inscriptions, the architectural feast of Khajuraho and archaeological marvel of Orchha stuns the world.1 Chitrakoot and music legends like Tansen and Baiju bawara have amazed the world with their tradition and devotion. The annual Dance Festival, Tansen Samaroh at Gwalior and Ramnavami at Chitrakoot, centuries old scales in the traditional crafts keep alive a vibrant traditions. Today Bundelkhand offers everything be it heritage, cultural adventure, pilgrimage, leisure and business tourism, making it a many splendoured land.

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1 Bundelkhand; *Discover the glory of courage*, Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 1997, p.06.
GEOGRAPHY

In the Northern end of the Vindhyā mountain range, Bundelkhand region, in central India, is spread over two states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It is demarcated in the north by the river Yamuna, and extends southward towards the Narmada; the Sindh defines the western limits, and the river Tons, the eastern.

A regional melting pot with a distinctive historical and cultural identity, Bundelkhand spreads over southern Uttar Pradesh and northern Madhya Pradesh. The rugged tract of country provided ideals sites for forts, with rocky outcrops and isolated hills rising abruptly from the plains. Bundelkhand has some of the Peninsula's major rivers such as Yamuna, Betwa, Kali Sindh, Pahooj, Kuwanri, Ken, Chandraval and Berma. The northern part is drained by the Betwa river systems.

HISTORY

The region was called Jajhauti- Chi-chi-to for the Chinese-when Hiuen Tsang came to India in the seventh century. Some 400 years later, Alberuni, accompanying Mahmood of Ghazni, referred to Jajhauti and Khajuraho. 'Ibn-battutah', the fourteenth century traveller from Tangier in Morocco, also visited the region, including Khajuraho and Chanderi. According to Alexander Cunningham, the first head of the Indian archaeological survey, Jujhauti corresponded with Bundelkhand, as the region later came to be known.¹

¹ Kashi Prasad Tripathi; Bundelkhand ka Vrahad Itihas, Bharat Bhawan Purani Tehri, Tikamgarh (M.P.) p.18
CLIMATE

The climate of Bundelkhand region is monsoonal. It gets warmer after March as the tropics of Cancer passes through northern part of the region. Like other part of India, Bundelkhand also has three major seasons- Summer (March- June), during this period the temperature in the entire region ranges above 32.4°C. In general the southern parts of Bundelkhand are hotter than the northern parts.\(^3\) The places like Gwalior, Morena, Jhansi, Banda and Datia record temperature of over 42°C in the month of May. The humidity is relatively very low and the region usually experiences frequent yet mild dust storm.

The south west monsoon usually breaks about mid June and the entire region receives a major share of its rainfall between June and September. The north-east parts of the region tend to experience a hire rainfall where as the parts of south west receive less. The Jalaun, Bhind, Datia, Gwalior, Hamirpur, Mahoba and Jhansi, Banda, Chitrakoot and other extreme north eastern part receive more than 150 cm rainfall. The districts of southern Bundelkhand receive less than 120 cm rainfall.\(^4\)

The winter season starts from the month of November. The temperature remains low in the northern parts of the region. In comparison to the southern parts. The daily maximum temperature of the northern parts in the month of January remains between 15°C-18°C. The climate is generally dry and pleasant with a clear sky. Few

\(^4\) Bundelkhand; Discover the glory of Courage, Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 1997, p.08.
cyclonic spells come during December and January. In the North west part of the region.

**FLORA AND FAUNA**

The region of Bundelkhand encompasses a breathtaking wilderness along with extensive flora and fauna and rich biodiversity. There are countless variety of plants and animals in a region of interdependence. There are more than 1000 species of flowering plants including ferns, orchids, aromatic and medicinal plants. The faunal wealth of the Bundelkhand is equally rich and diverse. The inhabitants include species of cat, antelopes, gazelles and the dog family, many other species of mammals and reptiles and avifauna. The heavily forested regions and marsh wetlands all create a natural habitat for birds and support a variety of birdlife. Wildlife spectrum has tiger, panther, wild dog, bison, swamp deer, blue bull, sloth beer, wild boar, langoor, wolf, hyena, Indian gazelle, civet, rhesus macaque, porcupine etc. Crocodiles and gharyal are large aquatic predators of rivers and lakes.

**PEOPLE**

The population of Bundelkhand is about 11.76 Million (2001 census), an increase of 24.34% and the population density is 196 people per square kilometer.

More than 75% of region population resides in villages whose main occupation is agriculture, while the rest of population lives in towns. Number of females per thousand male(sax ratio) in the region

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5 A C Nielsen Org Marg, New Delhi; *A report on Tourism Master Plan in Bundelkhand Region*, New Delhi, 2011, p.16.
is 919 where as the literacy rate is 63.70%. The majority population is Hindu with Muslims making up the largest minority community. The tribes of Bundelkhand population constitutes over 6% of the region population and are mainly concentrated in southern part of the religion. The life style, culture and customs of this community mostly resemble the Hindu religion though they still strongly believe in orthodox traditions. The social customs prevalent among different types and castes vary more due to variation in their habitat and surrounding geographical conditions. For earning they depend upon agriculture and forest produce and local craft. With improved communication and growth in the economy, the tribal's way of living has changed from their original hunting and gathering existence to one near the mainstream.

**LANGUAGE**

Hindi, the official languages of Bundelkhand region is the most widely spoken language. It is the predominant language of the official work. It is not very difficult for locals even in remote corners to understand Hindi. For a fair amount of people in the major towns and cities and for the business class English is their second language. It is widely spoken by sizeable numbers engaged in the hospitality and service industry. English speaking guides are available at all places of tourist attraction and it is even possible to engage the services of French, German, Spanish, Japanese and other foreign language specialized tourist guides. One would see words of English and
Hindi both used on signage, milestone, shop and office signboards. The language Bundeli is also widespread.

**ECONOMY**

All the concerned districts of Bundelkhand have their economy predominantly based on agriculture. But the infertility of land, low productivity, improper land distribution in which a few medium and large farmers have major share in land holdings, lack of irrigation facilities and unscientific cultivation in terms of non-use of modern methods in agriculture have kept the agriculture-based economy on the verge of subsistence only. In Bundelkhand, Panna is the only district which has the percentage of forest area over 50% with respect to its geographical area. Satna and Chhatarpur have the forest cover between 20-30%, while Datia and Tikamgarh have it less than 20%. Bundelkhand, devoid of forest cover, looks like a barren land with naked mounds of hills. The problem of soil erosion, soil filling into the ponds making them useless, direct flow of rainwater into the rivers, depleting ground water resources and unproductivity of the land, all these are the emerging issues in Bundelkhand which have roots into the depletion of forest cover. Forests in Bundelkhand have been a major source of livelihood for poor people. Though, tribes have been dependent on forests for everything in their life, other caste people, particularly that of Scheduled Caste, have also been dependent on it for food. Mahuwa has been one of the major sources of food for poor community living in the rural areas of these concerned districts. Bidi making

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9 *A Study on Bundelkhand*; By Samarthan (NGO), Rakesh Nath Tiwari, Bhopal, 2009, p.15
provides livelihood to a large number of poor families in the region. What is worth observing is that Bundelkhand is rich in some important minerals and stones but mining and quarrying involves exploitation of wage labour and the issue of health hazard is also involved in it. Stone cutting and quarrying is under the total control of contractors, coming mostly from the upper caste and carrying the feudal relations into this business. It is hazardous and a large number of TB cases and other such respiratory diseases can be noticed among the workers involved in this business. Tikamgarh has poverty rate of 58.3% closely followed by district Satna with 55.5. Districts Datia and Panna also have the poverty rate indicating nearly half of its population below poverty line. Only Chhatarpur is relatively better in Bundelkhand, with the poverty rate of only 29.8% which may be attributed to comparatively loose feudal control and prevalent economic activities like bidi making.

**Agriculture**

It is the main occupation of villagers and the region is the biggest cultivator of Soyabean, wheat, Jawar and Gram. Rice and coarse millets such as Kodo and Kutki are also sown in large parts. Pulses, Cereals and ground nut are also grown. Important among the cash crops are cotton, sugarcane and oilseeds.

The irrigation of land is mostly dependent on the ponds, tube-wells and major rivers such as Yamuna, Betwa, Kali sindh, Pahooj, Kuwanri, Ken, Chandraval and Berma. The Chambal valley, Matatila dame and other such projects offer good potential for hydroelectric power generation. Rural electrification covers over 87% of the villages in the state. Road density has increased manifold since 1950. Communication are well developed. Rail route passes
through Bundelkhand. Telephone and cellular service provider, BSNL and other private operators are operational. All of the district headquarters have internet access.¹¹

Bundelkhand has an enormous potential and resources to be developed into a major tourism destination. Numerous monuments of historical, archaeological, architectural and pilgrim importance dot the region all over. The forests are teeming with all kinds of wildlife and birdlife. Because of its central location and easy accessibility, Tourism can be a major economically attractive thrust area.

Cultural Heritage

Bundelkhand, a land of ancient culture and traditional, is famous for its archaeological monuments and places of pilgrimage for all the religions, Hindu, Muslims, Jains and Buddhists. The famous Sanchi stupa near Vidisha, is a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists from all over the world. Bundelkhand have a rich cultural background. Chandelas and Bundelas rulers of Bundelkhand were great builders and created numerous forts, palaces and temples. The region is full of temples, particularly that of Lord Shiva. Chandelas created a large number of ponds now known as Chandeli-ponds in this region for irrigation and drinking water supply.¹² A famous place of tourist and religious attraction, Orchha, is situated in the district of Tikamgarh. It was the capital of Bundelas before it got shifted to Tikamgarh due to vulnerable strategic position of Orchha in later days. In the background of river Betwa, the fort and numerous temples of Orchha provide a

¹¹ A Study on Bundelkhand; By Samarthan (NGO), Rakesh Nath Tiwari, Bhopal, 2009, p.14
picturesque view. The buildings of Orchha and Datia are magnificent and tell the tales of the creativity of Bundela rulers. Tikamgarh is also religiously famous for its temples of Lord Rama in the Orchha, and the one named Kundeshwar Mahadeo Mandir, near Tikamgarh township. Datia is known for its buildings and palaces built by Bundelas, particularly that of Virsinghdeo. Some of them are unique. Datia also has a famous ‘Saktipeeth’ which attracts a lot of people for religious worship. It also has a famous Jain Temple. Datia has always strived for preserving the original Bundela culture, its language and traditions. At present, there are numerous theatrical and literacy groups in Datia, which are trying to preserve and propagate its cultural heritage. Panna, too, has a rich cultural base. The famous Bundela chief, Chhatrashal, had made Panna his capital. District Chhatarpur is named after him. Panna, is known as ‘town of temples’. There is a mythical story telling that Saint Prabhunath told to his disciple, Chhatrashal that on one particular night whatever area will be covered by him sitting on the back of his horse, will find the mine of diamond beneath the earth.\(^\text{13}\) So are the diamond mines in Panna. As a reverence to Saint \textit{Prabhunath}, Chhtrashal constructed numerous temples, mostly attributed to Lord Shiva.\(^\text{14}\) It is said that there are as many as eleven-hundred ancient temples in the district. Khajuraho, the famous tourist attraction in India, is situated in the district of Chhatarpur. Khajuraho has a range of temples with erotic love-making stonecarved scenes on the outer walls. They were created by the Chandela kings who ruled Bundelkhand, before the rise of Bundela in the region.

\(^\text{13}\) \textit{A Study on Bundelkhand}; By Samarthan (NGO), Rakesh Nath Tiwari, Bhopal, 2009, p.16.
\(^\text{14}\) \textit{Ibid}, p.p.16-17
TOURISM

Bundelkhand lies in the heart of India, whose topography ranges from plateau with the Vindhya mountain ranges, in the east and the plains in north, meandering rivers, rocky hills and ravines to lush green forests.

The region boasts of a wide variety of attractions to suit all tourists tastes, from ancient temples to natural parks and sanctuaries, forts and places, a host of cultural and tourists festivals to splendid venues for international conferences and conventions of global standards. The best known tourism products of Bundelkhand in global and national tourism market are its heritage and archaeological sites, wildlife territories, pilgrimage centres, leisure and business centres, and rich classical folks and tribal culture. The principal destinations are Khajuraho, Jhansi, Mahoba, Gwalior, Shivpuri, Chanderi, Orchha, Chitrakoot, Baruasagar, Datiya and Kalinjar. Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation Ltd.(MPSTDC) and Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation Ltd.(UPSTDC),The state governments organisations are the nodal agencies responsible for development and promotions to attracts tourists to this very heart of India.

FAIRS AND FESTIVAL

Fairs and festivals are the essence of Indian culture, social and economical panorama is a centre of attraction and a rare combination, where the entire atmosphere is dazzlingly theatrical.

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and lively. The Bundelkhand life is full of celebration. Here are religious festivals having mythological origins, those that mark the season, others commemorate a local deity or a hero. There are many others introduced by tourism to showcase the heritage or culture of a region. Traditions of the state can best be captured at its fairs and festivals. Some of the larger and more popular celebrations are briefed here.

**Lokranjan**

Organised by M.P. tourism, Lokranjan is a national festival of folk dances held at Khajuraho every year. The activities include presentation of popular folk and tribal dance forms from various parts of India and a craft bazaar to exhibit and demonstrate the creations of the traditional artisans. This festival in the heritage city of Khajuraho is magnificent spectacle, as its unveils the majesty and grandeur of a world famed temple site and provides an opportunity to catch up the colour and creativity of the tribal and rural life style.

**National Ramlila Festival**

Ramlila, The enactment of the story of Lord Rama and his victory over the demon king Ravana, evokes a festive atmosphere and enables observance of religious rites. Chitrakoot in Bundelkhand region is the venue of the national Ramlila festival offering an opportunity to enact this story by the traditional artists from all over the country.16

The outstanding exponents of various folk forms of this Ram Katha perform on one stage in their own distinct style. Almost all popular forms with a long tradition are staged during this annual festival. The assemblage of various painted forms in telling the story of Ramayana along side is unique and the first ever initiative during the festival.

Khajuraho Festival of Dances

The world renowned temple town of Khajuraho in Bundelkhand region in Madhya Pradesh designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site for its archaeological and historical monuments, draws crowds from India and abroad to a culturally enriched shoe of classical dances in the month of February- March. An internationally recognized festival of classical dances, Khajuraho Dance festival in the city known for the fabulous architecture of its temples built by the Chandellas is an attempt by the organizer Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad, to contribute towards promotion of cultural heritage of the nation. The exponents of the popular classical dance forms are invited from every part of the country to perform during this week long festival. Classical Indian dance forms like Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri, Mohiniattam are performed by outstanding exponents. The strength of tradition and spirituality gives the performance an unusual and attractive appeal. Classical Hindustani music is used for accompaniments in most of these dance forms. It is considered to be a privilege by the exponents of classical Indian dancers to perform during the Khajuraho Dance festival.

17 Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Cauldron of Cultures, Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 1999, p.08
Tansen Samaroh

This cultural festival is dedicated to the pillar of Indian classical music, The great Tansen'. The place where this great musician lies buries, Tansen Tomb, in Gwalior is the venue of a music festival held annually in November-December. Gwalior is the place that has retained the rich classical music traditions and Tansen devotion to music laid to the foundation of what is known as the Gwalior gharana style with its unique Dhrupad classical form. Khayal was also refined from the Gwalior gharana only. Tansen Samaroh is noted for its unique composition in Indian classical style and forceful performances.

Organised by the Madhya Pradesh KalaParishad, the Tansen festival of music, the event is a unique four day show for the music lovers of the country to experience the superb melody renderd by the great exponents of Indian classical music. The most prestigious Tansen honour (samman) for the long time devotion and contribution to Hindustan classic music is also awarded on this occasion.

MUSIC AND DANCE

The region of Bundelkhand has its own distinct cultural identity. The people of Bundelkhand have their songs, music and every festival is an occasion for musical expression. There are songs created by societies in the past and still continue to be sung today like on occasions of birth, death, naming ceremony, sacred thread ceremony, wedding, changing seasons, religious festivities. The folk songs of Bundelkhand captured every mood, love and separation, the
joy of togetherness, the strong family ties and the simple joy and sorrows of every day life.18

There is richness and diversity in the music form and a rich characteristic style of singing of each region. It is the place of Tansen's devotion and the birth of the world famous Dhrupad singing.

Folk songs

It is really a treat to hear a characteristic style of singing. Pandvani the core melody is a plaintive rendition of the epic Mahabharat's sage of sacrifice, duty love and chivalry using just a single string instrument Ektara. The lone singer's rendition accentuated by nuances and facial expressions creates an unparallelled dramatic performance. It is amazing to note the great synthesis of narration, music and action this form of singing.

The folk lore of Dhola Maru originally from Rajsthan and Lala Hardol Charit of Orchha prince are very popular in Bundelkhan region. The people sing about Dhola Maru's love separation, union and love and sacrifice for the motherland of Lal Hardaul in their own distinct folk style. It is not at all unusual to see women folk singing practically on every ceremonial occasion and even on death in the region.

Beats of Chang and Dhaf whip up the competitive fervour of the kalgi turra form of folk singing is very popular in Bundelkhand region. The songs are composed with accounts ranging from the Mahabharat

and the Puranas to the current affairs and the opposing parties sing all through the night to outsmart each other. This traditional form of singing has its origin dating back to the reign of the Chanderi king Shishupal. Songs composed by saints like Singa ji, Kabir, Meera, Dadu are part of the folk repertoire of the region popularly known as the Nirguni style of singing. The singing is usually accompanied with an Ektara and a Kartal (a musical instrument with small metal jinglars attached to wooden planks). The other very popular form of folk singing in Bundelkhand is called Phag singing. It is heard to the accompaniment of Dhaf and Chang on the festive season of Holi. These songs have a strong romantic fervour.

The Bundelkhand region is the land of warriors. The Alhait community of Bundelkhad had composed songs to inspire the warriors with accounts of heroic deeds of Alha and Udal. The tails of heroism, honour, valour and chivalry of Alha and Udal as demonstrated in the 52 war fought by them are traditionally sung during the period of rainy season by people of this region. The musical instruments that accompany are dholak (a small version of the drum played on both sides with hands) and Nagara (consists of two drums made of metal iron, copper with the open face of the hollow pots spread with buffalo skin which is traditionally beaten with wooden sticks).

There are songs that relate to festivities on Holi, Sawan, Isuri, Chandrasakhi, Rai Phag, Diwari from the songs accompanied to the tunes of Dholak, nagara and flute is sung on the occasion of the

20 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935, p. 58.
festival of Diwali. Bumbulia songs are rendered on the festival occasions of Shivaratri, Basant Panchami and Makar Sankranti.

The style of singing folk songs of the both the male and the female are strong and powerful. There is a marked richness and diversity in songs and this also reflects the unique culture and heritage of the region. The theme of the songs is quite diverse and is created around various subjects. Phag songs sung during the festival season of Holi express the abundance of spring season and expression of inter personal relationships. Beats of nagara whip up the charged spirits of the group of singers.

Folk Dances

The most primitive aspects in arts, dance is the art form known to the mankind since time immemorial. Music and dance are deeply ingrained in any society universally. There are various festival, ceremony and religion related dance ferms. Bundelkhand region like any other parts of India offers a panorama folks and tribal cultures. They have some or other dances forms of their on which they traditionally performs and are related to various deities and rituals, in Hindu mythology, the Tandav dance performance of Lord Shiva and the story of Lord Krishna dancing with Gopies in Raslila are popular myths.21 Lokranjan- an annual dance festival at Khajuraho organised my M.P. Tourism and Madhya Aadivasi Lok Kala Parishad is a platform to present a number of popular folk and tribal dance forms from various parts of India. The annual dance festival at Khajuraho also has its own rich cultural traditions.

Rai

When the lively and spontaneous dance of the bundelkhand region, takes centre stage, the atmosphere comes alive and one is swept away by the nuance and rhythm of Bundelkhand. Traditionally the dance is performed by a woman, locally called Bedni, where as the Mridanga beeter initiates the pase of movement giving the dance a vigorous character. The dance performance is entermittently dotted with prose or poetic dialogues called Swang. It is a unique synthesis of a dancers choreographed graceful movement accentuated by the melody and music of the accompanying folk lore and the instrument.22

With the increasing beet the pase increase and swaying of dancers body lives the viewer spell bound this dance forms is not particular to any season occasion, but is considered to be an art of enjoyment and entertainment.

Badhai

Another entertaining folk from the dance popular on the occasions of birth, marriage and festivals in the Bundelkhand region is Badhai. In this dance, men and women dance vigorously to the tunes of accompanying musical instruments. The dancers accentuate supple and acrobats like movements and there colourful attire leaves the viewers simply amazed.

22 Interview with Dr.Ram Bhajan Singh, Tourism Dramaten in Bunderkhand at Hamirpor, Date-14-11-2010.
Baredi

The Baredi folk dance of Bundelkhand is believed to have its roots related wandering balladeers belonging to the one powerful community of Aabhir who would sing the glories of Lord Krishna and the loving tales of Raslila. Baredi dance is perform during the period started the festival of Diwali till the day of Poornima. One of Bundelkhand region's most stunning performance, the dancers are group of colourfully dressed 8-10 young men, choreographed by a head male performer. Usually a to line devotional poetry form called Diwari proceeds the dance performance.

Naurata

This dance has a special significance to the unmarried girls in the Bundelkhand. Naurata dance is performs by the would be brides to invoke the God seeking a good match and conjugal bliss the nine day festivities during the period of Navratri are marked by creating Naurata intricated designs outside the house made from lime and various colours.

ART AND CRAFT

Bundelkhand is a blaze of incredible work of art, craft and colour. The wonderful creations of the craftsmen and the diverse art form of the Bundelkhand region has survived innumerable centuries. The mettle of iron, the solidity of wood, the brilliance of bronze, the nerve of leather, the pulp of paper, all melt in the hands of craft and emerge as symphonies of design and aesthetics.
Textile

Hand block printed fabric with figurative motifs is the famous textile presentation from the region of Bundelkhand. The printers or Cheepas of Bagh create patterns on fabric in alizarine red and iron black to be used as saris, odhnis, table cloths, bed covers and other furnishings. The traditional prints have a tonal and three dimensional effect. The Bagh rivr with a high copper content imparts a richness and brightness to the colours derived out of vegetable and natural dyes.23 There is yellow colour from termeric, pink from pomegranate skin and indigo from none other than indigo. Resin wax and oil is applied to enable colours to penetrate fully into the fabric. The printing blocks(chhapas) are made of teak on which traditional woodcarvers create an intricate design. The block printers create the unique Batik work. The process of Batik involves applying hot molten wax on soft cotton cloth. The cloth is dipped in to various cold dyes and the boiling hot water is poured over the cloth. The result is a fascinating design and pattern.

The intricate artistry of painted wax on cloth is complemented by the bright colours of cold dye. The dress of Batik, be it the ethnic imprints on saris, dupattas, lungis and kurtas impress with their dramatic splendour. One can also have Batik work bed covers and other furnishing items.

23 Bundelkhand;Uttar Pradesh, Cauldron of Cultures, Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 1999, p.10.
Sarees

Tussar

Threads specially drawn from the cocoons grown on Arjuna, Safa and Sal trees imbue the fabric-Tussar silk with its special hues of gold, honey, tobacco, cream and beige. Tussar fabric is a symbol of the auspicious, elegance and purity and hence the Tussar Sarees are worn during festivals, marriages and religious ceremonies. A medley of colours from luminous hues have come to adorn the sensual silken threads of Tussar. Adding colours like Dhaniya(light green), Mas(deep blue), Darra(deep red), Narangi(orange) and Rani(mauve pink) add to its traditional offerings. Teen phuliya, ghungroo, chatai, singhvalic, kangoora-the names are as fascinating as the designs.24 Gorgeous and graceful, the Tussar sari remains the preferred formal wear among the traditionalists as well as modern day designers.

Chanderi

The superb craftsmen from the historic town of Chanderi have spun cotten that could pass through the hole in a nail.25 Several generations of the nobility and the royal household of Gwalior have patronized these enchanting compositions. Traditionally, craftsmen used silk as warp and cotton for the weft, but now teh modern looms adorn silk in both, though the cotton based pastel coloured Chanderi sarees remain a favorite summer wear, while the textural luminosity and lissom drape of Chanderi silk is preserved for

special occasions. The silk Zari sarees have luxurious gold border and two gold bands on the pallu. In some cases the richness is further enhanced with gold checks and small butis all over. Usually there is a harmonious blend of motifs and colours that embellish the body and borders of the sarees. Motifs are generally inspired from earth and sky-fruits, flower, leaves and birds. The range, as diverse as nature itself- a vivacious saffron for kesari, a tender badami for almond, the playful morgardani for blue, green of peacock’s neck, Rani for Indian pink- the list is just endless.

**Durries and Carpets**

The art of weaving carpets and durries has been an ancient one in Bundelkhand region. Hand woven these are patterned with stylized motifs an a mix of contrasting colours. Charkhari and Jalaun are well known for hand woven durries with geometrical motifs in subdued colour. Durries made out of rags in Satna. Gwalior is an important station of carpet weaving ranging from the Persian carpet to cheaper varieties along with Morena.

**Folk Paintings**

The tradition of painting can be traced back to the prehistoric time as evidenced by the fragments of paintings recovered from various excavating sites in Bundelkhand region. Paintings are able to tell the characteristics of the human form and life of a particular region. The subjects normally include religious, secular and different shades of daily life.

Traditionally the folk painting of Bundelkhand region used four types of canvasses. Paintings executed on floor like Rangoli- a floor ornamentation done on testive and auspicious occasions using
bright colours to draw geometrical forms accentuated by motifs of flowers and leaves, wall painting popularly called Sanghi, is done with dung on the entrance gate and prominently green, red and brown colours are used to draw a variety of figures. The third popular form of ornamentation uses paper, cloth or leaf. The fourth uses human body-tattooing which is an ancient ornamentation. Folk paintings of Bundelkhand region depict the life of simple and religious people.

The folk life of Bundelkhand region is full of the noble tradition of sacrifice and self respect. The aesthetics and charm of Bundeli folk painting tradition are a bit different. It is almost a daily routine to draw ceremonial squares of flour and the practice of drawing epan at entrance and in courtyard by rice flour is quite popular. Pictures are drawn or idols made on the festive occasions of nevala asthami, bhai dooj, ekadashi, makar sankranti, ahoi asthami etc. which are characteristics of a distinct Bundeli folk culture on account of the profoundness of symbols, imagery, motifs and ethnic memory employed.

**Pottery and Terracotta**

Clay shaped on a wheel with great manual dexterity and baked in a kiln or fire is used extensively for making water pitches(makta), domestic vessels, images of deities, animals, birds and other objects in Bundelkhand region. Every village in this region has a potter (kumhar) who creates his own distinct shapes and designs. The speciality produced depends on the quality of the clay and the Potters claim themselves to be the descendants of their legendary forebear,

Rudrapal, who is believed to be created by Lord Shiva himself when he required expertise of the potter a vessel for a ceremonial purpose on the occasion of his wedding to Sati.\textsuperscript{27} Preparation of pots from clay finds a mention in Rigveda and the Manusmiriti. Many beautiful clay products and figures have been discovered in the remains in some ancient civilizations like Indus valley, Harappaa and Mohenjodaro civilizations. A proof of its longest lineage like several other parts of India in Bundelkhand region also the folk and tribal terracotta has a rich artistic heritage.

The tradition of preparing small clay toys in the folk societies during fairs and festivals and on special occasion is prevalent all over Bundelkhand region. These small creations of clay are the carriers of cultural patterns of the communities which have existed since the age of prehistoric man. The clay offerings of animals, birds and several mythological characters are commonly used in ritual and festivals. Clay lamps, ghat, sikora, matka or ghara are some of the common objects other than the children's toys and ritualistic figures which potters make for the folk people. The beautifully coloured clay objects like elephants, horses, lamps and gawalan are traditional creations in the region. The terracotta figures of Bundelkhand prepared specifically on festival occasion include unbaked figures of elephant and rider. Bundelkhandi potters prepared popular figures of gods and goddesses riding a horse. Big vessels of terracotta are locally created by potters of Sagar to store grain and water. The primitive hand made pottery and small elephants and horse figures in earth colour made by the potters of Chattarpur are quite popular. The Gwalior, Shivpuri area has the tradition of small figures and toys

among the potters of those area. The black and red pottery of Sheopur is a style specific to this area.

**Wood Craft**

The woodcraft of Bundelkhand unveils marvels in refinement and intricacy. Figures carved out of wood from the very small like miniaturized animals and human figures to large objects of furniture find representation in the traditional woodcraft of Bundelkhand region. Images of objects from nature—real life—fish, cook, warrior with bows and arrows, peacocks, horse riders, elephant, lion's head carved out of wood speak the expert eyes and beauty of this craft. Locally available shisham, teak, dudhi, sal, kidar and bamboo are carved into various shapes providing utilitarian and decorative creation.

**Basket's and Bamboo**

Basket and mat weaving is a major craft in Bundelkhand region because of the readily available bamboo. A variety of basket's and women mats can be found at local haat (market). The Toori community weave about 50 different types baskets which are used for various daily needs and ceremonial presentation during the festival occasions. Beautifully crafted basket and winnows of bamboo are found there. Bamboo and cane are used for chairs, tables, Lamps and other furniture accessories. Winnows made of bamboo are collectable art pieces.

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Metal Craft

The metal craft of Bundelkhand region has a fascinating range. The master craft men of the region have created symphonies metal. The earlier craft was confined to utensils and ornaments but later craftsmen diversified their work to include icons of locally revered deities, figures of human, animals and birds and other decorative objects. Swarnakars of Tikamgarh who trace their origin to city of Ayodhya, particularly known for their use of wired metal, specialize in making tradition utensils like the hukka, gudguda, khichdi ak bela and puliya.\textsuperscript{30} The cast folk ornaments in brass, bronze, white metal and silver and embellish them with chunni, belchuda, muttermala, bichchuaa, kardhona, gajara and other articles of adornments. The decorative objects include elephants, horse, throne of Thakurjee, oxen, jewellery box, door handle, betal nut cutter etc. along with figure of local deities. Tikamgarh is famous for chariots and brass horses with wheels.

Iron craft

The story of blacksmithy is almost as old as the land itself. Scrap iron is heated on the furnace and then beaten repeatedly to reuse and crafted in to objects of decoration and utility. The tribal lohars (blacksmiths) of Bundelkhand region craft iron into art. The hand crafted designs composed decorative diyas (lamps), enchanting little birds, animals that are both traditional and contemporary just fascinate. The iron also takes forms of sankal (chain), chitkanis (latches), chhuri (knife), kulhari (axe), and delicate

\textsuperscript{30} Visitors Guide Madhya Pradesh; Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation Limited, Bhopal, 2004, p.78.
ornaments like bracelets.\textsuperscript{31} With changing time, the art is being given new interpretations to suit the tastes of the modern times. Karera and Shivpuri district is known for its artistic and find work in iron.

**Jewellery**

In every small village or town the goldsmith or silversmith produces traditionally designed ornaments creating some remarkable treasures for the folk and tribes in the region. The designs of the tribal jewellery are age old simple designs of shapes of leaves, flowers, birds and tendrils.\textsuperscript{32} Every day wear includes anklets, bangles, necklaces, ear rings in conventional gold, silver, bronze, white metal and glass. Imperial patronage had influenced the designs and patterns particularly in the Gwalior region. However it is folk and tribal jewellery of Bundelkhand which reflects its true culture. It borrow heavily from nature. The metal ornaments of the tribal area of Bundelkhand had their own distinct styles and rich traditions.

**Stone work**

The tribal artists of Bundelkhand region since generations have traditionally carved the exotic statues from soap stone. Embellished with jalli or lattice work figurines of gods and goddesses, of birds and animals of the heavenly and the earthly make one gaze in wonder. Stone caring has been an expression of the spiritual quest for the artist of Bundelkhand region. Gwalior is a centre for stone carving

\textsuperscript{31} Interview with Sri Sanjeev Bajpeyi; A Government of M.P. approved tourist guide, in Orchha fort, Dated 14-08-2011.

\textsuperscript{32} Visitors Guide Madhya Pradesh; Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation Limited, Bhopal, 2004, p.78.
(lattice work) on locally available sand stone. Kari near Tikamgarh is famous for making utensils out of multi coloured marble.33

**Leather Craft**

Symbolic mementos of culture, crafted in leather by crafts persons of Bundelkhand region include miniature monkeys, larger than life lions, majestic horses to beautiful birds in colour and texture as natural as the real. The recent addition to this traditional range are products like bags, belts, leather jackets, accessories and outfits. Locally hand made footwear embroidered with gold and coloured threads is quite popular.

**Papier Mache**

The Nagvanshi community artists of Bundelkhand particularly from Gwalior region excels in the art creating from replicas of birds, to icons of deities, traditional baskets and other decorative pieces. The Agrawal community businessman from Kalpi town are expert in the art of fine paper making.34

**The rulers of Bundelkhand region**

In pre- historical times, indigenous tribes inhabited the wooded tracts in Bundelkhand. The earliest Aryans in these parts were the Chedis. Their kingdom Chedirashtra was among the principal domains in the sixth century BC. It appears that Chedibhukti-bhukti is the equivalent of province- became Jejakabhukti, or in its

34 Interview with Sri Avinash Chandra Mishra; Deputy Director, Uttar Pradesh Government Tourism office at Kalpi fort town Dated 08-11-2011.
shorter version, Jajhauti. The region saw the rule of the Samudragupta was the dominant power in the fourth century AD. The Hun Nandas, Mauryans, Sungas, Kushanas, Nagas and the Guptas. invasions towards the close of the fifth century hastened the Gupta decline. A relic of the late Gupta period in Bundelkhand region is the Vishnu temple at Deogarh. Harshvardhana held part of the region in the first half of the seventh century, co-existing with other rulers at various levels of dependency, In the forest-clad low hills, the Gonds sway. The Pratihara Rajputs were ascendants in the eighth century. They ruled from Kannauj.

The Chandellas

An influential dynasty, the Chandellas were once tributaries of the Pratihars. During the ninth century, the Chandellas eclipsed their overlords in Bundelkhand by a mutually sapping struggle with the Deccan Rashtrakutas weakened the Pratiharas, enabling the Chandellas to break away and dominate the region for 300 years. During the period of Parmardi dev Chandela Bundelkhand progressed highly. This was the golden period of Chandela dynasty. The great warrior Alha and Udal fought many of the wars during their life and increased splendour of Bundelkhand.35

The Chandella fall was precipitous accelerated by a debilitating rivalry with Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi. The final blow was the


-Moolchandra Yadav; Alha (popular ballad) singer, Mahoba, on 18th August, 2004.
ransacking of the Chandella administrative capital Mahoba by Qutub-ud-din Aibak, founder of the Delhi Sultanate. The Chandellas became a shadow of their former self, withdrawing into their strongholds at Kalinjar and Ajaigarh. Centuries later, a Chandella star appeared: Durgavati of Gondwana. Married into the Gonds, she was the daughter of the Chandella chief of Kalinjar, Kirat Singh. He was executed when the fort fell even as the victor, Sher Shah Suri, succumbed to his battle wounds. Some years after, Durgavati perished defending Gondwana against Akbar.

The Chandellas, it is surmised, were indigenous people. Legend links the Chandellas to the Lunar race, the Chandravanshis. The first in line was Chandravarman, born of Hemavati, daughter of the Brahmin priest of the Raja of Kashi. According to legend a smitten moon god, Chandrama, embraced the beautiful Hemavati. She conceived and Chandravarman was born. Thus the Chandella dynasty came into existence.\(^{36}\)

There is no any reliable historical evidence to prove this tale. Only one inscription of king Dhangadev Chandela has been found. In this inscription the first king of Chandela dynasty has been told to ‘Nannukadev’. In the inscriptions of Chandela period there is no any description about the kings before king ‘Nannukadev’. The description about the king of Chandela dynasty which has been found is as following.\(^{37}\)

\(^{36}\) Gorelal Tiwari; *Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas* (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935.p.42.

\(^{37}\) The Inscription of the Chaturbhuja temple of Khajuraho - 954 A.D.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the king</th>
<th>Period (A.D.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nannukadev</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vakpati</td>
<td>935</td>
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<td>Vijay</td>
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There is no any details of these three kings Nannukadev, Vakpati and Vijayashakti except their names. The Inscription of Khajuraho has described that king Yashovermadev got victory on Gaurha, Khasa, Koshal, Kashmir, Kannauj, Malva, Chedi, Kuru and Gurjar etc. He also defeated Kalchuries of Kalinjar and taken the fort from them. He defeated the king of Kannauj and taken the idol of lord Vishnu from there. After Yashovermadev his son became the king.
He made a great temple of lord Shiva in Khajuraho. He lived for 100 years and died in the Jal Samadhi at Triveni Sangam of Prayagraj.\(^{38}\)

Chandellas ingenuity was strikingly demonstrated in the temples at Khajuraho and the irrigation systems built by the dynasty that helped to sustain large semi-arid areas. A millennium later, the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, borrowed a leaf from the Chandellas when he decided to dam the streams in the region to irrigate the poor soil.

**The Bundelas**

The Bundela Rajputs were ‘suryavanshis’. Legend has it that a local Gaharwar Rajput chief did tireless penance to appease (to satisfy) the goddess Vindhyavasini Devi at her abode on the Vindhyan range. The chief cut off his own head as an offering. A satisfied devi accorded the blessing that the drop of blood suggestive of Boondela’ or 'Bundela'- falling on the sacrificial altar wound yeild great rulers. It is said also that 'Vindhyela' was the name given to the lineage, which over time was altered to 'Bundela'.\(^{39}\)

There are accounts that the Bundelas branched of from the Kannauj Pratihara dynasty. This offshoot had come in control of Kashi. The Bundela chief had three sons. The eldest, Hemkaran, was the ablest, but the other two brothers conspired to get him expelled from Kashi. Hemkaran propitiated the devi and settled near present-day Banda. His successors ruled from Mahoni for two centuries.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) The Chandella Inscription of Khajuraho - 999 A.D.

\(^{39}\) Gorelal Tiwari; *Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas* (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.115.

\(^{40}\) Ibid : p.116.
In the Thirteenth century, the Bundelas had to contend with the Khangars, who ruled from Kundar. Vrindavan Lal Verma's Garh Kundar is an account of the ebb and tide of this dynasty’s fortunes. The Khangars—former vassals of the Chandellas—were outwitted and wiped out by the Bundelas in what became a bloody culmination of a wedding ceremony. Kundar became the Bundela capital. The aftermath of Timur’s invasion, towards the end of the fourteenth century, allowed the Bundelas a freer run in the region.

The Mughals

The Bundela shift from Kundar to a more sheltered Orchha in the sixteenth century was influenced by the region’s growing vulnerability to the Mughals. Babar had taken Kalpi and Chanderi. Akbar, who transformed a kingdom into an empire, kept up the pressure after annexing Gwalior.

It was early in the seventeenth century that a Bundela-Mughal fusion of interests took place, triggered by the murder of Akbar’s trusted counsellor, Abul Fazal. The assassin was Orchha’s Bir Singh; the crime was perpetrated to further the interests of Prince Salim who soon became the Emperor Jehangir. Bir Singh exploited his proximity with the seat of power for the benefit of the Bundela Rajputs. The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Bundelkhand belonged to the flamboyant Chhatrasal of Panna. His defiance of Delhi’s imperial authority and protracted conflict with the Mughal satraps led to the entry of the Marathas in Bundelkhand. The

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incursions of the Mughal governor of Farrukhabad, Bangash khan, into Chhatrasal's dominious, compelled the Bundelas to invite Maratha help from Peshwa Baji Rao-I.

The Marathas

The Peshwa's trounced Bangash Khan. Having gained access into Bundelkhand, the Marathas stayed on. An ageing Chhatrasal, under pressure, found it prudent to part with his possessions to the Peshwa, who expanded in Bundelkhand. Nauru Shankar was the first Peshwa-appointed subehdar in Jhansi. The defeat at Panipat of her next Peshwa, Balaji Baji Rao, by the Afghans was a shock to the Marathas, but they recovered soon. Even when retreating from Panipat, the Marathas were able to marshal resources enough to plunder Bundela territory.

The Peshwa's proteges were aggressive. A favourite buccaneer was the Nawab of Banda, Ali Bahadur, whose father was the son of Baji Rao I from the concubine Mastani. She had been gifted to the Maratha chief by a deeply indebted Chhatrasal. The Mughals were declining rapidly now. Delhi, as the centre, had ceased to hold. This state of affairs was confirmed when the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam's eyes were gouged out in his own palace in the Red Fort by a treasure hunting Rohilla brigand, Ghulam Kadir, who himself met a blood-curdling end at the hands of Mahadji Scindhia.

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The British

The blinded Mughal continued to reign. The British were amenable to this. The Scindia treated the remains of the Mughal empire as part of the Maratha protectorate. The charade of a Mughal emperor on the Throne suited the British, who bided time their intervention always on imminent, more so since the cessation of Anglo-French hostilities in India at the end of Europe's Seven Years War. The reign of Shah Alam and his two successors limped on, before the great uprising of 1857 swept away the Mughals.

The Marathas, dominant between the Doab and the Deccan, increasingly came into conflict with the British. This was in the backdrop of the Mughal collapse. The chiefs in Bundelkhand, apprehensive of the Marathas, drew closer to the British. Chhattrasal's descendants bound themselves to the British with promise of allegiance and fidelity in return for sands-deeds-confirming possession of their hereditary lands. Separately, the rulers of Orchha, Datia and Samthar entered into treaty relations of cordiality and mutual assistance with the British.

The First Independence war of 1857

The Anglo-Maratha wars led to the Peshwa's exile from Pune. He settled in Bithoor, not far from the northern fringes of Bundelkhand.

46 Motilal Bhargava; Nana Saheb, Department of Informatio Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 1961, p. 41.
The Maratha sun had set with the British acquiring territorial rights in the region from the Peswa. But the churning, which led to the momentous events of 1857, returned the Marathas to the frontline under Nana Sahib, the adopted son the exiled Peshwa. Maratha and Bundela were pitted against each other. The pivot of the uprising in Bundelkhand was the Rani of Jhansi. From here commenced the chiselling of a new nation.

The forts of Bundelkhand

There is a long list of the forts and small forts made in Bundela’s land. Most of these are in the category of Giri durg (Mountain fort) and Mahi durg (ground fort). Currently, some of these forts are in a good condition. These are –

1. Ajayagarh fort
2. Kalinjar fort
3. Bhuragarh fort
4. Mahoba fort
5. Charkhari fort
6. Baruwasagar fort
7. Garhkundar fort
8. Orchha fort
9. Dhamoni fort
10. Talbehat fort
11. Devgarh fort
12. Chanderi fort
13. Jhansi fort
14. Samthar fort
15. Datia fort
16. Gwalior fort
17. Narwar fort
18. Rampura fort
19. Jagammanpur fort

Apart from these forts some other forts Tikamgarh, Bijna, Mander, Shahgarh, Bandhavagarh, Gurgi-riwan, Madhavagarh, Rahatgarh, Mandala Singaurgarh, Maihargarh, Garhakota, Ramgarh, Bankagarh, Jhanjhangarh etc. are worth to be quote. Most of them have been damaged by the fire of cannon. The sacrifice of the Chandela kings for self respect can never be forgotten in Bundela history. The folk tales and folk songs about these forts can be listened to even today in each house of Bundelkhand. The folk songs of Bundelkhanda brings out the fact that this region was a prominent cultural centre. Ballads praise the glory and prosperous days of that period and narrate the inspiring slogan of Aalha and Udal

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the two legendary warrior brothers of Mahoba (Bundelkhand), who sacrificed their life for protecting the honour of their motherland.

**Ajayagarh Fort**

The mighty fort of Ajayagarh crowns a flat spur of the Vindhyan range. The ninth-century fort derived its name from Ajayapal, a sage who lived on the hill Kedar Parvat. Ajayagarh provided a safe haven for the Chandellas after their capital Mahoba was taken by Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi in 1182. Internecine Rajput warring catalysed Muslim invasions and conquests in India. The Chauhan dynasty was extinguished in 1192 by Muhammad Ghori. His general, Qutub-ud-din Aibak, founder of the Delhi Sultanate, conquered Mahoba in 1203, which led to Ajayagarh emerging as an administrative centre. The fort pulsated for a century-and-a-half, with whatever remained of Chandella splendour. The hill, of granite and sandstone, is steep. Rock inscriptions abound, relating mainly to the later Chandella period: from Madanvarman in the mid-twelfth century till the reign of Parmardideva's great grandson Viravarman in the late thirteenth century. Chandella territory was confined now to the tract near Kalinjar, Panna and Ajayagarh.

Ajayagarh fort, at an elevation of 800 feet from the plains, allowed the Chandellas to recoup following their debilitating battles. The formidable bastions and stout corner towers indicate that the fort was built to withstand prolonged sieges. The stronghold was self-contained, with a good water supply. It could shelter large numbers of people.

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populations. The hills - dense with sal and tendu - further strengthened the defences of the fort.

A sheer climb leads to the north entrance, the Kalinjar Darwaza, which faces in the direction of Kalinjar fort twenty miles away. Another gateway, on the southeast, is the Tarhaoni Darwaza, which overlooks a village of the same name. The other three gateways are blocked. The Ken river can be seen in the distance, silvery and sinuous. The thick battlemented outer wall of the fort, three miles in circumference, girdles a triangular tract. The uneven rampart, composed of huge blocks of stones, never has the same breadth or depth for more than a few yards running. In the parapets, beautifully carved pillars and doorjambs torn from Hindu and Jain temples were set haphazardly by the Muhammadan kiledars.

At the Kalinjar Darwaza is a dancing Ganesha with lines so lyrical that one can almost hear the ankle bells. Close by, two huge caverns, the Ganga and Yamuna, hewn in rock and replenished from an underground stream, comprise an important water source. Varaha, an incarnation of Vishnu, recreates Earth's salvation. A colossal Shantinath signals the pervasive Jain presence in Bundelkhand.50

Among the rock-cut images near the Tarhaoni Darwaza is a panel of Sapta-matrikas or seven mother-goddesses, accompanied by Veer-bhadra, a form of Shiva. This is a reminder of the Shakti cult which flourished in the fort. Other inscriptions in rock include a cow

and calf, a human palm and a child in the lap of a goddess- all symbols of fecundity. Nearby, there is a sombre setting of sati pillars. The memorials bear the symbols of the crescent moon and the sun. The female hand denotes a blessing upon the sati.  

A cluster of temples overlooks the languid waters of a talao named after Parmardideva and used by women of the royal household. This pristine setting in the southern area of the fort is interspersed with an illusory, fleeting vision of Parmardideva's wife, a fabled beauty.

Tier upon tier of elaborately carved stones rise in a gently taper in Ajaigarh's temples. Craftsmen who worshipped the rising sun as the mystic world lotus have carved its petals on the pillars, arches and the soaring shikharas of these temples. Panels and friezers are decorated with the figures of voluptuous nymphs and celestial apsaras. Congregations in the fort's centre, on the edge of the Ajayapal Talao, break into folk songs from the Alha Khand. The warriors Alha and Udal were an exceptional theme, considering that the usual bardic effort centred around kings who were regarded as akin to gods and descendants of celestial beings. Chand Bardai, in Prithviraj Raso, composed eulogies about the Chauhan king of Delhi; he also wrote about the impious transgressions of his master's foe, Parmardideva, leading to Mahoba's grim fate and the fall of the Chandellas.

Nothing has changed at the Parmardideva Talao since the Bengal Army's Captain W.R. Pogson's visit to Ajayagarh. He

described the fort as 'stupendous' in his History of the Bundelas published in 1828. Earlier, the 1809 edition of the Asiatic Annual Register, quoted by Pogson had recorded as...the ruins of three magnificent Hindu temples, built of stones, laid without cement, but most nicely fitted to each other, and adorned within and without, with sculpture, of Chaste design, and the most exquisite workmanship. The era of the erection of these venerable buildings is lost in antiquity; but they are evidently much older than the fortress.. "

Adjacent to the Ajayapal Talao, now under water hyacinths, is an ancient statue of black stone worshipped as Ajayapal. The story is told of a British commandant who threw the idol into the water. The commandant became violently ill and the image had to be restored with honour to its shrine. It was also believed that a stone roam the sacred compound of this temple, if placed in a home, would ward off the evil eye. Vestiges of the Chandella dynasty continued at Ajayagarh till Akbar took the fort, then under a Gond kiledar. About the same time, the Mughals also wiped out the Gondwana kingdom governed by Rani Durgavati. Of Chandella lineage, she opted to resist the emperor and stabbed herself to death after getting wounded in battle.

This spirit of defiance remained alive: some three centuries later, Durgavati’s descendant, Raja Shankar Shah of the Gond royal family of Garhmandla and his son, revolutionaries of 1857, were tied to cannons and blown up by the British.

Abdul Fazl’s records refer to Ajayagarh as the headquarters of a mahal in the Kalinjar sarkar. The Mughal writ ran here till the entry

of Champat Rai and his son Chhatrasal, whose Panna became the dominant principality in Bundelkhand towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign. Champat Rai had fought on Aurangzeb's side against Dara Shikoh in the decisive battle of Samugarh during the Mughal civil war of succession. He had also deftly piloted the combined armies of Aurangzeb and Murad Baksh in difficult terrain and across dangerous fords in the Chambal area.

Champat Rai fell out with Aurangzeb after the latter's ascent to the Mughal throne. The Bundela was upset by the emperor's bigotry and needless threats. Champat Rai blocked Mughal access to Malwa, his guerrilla tactics well complemented by the thickly wooded region. But the insurgency could not be sustained. Chased by the Orchha troops, and hemmed in by a group of hostile Dhandera Rajputs, Champat Rai stabbed himself to death along with his wife. His son Chhatrasal (1649-1731) entered Mughal military service. Chhatrasal was offered the kiledari of Satara. But his ambitions prevailed. The Bundela chief left the Mughals and linked up with the Marathas. He met Chhatrapati Shivaji and stayed with him at Pune for a few days. An over-cautious Shivaji could not bring himself to fully trust Chhatrasal. Rather than enter into an Alliance, he counselled that Chhatrasal step up his independent activity in Bundelkhand. Chhatrasal assaulted Ajayagarh fort in 1674. He was successful and confirmed in his possessions by the emperor.

Ajayagarh was inherited (1732) as part of Jaitpur state by Chhatrasal's son, Jagat Raj. After him, a family settlement saw Ajayagarh, along with Banda, bestowed to a nephew Guman Singh.

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53 Bhagwandas Gupta; Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela, (Hindi), Madhya Pradesh Hindi Grantha Academy, Ravindrnath Thakur Marga, Bhopal, 1992. p.117
(1765-81), who died leaving a minor son in the charge of his army commander Arjun Singh. An alliance of 'king-maker' Himmat Bahadur's mercenary army and the Peshwa's protege Ali Bahadur attacked and killed Arjun Singh. Ali Bahadur became the Nawab of Banda in 1791 and, following a siege of six weeks, took Ajayagarh fort in 1800. Ajayagarh's protection allowed Ali Bahadur's cavalry to run loose, raising, taxes effectively from Panna, Bijawar, Charkhari and Jaitpur for the Peshwa.

The Ajayagarh-Pune political bridge could be traced back to Mastani. She was Chhatrasal's gift to Peshwa Baji Rao (1720-41). Their relationship resulted in a love child, Shamsher Bahadur, the father of Ali Bahadur. Shamsher Bahadur succumbed to wounds received in the third battle of Panipat (1761). Ali Bahadur died (1802) besieging Kalinjar; his son, also named Shamsher Bahadur, was in Pune, at the side of Peshwa Baji Rao II, at the time. He rushed back to Bundelkhand, imprisoned an usurping relative in Ajayagarh fort and poisoned him.

However, the balance of power was shifting with the mercenary, Himmat Bahadur, switching over to the side of the British, and Lakshman Daoowa- a notorious freebooter, and no friend of the Marathas with British connivance, bribing the Ajayagarh kiledar into surrendering the fort to him. Daoowa terrorised the surroundings from the heights of Ajayagarh. This brought him into conflict with the British, who were seeking an understanding with the Bundelas to

54 Krishna Das; Bundelkhand ka Itihas-Panna Khand, Santosh Bhawan, near state bank, Chhatarpur M.P.1974, p. 123.
55 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.65.
isolate and further weaken the Peshwa. The Maratha's power was already declining, reflected also in the Treaty of Bassein, 1802.  

In 1809, the British decided to take Ajayagarh. The campaign, under Colonel Martindale, lasted a month. The encounters were fierce. The British carried Artillery to an adjacent hilltop commanding the gates of Ajaigarh. Ambushes in the precipitous hills resulted in heavy casualties before Daoowa capitulated.

According to the Asiatic Annual Register of 1809, The batteries opened at day break on the 12th of February 1809 and so heavy and destructive was the fire, that the enemy could not shew a man, and fired in the intervals while our guns were cooling. By sunset two of their guns were dismounted and three of the gates, with their defences, laid in ruins. Immense masses of stone and masonry were brought down. Next morning, the batteries played on the upper gate and defences with powerful effects, and at noon the enemy displayed a white flag. At four they evacuated the fort; and at five we occupied it.' Lakshman Daoowa fled to calcutta leaving his family, eight in all, in the charge of his father-in-law who lived in a village at the base of the fort. The old man slit the throats of the entire family, as well as his own.

Ajayagarh's political and military developments at the turn of the eighteenth century illustrated well the raison d'être for entrepreneurial soldiering in Bundelkhand, represented by Himmat Bahadur, well stocked with cannon, armed men and a Danish

commander: Colonel Meiselback. A Brahmin gosain, Himmat Bahadur’s real name was Anupgiri. He was brought up in the foster care of the Jhansi kiledar. These were disturbed times, when religion-oriented groups bairagis, gosains, nagas, sanyasis banded together in order to influence events, the prime interest being self-preservation. Himmat Bahadur was ready to be hired, whether by Oudh, the Marathas or the British. This mercenary had managed the doab revenues on behalf of Nawab Shuja-ud-daula of Oudh, whose life he reputedly saved in the Battle of Buxar against the British. He served Mahadji Scindia, before aligning with the Peshwa for securing Bundelkhand through Ali Bahadur. Himmat Bahadur transferred his allegiance again to consolidate the British in Bundelkhand. A grateful Governor-General, Lord Wellesley (1798-1805) rewarded Himmat Bahadur with a generous Jagir. The East India Company took Meiselback in to service and made him a brigade-commander. The British handed over Ajayagarh fort to Raja Bakth Singh, a nephew of the erstwhile ruler Gumansingh. Ajayagarh was recognised as a princely state in return for allegiance through a sanad agreement. Banda became a district in British India.

Today Ajayagarh fort lies lonely, crumbling and covered with creepers. Forlorn peacocks find refuge in the abandoned ruins of what was once a mighty Chandella stronghold. There is a heavy cannon on the fort on which these lines have been written-

'Garhe garh dhahan dhahan, Ari dal par purwam .

58 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.272.
Madhav nripa ki top yah, Aridal Ganjan nam.  

(This cannon is of king Madhav. The name of this cannon is Aridal Ganjan, which means destroyer to the enemies. With the help of this cannon, the strongest forts also can be conquered and this creat fear in heart of the enemy.)

Kalinjar Fort

A solemnity shrouds Kalinjar. Ruined temples, palace remains and sculptures lie scattered in what was once the mightiest fort in mediaeval India. The hill on which the fort stands has been a mahatirth since ancient times. Hermits and ascetics, seers and sages still live and meditate here.

The Vedas describe Kalinjar as a tapasyasthana for austere devotion. The Mahabharata proclaims that whosoever takes a dip in the lake of the gods at Kalinjar, achieves goodness equal to the gift of a thousand cows.

Kalinjar was a Chandella stronghold, described by Ferishta, the Bijapur historiographer, as unparalleled in strength. The citadel successfully withstood Mahmud of Ghazni. The Sultan, during one of his seventeen expeditions to India, marched menacingly towards Kalinjar (1019) when he was met by a Chandella army comprising 36,000 horses, 45,000 footmen and 640 elephants. Mahmud pillaged the countryside, but saw the fruitlessness of making a serious attempt on the citadel itself. The invader felt


Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.64.
compelled to withdraw. The windswept Kalinjar haunted the Sultan. He returned, unable to resist the challenge of the fort's rock face and the ramparts hanging on the edge of the scarps. An offensive was mounted in 1022. Again, Mahmud failed. The Sultan allowed himself to be appeased with the elephants, gold and jewels gifted by the Chandella king, Vidyadhara, along with some verses in praise. The Sultan's obsession with Kalinjar saved Khajuraho, exposed in open territory, not much distant from the path taken by Ghazni's ravaging cavalry. Situated on Kalinjar hill, 900 feet high, the grim fort appears to have grown organically out of harsh rock. Anchored to the precipitous slopes are crenellated, grey, serpentine walls, the parapets relentlessly pursuing the hill's contours over a fourmile periphery. Parallel to its significance as a fort, the legend of Kalinjar's divinity has perpetuated. Kalinjar (Kal: time; jar, destroy) is exalted as the abode of Shiva in the Koorma Purana, and is mentioned in the Padma Purana as among the nine holy spots in northern India. The Puranas, eighteen in total, supplement the Vedas as a corpus of Hindu beliefs, moral-philosophy and religion. Historian Nizamuddin told that there was no any other fort competing to Kalinjar fort in India that period.

The hill was first fortified around 2000 years ago, though there had been earlier settlements in the area. The second century Roman scholar, Ptolemy, refers to Kalinjar as 'Kanagora', when it was under the Kushanas. The Kalling of the ruler of the kingdom, Kalinjarapura, in battle and the conquest of Kalinjar fort in

62 Dinanath dubey, *Bharat ke durg*; Publication Department Govt. of India, Patiyala house, New Delhi, p.110.
63 Gorelal Tiwari; *Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas* (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.65.
64 *District Gazetteer of Banda*; Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1988, p.34.
the third century (248-249) marked a milestone event it flagged off the Kalachuri era. The victors, perhaps, were the forebearers of the Chedi Kalachuris. The conqueror came to be known as 'Kalinjaradhipati' or 'Lord of Kalinjar', a title of the Kalinjar fort changed hands from the Kalachuris to the Rashtrakutas in the eighth century, followed by the Pratiharas in the ninth, and later, the Chandellas. There is evidence of the Rashtrakuta, a Dantidurga (733-738), holding Kalinjar, and the Pratiharas, Nagabhata II (800-825) and Bhojdeva (836-885). The Rashtrakutas, aided by the Kalachuris, retook the fort from the Pratihahas, though only for a short period. The Chandellas came to the aid of their former masters, the Pratiharas, against the Rashtrakutas. They captured Kalinjar, pushed back the Rashtrakutas and helped the Pratiharas to recoup. The Chandella king, Yashovarman, kept Kalinjar for himself. This placed his dynasty in a strong enough position to deal with Mahmud of Ghazni. Chandella power suffered a blow in the exhausting struggle against the Delhi Chauhans towards the close of the twelfth century. This paved the way for Qutub-ud-din Aibak's seizure of Kalinjar from early Kalachuri rulers.

The greatly weakened Chandellas in 1203. The old walls saw much blood and fire, and the garrison was forced to surrender as the fort's water supply ran dry. A contemporary chronicler Hasan Nizami recorded in the Taj-ul-Ma'sir-“The garrison, in an extreme state of weakness and distraction, came out of the fort and by compulsion left their native place empty and the fort of Kalinjar, which was celebrated throughout the world for being as strong as the wall of Alexander, was taken. The temples were converted into mosques and abodes of goodness, and the ejaculations of the bead counters and the voices of the summoners to prayer ascended to the highest
heaven, and the very name of idolatry was annihilated. Fifty thousand men came under the collar of slavery, and the plain became black as pitch with Hindus. Elephants and cattle, and countless arms, also became the spoil of the victors.”

Hasan Nizami’s account, in Persian, was an official history of the Delhi Sultanate, written on orders of Qutub-ud-din Aibak (1206-11). Such scribes employed by the Sultans were fervent in Darul Islam; their sole aim being to glorify the faith. They referred to the destruction of temples and killings of ‘infidels' without intellectual or moral compunction. Often, there was exultant description of the tyrannies perpetrated in the name of religion. The Chandellas and other Hindu kingdoms of the era were unable to comprehend the intensity of the mujahids and the ghazis, which led to the Muslim conquests in India, which is described as ‘probably the bloodiest story in history.’

The occupation of Kalinjar by the Turko-Afghans did not last long. The Chandellas re-established their authority over the stronghold to resume their hostile independence. But the dynasty's days of glory were over, left as they were with only Kalinjar and Ajaigarh. Kalinjar provided the Chandellas cover enough to exert their presence towards the east, in Baghelkhand.

After Aibak, Sultan Iltutmish's commandant of Bayana and Gwalior, Malik Tayasai, made a futile attempt on Kalinjar. He retreated booty-after devastating the countryside, but without the fort. Sultan Nasir-ud-din's father-in-law and chief minister, Balban, plundered the territory around Kalinjar. Balban, later to succeed as

66 Interview with Dr. Ram Bhajan Singh, Tourism Promoter in Bundelkhand (U.P.) date 14.11.2010
Sultan (1266-87), was harsh, and the Chandellas acceded to a tributary status while remaining kiledars of the fort.

Early in the sixteenth century, the Lodhis occupied Kalinjar. The Chandellas regained possession when the lodis were crushed by the Mughals at Panipat (1526). After Babar ascended, his son Humayun attacked the fort. The siege was abandoned when Babar died. Humayun resumed the offensive after a few months, but gave up in the face of the spirited defence put up by the Chandella keepers of the fort.

Sher Shah, the Afghan king of the Sur dynasty in Delhi, who had driven Humayun from India to Persia, was successful at Kalinjar, but only after a siege lasting a year. On his way to the fort. Sher Shah was engaged in battle by Bharati Chand of Orchha a fruitless intervention. Kirat Singh, the last of the Chandella rulers, was in possession of Kalinjar. Sher Shah's resolve and the severity of his offensive was triggered by Kirat's refusal to surrender a local chieftain who had ignored a summons to attend court in Delhi. The two adversaries, Afghans and Chandellas, both took a savage battering. During the war the Sultan was mortally wounded, hideously burnt by a fire-arrow rocket shell, which ricocheted after igniting an ammunition dump. According to Sir Wolseley Haig'...when the parallels had approached the walls, Sher Shah ascended a high tower in the line of circumvallation, ordered one of his officers to bring a supply of loaded shells, or ....rockets, and amused himself in the meantime by shooting arrows into the town...one of them was fired against the gate of the town, but rebounded and fell into and ignited a heap of ammunition by which the king was standing. Shershah was most
severely burned...he summoned his nobles and commanded them to capture the fortress..."67

The commanders were shaken by the Sultan's condition, but recovered soon enough to put in everything they could. The closing moments of war has described by an Afghan historian Abbas Khan Sarwani, in Akbar's court, in his book ‘Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi’ as following words ’...Men came and swarmed out instantly on every side like ants and locusts, and by the time of afternoon prayers captured the fort, putting everyone to the sword and sending all the infidels to hell. About the hour of evening prayers the intelligence of the victory reached Sher Shah, who lay on his countenance. Raja Kirat Singh, with seventy men remained in a house. Kutub Khan the whole night long watched the house in person lest the Raja should escape. Sher Shah said to his sons that none of his nobles need watch the house, so that the Raja escaped out of the house, and the labour of this long watching was lost. The next day at sunrise, however, they took the Raja alive...’.68

Kirat Singh was executed and the Chandella dynasty in Bundelkhand came to an end. Sher Shah's son Islam Shah was crowned at Kalinjar. Some twenty years later, Kirat Singh's widowed daughter Durgavati gave her life in Gondwana defending her late husband's kingdom against Akbar's forces. She is remembered as Durgavati of Gondwana.69

69 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.82.
The Sur dynasty (1540-55) in Delhi was short-lived, and Kalinjar came under the rule of the Baghel Rajputs of Rewa- but not for long. After the reinstatement of Mughal rule in Delhi, Akbar's armies, under Majnun Khan Qaqushal, surrounded the fort. The defendants preferred to surrender (1569), aware of the fate of the other strongholds taken by assault. Kalinjar became the headquarters of a Mughal sarkar and part of the jagir of Birbal, a favourite of the emperor.

Chhatrasal of Panna captured Kalinjar (1688) from the Mughal Kiledar Karam Ilahi. The Bundela chief appointed a Brahmin, Mandhata Chaube, as the fort's keeper. His descendants continued to administer the fort till it remained with chhatrasal. Ali Bahadur, Maratha warlord of Banda, attacked Kalinjar with a siege that lasted two years. Ali Bahadur died at Kalinjar after a fall (1902) and the Marathas were warded off. Kalinjar emboldened its occupants to plunder the surrounding British territory. In retaliation, the British attacked (1812) Kalinjar with two cavalry regiments and seven infantry battalions under Colonel Matrindale who occupied a hill to the north of the fort. With considerable effort, four eighteen-pounders and two mortars were carried to the top. The surface was bare and earth had to be carried in canvas bags to mount the guns. The firing deflected off the walls. After a through survey of the defences, the British detected a vulnerable spot and directed concentrated fire for three weeks, causing a breach. The British noted: 'We continued for several days to batter at the wall; mean time, the people in the fort gave us little interruption. Until we began to fire from our batteries, they had not fired a shot; this was from an old Indian point of honour, that it did not become a fort to fire until it was fired upon. After they did begin, they did no harm; they did
no harm; they had only some old cannon, that were more dangerous to those that worked them, than to us. 70 Although their firearms were evidently of not much use, the defenders found another way to strike back. They wreaked havoc on the British by rolling boulders down the chasms. Every stone that was thrown or displaced brought down a heap of rubble, which sent the troops reeling back, blinded and suffocated by dust and smoke. Ultimately, in a compromise, the Kiledar transferred the fort to the British for land in three villages in the plains. Remains of Chaube's residence and sundry dharmashalas can be seen in the fort. 71

The hill on which the fort stands is visible from afar. The rugged battlements are pockmarked with old wounds, from where the artillery has torn away the masonry. The first gateway guarding the steep ascent to Kalinjar is the Alamgir Darwaza. The Ganesha Darwaza follows. Strategically placed, it is the strongest of the gates, defended by bastions on either side. The other gates are the Chandi, Budh-bhadr, Hanuman and Lal darwazas. The Budh-bhadr Darwaza, also called the Swarg-rohan or heaven-ascending gate, refers to the auspicious planet Mars. Along the incline are the Hanuman and Bhairon Kunds. The seventh and last gate, the Bara Darwaza, is elaborately inscribed and leads into the flat hilltop.

Much has survived in Kalinjar despite Islamic iconoclasm and Victorian prudishness indeed, nineteenth century Europeans strained to appreciate the amalgam of philosophy in the yonis and lingams. The sculpture and rock-writings in the fort articulate in all-

71 Uttar Pradesh, District Gazetteer of Banda, (Govt. of Uttar Pradesh) 1988, p. 49.
encompassing culture, including that of the Gupta and Chandella periods.

The Neel Kantha temple, containing a dark blue stone lingam with silver eyes, has been the main object of worship at Kalinjar for well over a millennium. Shiva in the phallic form depicting procreation is at the centre. The pavilion outside is classic Chandella architecture, with exquisite chiselling on granite pillars and mouldings, arches and capitals. A large black stone inside the temple indulges in bombastic praise of Parmardideva.

A giant Mahasadashi va is hewn within a recess in the rock. The polished figure rises to a height of twenty-four feet. The deity, with eighteen arms is ornamented with a garland of skulls. It is bedecked by snake armlets and a Serpent drapes its neck. Close to this form of Shiva the destroyer is a statue of Kali, the stone rendered smooth and shining by an overhead trickle of water.

Kalinjar is reputed to have suffered a water crunch at crucial times. However, on the other hand, there are a number of tanks and springs in the fort in evidence seemingly, a perennial source of water. The Patal Ganga, or the underground Ganges, is a large cavern cut in the rock. The water is deep and clear. The Pandu kund, named after the Pandavas, is a shallow circular basin into which water trickles from rock crevices. An inscription, in Gupta Brahmi, dates the basin to the fifth century.

Among the profusion of tanks is the Sita kund; the Mrig dhara or the deer spring, which is a fountain of cool water; and the Bhuriya tal which is said to have healing powers. The Kot Tirth is a holy spot with a large tank and several ghats in which thousands take a dip on
festive days. Legend says that the Chandella king, Kirtivarman, was cured of leprosy after bathing in the Kot Tirth.72

Scattered in the fort are sati memorials: sculptures of a woman's forearm covered with bracelets, the palm held open. Also carved in the stone, are the sun and moon, symbolising immortality which the ritual of sati was tragically believed to bring. The bangles and bracelets on the woman's forearm is a symbol for the belief that a woman who immolated herself on her husband's pyre was not considered to be a widow. Having accompanied her husband in death, the bangles and bracelets remained intact.

The original Sati, to avenge in insult to her consort Shiva who had not been invited to a yagya by her father Daksha is believed to have used her innate powers to create a fire and consume herself before a divine assemblage. The mythology of Sati's regeneration as Parvati and reunion with Shiva perpetuated. The terror of self-immolation was sought to be mitigated by the spurious social conditioning that sati bestowed sacredness. Governor-General Bentinck's Regulation XVII was a significant step towards eliminating sati.

Captain Sleeman, who accompanied the Governor General in his tour through Bundelkhand. wrote in his account 'Suttee Tombs-Insalubrity of Deserted Fortressed' in Rambles and Recollections'The village stands upon a gentle swelling hill...there is a very unusual number of tombs built over the ashes of women who have burnt Themselves with the remains of their husband... When I

72 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg, Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.113
passed this place on horseback with Lord William Bentinck, he asked me what these tombs were, for he had not seen any of the kind before. When I told him what they were, he said not a word...".

At Kalinjar as in Bundelkhand consciousness is patterned by oracles, legends, and fragments of history. Desolate pathways appear to be in wait for cavalcades, gilded elephants and standard-bearers. Monkeys swing lithely from overhanging tree boughs nudging the abandoned tamparts of Kalinjar. In an Inscription found in Motimahal in Garha-Mandal has been described that there is the hint of an anklet sound in the hush of the pavilions where Kirat Singh’s daughter Durgavati grew up.

**Bhuragarh fort**

Across the river Ken there are ruins of Bhuragarh fort said to be built with brown stones by Raja Guman singh in 17th Century. This place was main centre at the time of freedom struggle. It witnessed the death of over 800 patriots. A mela is organized here annually in this place called ‘Natbali Ka Mela’.

The Great freedom Struggle against British empire started on 14th June 1857. It was led by Nawab Ali Bahdur II in Banda (U.P.). This struggle was much fierce than expected and revolutionaries from Allahabad, Kanpur and Bihar joined Nawab in fight against Britishers. On 15th June 1857, revolutionaries killed joint magistrate Cockrail.

74 Gorelal Tiwari; *Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas* (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.65.
On 16th April 1858, whit luck arrived Banda and he fought against revolutionary army of Banda. About 3000 revolutionaries were killed in the fort during this war. Nuts (One who performs acrobatic feats)from Sarbai sacrificed in this war. Their graves are found inside the fort. Graves are of many revolutionaries are found around the fort. On 8th June 1859, many revolutionaries were arrested and sentenced to death and life imprisonment. According to District court's file No.19 of the year 1859 these names are:

1. Shri Akbar Beg Golandaz.
2. Shri Faryaz Mohd. s/o Niyaz Mohd.
3. Shri Chatta Khan.
4. Shri Mukhtayar Mohd.
5. Shri Devideen.
6. Shri Kadir Beg.
7. Shri Idrish Mohd.
10. Shri Paigam Ali.
11. Shri Kale Khan.

77 Kamlesh Thapak; Gaurav Gatha, Prachya Vidya Shodha Sansthan, Sitapur, Chitrakoot, 2006, p.37.
12. Shri Ismail Khan.


14. Shri Ayaam.

15. Shri Sheikh Jumman.

16. Shri Vilayas Husain (Dewan-e-Riyasat, Banda).

17. Shri Gulaam Haidar Khan.

18. Shri Sardar Mohd. (Deputy collector, Banda).


22. Shri Hanumant Rao Thate.

23. Shri Babu Rao gore.

24. Shri Himkat Ulla Khan (Deputy collector, Fatehpur).

25. Shri Usmaan Khan.


Shri Rao mahipat Singh of Sungara state with his 80 officers were hanged in this fort. From May 1858 till the independence of
India, fort remained under British Rule. Due to cold eye of Indian Tourism and Archeological authorities, the fort reached the brink of destruction. The basement and lower floors vanished under dirt and garbage. However, with grace of Tourism Development scheme 2005-06, about 1.6 million rupees were issued to the authorities for fort. A park, boundary wall, Martyr Memorial etc. has been constructed with this money.\textsuperscript{78} But no work has been done for storing and restoring the architecture and design of historical importance. Bhuragarh Fort is not just a piece of architecture or history which is about to collapse. It is a symbol of sacrifice, patriotism, sovereignty and equality. It is the witness of struggle where people from different sects, races, communities, religions came together rubbing shoulders with each other and fought against foreign rulers. It is the ground of great incident which made Banda as the first town in India to achieve freedom from British Rule.\textsuperscript{79} Its the mirror of our glorious past. its pride of Banda.

\textbf{Mahoba fort}

The Mahoba Khand of Chand Bardai’s Prithviraj Raso portrays the pulsating tempo of the epic conflict between the Chauhans of Delhi and the Chandellas. It was Prithviraj Chauhan's triumph over Parmardideva of Mahoba in 1182 that triggered the Chandella decline. The clash of the titans fractured the Rajput polity irrevocably. This was a watershed in the history of India: the weakening of the indigenous military capacity led to the victory of

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\textsuperscript{78} Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh; \textit{Paryatan Vivranika} (2005-06), Lucknow, 2006, p.21. \\
\textsuperscript{79} Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteer of Banda. (1988). p.28
\end{flushright}
Mohammad Ghori over Prithviraj in 1192 and the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206.

Alha and the brave land Mahoba are synonyms. Here the morning starts with singing of Alha and the day ends with singing of Alha and even the new born babies are named after the heroes of Alhakhand. All the social rituals and festivals do not end without singing of the bravery filled Alha songs. Seldom the crimes of Bundelkhand are also influenced by Alhakhand. Some years back, a person heard the songs of Alhakhand sung by a professional Alha singer, “Jake bairy sukh se sovain, take jivan ko dhikkar.” (whose person’s enemy is sleeping peacefully in night in his home, that person’s life is useless) Very same night that person shoot down his enemy.

The personality of Alha was so unique that even after 800 years, today also, Alha is the soul of Bundelkhand. Alha was born to a couple Daksharaj and Deval devi. According to ancient tradition and mythology, Alha is treated as an avatar of Yudhishthir of Mahabharat. He was a master of power. He was a very good warrior, with knowledge of martial arts. Still he neither misused his power, nor showed his powers boastingly. The time on which Alha was born, was called a traditional Nobles period and they were having several wives. Still Alha married only once. At the time of Chunar fort war, the sons of king Nepali, Joga and Bhoga arrested Alha by cheating and the princess Sonavan proposed to run away from there. She was prepared to help him. But Alha refused to do so. He felt that running away is a black male to a warrior like Alha who was helped by a lady. In his opinion, taking food from the hands of unmarried

81 Personal Interview with Mr. Kaushalendra Pratap Singh Yadav. Historian & Business Tax Officer, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, Mahoba, Fort of Mahoba, dated 04-09-2009.
lady is also not proper for a brave person. In due course Sonavan became the wife of Alha. She was also known as Machhala, because she was feeding to fish everyday.\textsuperscript{82}

The avatar of Yudhishthir, Alha fought 52 number of battles. Still Alha was not mad after wars. An example is given in the history that during the time of Bairagarh war Prithviraj Chauhan and his warriors killed Alha’s guru Tala Syed and his brother Udal by cheating. When dual fighting took place between Alha and Prithviraj Chauhan, Alha gave chance to Prithviraj to attack first.\textsuperscript{83} When Mohammad Gauri attacked Prithviraj Chauhan, Chanbardayi proposed for a treaty between both the warriors. On that Alha suggested that Prithviraj being besieger, proposal should come from him only. But Chauhan was proud of being the emperor of Delhi. How can be bow down his head in front of a noble like Alha? Hence, war became inebitable. A rumour is that Ashwathama the villain of Mahabharatha, taught archery to school arrow at any place without seeing to Prithviraj Chauhan.\textsuperscript{84} In spite of that Prithviraj was defeated in the battle. Even today every citizen of Bundelkhand takes glittering plates and sings, 'Listen to the story of Bundelkhand from their own voice. Here horse are very fast and runs like wind, there is sharpness like fire in the water of this land.' Alha and Udal were the warriors of fort Mahoba and Chauhan was the emperor of Delhi. Both of them always stretch their bow to each other arrows in the whole life.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{82} Interview with the priest of Bhartrhari temple at Chunar fort, dated- 16-09-2009.
\textsuperscript{83} Kamlesh Thapak ; Bundelkhan ka Itihas, Prachya Vidya Shodha Sansthan, Sitapur, Chitrakoot, 2006,p.126.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. p. 132.
\textsuperscript{85} Dainik Jagran, (Hindi news paper) Kanpur edition (27 May,2009)
Udal was also equally brave like his brother Alha. He was in earnest as Bhima. Whole Alhakhand is failed with brave activities of both the brothers. In appreciation of their bravery, they were famous as Bagh Udal’. Chamundarai, the field Marshal of Prithviraj killed Udal by cheating.

Chamundarai was called Chaunda (wide) in alhakhand. Only after the death of Udal, Prithviraj Chauhan could kill Chandela warriors. One busy area of Mahoba is called ‘Udal Chowk named after the brave warrior. In order to give respect to this great warrior, people will not ride on horse-back in this chowk. The English Administrator of Mahoba, James Grant, has mentioned that a marriage procession was going near Udal chowm and the bride groom was riding on the horse back. Near the chowk the horse started running out of control and the bride groom was thrown down. I have already head the traditional saying about the chowk, but today I personally witnessed it.

Many monuments and memorials are seen in Mahoba. Some are newly made and some were made during that age and are in ruined condition. Two courtyard have been made in the centre of the city by the name of Alha and Udal. Two gigantic statues of these two warriors are found there. Alha is found on his elephant Pashchavad, Udal is sitting on his galloping horse Bendula. Many visitors come to this city to see both the gigantic and live statues. One more chauki is found on the bank of Keerat Sagar pond, where a division of Alha’s army was residing. Many other chaukis have been found here in Mahoba, which reminds us for the nobles age. Alha’s son Indal’s chauki has been found at the middle of Madan sagar.  

Though this pond is very deep, this chauki leads to the fort through subterranean passage. District administrators have closed now this passage. Indal also was as famous as his father Alha. It is being told that Guru Gorakhnath assuming that Alha will kill Prithviraj Chauhan with his divine weapons, took him and his son Indal to the Kadali forest. Dr. Hajari Prasad dwivedi has identified this Kadali forest as the mountain meadow valley of Uttarakhand.  

Dr. Jayadayal Saxena the retired Head of the Department of Political Science of D.V. college quotes that the eternity of Aloha is not bestowed upon by any god-goddess or saint-monk. The public for whose welfare and relief. Aloha faced long life all the tortures given by time and tolerated all the pains, has made him eternal. Alha fought for the due respected and justful place for the downtrodden. For this, Alha and his family were treated criminal. They were called 'Vanafar' and insulted much. Vanafar means the uncivilized tribal people who dwell in the forest areas. He was also treated as low caste person "Jat Vanafar ki ochhi hai" (The caste of Vanafar's is low). Above all, he was expelled from the society. No one also take water from them for drink. Still, Alha was totally unmoved, inspite of all such insults. He never felt ashamed of being tribal. He proudly called himself as Vanafar. Today Vanfar is a respectable gotra of Kshatriyas. 

Much discussions and analysis take place about the bravery of Alha. But, during his lifetime, he contributed much for social justice. Unfortunately, this fact not much highlighted upon. When Udal was in the womb of his mother, that time Alha and Udal's father and uncles

87 Interview with Mr. Bhagwandin Prapati; Prof. & Head of department of Hindi, Government degree college Mahoba, dated-06-09-2009.
were barbarously killed. Talhan Syed was a very close friend of Alha’s father. He was a horse trader of Central Asia. After this episode, Syed wanted to help his friend’s family. He left Banaras and his business and came to Mahoba. Syed felt Aloha as a gift of Allah and named him Alha. Aloha was very obedient and grateful to his uncle Syed and respected him equal to God. Even today Syed is gracefully worshiped in every village of Bundelkhand. 88 Aloha’s mother Devala saved Lakha from prostitution. The prince of Mandu Karinga Rai killed Alha’s father and kidnapped Lakha also. Under the leadership of Syed, Alha attacked Mandu. Lakha helped him. Inspired by Lakha, Alha raised his voice for the release of ladies from prostitution. A part from these, Aloha treated Lakha as Mausi (Mother’s sister) and gave her full respect. 89

All the chief warriors of Alha hailed from low caste of that period. These low caste people were totally neglected in the society. They were treated as down-trodden. They were denied of weapons and education. The famous warrior Lala Tamoli, Dhanuvan Teli, Roopan Bari, Madan Gadariya, Khun Khun Kori, Dhanna gujar, Chandar Badhai, Halla Jatav etc. were among them. Alha discouraged and criticized blind beliefs, cheat, magic, unscientific following in the society. He preached the people that man is the best creation of nature. Serving man is the real religion. As a symbol of this method, he framed the worshipping of man as God worship. Thus a new God Maniyan dev was created. Maniya God is worshiped at his back. Maniya God’s face and chest are hidden in the wall. Only the back is visible. People worship only the back position.

89 Interview with Mr. Moolchandra Yadav; Alha (popular ballad) singer, Mahoba, dated 05-09-2009.
The hidden sense of such worship is that we should not serve man by identifying him. Considering him as our favorite or unfavorable or thinking of high or low caste. He should be worshiped without any difference.\(^{90}\) Maniya Deva’s worship is the worship not only for man, but also for all the being. Alha worshipped goddess Chandrika also. The Goddess is worshipped not only by Mahoba people, but also by whole of Bundelkhand. At the time of Navaratri. Alha rememberances start with worshipping of Goddes Chandrika. The first invitation of any marriage or of the auspicious function in Bundelkhand is given to Goddess Chandrika.

During rainy season, Mahoba looks very attractive and people chant Alha songs. The biggest crowd in Mahoba would gather at the time of Rakshabandhan festival. This festival is called Kajali and mark the day on which the warriors of Alha defeated Prithviraj Chauhan and made him to run away from the battle field. In order to celebrate this success, the sisters started decorating the wrists of their brothers with Rakhi (Thread of charm).\(^{91}\) About 800 years passed, still the Mahoba people celebrate this festival, but not on the full moon day of the month Shravan, instead they celebrate on the next day called ‘Pareva Day’.

Haveli Darwaja is a place where the revolutionaries in 1857 were hanged to death.\(^{92}\) A festive procession will start from here and will end at the bank of Kirat Sagar where after the success in the battle, the sisters of Mahoba tied the thread of charm to the brothers-

\(^{90}\) Kamlesh Thapak; *Bundelkhan ka Itihas*, Prachya Vidya Shodha Sansthan, Sitapur, Chitrakoot, (M.P.) 2006, p.141.
\(^{91}\) Sharma Rita; *The forts of Bundelkhand*, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.137
\(^{92}\) Bhagwandas Srivastav; *Bundelkhand men Svadhinta Andolan* (Hindi), 1857-1860, Shanti Prakashan, 10/2, Anjali Comlex, Tulsi nagar, Bhopal, 1981.p.132.
Alha, Udal and other warriors. The chauki of Alha Alha at the bank of Kirat Sagar has to be converted into a stage for seven days where continuously dancing and singing will take place. The other major attractions at Mahoba are the Sun temple of Rahiliya Sagar, Shiva-tandava and peer Mubarak shah etc.

From smouldering Mahoba arose the saga of Allha and Udal. These Banaphar Rajput youths fought, alongside the Chandellas, the losing battle against the Chauhans. The two brothers came from Chilla, a landing ghat on the Yamuna, still in use on the northern edge of Bundelkhand. It was Mohoba's court bard Jagnik Rao, whose Allha Khand ensured immortality for the two chivalrous warriors.93

The bards, whether Chand Bardai or Jagnik Rao, were flashy chroniclers. They wove the tales of their royal patrons into colourful renditions. In Bundelkhand, song and verse extolling heroic deeds came to be known as alhas, and were rendered in a distinctive style. Alhas, accompanied by the dholak and the refrain of an Alaap, still resound from the hillocks on commemorative occasions. The Chandellas, it is believed, were descended from Hemavati, the beautiful daughter of Hemraj, priest of the Raja of Kashi. Legend has it that the moon-god Chandrama could not resist her as she bathed in the shimmering waters of a lotus-filled pond. A disraught Hemavati cursed Chandrama, who consoled his consort that the son of their union would be the lord of the earth from whom would sprout a thousand branches.94

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93 Interview with Mr. Moolchandra Yadav; Alha (popular ballad) singer, Mahoba, dated- 05-09-2009.
94 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006, p.133
Chandrama disclosed that their son would be born on the banks of the Karnavati river and reign in Mahoba. He would possess the parasmani or philosopher's stone and build a fort on the hill of Kalinjar. At the child's birth, Chandrama performed a great festival, the mahotsava, from which Mahoba derived its name. The festival was attended by all the gods. This was the eleventh day of the waxing moon of Vaisakhi. The festival and its traditions still continue. The horoscope of the newborn Chandravarman was written by Vrihaspati. When sixteen, the prince killed a tiger. He became a powerful monarch and designated Mahoba as his chief city. Closer to reality, it has been surmised that Chandravarman was a Gond chief. The Chandellas were an indigenous people who rose towards ennoblement. Durgavati of Gondwana, the valiant sixteenth-century queen, was a Chandella married to a Gond.95

The Chandellas were tributaries of the Kannauj Pritiharas in the eighth century. This power equation was disturbed when the Deccan Rashtrakutas invaded Bundelkhand early in the ninth century, an opportunity used by the Chandella chief Nannuka to drive out the Pratiharas and set up capital in the walled city of Khajuraho, thirty-four miles south of Mahoba.96 Nannuka became the first Chandella king, ruling from 831 to 845. The wresting of Chanderi from Bhojdeva of Kannauj (836-885) by the Chandellas, boosted the standing of this fledgling dynasty.

Mahoba developed in Rahilya's time (900-915), though Khajuraho remained the epicentre. Alberuni, who accompanied

95 Kamlesh Thapak; Bundelkhan ka Itihas, Prachya Vidya Shodha Sansthan, Sitapur, Chitrakoot, (M.P.) 2006, p.166.
Mahmud of Ghazni on his expeditions, writes about Khajuraho, as does Ibn-Batutah, who came in 1335. An early Chandella landmark in Mahoba is the granite temple of Rahilya- the sun god. The original sculpture, which was in the aradhana mudra, overlooked the Rahilya Sagar, an irrigation lake built as a welfare measure.97

Chandella influence extended when Rahilya's daughter married into the neighbouring Chedis and his son and successor Harsha (915-930) took a bride from Sambhar's Chauhans. It was further strengthened when Yashovarman (930-950) took Kalinjar. This celebrated fort had recently been taken by the Rashtrakutas from the Kannauj Pratiharas. Yashovarman provided critical help to the Pratiharas against the Rashtrakutas, from whom Kalinjar was recovered. The Chandellas kept the fort; they also acquired, from the Pratiharas, an idol of Vishnu, originally with the King of Bhot or Tibet, for which a temple was constructed at Khajuraho.98

Dhangadev (950-1008)-one of the greatest Chandellas-was part of a confederation led by Jaipal of Lahore, against Ghazni. He kept in check the Palas and the Rashtrakutas. Victories were glorified and villages donated to maintain the families of those who died in battle. Dhangadev's passion and intensity can be perceived from the unrivalled profusion of carvings and richness of sculptures in the Kandariya Mahadeo and Vishwanath temples he built at Khajuraho.

97 Ibid. p.19.
98 Kamlesh Thapak; Bundelkhan ka Itihas, Prachya Vidya Shodha Sansthan, Sitapur, Chitrakoot, (M.P.) 2006, p.166.
On reaching 100 years of age, Dhangadev immolated himself on burning cow dung cakes at the Prayag sangam.\(^{99}\)

Vidyadhara (1017-30) attempted to forge an understanding with Kannauj to meet the threat of Mahmud of Ghazni. The initiative failed. Piqued and apprehensive, Vidyadhara sent a son to confront the Kannauj ruler, Rajpal. Tempers flared, swords flashed, and Rajpal was killed. Vidyadhara shifted base from Khajuraho to Mahoba as Mahmud drew closer. The invader's objective was Kalinjar, but the stronghold stood up to him on two occasions. When the threat of Mahmud receded, Vidyadhara seized large chunks of the doab from Kannauj.

Kirtivarman gained both from the Kalachuris and the Chedis. The Chandella star continued to shine with Madanvarman (1125-65). He subdued Malwa's Paramaras and held off the Chalukyans in the Deccan. Jainism was patronised, pilgrim resthouses built and hectic work undertaken on irrigation projects like the Madan Sagar. Parmardideva (1165-1202), also referred to as Parmal, was the last great Chandella king. He was also a prodigious builder.

Parmardideva's brother-in-law, Mahil Parihar, detractor for long, invited Prithviraj Chauhan to wage war on Mahoba. Prithviraj's ire had been fuelled when Parmardideva's son, Brahmjit, married his daughter against his wishes. The two armies met at Sirsagarh (1182), on the banks of the Pahuj.\(^{100}\) The Chandellas were worsted in a fierce
battle lasting eight days, in which many Mahoba commanders were killed.

Parmardideva was vulnerable now. At the onset of the Chandella dynasty, Chandrama had told Hemvati that her posterity's continuance was contingent on the king abstaining from wine and illicit womanising, apart from protecting Brahmins and preserving the Varma name. Parmardideva was in breach on all counts. His haughtiness resulted in Alha and Udal leaving Mahoba in preference for Kannauj. The queen of Mahoba, Malhan Devi, had to send the bard, Jagnik Rao, to Kannauj as her personal messenger to persuade the brothers to come back, 'The Chauhan is encamped on the plain of Mahoba..Sirswa is given to the flames and the kingdom of Parmal laid waste by the Chauhan. For one month a truce has been obtained: while to you I am sent for aid in his griefs. Listen, O sons of Banaphar: sad have been the days of Malhandevi since you left Mahoba! Oft she looks towards Kanauj; and while she recalls you to mind, tears gush from her eyes and she exclaims: "The fame of the Chandels is departing"; but when gone, O sons of Jasraj, great will be your self-accusing sorrow... think of Mahoba.'

Alha and Udal returned to Mahoba when directed to do so by their mother a dominating woman whose ancestral village, Saraiya, can be seen from Kalinjar fort. The Kannauj king Jaichand sent a well-equipped force with Alha and Udal, along with two of his sons. Jaichand was seeking revenge, years ago, his daughter Sanyukta had eloped with Prithviraj. The battle was fierce and the Banaphar heroes struck hard. But the Chauhans prevailed. Alha was killed and Udal wounded. Among the slain were Brahmjit and the

101 Uttar Pradesh district gazetteer of Hamirpur, 1989, p. 33
sons of Jaichand Prithviraj appointed Pajjun Rai as governor of Mahoba and Parmardidev retired to Kalinjar.\textsuperscript{102}

Alexander Cunningham has left an interesting account, '...Alha, when he quitted Mahoba, forbade... beating a nakara (kettle-drum)... this injunction is still in force after... seven centuries! The general belief is that the ghosts of the old Chandel Rajas still haunt their old capital, and would resent the beating of a kettle-drum haunt their old capital, and would resent the beating of a kettle-drum... Should anyone do so, the horse of the drum beater would stumble and the rider be killed, while the chief who ordered the drum to be beaten would shortly meet with a violent death. I was... witness to... this old belief. In February 1843... the brother of the Chhatrpur Raja, was obliged to go to Naugaon to celebrate his daughter's marriage, as he did not dare to have a wedding procession with music through the city which the ghosts of the old Chandel Rajas were believed to haunt.\textsuperscript{103} Mohammad Ghori's invasions came soon, sweeping away the Delhi Chauhans. This allowed Parmardideva to retrieve Mahoba, but it could only be a weak control, as the Turko-Afghans were will on course to establishing the Sultanate under Qutub-ud-din Aibak, Muhammad Ghori's general. The Chandellas reconciled themselves to being tributaries. But, after Parmardideva's death in 1202, his minister Ajay Deo refused to pay tribute. The following year the Turko-Afghans ransacked Mahoba. A subehdar was appointed at Mahoba, accountable to the Sultanate. Over the years, the Mewatis, Gonds, Khangars and the Bundelas occupied Mahoba. Timur's invasion in 1398 loosened Delhi's hold over Mahoba till the revival of

\textsuperscript{102} Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.140. 
the Sultanate's central authority by the Lodis. Under Mughal administration, Mahoba became an administrative unit controlled from Kalinjar, part of the province of Allahabad. Mahoba, comprising 82,000 bighas, was among the more prosperous Mughal possessions in Bundelkhand.

The Mughals were fascinated by Mahoba's paan, or betel leaf, from the fragile creeper nurtured by the earliest Chandellas. Its leaf, taken with the right ingredients, was also known for its aphrodisiac qualities.\textsuperscript{104} Mahoba's folded paan leaf, or beeda- seductively fastened with a clove- got its sharp, juicy characteristics and aroma from a special manure prepared with jowar flour, mustard oil cakes, curd and cow dung. The choicest of paan selections were included in the tribute paid to the Mughal emperor. Of the Chandella fortifications in Mahoba, only some impressions remain, which overlook the town. The old fort area is identified by the remnants of the Bhainsasur and Bheetarkot darwazas. The cultural cross currents are evident: the thirteenth-century dargah of a saint from Herat, Pir Mubarak Shah, lies some distance from a rock-cut tenth-century Shiva in tandava; the Kaal Bhairava, a Maniya Devi temple, a shrine of Hanuman; and havan kunds for yajnas.

The Madan Sagar is on the southern side, its scenic splendour heightened by two temples built on islets in the lake the granite Kakra Math devoted to Shiva, and a Vishnu temple, now in ruin. Dipping into the Madan Sagar is the grey granite of a fortified hill, the silence broken only by the twitter of water birds gliding past a melange of ghats and temples. In the east of the town is the Vijay Sagar built by

\textsuperscript{104} Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.140.
Vijay Pala (1030-1040), taking advantage of a shallow valley. The Kirti Sagar embankment is the site of the Kajli fair in August, a celebration of the monsoons, wellbeing and fidelity. Centuries ago, Prithviraj Chauhan's men had attacked the royal Kajli procession, elaborate with decorated palanquins, elephants and artists. The intruders were repulsed, but the celebrations traditionally earmarked to coincide with Raksha Bandhan, had to be postponed. Accordingly, Kajli came to be celebrated on the day after Raksha Bandhan.105

A baithak survives on the Kirat Sagar. This is where the Chandella kings relaxed with their consorts critiqued the arts and appraised performances. A favourite was the Prabodha-chandrodaya encapsulating Vedanta philosophy in drama form. The celestial Chandella setting- with images of Khajuraho- was embellished by offerings from Mahoba's betel creeper encircling the area palm, complete with the ambrosial waft of a supari nut in a paan leaf.

**Charkhari fort**

Charkhari fort spreads over a rocky hill. The ramparts command a view of miles of wheat lined roads and horse tongas outracing bullock carts. The approach to the fort curves around the Ratan Sagar Lake, dotted with migratory birds.

The Raja of Jaitpur, Jagat Raj (1732-58) a son of Chhatrasal came to Charkhari to hunt a species of deer known as charkhar. On an auspicious mangalwar- Tuesday- in the dense forests of Ranjit hill, the Raja laid the foundation of a fort: Mangalgarh.106 The Raja's aim

was to subdue the local Lodh community. A struggle ended in a compromise, with Jaitpur recognising the Lodh chieftain's locus standi with the awarding of a title. The ensuing peace paved the way for a new principality, Charkhari, to be carved out of an extended Jaitpur.

Jagat Raj was succeeded at Jaitpur by his son, Pahar Singh. Tension arose because another son, Kirat Singh, had been nominated earlier as heir, but predeceased Jagat Raj. Kiran Singh's son, Guman tried to seize Jaitpur, and was checked by Pahar Singh. Guman was settled in Ajaigarh-Banda and Khuman in Charkhari. Guman Singh died in 1781, leaving behind a minor son under the tutelage of his commander Arjun Singh. Khuman Singh (1765-82) was the first Raja of Charkhari. He strengthened the fort parapets and sightings for musketry, and set up sturdy gates in the ascent. When the Oudh armies attacked Charkhari in 1768, Khuman Singh drove them off. Headstrong, Khuman Singh got needlessly provoked into battle by Arjun Singh and was killed in 1782.

Khuman Singh's son and successor was Vijay Bahadur (1782-1829). He approached the Scindia because his son kidnapped and held hostage in Gwalior by the Maratha tax collectors. Vijay Bahadur got his son back, but with Arjun Singh at his aggressive worst, Vijay Bahadur abandoned Charkhari to immerse himself in pravachanas and writings in the relative tranquillity of Jhansi. Charkhari became an annexe of Ajaigarh-Banda.

107 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.238.
Vijay Bahadur broke out of his isolation, reaching but to Ali Bahadur, a favourite of the Peshwa, and Himmat Bahadur, a soldier-of-fortune, for help against Arjun Singh. Himmat Bahadur killed Arjun Singh in battle in 1791. Ali Bahadur usurped the throne to become the 'Nawab of Banda' and restored to Vijay Bahadur some territory with Charkhari fort. Vijay Bahadur was succeeded by a fourteen-year-old grandson Ratan Singh (1829-60), from an illegitimate son.

Charkhari was the first state in Bundelkhand to seek British protection through a sanad and assure fealty (1804). During the 1857 uprising, Ratan Singh rushed a cannon and 200 matchlockmen to the neighbouring British district of Hamirpur. The Deputy Commissioner, T.K. Lloyd, and his deputy, Donald Grant, fled. They hid in some castor oil fields, but were detected, bound up and shot in the civil court compound. An anxious British magistrate from Mahoba, J.H. Carne, somehow reached Charkhari fort to a hospitable reception. A furious Nana Sahib ordered Tatya Tope to undertake an all-out offensive against Charkhari. Tatya Tope's assessment, conveyed to Nana Sahib, was; 'It is very difficult to capture this fort, inasmuch as the place is hilly and I have only a small body of men with me. The Rajah does not wish to side with us, as he relies very much on the strength of the English. When such is the case, whatever services may be achieved by me will of course have its origin in your good fortune. The sepoys boast very much now but in the time of difficulty they will desert us. God does whatever is good. In the battle

fought day before yesterday, our troops fled before the enemy. I hope therefore that you will be pleased to send Vilayetee men (Afghans) to our assistance and one hundred pieces of cloth which I will distribute among the troops here as an inducement to them to take the field.\\textsuperscript{110}

When Tatya Tope received intelligence that the northwest portion of the Charkhari fort was weak and vulnerable to assault, a strong cannonade was launched at this point. The Nawab of Banda also sent a force to assist Tatya Tope. The Raja of Charkhari sued for peace. The rebels demanded three lakh rupees, the surrender of the Mahoba magistrate, Carne, and a visit by the Raja to Tatya Tope's camp with an assurance that he would join the revolutionaries.

The Raja insisted that there were no British officers in his fort. He also regretted his inability to come to Tatya Tope's camp because of an inconvenient swelling on his posterior. Tatya continued heavy firing on the fort and ordered that the town be pillaged. Large-scale arson followed, including the Raja's palace and also outside the fort.\\textsuperscript{111} According to Carne; 'The Rajah's own residence has also been rifled of every particle of property which could be carried away, while costly mirrors, chandeliers, carpets, and other valuable fittings and furniture of English fashion were smashed to pieces and otherwise destroyed by the rebel mob. Elephants and horses with their trappings, carriages of various kinds, palanquins and other

\\textsuperscript{111} Bhagwandas Srivastav; Bundelkhand men Svadhinta Andolan (Hindi), 1857-1860, Shanti Prakashan, 10/2, Anjali Complex, Tulsi nagar, Bhopal, 1981.p.193.
conveyances, camels and draught bullocks, all the cattle belonging to the inhabitants..have all fallen into the hands of the enemy.\textsuperscript{112}

After eleven days of hard fighting, the town came into the hands of Tatya Tope along with twenty-four guns. Most of the population fled. Among those resisting, the role of women was notable. With kitchen utensils and grinding moosal stones, they killed a number of Tatya's men. At the same time, the Raja of Charkhari kept the negotiations open.

The Raja sent his young son with trusted counsellors to Tatya Tope along with a large sum of money. Meanwhile, Carne, the British magistrate sought by Tatya Tope, was smuggled out through the rebel barricade to Panna in the guise of a Bundela Rajput. The British were closing in. Tatya Tope also had to abandon operations when Nana Sahib ordered him to go to the aid of the Rani of Jhansi. Ratan Singh's Charkhari survived the odds.

Jaitpur, from where Charkhari had been carved in the eighteenth century, was annexed by the British in 1849 under Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse. The Raja of Jaitpur Parichhat Singh openly inimical to the British was deposed due to his role in the Bundela Rising of 1842. In 1857, his widowed queen raised the banner of revolt. A spirited woman, she took control of Jaitpur, but it was a short-lived triumph.\textsuperscript{113}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{113} Jaiprakash Mishra; 'The Bundela Rebellion', Sandeep Prakashan, C-2/9,Community Centre Ashok Vihar,Phase-II ,Delhi, 1982.P.119
\end{flushright}
The British rewarded the Raja of Charkhari with a khillat- a sword of honour, Land grant in perpetuity, the privilege of adoption and an eleven-gun hereditary salute. The gratification paid under coercion to the revolutionaries was returned to the Raja.\(^\text{114}\) The Nawab of Banda, who helped Tatya Tope in Charkhari, was exiled and his property confiscated.

The state buildings that came up in Charkhari during the ensuing peace, incorporated European designs. Venetian-style blinds and Corinthian columns. The ruler was titled 'Maharajadhiraj Sipahdar-ul-Mulk'.\(^\text{115}\) Today, the old draperies are ready to fall to pieces at a touch. But the elephant spikes on the main gateway, leading from the town to the fort atop the hill, remain sharp and glistening as ever.

**Baruwasagar fort**

The tumult of 1857-58 saw Hugh Rose emerge as the man-of-hour for the British campaign in central India. With his eighteen-pounders and eight-inch mortars, Rose won a decisive victory at Baruwasagar against Tatya Tope, who was leading a force of 20,000 that was intended to reinforce Lakshmi Bai in Jhansi.\(^\text{116}\) This was a major setback for the Rani, as Baruwasagar, close to the river Betwa, provided a strategic forward line for engaging the British.

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\(^\text{115}\) Sharma Rita; *The forts of Bundelkhand*, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.77.

\(^\text{116}\) Jaiprakash Mishra; *The Bundela Rebellion*, Sandeep Prakashan,C-2/9,Community Centre Ashok Vihar,Phase-II Delhi, 1982.p.179.
Built early in the eighteenth century by Orchha's Udot Singh, the fort commanded an extensive view from the Betwa to Orchha- a skirmish-prone area, coveted both by the Marathas in Jhansi and Gwalior's Scindia. One such affray had been in 1744, when a brother of the Scind Rani Lakshmi Bai's 1857-58 campaign saw her father Moropant Tambe take the initiative of capturing Baruwasagar fort from the Orchha troops. He was aggressive; according to an abstract of the ia was killed by the Orchha Bundelas.\textsuperscript{117} British Intelligence,'The Ranee of Jhansee's troops that are stationed at Burwa Saugor plundered the... villages... They cut down the flag staff at Niwaree, pulled down the government buildings and burnt the village. All the supplies collected for the British camp have been taken by them. The cattle in the village... have been lifted... Mama Sahib the Rajee's father are all... stationed at Burwa Saugor'.\textsuperscript{118}

After Tatya Tope's rout by the British, the Rani's troops retreated from Baruwasagar to Jhansi. Post-mutiny, a new order arrived. Louis Rousselet, a Frenchman, visited Baruwasagar in 1867. By now, the fort had been converted into a resthouse for touring officers, surveyors and sundry picnickers. Rousselet wrote, 'Barwa-Sagur... The castle stands upon the side of a hill...having nothing Hindoo about it...with its large round towers and its many-windowed facades, it would not be out of place upon the hills that surround the Rhine...'.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{117} Gorelal Tiwari; \textit{Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas} (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935.p.241.


Visitors were careful not to stray too far. Rousselet recalled how one of his camels, negligently let loose at night, was killed by a tiger on the prowl. He mentions crocodiles in the adjacent lake which was formed when Raja Udot Singh erected an embankment across a feeder stream of the Betwa.\footnote{120} A looping flight of steps descending into the water presents a pleasing sight from atop the fort.

When the Raj rose from the ashes of John Company, the ruling class acquired a new ruddiness and self-assurance. The discipline associated with district administration was framed in manuals and regulations. Field inspections and partals were central to governance, necessitating 'night-halts', for which the facilities at Baruwasagar were convenient. The basic nature of the amenities was amply compensated by the chef creating his culinary wonders on the mud even. Rousselet recorded his experience in the fort:\footnote{121} ‘Having lighted torches, we began by visiting the apartments of castle. The ground floor consists of large vaulted rooms, the large windows of which look out upon a deep precipice near the lake; and a winding staircase leads to the first floor...Upon the second floor, some smaller and more comfortable apartments...These rooms at the top of the palace are partly surrounded by a terrace overlooking the lake...Our camp was soon installed in its aerial abode, and a good dinner obliterated the recollection of our inconveniences during the day.’

From the time Victoria was declared Empress of India in 1877 to the outbreak of the Second World War, life in the districts remained

\footnote{120} Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006. p.75.
the same: meals by lamplight, the hand-pulled fan in the summers, mosquito nets, comfortable armchairs, gymkhanas and bath houses, topees and sola hats, felt and canvas shikari helmets, turbans and commerbunds, chefs and retainers, water carriers, dhobis, and mussalchees- all completed the picture.\textsuperscript{122}

The Raj had its heroes, and pomp and ceremony were encouraged to emphasis the existence of imperial power. But much more striking was the day-to-day exercise of governance kept ticking by the ordinary field officers, civil and military. Sport was an essential ingredient: riding, pig-sticking and hunting wild boar were popular pastimes. In the shrubbery of Baruwasagar lake, there was a surfeit of partridge. Wild greese were aplenty. The lake teemed with fowl, wilder than the quilt of Lilies and Lotuses.

The fort is crumbling, but the air of timelessness and languor is inescapable. Moth-eaten records tell the story of a bygone era- of self-righteousness and arrogance.\textsuperscript{123} And, of officers who stood in the fort resthouse at sunset, looking on to the countryside drenched in orange after a hectic day of village inspections and snipe shooting.Nothing has changed. Nearby is a Chandella irrigation dam. Fishermen cast their nets from canoes hollowed out of tree trunks. During the winter crop, the landscape is a mosaic of green-brown cultivation, interspersed with honey gold. The odd visitor is seen, come to view the fort in the crimson pall of an evening and experience the gay abandon of Bundela folk songs.

\textsuperscript{122} Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.84.
\textsuperscript{123}Ramsevak Richhariya; \textquoteleft\textit{Sangharshaun se Joojhata Baruwasagar} (Hindi) Usha Prakashan,90 Sanaura, Baruwasagar,1994.P.138.
Garhkundar fort

The romance of Kundar fort is woven around the story of the Khangars a community long scattered. It is a tale that has been pieced together through folk songs and archaeological remains on hillocks round-shouldered with age. This ninth-century fort is an invitation to muse on vanished dynasties and lost kingdoms.

The Khangar deity was Devi, the great goddess with a thousand faces and apppellations; in Kundar, the embodiment was in Giddhvahini Devi, whose now quite elaborate shrine stands not far from the fort. The Khangars are still drawn to Kundar the abandoned citadel's towers appear to exercise a strange psychic hold and its dungeons seem to conceal many mysteries.

Kundar looks radiant from afar. One moment its turrets are aglow in the sunlight, the next, hidden from view by the arc of a granite cliff or a bend in the path curving its way through cheesboard fields. A rocky incline through the girdle of outer walls leads to a gateway paved with uneven flagstones. A gallery of recessed arches leads into an open court. Octagonal corner towers are blended skilfully into the body of the fort, a three-tiered structure.

An assortment of geometrical forms and design permutations-quadrangles and corridors, pavilions, towers and ramparts hold space in balance and harmony. The scalloped arches and carved angle brackets resolve themselves into endless embellishments, giving the austere masonry variety and depth. The Khangars, among

124 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.143.
125 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006. p.125.
Bundelkhand's original inhabitants, were listed by 'James Tod' as an 'aboriginal race',\textsuperscript{126} with any claims to Rajput lineage countered by their non-Aryan 'totemistic tribal structure'. The Khangars, kindred to a wider world, subscribed to gotras or sects: the hathgotiyas (hathi:elephant), nahargotiyas (nahar:lion), naggotiyas (naga:serpent), bargotiyas (bar:banyan tree) and others. Despite the military achievements of the Khangars, their avowal to Rajput descent was tenuous.\textsuperscript{127}

Kundar fort was built by the Chandellas. It fell in the administrative province of Sirsagarh. In consideration of its strategic importance, Parmardidev, the Chandella chief, made Kundar the headquarters of a separate province, while appointing Shiaju, a Paramara Rajput, as governor of the fort. His deputy was Khub Singh, a Khangar. In 1182, Shiaju was killed in the battle of Sirsagarh, when Parmardidev was defeated by Prithviraj Chauhan. This was signal for Khub Singh to switch loyalty to the Chauhans and usurp the province from the Chandellas. Pressure on the Rajputs following Mohammad Ghori's invasion (1191-92), the emergence of the Delhi Sultanate (1206) and the Chandella decline, led to a period of power realignments enabling the Khangars to expand their territory.\textsuperscript{128}

The Khangars were ferocious warriors. Merciless in their treatment of the vanquished, they accumulated cultivable lands and wealth. Khub Singh built a chain of small fortresses. His successor

\textsuperscript{127} Crooke, W. ; \textit{Native Races of India}: The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western India, Methuen Company, London, 1996.p.230.
\textsuperscript{128} Sharma Rita ; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.71.
was Hurmat Singh, who furthered the dominance of the Khangars by playing off the Rajput Jagirdars against each other. It was a slight to the Bundela chief, Sohanpal, which caused Hurmat Singh's downfall. The Bundela governed his fief at Mahoni under the overlordship of the Khangars. Sohanpal sought help from Hurmat Singh against some kinsmen who had usurped Mahoni. The Khangar laughed off the Bundela's request. Sohanpal used all manner of entreaties, but to no avail.

Bundela servitude to the Khangars had always irked, but the final blow came when, having ignored his entreaties for assistance, Hurmat Singh sought the hand of Sohanpal's daughter for his son Nagadeva. Hurmat was keen to advance his standing in the social hierarchy by marrying into the Bundelas. The proposal enraged Sohanpal, but prudence prevailed. The Bundela accepted the proposal and agreed to the Khangar ceremonies, including the festivities at the groom's place.

The celebrations grew raucous with wine flowing freely in Kundar fort. The Khangars did not recognise Sohanpal's soldiers, disguised as retainers, creeping in from the shadows under the colourful festoons. What followed has been immortalised in Vrindavan Lal Verma's *Garh Kundar*. At night, as the revellers, inebriated with drugged wine, groped around in the fort, Sohanpal's men, sword in hand, struck. The Khangars and their chief fell where they stood.

Sohanpal took over Kundar, made it his capital, and abandoned the idea of repossessing Mahoni. A Paramara prince who

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had helped Sohanpal, was given the hand of the winsome Bundela princess. There were to be no Bundela marriage alliances with the Kachhwahas, Chauhans and Tomars, as they did not help against the Khangars. Sohanpal had probably promised his daughter to the other chieftains, too, who, when left unobliged, snapped their relationships with the Bundelas.

The legend goes that a Khangar princess who was pregnant, to escape the Bundelas, hid in a field of kusum the thistle-like, dye-yielding flower where she gave birth to a son. The woman, shielded initially by a fakir, was given refuge in a Dangi household, an off-the-mainstream community remotely related to the Rajputs. When the Bundela soldiers came looking, the Khangar's protectors denied her presence. The pursuers, to single out the Khangar, ferreted out all the women in the family, and asked them to eat maheri-rice in skimmed milk, sprinkled with cumin, meant to be taken in family communion. To their credit, the Dangis did not flinch in having to eat maheri with a Khangar.

A bounty of tradition was generated. Dangi intrepidity to save a Khangar in distress led to a practice where the two communities together partake of Maheri during celebrations. The Khangars, in remembrance, fashioned a deity in whose presence falsehood was abjured. Further, in deference to the cover provided by the kusum field during their ancestor's birth, the Khangars forswore apparel dyed with this crop. Fakirs, normally receivers of alms, act as providers in a Khangar wedding and bring presents.130

130 Sharma Rita; 'The forts of Bundelkhand' Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006, p.126.
There is another version: according to the Khangars, the feud was not between the Khangar ruler and his Bundela tributary; rather, the adversaries were two jagirdars - the Khangar's son sought the hand of the Bundela's daughter. The resultant bloodletting led to the liquidation of the Khangar jagirdar and the usurpation of his lands by the Bundelas, but without impacting on the ruling Khangar dynasty. The Khangars remained masters of Kundar till they were dethroned by the Sultan of Delhi, Muhammad Tuhdak.

The Sultan sought the hand of the princess Kesar Devi, sister of the Khangar ruler, Bardai Singh. The Sultan was cold-shouldered, and responded by besieging the fort. According to the Khangars, the other clans, including the Bundelas, did not help. When the situation became hopeless, the Khangars prepared for jauhar.\textsuperscript{131} The event is cited to buttress the affinity Khangars claim to have with Rajput rituals. For the beleaguered, self-destruction was preferred to surrender and dishonour. Women in their finery jumped into a pyre. Children, too, were consigned to the flames. The men died in battle harness. After the battle, the Sultan handed Kundar over to the Bundelas to administer.

Even centuries after the Khangars fell, during the investiture ceremonies of Datia's Bundela kings, a model of Kundar fort used to be broken. This was to demonstrate Bundela hostility against the Khangars. Bundela expansion and consolidation from Mahoba to Seondha was sporadic, factored into the fluctuating strength of the Delhi Sultanate and the anarchy inflicted by Timur's invasion. In 1482, the Bundela chief Malkhan Singh (1468-1501) came into direct

\textsuperscript{131} Verma Vrindavan Lal; 'Garh Kundar' (Hindi) Virangana Prakashan, Jhansi, 1960. p.166.
conflict with Sultan Bahlol Lodi (1451-89) over Kalpi. The Mughals arrived in 1526.

The new chief Rudra Pratap (1501-31) decided to move the Bundela capital from Kundar to a safer location.  

The Bundelas shifted to Orchha. The baolies at Kundar became the haunt of bats, and weeds and creepers overtook the pavilions. The underground chambers, once lit by torches, lie still and sombre. The silence and the isolation magnifies each sound, even the wind blowing through the grass which covers the wounds of centuries.

Orchha fort

Across sparkling Betwa and forests, the lofty Orchha fortress-palaces and temples silhouette the skyline. Every curve and contour of the magnificent edifices at Orchha displays the headliness of its rulers who combined the best of Rajput and Mughal styles.

Orchha was a picturesque spot. When Bundela ruler Rudra Pratap (1501-31) chanced upon it during a hunt, he decided to shift his capital from Kundar to Orchha. The new location for the capital was also safer. Rudra Pratap had held well against the Lodi Sultans, but with the Mughals having gained entry, Bundelkhand was vulnerable. The Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605), after annexing Gwalior, turned to Bundelkhand. The Orchha forces proved to be too strong initially. The terrain was difficult, thick with jungle and without open pathways. The Mughals had to fortify their campaign and put

133 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagar Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.124.
into battle a coalition including the Kachhwahas of Narwar. Madhukar Shah lost a son, Haural Dev, and the Bundelas were finally forced to capitulate to the Mughal general, Sadiq Khan. However, a stubborn Madhukar Shah refused to bow down before his conqueror.134

Madhukar’s obduracy manifested when he wore a huge vermilion foot-shaped tilak in the form of God's charan in Akbar's presence, disregarding the code on headmarks such as these prevalent in the Mughal court. However, the emperor could not bring himself to chastise the Orchha king for what came to be known as the 'Madhukar Shahi Tilak'135

The Bundela chief also ignored Akbar's call to accompany the Mughal campaign in the Deccan, and did not make the customary courtesy visit when the emperor's son Murad was appointed Malwa's governor. Undeviating till his last days, Madhukar Shah died aged eighty in the Narwar forest, while retreating from an engagement with the imperial troops.

Orchha went into a decline after Madhukar's son Ram Shah (1592-1605) succeeded. The ruler was unable to cope with the ambitions of collaterals and open rebellious activity by a number of brothers, including Bir Singh. A son, Sangram Shah, was killed in Erich trying to capture Bir Singh, then a fugitive from Akbar. When Jehangir succeeded (1605-27), he deposed Ram Shah and gave the throne of Orchha to Bir Singh.

134 Krishnadas; Bundelkhand ka Itihas-Orchha Khand; Santosh Bhawan,Near state bank, Chhatarpur (M.P.),1974, p.123
135 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.126.
This was the new emperor’s compensation to Bir Singh for assassinating the scholar- statesman Abul Fazl at his bidding when he was still Prince Salim and Poisoning Akbar's ears against him. At the prince's behest, Bir Singh waylaid yet to ascend the throne as Jehangir. Salim had believed that Abdul fazl was Abul Fazl near Narwar as he returned to Agra from the Deccan, after being summoned by an anxious emperor, Akbar, for consultations. Bir Singh, with 500 horsemen, ambushed and killed Abul Fazl, severed his head and sent it to Salim, then residing in Allahabad fort.136

With Bir Singh (1605-27) on the throne, Orchha's fortunes were restored. The Bundela maintained a closeness with Jehangir. He assisted the Mughal general Mahabat Khan to ensure the submission of Mewar, and later joined up with the imperial forces for the Emperor's Deccan operations. This led to the elevation of the Orchha military officials by the emperor.137 Jehangir also asked Bir Singh to accompany his son- the inexperienced Prince Khurram- on an expedition to Udaipur.

Bir singh was a compulsive builder. apart from the jahangir Mahal, he built the Lakshe Narayan temple, the Datia fortress-palace, Dharmashalas and irrigation tanks. Much gold was donated to the Mathura temples. But Bir Singh could be forbidding: he ordered a public trial for a son. Jagat Dev, accused of setting hunting dogs on a sadhu who was mauled fatally. Jagat Dev was

136 Lakshman singh Gaur; Orchha ka Itihas, Ramraja Mandir Orchha, 1994, p.81.
137 Ashant Tripathi; Bundelkhand ka Itihas (Hindi), Sharda sahitya kutir, 86, Purani Najhai, Jhansi, 1991, p.94.
condemned to be bitten to death by dogs.  

Birsingh was succeeded by Jujhar Singh (1627-34). Shahjehan's animosity towards Jujhar dated back to the time when he, as Prince Khurram, had revolted against his father Jehangir. The Emperor had given the task of quelling this rebellion to Bir Singh, who in turn had handed the responsibility of heading a 1000-horse army to Jujhar Singh. After Khurram became emperor, Jujhar Singh paid him the formal visit of a tributary, but this did not smoothen relations between the two: Shahjehan felt slighted when the Bundela made a quiet exit despite an invitation to stay on for the celebrations at Agra.

There was vehement opposition from Jujhar Singh when Shahjehan imposed fresh taxes. He was suspected also to have connived at the safe passage of the rebel Khan Jehan Lodi through Orchha territory. Eventually Jujhar Singh gave in and went with the Mughals to the Deccan. However, on the journey back, the tempestuous Jujhar Singh attacked the Gonds, ignoring Shahjehan's caveat not to press on with the operations. The Gond chief Prem Narayan was killed and considerable treasure fell into Bundela hands.

Shahjehan ordered the return of the Gond possessions and deposit of a portion of the plunder in the imperial treasury. He dispatched his his son Aurangzeb to take on an unwilling Jujhar Singh. The Mughal prince stormed Orchha. The Bundela escaped,

\[\text{138 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.127.}
\[\text{139 Ashirvadi Lal Srivastava; Medieval India; Shiv Lal Agrawal & Co. Pvt. Ltd. Agra, 1973. p.179.} \]
taking the women from his zenana and whatever wealth he could
deep into Bundelkhand to The forest fort of Dhamoni. But he was
captured by the Gonds and brutally killed along with his son. The
emperor then installed Devi Singh of Chanderi at Orchha (1634-36).

When Shahjehan visited Orchha, the architecture invoked his
envy and many buildings were torched. There was a move for mass
conversions, which invoked a reaction from the Bundela Jagirdars.
Devi Singh fled back to Chanderi. Anarchy ruled till Shahjehan
assigned Pahar Singh (1641-53), a brother of Jujhar Singh, to the
throne. He ran some successful campaigns against the Gonds
under the Mughals. Orchha's position recovered, followed by victories
against Chauragarh and Raisen forts, south of Bundelkhand.

Pahar Singh accompanied Prince Murad Baksh, Shahjehan's
son, to the harsh Balkh campaign and in the operations in Kabul and
Kandahar against the Persians. His successor, Sujan Singh (1653-72),
got with the Muchals to Kashmir, Bijapur and cooch Behar.
Aurangzab (1658-1707) also deputed Sujan Singh to go on an
expedition to Shivaji's Purandar fort.

With the Mughals going into a steep decline in the closing
years of Aurangzeb’s reign, Udot Singh (1689-1736) came to rule
over Orchha; he was the contemporary of six Mughal emperors in
Delhi. Udot Singh kept up with the shifting imperial priorities and
participated in the Mughal campaign against the Sikhs.

\[140\] Gorelal Tiwari; *Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas* (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha
\[141\] Sardesai Govinram Sakharam; *Marathaun Ka Naveen Itihas* (Hindi) Vol.III,
Panna’s star had simultaneously risen under the indefatigable Chhatrasal (1649-1731), who was determined to erase Mughal presence from Bundelkhand.

Chhatrasal, originally a fief-holder of Orchha, had met Chhatrapati Shivaji (1627-1680) in his early days. The Maratha motivated the Bundela to chart out a course that would give him freedom from the Mughals.\(^{142}\)

Orchha’s energies were now directed to keeping at bay Chhatrasal, and later, as the eighteenth century wore on, the Marathas. Getting out of the Maratha route to the doab became a priority. The capital was shifted from Orchha to Tikamgarh in 1783 during the rule of Vikramjit (1776-1817). Orchha also established relations with the British through a treaty in 1812. Orchha was the premier Bundela state. The assimilation of Mughal styles in Bundelkhand’s architecture is reflected in the Jehangir Mahal built by Bir Singh in the early seventeenth century. The square-shaped palace is a sprawling construction. 220 feet on each side. The facade is richly decorated, with imposing arcades and large fluted domes, and sandstone walls adorned with designs and geometric patterns. The entrance portal, flanked by sculpted elephants and embroidered with cusped arches, leads to a spacious interior.

The Betwa can be seen through a delicate lattice on the screen windows of the Jehangir Mahal. Light plays in lively reflection on the shell-plastered walls of a three-storeyed set of pavilions profusely decorated with blossoms, tendrils and arabesques. The eaves and

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\(^{142}\) G.D. Khosala; The Last Mughal, Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd. G.T.Road, Delhi-32,1969. p.61.
piers are overlaid with lace work. The walls have depictions of Ras Lila- dramas or performances based on Lord Krishna, Radha and the gopis. Elephant brackets support a russer cornice, which runs along the periphery enclosing a courtyard with a fountain in the centre. Construction on the Raj Mahal was started by Rudra Pratap-Orchha's founder and completed by Bharati Chand. This sixteenth-century building housed the administrative secretariat and the diwankhana. Closely-woven wall paintings depict the Vishnu dasavatars, the apsaras and mythological scenes from Anantsayi Vishnu and Varsha rescuing the world. The drama, depictions of which range from the subdued and pastel to the gaudy and strident, unfolds in the mellowness of the interior apartments.

The wonderful Chaturbhuj temple was built over a fifteen-year period by an intensely god-d fearing Madhukar Shah in the late sixteenth century. The temple has no parallel. With its conical shikharas and lofty ceilings, the structure is audacious, appearing more like a medieval cathedral than a traditional temple. Clearly, Bundela temple architecture in Orchha had come a long way from the dark narrow sanctums and closed antaralas of Chandella Khajuraho.

The spacious interiors of the Orchha temples reflect Hindu renaissance. The Bhakti cult influenced worship rituals and, consequently, the architecture of the shrines. Congregational worship altered temple interiors, from the confines reserved for priest and

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143 Lakshman singh Gaur; *Orachha ka Itihas(Hindi)*, Ramraja Mandir, Orchha, (M.P.), 1993-94. p.186
144 *Ibid*, p.188.
145 Krishnadas; *Bundelkhand ka Itihas-Orchha Khand*; Santosh Bhawan, Near state bank, Chhatarpur (M.P.),1974, P.109.
the chosen few, to spacious halls for accommodating large numbers of devotees.

The Laxmi Narayan temple built by Bir Singh is empoirdered with Hindu mythology and battle scenes. Other buildings include the elegant Sheesh Mahal and Phool Bagh palace complex, which were refurbished later for European guests. Redstone columns supported a spacious audience hall. The palace was kept cool by a conduit-network connected to water towers. Terraces and pavilions overlook Mughal-style gardens with geometrical patterns interspersed. Dwarfed by the Chaturbhuj temple is the Ram Raja temple: squat, sprawling with water canals and white washed. The temple was built as a palace by Madhukar Shah for his wife Ganesh Kunwari. Rani's deity was Ram and his was Krishna. Legend has it that the Rani prayed to Ram at Ayodhya by the river Saryu. She was blessed by Ram, who promised to return with her to Orchha. The Rani took eight months to return to Orchha. But the temple for Ram was not complete and the deity had to be placed in the Rani's palace. After the Chaturbhuj temple was built, attempts were made to shift the idol of Ram to its new home. However, it refused to budge from its place and no one could move it.

Subsequently, an image of Vishnu was installed in the temple meant for Ram, and the Rani's palace became the Ram Raja temple. The Ram Navami festival is still celebrated with favour in Orchha.

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147 Interview with Sri Sanjeev Bajpeyi; A Government of M.P. approved tourist guide, in Orchha fort, dated 14-08-2011.
A symbol of sacrifice in Orchha is the samadhi of Jujhar Singh's younger brother Hardaul. Jujhar suspected his wife and Hardaul of having intimate relations. He ordered his wife to poison Hardaul. The Rani, devoted to her husband and grieved at the insinuation, did not offer Hardaul the poisoned meal as directed. The interests of his bhabhi were supreme for Hardaul: he ate the meal and died. This sacrifice is commemorated in Bundelkhand villages, where houses have a Hardaul-ka-chabutra, or platform where Hardaul is venerated as a minor deity.\(^{148}\)

The Orchha rulers patronised literature. Here lived the great poet Keshav Das (1555-1617), author of *Vigyan Gita*, dedicated to Madhukar Shah. His *Kavi Priya* prescribes the traits of poetry and his *'Ramchandrika'* is among the finest popular verses in Hind.\(^{149}\) Other works by Keshav are *Rasik Priya*, a book on poetry composition, and Ram *Alankarmanjari*, on prosody. Keshav was influential enough to prevail upon Birbal, one of Akbar's nine jewels', to obtain the exoneration of a fine imposed by the emperor on a son of Madhukar Shah for a misdemeanor. Bir Singh's mistress, Praveen Rai, was an accomplished poet too.

Today, the Bundela spirit lives on in the magnificence of the fortress-palace complex at Orchha. The town itself appears sleepy and shrunken today, encircled by old city walls like an oversized garment. Turets, domes and spires are everywhere. And in the pearly shadows, it is difficult to tell where reality ends and illusion begins.


\(^{149}\) Acharya Ramchandra Shukla; *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas*, Nagri Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1934, p.89.
Dhamoni fort

The Ain-i-Akbari refers to Dhamoni as an administrative unit in Raisen, part of the Malwa province. Even before the Mughals, Dhamoni was an important trading mart of the Malwa kingdom and a market for elephants captured from the jungles nearby.\footnote{Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi, 2006. p. 98.}

Thick vegetation surrounds Dhamoni, the last refuge of Orchha's Jujhar Singh who had rebelled against Shahjehan. This hostility was traced to when Shahjehan, still Prince Khurram, challenged the authority of his father, Jehangir. To discipline Khurram, the emperor turned to his confidante: Bir Singh, the then Orchha chief.\footnote{Lakshman Singh Gaur; \textit{Orachha ka Itihas (Hindi)}, Ramraja Mandir, Orchha, (M.P.), 1993-94. p.179} The Bundela king responded by deputing a cavalry contingent under his son Jujhar Singh, a plucky horseman, but with a penchant for needless ruffling and hardly possessing the suavity required for such a delicate mission.

The equation between Orchha and the Mughals became insurmountably frosty when Jujhar Singh succeeded Bir Singh and Khurram took over as Shahjehan. The bitterness escalated when Jujhar Singh plundered the Gond fort of Chauragarh (1634) and killed its chief Prem Narayan. Bundela-Gond rivalry was long standing, but this particular act of aggression deliberately ignored Shahjehan's express wishes that the Gonds be left alone. The Mughals resolved to punish Orchha. Jujhar Singh took refuge in Dhamoni.\footnote{Gorelal Tiwari; \textit{Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas} (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. P.147.} He fled as the Mughals drew near, leaving behind a
contingent at the fort with a commander, Ratnai. The Bundelas razed the houses and cleared the thickets around the fort to deny the enemy cover. Deep ditches were dug on the west of the fort, while natural precipices protected the southern and northeastern flanks. The defenders fought well, but stray shells ignited the gun power stored in the towers. In the ensuing panic, the besiegers carried the day by sheer numbers. The imperial forces recovered substantial treasure thrown into wells by the fleeing Bundelas. It was a young Aurangzeb who led the Mughal campaign. The hostile terrain was brimming with Bundela irregulars, as the future emperor set out to trap Jujhar Singh who had taken flight with his family and zenana, southwards. There was a heavy Gond presence in this area and the Mughals did not have to exert themselves much. The Gonds caught up with the fleeing Bundelas. The outnumbered Bundelas killed many of their women and disfigured the others to remove the possibility of them being made members of a Mughal harem.\textsuperscript{153} The fugitives then turned around to fight. Jujhar Singh and his son were brutally slain and their heads were strung up at the gates of Sihora town.

Aurangzeb was happy to be able to rest awhile in Dhamoni fort. Originally, a modest fort- a garhi- it was built in the fifteenth century by a Gond chieftain, Surat Shah, of the Garhmandla dynasty.\textsuperscript{154} A resurgent Bir Singh of Orchha took the fort from the Gonds and decided to strengthen it. Astrologers were consulted and the fort, constructed in a roughly triangular shape, was rebuilt, utilising where possible, the earlier foundation material.

\textsuperscript{153} Lakshman singh Gaur; \textit{Orachha ka Itihas (Hindi)}, Ramraja Mandir,Orchha, (M.P.), 1993-94. p.188.
\textsuperscript{154} Kamlesh Thapak; \textit{Bundelkhan ka Itihas}, Prachya Vidya Shodha Sansthan, Sitapur, Chitrakoot, (M.P.) 2006, p.194.
The main gateway, with its barbican, leads into a courtyard. This is followed by another entrance into the interior of the fort. Occupying an area of about fifty acres, the fort included residences and facilities for dispensing the affairs of state, befitting the status of an administrative hub. Remnants of the Rani Mahal and kutcherry can still be seen. Bir Singh's son, Narhardas, held court in the fort and administered revenue collection from here.\textsuperscript{155}

After Aurangzeb took Dhamoni, a regular kiledar, Sardar Khan, was appointed.

However, de facto control of the hinterland outside the immediate pale of the fort remained with the Bundelas; a fact with which the Mughals came to acquiesce. Dhamoni came under strain with the ascent of Panna under Champat Rai and his formidable son Chhatrasal.

Dhamoni lay on the road to the trading city of Sironj, sixty-five miles west—a target for the Panna Bundelas. Khaliq, a Mughal kiledar of Dhamoni, posted faujdars on the trunk routes and horse-pickets to counter pillaging by Chhatrasal and his son Hirde Shah. Aurangzeb had hoped to make Dhamoni the launch pad for his Deccan campaign, but could not because of his inability to rein in the freebooters that spawned in the area.\textsuperscript{156}

Chhatrasal's campaign in and around Dhamoni lasted three decades till the end of the seventeenth century. Chhatrasal defeated the kiledar Khaliq, and successors, Rahullah Khan and Sadr-ud-din,

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in pitched battles. In 1680, Chhatrasal took Sadr-ud-din prisoner. He was released on payment of a huge ransom. Chhatrasal's war of attrition led to a rapid turnover of kiledars in Dhamoni fort. Chhatrasal killed Ikhlas Khan, a kiledar, in battle. In another engagement, the Bundela forces wounded a Mughal general Bahlol Khan, who succumbed in Dhamoni fort. The Mughals were drained out and Chhatrasal was able to occupy the fort in 1700. Aurangzeb accepted the situation and awarded Chhatrasal the title of 'Raja'.

His son Hirde Shah succeeded in 1731. The local land-owning Lodhs were appointed as keepers of the fort; they doubled up as revenue officials in the area. In 1799, the fort was ceded to the Maratha Bhonsles of Nagpur.

The British were not far behind, Major General Marshall's forces besieged the fort in 1818-part of a mopping-up exercise after the conclusion of the Anglo-Maratha wars. The Bhonsles put up stiff resistance and the British had to mount an assault on Dhamoni fort. The attempt was successful. A British priority in these parts was the anti-Thugee campaign, which brought Captain Sleeman to Dhamoni in the 1830s. 'The only thing remarkable here is the magnificent fortress, which is built upon a small projection of the Vindhya range, looking down on each side into two enormously deep glens... The rays of the sun seldom penetrate to the bottom of these glens, and things are, in consequence, grown there that could not be grown in parts more exposed... Bir Singh laid the foundation in the same happy hour which had been pointed out to him by his astrologers... The fortress is now entirely deserted, and the town, which the

157 Bhagwandas Gupta; *Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela*, (Hindi), Madhya Pradesh Hindi Grantha Academy, Ravindrnath Thakur Marga, Bhopal, 1992.p.78.
garrison supported, is occupied by only a small police-guard, stationed here to see that robbers do not take up their abode among the ruins.'

Sleeman strengthened the token force already in the fort. Its ramparts, fifty feet high, and walls, fifteen feet thick, were clearly a vantage point for strengthening operations to eliminate banditry—a challenge in Bundelkhand. Some thirty years later, when the surveyor-traveller Louis Rousselet toured the area, the pall of banditry hung heavy, the Frenchman observed (1983, p 335): 'Bundelkhand still continues to be the classic land of brigandism; and in its sombre forests was born the terrible religion of the Thugs'.

Dhamoni, in Mughal times, was the administrative centre of many hundreds of villages. It became a regional centre of learning, also maintaining close links with Akbar's religious experiments and orientation towards spirituality. Sheikh Faizi, poet and elder brother of Akbar's prime minister, Abdul Fazl, was born here. The two brothers and their father, Sheikh Mubarak, an innovative religious teacher, prevailed upon Akbar to recite the khutba from the pulpit at Fatehpur Sikri—a step that provoked debate about the emperor's pretensions to spiritual authority.

Sheikh Faizi was Akbar's envoy to Khandesh and Ahmadnagar. His mentor, Baljati Shah, lived in Dhamoni; he was the inspiration behind the effusive khutba that Faizi had composed in verse. Baljati Shah's final resting place is near Dhamoni fort. For its

upkeep, Aurangzeb declared two villages revenue-free. An Urs is held here annually, the only time when a lost Dhamoni reverberates with human activity.

Talbehat fort

The fort of Talbehat is on an elevation commanding a lake. Tal means 'lake' and bihat, 'village' in the language of the Gonds, earlier chieftains of this tract. The Gonds were hardy agriculturists: their water-embankments are still in use.

In the eighth century, power shifted from the Gonds to the Pratihara Rajputs and then during the ninth century, to the Chandellas. Talbehat become a prominent settlement, a fact testified by the three Chandella temples in the fort's vicinity, one dedicated to Mahadeva and two to Vishnu. With the decline of the Chandellas, the Gonds reinstated their hold in the area.

Later, Talbehat became a Bundela stronghold. Jehangir's ascent in Delhi marked the replacement of Ram Shah at Orchha by his brother and the emperor's favourite, Bir Singh. Ram Shah was assigned a prosperous jagir (1608-12), where he laid the foundation of Talbehat fort.

The site of the fort was Narsinghpuri, referred to as such because of the temple of Narsingh, which came to be included within the fort precincts. Ram Shah's grandson Bharat Shah (1612-30) completed the fort in 1618. He helped the Mughals crush a revolt

by Godarai, the Kiledar of Chanderi fort. In turn, the emperor attached Chanderi to Bharat Shah's possessions.

Devi Singh (1630-63), son of Bharat Shah, was resolute in strengthening ties with the Mughals and was able to acquire substantial revenue-against the Mughals. Shahjehan needed an ally to restore his writ in Bundelkhand. With Jujhar Singh on the run and the Mughals in pursuit, Devi yielding lands. His interests were helped by the rebellion of Orchha's Jujhar singh Singh was given the additional responsibility (1634-36) of administering Orchha.\(^\text{163}\)

Simultaneously, Devi Singh refurbished Talbehat fort. He strengthened the roughly hewn stone wall with earthwork and scarps. The main fortifications, from north to south, quite intact till today, comprise a mile-long thick wall on a low hill overlooking the town. Some frescoes survive close to the Narsingh temple.

The principal defence on the north was provided by a large lake of about 500 acres, which continues to irrigate the cultivation nearby. According to legend, a severe drought had occurred in the area, Brahmins fasted and did penance, followed by a human sacrifice. This culminated in water sprouting from the earth, resulting in this lake.\(^\text{164}\) Alongside, towards the south of the fort, is a Chandella embankment of large stone blocks and a dense wooded area.

Talbehat was a quiet place. An incident is recalled even today, indicative of Mor Prahlad's debauched chiefdom (1802-42), a period tied up in Bundela-Maratha political jostling. Some young women,

\(^{163}\) Dube Dinanath; *Bharat Ke Durg* (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993, p.148.

\(^{164}\) Sharma Rita; *The forts of Bundelkhand*, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006, p.80.
collecting foliage for an akhshaya tritiya ritual, took their lives after being kidnapped and ravished by the king's men in Talbehat fort. This is still remembered as a shattering violation of the spirit behind a long-standing local custom, obliging men to venerate women and demonstrate it by touching their feet, regardless of caste or class. Since the shocking incident, the celebrations accompanying the ritual have never been held in Talbehat.165

The power vacuum, fuelled by the Mughal collapse, prompted Gwalior's Scindia to take an all-out offensive against the dissolute Mor Prahlad, who held Talbehat fort by virtue of his being the Raja of Chanderi-Banpur. Scindia's French commander, Colonel Jean-Baptiste, was supported by forty cannons. The vulnerable points in the defence were betrayed, enabling Baptiste to force an entry (1811). The defenders escaped by the lake, but the Scindia lost hundreds of men. Besides Talbehat, the Gwalior forces also occupied large areas in Chanderi and Banpur.166

Talbehat fort, after its occupation by Scindia's forces, was besieged by Mor Prahlad's son, Mardan Singh. Baptiste was rushed by Scindia for relief to the defenders. Negotiations followed, prodded by the British-keen on good relations with the Bundelas to counter the Marathas. Some territory under Scindia's occupation, including Banpur, was restored to Mor Prahlad. In return, Mardan Singh lifted the siege on Talbehat.167

165 A.k.Pandey ; 'Bundelkhand ki Lok Paramprayen' (Hindi),Government Museum Jhansi, Kailash Madvaiya; 'Banpur' (Bundelkhand ka Vismrit Vaibhav),Hindi, 75, Chitragupta Nagar, Kotra,Bhopal(M.P.),1963.p.119.
166 Vasudev Goswami ;'Vidrohi Banpur (Hindi),Sahyogi Prakashan Mandir Ltd. Datiya,1954.p.41.
In 1857, Talbehat became a rallying point for the rebel cause, with the Raja of Banpur, Mardan Singh (1842-58), proclaiming his support for the Rani of Jhansi. The revolutionaries overpowered the small garrison in the fort. The Raja took up residence here and was adequately supplied with provisions and men from Banpur. He put up a stubborn resistance against the British. According to a contemporary British Intelligence Report, 'The Bazaar of Lullutapore has been plundered. The Chief of Baunpore is reported to have secured all the corn within his Ellaka and to have removed it to Tall Baihut and Chundeyree...The Chief collected all his Thakoors and told them that he was their well-wisher. If they wished to deliver him to the British authorities he was ready to meet their wishes. All the Thakoors took oaths to side with him and expressed their readiness to fight to the last.'

The fort fell to Hugh Rose in March 1858 and was plundered by the Madras Regiment and the Orchha troops. Since then, the fort has been in disuse, its crenellations curling silently over the flat-roofed brown and white houses of sleepy Talbehat town.

**Deogarh fort**

The Betwa washes past Deogarh, treasure house of sculptures secured within craggy rock formations. Set on a tableland at the end of a range of low hills, the history of the fort encompasses epochs from the Guptas to the Bundelas. The flow of its tale is as smooth as the dancing lines in the carved doorway of Deogarh's temple of the

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Gupta period, a fantasy in stone, dating back fifteen centuries.\textsuperscript{170} It is as calm as nature's blue and green, so bountiful in this garh of the devtas. The Betwa and the sheer rock face alongside provide a natural defence to the fort. Located on the right bank of the river, the fortifications extend over a vast area, 300 feet above the plains, with overhanging cliffs forming a steep sandstone ridge. A thriving civic community, adroit in trading and skilled in the arts, lived here. Deogarh provided protection and plenty of opportunities to prosper and engage in cultural and religious pursuits.\textsuperscript{171}

The Deogarh fort was built by the Kannauj Pratihars in the ninth century to ward off the Rashtrakuta challenge from the Deccan. Nagabhata (800-825), king of Kajjauj, had suffered reverses in battle near Jhansi at the hands of the Rashtrakuta, Govind III (808-814). The need was felt to secure the Betwa as a line of defence. Deogarh provided an ideal site.\textsuperscript{172} An inscription dated Samvat 919 (AD 862) in the fort indicates the importance accorded to Deogarh by the great Pratihara king, Bhojdeva of Kannauj (836-885).\textsuperscript{173}

Another inscription of Samvat 1154 (AD 1097) on the southwestern edge of the hill at Raj Ghati refers to the fort-complex as Kirtigiri, named after the Chandella king Kirtivarman (1060-1100).\textsuperscript{174} The Chandella captured the fort from the Kalachuris of

\begin{itemize}
  \item D.N.Jha & K.M.Srimali; \textit{Prachin Bharat ka Itihas}; Directrate of Hindi Medium Execution, Delhi university Delhi, 1981.p.227.
  \item Krishna Das Pt.; \textit{Bundelkhand Ka Itihas}; Santosh Bhawan, near state bank Chhatarpur (M.P.), 1974. p.139.
  \item Ashant Tripathi ; \textit{Bundelkhand ka Itihas} (Hindi), Sharda sahitya kutir, 86 Purani Najhai, Jhansi, 1991.,p.124.
  \item \textit{Devgarh Inscriptio (AD 862)}; accorded to the Deogarh by the great Pratihar king, Bhojdeva of Kannauj (836-885).
  \item \textit{Rajghati (Kirtigiri) Inscriptio (AD1097)}; accorded to the Chandella king Kirtivarman (1060-1100).
\end{itemize}
Chedi. Chandella credence and self-assurance was in evidence. The dynasty was peaking in various endeavours reflected in Krishna Mishra's Sanskrit allegorical drama 'Prabodha Chandrodaya'. Often enacted before Kirtivarman, it was a work based on Vedanta philosophy, with striking representations of knowledge and devotion. \(^{175}\)

A Chandella minister, Vatsaraj, strengthened the fort, conscious of the earlier expeditions of Mahmud of Ghazni to Bundelkhand. Deogarh also became the base for Chandella activities against Dhar's Paramaras. Centuries later, the Bundelas carried out major repairs to the fort. Deogarh was now part of the Chanderi freedom assigned by Jehangir to Ram Shah after his younger brother Bir Singh was given Orchha. \(^{176}\) The Bundelas held Deogarh till the Scindia took it in 1811 during his Chanderi campaign handled by Colonel Jean-Baptiste. The Frenchman was rewarded with a jagir at Jariya near Deogarh, where his descendants still live.

The innermost citadel of Deogarh's fortifications is approached through two gates. With the precincts, there are some thirty temples, with images inset haphazardly on the walls of courtyards or lined along pathways. Sculptural pieces lie scattered. The silence is absolute as the visitor ploughs through the into the ghati below on the Betwa. There was a time when, across the river, tigers roamed free.


The remains of a shrine are seen in the southwest corner of the fort. Built on a high plinth, it was dedicated to Varaha, the third incarnation of Vishnu. Amidst the ruins is a sixth century life-size image of Nrivaraha man and boar combined gleaming in a trickle of moonlight. The absence of a superstructure makes it difficult to determine the temple's design, but it appears to have been redone a couple of times. A number of panels dating back to the eighth century have been unearthed from this site.

Rock-cut caves are located at the river-gate in the south of the fort area. Here, the gods are in a state of spiritual equilibrium. Many of the rock formations appear strange-scoured as they are into forms resembling temple spires, runaway bulls and other shapes, a product both of natural weathering and manual carving. This is where the Betwa takes a sharp turn to the east. Along a cliff face, in the Nahar Ghati, are several niches and a bas-relief of the Saptmatrika, with a standing figure of Surya holding lotus flowers. Mahishasure-mardini occupies a spot in the Siddh-ki-gufa, depicting the goddess Durga killing a buffalo-headed asura, or demon.

The sixth century Dasavatara temple is dedicated to Vishnu. The idol in the Garbhagriha is missing, but the panel carvings are there, which master craftsmen enlivened with mythological and metaphysical tales. The friezes depict scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Krishna's life and Vishnu's avatars. Conspicuous is the platform on which the temple stands originally adorned by continuous rows of sculptured panels on all four sides. Today, only

177 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road,Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.89.
178 Ibid, p.90.
179 D.N.Jha & K.M.Srimali; Prachin Bharat ka Itihas; Directrate of Hindi Medium
a couple of reliefs can be seen embedded, with many others kept in storage. It is remarkable for a place of worship dating back to the Guptas to have survived so long in Bundelkhand.

It was during the Gupta period that the general form of the Hindu temple was established. Until then, temples were either rock-cut or flat-roofed structures. By the fifth century, there emerged the Hindu temple as an architectural reconstruction of the home of the Gods. The concept of stupa mounds that clung to the earth also transformed into taller structures reaching skywards. The period marked a new phase in the styles of temple architecture the nagara and the dravida, which developed into the shikharas of the north and the vimanas of the south. The Dasavatara temple is, however, not the most representative of the nagara temples, with their cruciform plans and curvilinear shikharas. There has, however, been a clear effort at Deogarh to obtain a semblance of height by moving away from the conventional flat roof. Excavations reveal the existence of small square shrines at each corner, which, with the central russet-hued structure, constituted the earliest examples of the panchayatana type of temple architecture.\textsuperscript{180}

The classic beauty of the Desolater temple is enhanced by sculptured niches on three sides, each in the form of a sunken panel between pilasters, and on the fourth by an exquisitely carved doorway with mithunas (dancing figures), pramathas (dwarfish male figures) and patravallari (a variety of creepers).

A ananta (cosmic serpent) with a canopy of seven hoods. The deity, uniquely, lalatabimba (projecting image) in the centre of the upper lintel shows Vishnu on is flanked by two of its known incarnations Nrisimha (man-lion) and Vamana (dwarf), a feature unknown in Indian iconography. Apsaras hold aloft the pillars. The Gajendra-moksha panel on the north, novel in proportions, depicts Vishnu with four arms, freeing Gaja from the grip of the serpent Naga. The emancipator, accompanied by gandharvas, descends from heaven on the wings of Garuda. For all its massiveness, the movement appears weightless. Love and gratitude stream from Gaja as he makes a floral offering to the Omnipotent.

The Anantsayi Vishnu panel on the south face of the Dasavatara temple shows the Lord of the Universe in slumber on the coils of the seven-hooded Shesha-naga. Lakshmi sits at his feet. Soaring above are Kartikeya, Indra, Mahadeva and Parvati, airborne on their vahanas. Below are other richly embellished figures; earlier thought to represent the five Pandavas and Drupadi. These figures are now believed to be Madhu, Kaitabha and the four Ayudha-purushas. \textsuperscript{181}

The Nar Narayana panel is on the east wall of the dasavatara temple. Flying vidyadharas carry a canopy of foliage above Narayana. This symbolises the fusion of the divine and the human: the lion and the deer are in amity; strength from asceticism overcomes all failings of the flesh. Peace is tangible in a composition of overwhelming simplicity and power. \textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{181} Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006, p.92.
\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Ibid}, p.92.
Deogarh was a Jain centre of significance from the post-Gupta period up to the seventeenth century. There are, thus, hundreds of Jina images in Deogarh. Panels depict Jain mythology, including the penance of Bahubali, the birth of the tirthankaras, acharyas and upadhyayas in meditation and ambikas in ecstatic poses. Jain temple architecture includes the manastambha (votive pillar), pratimasarvo-bhadrika (Jina image visible from all sides) and sahastrakuta (pillar carved with a thousand Jina figures).

The Jain temples, enclosed within an inner surrounding wall, are in the eastern part of the fort. Spangling the sky is the Shantinath temple. Its graceful arcade comprises six rows of six pillars each, decked with a profusion of arabesques and geometrical patterns. This multi-pillared hall has a raised platform in the centre. Jain figures embellish the approach to the sanctum. Soft light filtering through an opening blurs the details of an ebony statue of Shantinath the sixteenth tirthankara- with the antarala in front and surrounded by a pradakshinapath. The Shantinath temple was in existence when Bhojdeva came to power in Kannauj during the ninth century.183

The workmen who created Deogarh still live. They fashioned the sublime to give poise and proportion to the gods, as well as painstakingly crafting the routine- door- lintels, decorated pillars and accessories. The treasures must not get lost. Deogarh has suffered, and not only because of wind and rain. The sharpness of many an image has become blurred.184 Missing reliefs testify to rampant vandalism. Amateurish repairs have taken a toll. Skills and surgery,

183 Jain Shrines in U.p.; Soul Searching sojourns, Department of Tourism Goverment of Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow,1999-2000).p.16.
184 Sharma Rita ; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.93.
including bracing and stone transplants, are needed. The chronicle must survive in Deogarh.

**Chanderi Fort**

In 1528, Chanderi fort was a rallying point for the Rajputs against Babar, founder of the Mughal dynasty in India. Only a year earlier, Babar had decimated the Rajput confederacy led by Maharana Sanga of Mewar- at Khanwah, near Agra. Now, under the command of Medini Rai, the Raja of Chanderi, the situation was waiting to erupt.

Medini Rai’s contribution at Khanwah had included 12,000 handpicked horsemen, which matched his status as king-maker of Malwa. But Medini's strength was severely depleted. The Raja was contemplative as he waited for Babar, surveying the silhouette of turrets and towers, minarets and domes, and picturesque lakes stretching away from the fort over a wide countryside towards the surrounding tree-covered hillsides. \(^{185}\) The inns of Chanderi, a flourishing city, were humming with spies and Babar was aware of Medini Rai's worries. Keen to secure the route to the south, Babar proposed a settlement, which the Rajput chief rejected. As Babar approached, the bustling bazaars of Chanderi closed down and fell silent. Workmen weaving the fine muslin and gold thread Chanderi sarees fled. The siege lasted a month, till the Mughals located a vulnerable point in the defences to affect a breach. There were waves of warriors and an escalade. After beating back the Mughal army several times, the defenders donned saffron for the last

\(^{185}\) Dube Dinanath; *Bharat Ke Durg* (Hindi),Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi,1993..p.133.
encounter. They charged out with marked swords. With the men in close combat, the Rajput women, accompanied by children, committed jauhar. Babar recorded in his autobiography, the 'Baburnama,'...the fort-walls, being entirely of stone, were extremely strong-the pagans...put many men to flight; they made them fly over the ramparts; some they cut down and killed... they put all their ladies and beauties to death, then, looking themselves to die, came naked out to fight... A pillar of pagan heads was ordered set up..."186

Situated on a sandstone hill, the Chanderi fort is 250 feet above the plains and the Kirat Sagar, constituted an important source of water. The citadel's ramparts and towers convey the once great strength of the citadel. First fortified in the tenth century by the Chandellas, the stronghold extends for more than a mile north to south. The depth is three-fourths of a mile. There are a number of gateways. The entrance to the fort is through the Khuni Darwaza, or Bloody Gate, from where condemned prisoners were hurled to their deaths.187

According to the notes of Captain J. Fenwick, a British army engineer, 150 years ago: 'The fort of Chandairee stands on an isolated hill in the midst of a hilly and jungly country, the natural defences of which are very great. These have been strengthened by a loopholed wall of about 10 feet in height, along which a number of tower bastions are placed at intervals. From a range of hills...a spur of land approaches to within 300 yards of one of the strongest of these towers and is connected with it by a natural causeway of solid

187 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi),Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi,1993.p.135.
rock through a ditch 30 feet in breadth and 12 in depth. The Tower Bastions, five in number, are very strongly built, fenced with cut stone and averaging 30 feet in diameter... the south-east corner defending the causeway has two towers one square the other circular with a short curtain between... is of great height and thickness.'

Chanderi had been the seat of a powerful Hindu kingdom in the thirteenth century, extending over Bundelkhand and Malwa. The Delhi Sultan, Nasir-ud-din (1246-66), fielded a powerful army in 1251 under Balban to subdue Chanderi. The Chanderi Raja, Chahad Dev-a descendant of Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi- whose dominious included Narwar, put 2,00,000 footmen and a cavalry of 5,000 in combat. But Balban prevailed, and Chanderi along with Narwar, became part of the Sultanate.

The Delhi Sultanate's hold over Malwa and Chanderi weakened during the declining days of the Slave dynasty (1206-90). The Khilji dynasty (1290-1320) revived Delhi's hold in 1305: the Sultan, Ala-ud-din (1296-1316), despatched a strong army under Multan's Governor, Ain-ul-Mulk- later, Malwa's subehdar against Haranand, chief of Malwa and Chanderi, who fielded 1,00,000 men and 40,000 horses. The Sultanate's authority was restored.

Ala-ud-din's general Malik Kafur devastated the area around Chanderi (1309) en route to his Warangal campaign. He passed through Erich. Local residents recount Malik Kafur's four-day halt at Erich. Two centuries later, on his way to Chanderi, Babar also broke

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189 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi),Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993.p.134.
his journey at Erich for a day.\textsuperscript{190} Malwa's jurisdiction included Chanderi. Its fort became a recruitment centre for the Sultan's Deccan troops. The Moroccan traveller Ibn Batutah visited Chanderi in 1335 during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Tughlak (1325-51). In view of its importance, Chanderi was held by the Sultan's brother-in-law, Saif-ul-Mulk.

The anarchy following Timur's invasion led to Malwa's governor Delawar Khan declaring his independence in 1401. He was a descendant of Muhammad Ghori, who had defeated the Delhi Chauhans to set up the Delhi Sultanate. Malwa's Ghoris folded up in 1436 after a Khilji minister, Mahmud, poisoned the king. The Khiljis ruled Malwa till 1531 when the kingdom was annexed by Gujarat.

Mahmud Khilji (1436-69) had to overcome Chanderi's Rajputs to make Malwa a powerful kingdom. Just a year before Mahmud's ascent, Chanderi had been seized by Maharana Kumbha of Mewar. The Rajputs had taken Kumbha's help in their revolt against Chanderi's governor. In 1438, Mahmud Khilji laid siege to Chanderi. The Mewar-backed garrison in the fort resisted for eight months. Mahmud had to direct the final assault himself to capture the fort. The Malwa ruler found Chanderi convenient for mobilising operations against the Jaunpur Sharqis on the northeastern border.

Mahmud left a mark at Chanderi with his architecture in the mid-fifteenth century. The Kushak Mahal, forty yards on each side, had seven storeys.\textsuperscript{191} Four survived its vibrant distinctiveness came

\textsuperscript{190} Anand Mishra; \textit{Chander ka Jauhar} (Hindi), Sahyogi Prakashan ltd. Datia, 1989,p.71.
\textsuperscript{191} Sharma Rita ; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.107.
from a set of lofty, arched passageways and quadrants and impressive interiors with their pierced screen-work, brackets and cornices. Balconied windows generously allowed natural lighting of the palace halls. The Badal Mahal Darwaza- erected by Muhmud at the base of the hill was a commemorative gateway, an outlandish combination of arches and buttresses.

Chanderi's architecture, indicative of Malwa's all-embracing tradition, was exposed to Gujarat's influence, which can be seen in its arches, vaults and high quality masonry. Artisans were available from Ahmedabad a rich city with craftsmen guilds open to opportunities for trading their skills. During the same period, the Jama Masjid of Chanderi came up, comprising an impressive frontage with bays and hold arches. The presence of Hindu masons is evident from the undulating brackets holding the eaves, a Hindu temple feature grafted onto a mosque. These buildings were precursors to the architecture that evolved in Bundelkhand, blending Islamic and Hindu structural characteristics.  

Mahmud's son and successor was the harem-centric Ghiyas-ud-din (1469-1500), controlld by Chanderi's governor, Sher Khan. When Delhi's Sultan Bahlol Lodi ventured close to Chanderi, he was met head-on and sent packing by Sher Khan. The governor is also credited for the Kati Ghati an engineering innovation of considerable proportions built in a cliff, southwest of the fort. This hillside cutting was used centuries later by Colonel Jean-Baptiste to transport guns for Daulat Rao Scindia's Chanderi operations and by

192 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993, p.134.
Hugh Rose in the later stages of the 1857-58 campaign to regain the fort.

Ghiyas-ud-din Khilji was poisoned by a son, Nasir-ud-din. The resulting political uncertainty stoked Sher Khan's ambitions. He revolted, but was killed. The new king, Nasir-ud-din (1500-10), rode to Sher Khan's still fresh grave, exhumed his body, and perched it prominently on the walls of Chanderi fort. Nasir-ud-din was also poisoned like his father. Medini Rai rose to power on account of his assistance to the Malwa king Mahmud Khilji II (1510-31), who was seeking to consolidate his kingship. Mahmud, driven out of his capital Mandu by adversary nobles, sought refuge in Chanderi fort. He was refused entry by Bihajat Khan, Chanderi's governor. The king appealed to Medini Rai, then chief of a small district. Medini by ruse and force, got the gates of Chanderi fort opened. With reinforcements from Chanderi, Mahmud marched on Mandu and established himself. Medini Rai was made a minister and governor of Chanderi.193

Not before long, Mahmud began to feel harried by the Rajputs. He tried to dismiss and even assassinate Medini, but failed. In desperation, Mahmud sought help from Gujarat. A counter move came from Maharana Sanga of Mewar, a willing ally of Chanderi against Mahmud. In the ensuing Medini- Mahmud battle (1520), 20,000 were killed, including Medini Rai's nineteen-year-old son. The victorious Rajputs took Mahmud prisoner, but released him later.

193 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rups & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganjt, New Delhi, 2006, p.108.
Medini Rai was described by Babar as ‘a pagan of great consequence’.\textsuperscript{194} The Rajput was killed defending Chanderi (1528) against the Mughals. Events took a turn: in 1530 Babar died suddenly; a year later, a large part of Malwa was annexed by Gujarat and Chanderi was plundered. The Mughals were driven into exile by Sher Shah Sur, who became Delhi’s Sultan (1540-45). Puran Mal of Raisen seized Chanderi fort amidst great slaughter. Sher Shah struck back ferociously, forcing Puran Mal’s garrison at Chanderi to surrender. Puran Mal was captured and killed, three of his nephews castrated and a daughter made a dancing girl.\textsuperscript{195}

Chanderi remained part of the Malwa province when the Muchals returned from their exile (1540-55) in Persia. Chanderi was a prosperous commercial centre in Akbar’s time, with a population of 3,00,000, and a large number of markets and caravan inns. Jehangir assigned Chanderi to the Talbehat chief, Bharat Shah, a Bundela from the house of Orchha a reward for having subdued a rebellion by the kiledar of Chanderi fort.\textsuperscript{196}

Much of Maratha expansion in Bundelkhand during the eighteenth century was at Bundela expense. Chanderi’s vulnerability was exposed when Malhar Rao Holkar of Indore invaded the area in 1735. Chanderi again appeared rudderless when its ruler Ramchandra (1775-1802), remorseful on having murdered a rival uncle, retired to Ayodhya for penance, leaving his state to an ineffective regent. The Scindia dispatched Colonel Jean-Baptiste

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item[196] Lakshman singh Gaur; \textit{‘Orachha ka Itihas’}, Ramraja Mandir,Orchha,(M.P.) 1993-94, p.146.
\end{thebibliography}

to Chanderi to pre-empt Sagar's Marathas from exploiting the power vacuum.

The Scindia occupied the forts at Chanderi, Talbehat and Banpur. Some thirty villages were left for the sustenance of the Chanderi ruler, Mor Prahlad. The power imbalance moved the British to intercede. Banpur was returned to Mor Prahlad, which became his headquarters. Mor Prahlad's successor Mardan Singh sought Chanderi. An astute Scindia transferred the high revenue-yielding lands, Chanderi and its fort, to the British.

Mardan Singh was disappointed, and in 1857 he became an ally of the Rani of Jhansi. The revolutionaries got possession of the fort when its garrison switched sides. The British recapture of Chanderi fort in 1858 is described in Captain Fenwick's account from the battlefront, '...March 5- The Brigade...took the strong line of masonry defences which extends across the valley by a coup de main, the enemy retreating in haste to the Fort... At night the Artillery brought up 28 inchs mortars... Working parties were employed in throwing up a small breastwork in front of one of these mortars...Party...cutting road of approach through the jungle...Battery for two 8 inch mortars and one 8 inch howitzer with magazine commenced at sunset...Great difficulty experienced in coiling a place for the platform on account of the rocky nature of the ground...Subdued the enemy's fire...March 17-The assault took place at 5 a.m. The enemy were surprised and the columns entering at the

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197 Kailash Madvaiya; 'Banpur' (Bundelkhand ka Vismrit Vaibhav), Hindi, 75, Chitragupta Nagar, Kotra, Bhopal (M.P.), 1963. p.149.
separate points... they retried precipitately from the Fort throwing themselves over the walls..."198

Chanderi fort appears heedless of its eventful past. Maharana Sanga of Mewar, Sultan Mahmud Khilji of Malwa and the founder of the Mughal empire in India, Babar all walked its ramparts. The Moroccan traveller, Ibn Batutah, knew well the Bazaars of Chanderi. History nestles quietly in the crumbling turrets, overpowered by the incense in the quaint shops at the base of the citadel. The lustre of the Chanderi sarees remains undiminished.

**Jhansi Fort**

Jhansi fort rises above the rock-strewn plains, a monument to the indomitable spirit of Rani Lakshmi Bai. Dead leaves rustle on the mottled stone, grey or glowing according to the time of the day. The wind sighs softly. The silent graves on the fort's deserted terraces yield themselves to the elements, oblivious to the bustle of the town below.

The Raja of Jhansi was Gangadhar Rao. His wife had died and he was childless. In 1842, the Raja married with Manikarnika the daughter of Moropant Tambe, a retainer of Chimaji Appa, the exiled Peshwa Baji Rao II's brother. The girl was given a new name, Lakshmi Bai. Her father, also a widower, was persuaded to settle down in Jhansi. The Raja Gangadhar Rao got Moropant Married again to a woman called Chimbanai.

There is a famous tale that in Jhansi on the festival of Holi in 1851, that day Rani Lakshibai’s new born son was poisoned to death by Ali Bahadur Shah, Rani Lakshmibai husband’s illegitimate progeny from danseuse Gajra bai.199

When Lakshmi Bai's newborn son died, the need arose to identify a successor to Gangadhar Rao. The British, as the paramount power, were ratifying successions and pertinent family adoptions under Governor General Lord Dalhousie's (1848-56) Doctrine of Lapse essentially, an instrument of annexation. Gangadhar Rao, before his death in 1853, adopted a son named Damodar Rao, to circumvent the British from taking over Jhansi for want of a successor. But, it was to no avail. Dalhousies's view was that the Jhansi chief had not been a ruler; he was only the Peshwa's subehdar, or administrative head of a province. With the Peshwa expired, his possessions in Bundelkhand, including Jhansi, would have to lapse into British India. Soon, the tumult of 1857 would bring the fort at Jhansi to the centre stage.200 In fact, Jhansi's story begins much earlier. In the seventeenth century, it was part of the Orchha kingdom. In 1602, Birsingh, a younger brother of the Orchha ruler, waylaid and murdered Akbar's friend and chief counsellor, Abul Fazl.201 The deed was perpetrated at the behest of Salim, son of the emperor. The headstrong prince, estranged from his father, had hated Abul Fazl 'The King's Jonathan'. When salim succeeded as Emperor Jehangir (1605-27), he conferred Orchha on Bir Singh. The hillock across the Betwa appeared to Bir Singh as a Jhainsi, a reflections,
and he ordered a fort to be built there. Stone-cutters and masons sweated in to raise this fort. The spot was occupied much earlier, as borne out by the Chandella pillars and stone slabs embedded in the fort.\textsuperscript{202} The outer defence, contouring the city of over four miles circumference, was a fortified wall of a height varying from eighteen to thirty feet, and with a thickness of six to twelve feet. There were ten gates: Baragoan, Bhandar, Datia, Jhirna, Khanderao, Lakshmi, Orchha, Sagar, Sainyar and Unnao, with a number of khirkis or smaller entrances.

The fort was held by Vasant singh appointed keeper by the Orchha ruler Jujhar Singh when it was captured in 1634 by the Mughal general Makramar Khan, along with its well-stocked granary, artillery, a powder magazine and treasury. This seizure was ordered by Emperor Shahjehan (1628-58) because of his antagonism towards Jujhar Singh, dating to the time when both were princes. The Mughals handed over the fort to a Bundela chief, Girdhar, for maintenance on their behalf. It was restored to Orchha when the Bundela-Mughal relationship normalised.\textsuperscript{203} Early in the eighteenth century, Jhansi came under the sway of Chhatrasal of Panna who pillaged Mughal territory. In reaction, Bundelkhand was invaded by the Mughal governor of Farrukhabad. In 1729, Chhatrasal, now eighty, enlisted Maratha help and the intruders were expelled. A relieved Chhatrasal greeted Peshwa Baji Rao I as his son. This was signal for an avaricious Peshwa to claim a share of Chhatrasal's domains in parity with the Bundela's two sons in line for inheritance.

\textsuperscript{202} Dube Dinanath; \textit{Bharat Ke Durg}, Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993.p.146.
\textsuperscript{203} B.N.Luniyan; \textit{Akbar Mahan}; Laxinarayan Agrawal, Hospital Road Agra, 1984.p.176.
Chhatrasal, reluctantly, willed one-third of his possession, including Jhansi, to the Peshwa.

The Maratha phase in Jhansi commenced with Nehru Shankar as the Peshwa's subehdar (1742-57). The fortifications were improved, a triple wall came up and the water supply was augmented. Shankargarh was the new named after a Shiva temple. Despite the area's poor agricultural productivity, a town flourished in the fort vicinity with cotton trading as an important economic activity. Tax collection was robust.

The Maratha-held fort of Jhansi was seized by the Nawab of Oudh, Shuja-ud-daulah, in 1762. The pretext came when the Marathas invaded Mughal territory administered by the Nawab, who continued nominally to be the viceroy of a rapidly declining emperor in Delhi. The Marathas recaptured Jhansi in 1766, for which the Holkar of Indore provided leadership and resources.

Jhansi was covered by the Jats of Bharatpur and Mathura, and also by the Afghan Rohillas from the upper Gangetic plains east of Delhi. They were outmanoeuvred by Jhansi's subehdar Raghunath Rao Nevalkar (1769-96), who was an able administrator and reformer of the revenue system. He abdicated in favour of his brother Sheo Rao Bhao (1796-1814) and took jal samadhi in Kashi. Later the chiefs cosied up to the British to promote their individual standing independent of the Peshwa.

The Rani had established influence, which muffled unrest following the annexation. Public disquiet came from a conviction that

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204 Bhagwandas Gupta; A History of Rise and Fall of the Marathas in Bundelkhand, Neha Prakashan, No.1415, Dr. Mukharje nagar, Delhi, 1987, p.89.
the British were in the wrong. Captain W.H. Sleeman, architect of the thuggee eradication campaign and also a personal friend of Raja Ramchandra Rao, had said, 'I have always considered Jhansi among the native states of Bundelkhand as a kind of oasis in the desert, the only one in which a man can accumulate property with the confidence of being permitted by its rulers freely to display and enjoy it.'

When the uprising was sparked off in 1857, the garrison and cavalry detachment in Jhansi sympathised with it. Arson was widespread and many officers were killed. The atmosphere was particularly charged due to the removal of the ban on cow slaughter, the belief that the new Enfield cartridges were smeared with animal fat and a rumour that flour was mixed with ground animal bones.

Now, when the moment arrived, the Rani acceded to popular demand and took charge of the administration. An army of 12,000 was raised along with a cavalry of 400. The Rani restrained the neighbouring states, which, taking advantage of the disturbed times, were plundering Jhansi territories. The chief of artillery was Ghulam Ghaus Khan who engineered twenty cannons, including two formidable cast iron pieces that can still be seen in the fort: the Kadak Bijli and the Bhawani Shankar.

The Rani drew all sects under her fold. In an age when women of her status remained indoors, the Rani, an orthodox Marathi Brahmin widow, was inspecting the ramparts and inspiring her men: 'We fight for independence. In the words of Lord Krishna, we will,'
if we are victorious, enjoy the fruits of victory; if defeated and killed on the field of battle, we shall surely earn glory and salvation.206

Lakshmi Bai’s troops consolidated their hold in the territory around Jhansi. The Bundela chief of Banpur came forward to arrest them. The British advance was defeated. The territory seized by the rival forces from Orchha state was recovered. Among her trusted lieutenants was Khuda Baksh. Within the ranks were women like Moti Bai, Durga and Jhalkari Dulaiya, fighting sword in hand till the end.207

The British closed in on Jhansi after their victory in Delhi and the recapture of Lucknow and Kanpur. The Rani rejected advice to conciliate. General Hugh Rose, recently back from the Crimean War, headed the British strike against Jhansi fort. He inspected the terrain around the stronghold to identify the spots from where he could launch his eighteen-pounder attacks. Hugh Rose knew what he was up against; as he wrote: 'The great strength of the fort, natural as well as artificial, and its extent, entitles it to a place amongst fortresses. It stands on an elevated rock...and commands the city, and surrounding country; it is built of excellent and most massive masonry. The fort is difficult to breach, because...its walls vary in thickness from sixteen to twenty feet...has extensive and elaborate outworks of the same solid construction, with front and flanking artillery-fire, and loop-holes, of which, in some places, there were five tiers, for musketry.'208

Relentless enemy cannon caused a breach in the city wall between the Sainyar and Jhirna gates, Undaunted, the Rani supervised the repairs. But the damage widened due to the cannonade. The defenders mentally steeled themselves to stand ground and fight to the last. There was savage hand-to-hand fighting in the streets. After a spirited defence, the city walls gave way and enemy troops poured in.

The town was now burning. Advisers persuaded the Rani to leave the fort. She climbed down from a turret window with Damodar Rao on her back and rode off in the darkness to Kalpi. Pursuers were cut down in close combat. Cornet combe, of the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry, recorded, ‘We were sent all over the country in pursuit, and one of our troops overtook her...Her escort made a hard fight of it, and though our fellows did their utmost and killed every man, she got away, her smart saddle falling into our hands. She is a wonderful woman, very brave and determined. It is fortunate for us that the men are not all like her.’

Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope joined Rani at Kalpi. They marched to Gwalior and took the fort. Scindia's army joined the revolutionaries. Hugh Rose gave pursuit. It was a blistering June summer of 1858, when a fierce fight took place near Gwalior. Lakshmi Bai was killed shot and run through with a sabre. She was dressed as a man 'using her sword with both hands and holding the

reins of her horse in her mouth'.

Hugh Rose recognised her to be 'The bravest and best military leader of the rebels'.

Those from Lakshmi Bai's troops who were captured were those from Lakshmi Bai's troops who were captured were hanged or blown away by cannon. Jhansi town was sacked. Moropant Tambe Rani's father, was apprehended in Datia, brought to Jhansi and hanged. His wife Chimnabai managed to get out of the fort and walk unnoticed across fields to her father's house forty miles away. Damodar Rao was whisked away and remained in hiding being allowed to settle in Holkar's Indore. Time passed. Damodar Rao's wedding was attended by Chimnabai. Her son from Moropant became a tehsildar in British Sagar. Hugh Rose was titled 'Baron Staithnairn of Straithnairn and of Jhansi'; he spent his last days in Paris.

In 1861, the British handed over the fort to the Scindia as part of an administrative protocol that included exchange of villages and other assets to adjust for the expenses incurred during the recent events. The fort was returned to the British in 1886. Repairs were undertaken, pathways paved, gates and railings added and new walls raised.

Today, the fort shows up as two back-to-back architectural entities, Indian and British. The Rani's figure, clad in battle attire, stares from many a monument, painting and sculpture.

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210 Ibid. p.385
The battles she lost are victories. The citadel at Jhansi conveys the aura of a great historic event. It is a symbol of triumph.

**Samthar fort**

Samthar fort arrived on the political landscape in a time of flux. The Maratha trajectory was on the rise and the British were getting into contention in central India. The Mughals were clearly fading out. An eighteenth century fort, it is believed that one of Babar's (1526-30) commanders, Shamsher, had built a garhi, a small fort, here, in the nature of an outpost. The site was referred to as Shamshergarh. The terrain was samtal-level; hence the name Samthar.\(^\text{213}\)

The rulers of Samthar were Bar-gujars, among the thirty-six Indian royal lines recognised by James Tod.\(^\text{214}\) The Bar gujars were a section of the Gujars believed to have come to India with the white Hun hordes at the end of the fifth century. They attained laurels when they fought on the side of Prithviraj Chauhan against Muhammad Ghori (1191-92).

Samthar was part of the Datia kingdom. When the Datia ruler Ramchandra was killed in battle, there were many claimants to the throne. Naune Shah, a powerful zamindar, intervened, enabling the late king's great grandson Indrajit to ascend the throne. In reward, Naune Shah was awarded a jagir of five villages and the title of 'Rajdhar'; his son, Madan Singh, was assigned the governorship of Samthar fort. Madan Singh was succeeded by a son, Bishan Singh, who died childless.

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\(^{213}\) Sharma Rita; *The forts of Bundelkhand*, Rupa & Co., 7/16 Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006. p.68.

A brother, Devi Singh (1780-1800), took over. The opportunity to take advantage of Datia's fort, provided a base to Devi Singh for expanding his possessions. At the same time, he helped Datia tide over its adversities, emanating mostly from an overbearing Scindia in Gwalior and the Marathas in Jhansi.

In 1785, Samthar broke away. This political initiative was taken after taking the Peshwa into confidence. The Marathas were now dominant in Bundelkhand and it was only shrewd to have reached an accord with the Peshwa. Subsequently, the Peshwa bestowed the formal title of Raja on the Samthar chief, Ranjit Singh (1800-15).215

The British also had to be convinced of Samthar's standing. The Samthar darbar approached the East India Company through the following statement:

'Our family is descended from the Bar-Gujar clan, one Suraj-Bans being the founder.216 His descendants were the rulers of Panchala, Singh, Gujarat, etc. One Deo-sut held Gujarat and Mewat. Seventh in descent from him came Ked Rae, a very powerful chief, who held Gujarat when Alexander the Great invaded his dominions. Deo-sut came to terms with the Macedonian King and a great battle was thus avoided. This statement will be found to be fully borne out by the records of Alexander's travels. Ked Rae's descendants ruled at Lahore for nine generations, the last king being Chandra Sen, who fought with and defeated Subuktigin, driving him back to Ghazni...' Ranjit Singh II (1815-27) entered into a treaty in 1817 with the East India Company on lines similar to that of

Orchha and Datia. All three were designated 'treaty states'. These were states recognised by the British as possessing due autonomy and powers when the Engagement of alliance was concluded. The other princely states in Bundelkhand were 'stand states', like Charkhari or Ajaigarh, which pledged fidelity to the British and, in response, were confirmed in possession of their lands by the British through a grant. Overall, the British and the princely states bound themselves to assist each other in the hour of need.

Later, when Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi led the revolutionaries in central India, and the regent rains of Orchha and Datia aided the British, Samthar also came to be guided by a Rani, standing in for her incapacitated husband, Hindupat (1827-64). Samthar's regent power, Rani Lallan Ju, was pragmatic: she gave refuge to a number of British in her fort during the turbulence, and is believed by many to have also provided Rani Lakshmi Bai with a change of horses at a village, Datavali, when she was on her way from Jhansi to Kalpi in order to join Nana Sahib.

Hindupat had been retired to a garhi on the outskirts of the state, accompanied by his Muslim mistress and a son by her, Arjun Singh, also named Ali Bahadur. The contenders for succession were Ali Bahadur and Chhatra Singh, Hindupat's son from Rani Lallan Ju. The succession dispute was referred to the British who confirmed Chhatra Singh (1864-96) as the rightful heir to the throne.

From Samthar fort, drought, pertilence and relief works, land records, and justice were administered. Chhatra Singh, a progressive

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218 Yogendra Nath Gupta; Jhansi ki Rani (Hindi), Indian Press, Allahabad, 1963 p. 57.
ruler, increased revenue and negotiated successfully with the British for the introduction of railways and irrigation canals. Samthar was afflicted with famine during the rule of Bir Singh Dev (1896-1935), which kept the state machinery occupied with various welfare activities. Radha Charan Singh was the last ruler (1935-49): he continued to reside in the fort after the merger of the princely states with the Union.  

The fort battlements and crenellations behind a moat are well preserved. The elephant gates are awe-inspiring. Occasionally ornate, the residential part of the fort has long corridors and steep staircases leading to the rooms and courtyards. The living quarters in the fort comprise seven lofty storeys, easily the most imposing structure for hundreds of square miles around. The sense of permanence and tranquillity motivated the construction of elaborate living quarters, administrative buildings, record-rooms and courthouses.  

The Samthar ruler was awarded the title of 'His Highness' and a salute of eleven guns during Delhi's Imperial Durbar of 1877. Samthar became typical of the leisured aristocracy of the days: European styles were in vogue; modern conveniences and toilets were introduced; there was shikar on every conceivable occasion. Ladies enjoyed bicycling which was done in purdah. A menagerie

of animals was also maintained in the Samthar fort, along with elephant houses. For the nobility, life was easy, lavish and elaborate.

As the foremost agriculturist in the area, the ruler would spend time supervising the sinking of wells and installation of irrigation devices. Milch animal breeding was promoted. Besides, there was benevolent patronage of temples, schools and hospitals.

Dussehra was an occasion for aplomb. The Maharaja would ride in an elephant procession with spearmen and lancers, fireworks and carriages. The wrestling pit came alive. Court routine comprised durbars, with wizened peasants petitioning the ruler on his masnad, and the occasional full-throated poet reciting exaggerated paeans of praise. 223 The picture was complete with chandeliers and jagirdars; assemblages in the courtyard passing cardamoms and sweatmeats around; dance performances and qawwalis, with the accompaniments of sarod, sarangi and pakhawaj.

A characteristic of princely life was the acquisition of badges of British favour. The criterion was unalloyed allegiance, with 1857 as the great watershed, Bir Singh Dev received the title of ‘Maharaja’ in 1898, as had his father Chhatra Singh in 1877. 224 By now, the military had given way to a civilian rhythm, with red-tape in the government secretariat at Writers Building, Calcutta, knotting up all manner of questions, whether related to the cession of land for the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, salt levies, or the privilege to be addressed as a Maharaja.

224 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi, 2006.p.72
Datia Fort

Atiara of cupolas and chhatris crowns the gigantic fortress-palace of Datia. Rising from the bedrock, the citadel towers over a lake, embodying its resplendence, the freewheeling spirit of the builder, Bir Singh. The ruler of Orchha Bir Singh Dev was a capable ruler. He built Dhamauni, Jhansi and Datia forts. The time was taken 8 years, 4 months and 26 days and amount which was spent was 32 lakhs, Ninety thousand, Nine hundred and Eighty rupees only for making Data fort.225

The uniformity and symmetry of Mughal-style architecture is combined with Hindu form, ornamental designs and motifs. Captain Sleeman, during a visit in 1835, was enraptured by the beauty of Datia; and as his guide reflected,226 'The noble works in palaces and temples, which you see around you, Sir mouldering in ruins, were built by princes who had beaten emperors in battle, and whose spirits still hover over and protect the place..., when hostile forces threatened.... spirits of men like Bir Singh Deo and Hardaul Lala... had come to our aid.'

The Datia fortress-palace is believed to have been financed largely from the treasure that Bir Singh looted from Abul Fazl after killing him on the request of Jehangir when he was a prince.227 Bir Singh's loyalty towards his patron Jehangir never wavered. In 1625, when the emperor was seized by Mahabat Khan on his way

225 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.137.
227 Gorelal Tiwari; Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.134.
to Kabul, when the emperor was seized by Mahabat Khan on his way to Kabul, prompt aid was forthcoming from Bir Singh. He sent Bhagwan Rao, one of his twelve sons, to the emperor's aid.

Birsingh carved out a jagir, Palera, for Bhagwan Rao. However, family strife saw Bhagwan Rao shut out of Palera by the sons of his younger wife when he returned from an expedition. Bir Singh intervened. He bestowed Datia on Bhagwan Rao to nip any escalation of had blood.

Bhagwan Rao further cemented his relationship with the Mughals when the Pathan nobleman Khan Jehan Lodi, Governor of the Deccan, rebelled against the recently ascended Shahjehan. Lodi supported Dawar Baksh-son of the new emperor's late half-brother Prince Khusro-a rival contender to the imperial throne. Bhagwan Rao joined the Mughal army to fight the rebel. The Bundela chief lost a brother, Nahar Singh, in battle. After the rebels were subdued, Bhagwan Rao became part of the Mughal campaign in Bijapur (1631).

James Todd, the British political agent in Rajputana wrote, 'From the period of Akbar the Bundelas bore a distinguished part in all the grand conflicts, to the very close of the monarchy: nor among all the brave chiefs of Rajasthan, did any perform more gallant or faithful services than the Bundela chieftains of Orchha and Datia. Bhagwan Rao commanded the advanced guard of the army of Shahjehan. His son, Soopkurna, was Aurangzebe's most distinguished leader in the Dekhan.'

Bhagwan Rao also helped suppress a revolty by the Lahore Governor, paving the way for Shahjehan's first visit to the city in 1634. In return, a mansab, lands, and gifts were conferred on the Daia chief. The chronic tension between the Mughals and Orchha's Jujhar Singh - a step-brother of Bhagwan Rao - led to a situation enabling Datia to consolidate its own position. Bhagwan Rao, with his kinsman Devi Singh of Chanderi, assisted the Mughals in hunting down Jujhar Singh after his rebellion. Bhagwan Rao's cenotaph, the surabhi chhatri, still stands near the town.\textsuperscript{229}

The military tradition continued with Shubhkaran (1656-83), successor of Bhagwan Rao. By now, Datia had enough standing to snap the umbilical cord with Orchha and shape its own space under the Mughals. Delhi's war of succession (1657-59) had Datia on Aurangzeb's winning side, though Shubhkaran lost a half-brother, Prithviraj, in battle. Shubhkaran fought at Samugarh (1658) where Dara Shikoh, eldest of Shahjehan's four contending sons, was defeated, and at Khajwa (1659) that put Shuja, the second brother, out of reckoning.\textsuperscript{230} Aurangzeb designated Shubhkaran subehdar of Bundelkhand, an honour strongly resented by Champat Rai of Panna.

Shubhkaran thrived in battle, accompanying the Mughal forces to Balkh and Badakshan beyond the Hindu Kush and the Arakan on the empire's eastern frontier to fight the Burmese pirates. He led a large contingent to Bijapur and Purandar. Aurangzeb was aggrieved at the death of Shubhkaran. His son and successor was Dalpat Rao

\textsuperscript{229} Gorelal Tiwari; \textit{Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas} (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935. p.145.

\textsuperscript{230} \textit{Ibid}. p.159.
(1683-1707) who attained distinction in the Mughal campaigns against the marathas.

Dalpat Rao was generously accorded courtesies in the Mughal court. The cordiality between the two extended to their spouses. Once, when Aurangzeb's begum was journeying from Burhanpur to Agra, she was escorted by Dalpat Rao and his Rani. Suddenly, the Rani's elephant became erratic when crossing the Sindh. There was apprehension about the Rani's purdah falling and her getting exposed. The Mughal begum unhesitatingly threw her chadar to the Rani, thus ensuring that the latter's honour was not compromised.231

Dalpat Rao fought on the Mughal's side against Bijapur, Golconda, Adoni and Gingee. From Gingee, he brought back a huge gate as a trophy, which was installed on Datia. Dalpat Rao was a perpetual campaigner, and during one of his long absences, a son usurped power. Aurangzeb's intervention enabled Dalpat Rao to regain his position when he returned. The emperor also allowed the Bundela chief to have an alam, or royal standard, before him.

Dalpat Rao died of wounds received in Jajau, the most important engagement in the Mughal civil war (1707) that followed Aurangzeb's death. In Datia, too, there was a battle among half-brothers regarding succession.232 Ultimately Ramchandra (1711-36) came to the throne. He fought on the side of Chhatrasal's son, Jagat Rai of Jaitpur, against Bangash Khan, Mughal governor of

Farrukhabad. Later, Ramchandra went to aid the Nawab of Oudh against rebellious landlords, and was killed in battle.

With the Mughals in the grip of the Marathas, Datia came under pressure.

But this did not dampen the imperial trappings. The emperor, Shah Alam, toured Bundelkhand in the monsoon of 1760 and received the then Datia chief, Indrajit (1736-62), at Banda, presenting him royal standards, musical instruments and a portable throne. The decline of the Peshwa following the third battle of Panipat in 1761 saw the Scindia's rise. The Datia chief, Shatrujit Singh (1763-1801), was killed in battle against the Scindia's troops—led by the Frenchman, Perron—at Seondha, on the banks of the Sindh.  

Datia under Parichhat (1801-39), compelled by the freebooting Pindaris and Jhansi's Marathas, signed a treaty of alliance with the British in 1804. The resultant peace enabled Parichhat to sort out his domestic problems emanating from the numerous family trees from multiple marriages. The chief built a city wall with four massive gates. The next ruler, Vijay Bahadur (1839-57), led a kirtan-chanting religious life. He was followed by a minor, Bhawani Singh (1857-1907). Datia's Regent Rani saw the events of 1857 as a chance to cut Jhansi's Marathas to size.

The Datia forces encircled Jhansi and waited six months for General Hugh Rose to launch his offensive. After the British took Jhansi, Moropant Tambe, the Rani of Jhansi's father, was captured in Datia while making a getaway, and handed over to the British. In

\[233\text{ Bhagwandas Gupta ; }A\ History\ of\ Rise\ and\ Fall\ of\ the\ Marathas\ in\ Bundelkhand,\ Neha Prakashan, 1415,\ Dr. Mukharje nagar, Delhi, 1987. p.169.\]
1865, the British approved the title of 'Maharaja' for Datia's ruler.234 Pax Britannica saw the princes getting preoccupied with rankings and seating orders. Datia's Bhawani Singh attended the Viceroy's Durbar at Agra in 1866. According to an official account of the British, 'The gratifications afforded to the Treaty Chiefs of Bundelkhand, Datia, Orchha and Samthar was somewhat marred by a feeling of Mortification at the position assigned them with reference to some of the Princes of Rajpootana of modern creation. The subject has been under report to the Government of India, but no definite decision has yet been given as to the exact position they are to occupy at future similar Durbars; the conflicting claims and pretensions of the several chiefs conceived, doubtless, making the settlement of this point a delicate and difficult matter.'235

On his way to Datia, the French traveller Louis Rousselet had occasion to witness the Agra Durbar- 'a magnificent coup-d'oeil'-presided by the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence (1863-69). It was a balmy November, when Rousselet saw '... aslong procession of Boundelas and Rajput princes, all in rich and picturesque costumes, the Maharajah of Orchha, the Rao Maharajah of Datia, the Raja of Samthar, the Raja of Charkhari..'236 Some weeks later, Rousselet was in Datia, standing before Bir Singh's fortress-palace: 'Everything about this palace is sombre and massive; and one can easily discern the traces of the great genius of King Bir Singh Deo, and of the notorious Boundela, whose name has become legendary. Its

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234 Omshankar’Asar’; Jhansi Kranti Ki Kashfi (Hindi), Government Museum, Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh).
enormous proportions render it unfit for habitation; the small Court of Datia, indeed, would be lost in this immense labyrinth; and thus it is abandoned to the bats and the owls; 237

Travellers from Agra to Jhansi see Bir Singh's fortress-palace at Datia looming over the surroundings, seemingly taller than its 130 feet. It looks southwards over a large lake, the Karan Sagar, constructed by Shubhkaran, who also built the palatial Rajgarh, used later for housing government offices. Bir Singh's edifice, which took nine years to complete, is in the form of a square, and built in stone and bricks without wood or iron. Wide eaves, lattices and overhanging balconies delineate its five storeys, each of different height.

The interior comprises a series of apartments with terraces, complemented by courtyards. The complex of chambers and corridors, pillars and arches, integrate well, manipulated to keep in perspective the panoramic views all around. The splendour of the complex is enhanced by arcades and kiosks, ribbed domes, and octagonal towers at the corners. Elaborate brackets support the balconies and oriel windows. The main dome, massive and secure, sits in the centre, guarded by large rooftop cupolas.

The Datia fortress-palace wears a shroud of silence. It had already been long deserted when visited by Governor-General Lord Hastings (1812-23) in 1818. Captain Sleeman saw the building in 1835 and was reflective on finding it abandoned; his hosts responded, 238 'No prince these degenerate days could muster a family

237 Ibid. p.337.
and court worthy of such a palace, the family and court of the largest of them would, within the walls of such a building, feel as if they were in a desert. Such palaces were made for princes of the older times, who were quite different beings from those of the present day.'

**Gwalior Fort**

Gwalior fort is a mountain fort.\(^{239}\) It is situated at the extreme end of Vindhya mountains chain, just 90 kilometers away from Jhansi. Even from a distance this fort looks grand and beautiful. As one reaches nearer to the fort, the eyes of one’s filled with beauty seeing the wideness and the huge parapet walls of the fort. The height of the fort is such as it looks as it is spread over on the whole of Gwalior city. Today this fort may be looking silent but it has seen many centuries of history. Hence it is situated on the national highway from North to southern part of India, it often has been a victim of many attacks. In 1527 A.D. the Mughal emperor Babar has written in his diary,\(^{240}\) “Though my health was not good, still I visited the palaces of Man singh and Vikramajit which are inside the fort. These are unique and beautiful palaces. The palaces are constructed with Heavy and without having any ratio well selected trimmed stones." Gwalior fort is being counted on of the best fort among the beautiful and strate forts are available in North India. It had been very difficult for the attackers to conquer this fort so easily.

\(^{239}\) Dube Dinanath ; *Bharat Ke Durg* (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.122.

\(^{240}\) Beveridge, Smt. A.S.; *Babur-Nama* (English Translation from Turkish), Low Price Publications, Delhi, 2003. p.609.
Muslim Historian Hasan Nizami has successfully tried to prove that this fort is the big pearl in the garland of precious stones. This can be seen in his book ‘Taj-Ul-Masir’. This fort has been constructed about 90 meters above on Gopachal hill’s land. The fort is being spread over from North-to South 2800 meters long and from East to West 180-840 meters in width. The parapet wall of the fort is 10 to 12 meters high. The bastions and turrets which have constructed on the parapet wall at regular intervals are looking muchglorious. The cannons were kept here on the turrets. There are two entrances to reach in to the fort in East and in West directions. The eastern gate is called Gwalior or Alamgir gate and the western one is called Urwahi gate. Both the roads which lead to the fort are spiral. The walkers can use gwalior entrance gate, but the vehicles have to go via Urwahi entrance gate to reach the fort. At the beginning there were three other entrances named Dhodh Dwar, Garwa Dwar (West) and Jhilmil window (South). Now these entrances are closed. Before reaching to the fort through Gwalior gate, one have to go through Hindola entrance, Ganesh entrance, Laxaman entrance and Hathipol entrance route.

The Hathipol gate is the main entrance to the fort. This was constructed during the Gurjar Pratihar’s period. Raja Man singh reconstructed it in a new model. This door is guarded by bastions. The glitsering tiles have been used there. Badal gate was made during the Tomar rulers period. This entrance door is also made with round minars. Ganesh door was constructed by Dungar.

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241 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.122.
singh Tomar during 15th century.\textsuperscript{243} The penance place of mythological Rishi Gwalapi is situated near this door. Alamgir gate was made on 1660 A.D. The fortification wall of the premises is fully safeguarded with bastions on every corner. The round minars constructed on the walls add the beauty of the fort. The moat around the fort is called ‘Suvamrekha’.\textsuperscript{244}

Like other forts in India, the question of who and when this fort was built is untold. The historians don’t have one opinion about this Question. Through folk tales, stone carvings and land records one can get some proof about this. This place is also known as Gopadi, Gopadri, Gwalior and Gopachal. According to a folk tale, this fort was constructed by Raja Pasupati in 3rd century. He only dug the Surajkund pond. Another folk tale says that once upon a time there had been lived a rishi by name gwalapi. That time this place was covered with thick and dense forest. Once Rajput king Surajsen of Kuntalpur came here for hunting. He was affected with leprosy. He worshiped the saint and told about his misfortune. The saint told him to take a dip in the nearby pond. It is told that by taking dip in the pond and by the blessing and courtesy of the saint, the king was cure from leprosy. The king out of courtesy, wanted to serve the saint. The saint suggested the king to widen the pond and construct a fort there. The king fulfilled both the suggestions. Hence the city is now called Gwalior, Honouring the saint.\textsuperscript{245} Even today, people

\textsuperscript{244} Dube Dinanath ; \textit{Bharat Ke Durg} (Hindi),Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi,1993. p.122.
\textsuperscript{245} Interview with Mr.\textit{Om Shankar 'Asar'}, 'Historian' & History writer,Fort of Gwalior, dated-17-06-2008.
believe that the pond has got the power of curing leprosy on taking a dip in.

This folk tale is acceptable or not for a belief and abstract but a foundation stone found in Surya mandir has proved that Mihirkul who conquered the Hoonas was ruling in 525 A.D. in this region. Some historians opined that Gwalior fort was constructed by Raja Surya sen in 525 A.D. Dr. Bhagwat sharan upadhyay has believed that Gwalior fort was constructed during post-medieval period. As per a foundation stone of 875 A.D. found in the fort, this whole area was under the custody of Gurjar pratihara kings of Kannauj. After them Rashtrakoota and Pal kings had their control over the fort. These rulers not only completed the construction work left incomplete by king Surajsen, but also constructed many more palaces, temples and big wells. During the middle period of tenth century, raja Mahendrapal had his control over the fort. According to the foundation stone available in the Sas-Bahu temple, king Vajradaman Kachhawah (Kachchhap dhat) was ruling here. Actually, Vajradaman was a local noble of king Dhangdev Chandela.246 After him, the fort came under the control of Raja Dulha Rai, Parmardi dev, Ramdev Pratihara and Kachhwaha Rajputs.

During 1195-98, Shahbuddin Gauri conquered this fort and handed over it to Qutub-ud-din Aibak. After the death of Aibakin in 1210 A.D., Ilutmish became the Sultan of Delhi. He attacked Gwalior fort in 1231 A.D. A terrific war occurred here which has been described by Muslim historian Minhas in his book ‘Siraj-Tabkat-Nasiri’, 'The sultan besieged the fort from outside for eleven

246 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.123.
months. On this, the king Saranga dev was forced to surrender. As per Rajput tradition the ladies in order to save their honour from the conquering enemy hurled themselves on a burning pyre. In the fort this place is called 'Jauhar tal'. Raja Sarangdev who also called 'Malayavarman' fought with Iltutmish with minimum soldiers available and became martyr. After this episode Balban, Khilji and Tuglakas occupied the fort for some time. Firoz shah Tuglak died in 1388 A.D. A Chaotic atmosphere was create by Taimur on his attack over Gwalior. There became instability for ruler during this period. The Rajput king of Tomar Virsingh dev utilized this golden opportunity and he occupied the fort. The fort was under the custody of Tomar dynasty till 1581 A.D. The most brave king of this Tomar dynasty was Mansingh (1486-1516). The king Dungar singh and Karan singh Tomar were predecessors of king Man singh. During the rule of Dungar singh (1440), some Jain statues were established on the parapet walls of the fort.

Actually, the fort was more attractive and prosperous, during the period of Raja Man singh Tomar. He gave a new outlook to the fort. He constructed many palaces tall mansions inside the fort. Among them Man mandir, Gujari mahal and the parapet of eastern area are worth to be quote. These were constructed during 1486-1510 A.D. Man singh was not only a master of art, music and architecture, but he was a diplomat and a great warrior too. During his lifetime the sultan of Delhi Ebrahim Lodi did not have courage to attack the fort of Gwalior. After the death of Man singh Sikandar Lodi invaded the fort in 1517 A.D. The war went for a year. Man singh’s son Vikramaditya self surrendered. After death of Sikandar famous

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Kohinoor diamond to Humayun in this fort. This diamond was lodi the fort came in the hand of Moghals. Babar visited the fort in 1528 A.D. He has described the fort in his diary. Humayun stayed here for two months. He constructed a palace at that time. The wife of Vikramaditya tomar presented the maintained by Moghals for quite long time. After them Nadir Shah took away the diamond to Iran. Now a days it is being kept in the crown of queen of the England.

After defeat of Humayun by Sher shah suri, the went in the custody of Shershah suri. Sher shah suri went to Kalinjar from here. After his death the fort was under the custody of Akbar and his loyal Subedars.

Mahadaji Sindhiya established his power over the fort in 1780 A.D. after winning the war with Marathas. As per Salwai treaty in 1782 A.D. again sindhiya family came to rule on this fort. Sindhiya gave fully support to the English rulers in 1857 A.D. freedom fight. Maharani Lakshmi Bai became martyr during first freedom fight here and the history of the fort of Gwalior took a new turn. Maharani became martyr during the war with the English army at ‘Kota ki sarai’ near the fort of Gwalior. A statue of Maharani Lakshmi Bai on her horse back, is erected in this place. The English had power over this fort till 1886 A.D., After that the fort was handed over to Sindhiya family. The fort was in their hands till 1948 A.D.

It looks that the construction of the premises of fort has been completed in three phases. The lower portion and basement as well as the parapet have been constructed at the time of pre-

249 B.N.Luniyan; *Akbar Mahan*; Laxinarayan Agrawal, Hospital Road Agra, 1984. p.271.
Kachchhapghat and Gurjar Pratihara kings. Big rock stones have been used for the construction of parapets. For plastering unshaped stones have been used. The thickness of the parapet is of 3.5 meters and 2.5 meters tall. The middle portion of parapet is of 2.0 meters height. The kings of Kachchhapghat have not used plasters. Only rugged and parched stones have been used. The upper portion was of Tomar’s regime. The third portion is of 1.5 meters high. Cut stones and plaster of lime have been applied here. The rocks are cut for the chambers of soldiers. Badalgarh area was the centre of the movement of soldiers. During Marathas period in the Northern end of Surajkund a separate fortlet was constructed for the convenience of the soldiers. The English army reshaped the fort, and they constructed soldiers barracks, and many new buildings for amenity in European style. Now a days the Sindhiya Public School is functioning in these barracks. Khilji and Moghul rulers utilized this fort as prison. Allauddin Khilji arrested all his three sons as prisoners and kept here for sometime and killed them here. Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangajeb kept the rebel sardars and their children arrested and later they were hanged to death. Seven thousand prisoners were released free at the time of crowning of Jahangir from this fort. The Sixth guru of Sikhs Guru Hargovind Singh was also a prisoner in this fort. Hence, this fort has become a pilgrim place of Sikhs also.

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252 Interview with Mr. Om Shankar 'Asar'; 'Historian' & History writer, Fort of Gwalior, dated 17-06-2008.


A chain of uncomparable monuments are found inside the fort. Presently there are six palaces. Four out of them are – Man Mandir, Vikram Mahal, Keerthi mandir or Karna Mahal and Gujari mahal. These four belonged to Hindu kings. The remaining two- Jahangir Mahal and Shah Jahan Mahal- are of Muslim rulers. Man Mandir was constructed in 1427 A.D. which is an uncomparable memorial of Indian architectural style. Five of these are erected in the eastern slope of the fortification premises. Where as the Gujari Mahal is in the Northern slope of the hill. The technique used in the construction of Man Mandir resembles that in Agra fort and Fatehpur Sikri buildings. Six Minars have been constructed with tombs on the parapet walls. The tombs which have constructed In the Eastern part of the palace add more attraction to the palace. This part is of 100 meters long and 26 meters height. The walls of palace are decorated with coloured stones. Colourful strips in laid works and stickers in the palace are worth to be see. The palace is of six storeys. Four storeys are above the ground level and two are below the ground level. Wall carving embossed decoration, balconies and tiles work are very beautiful. There are many rooms around the courtyard. The construction of dance hall is very attractive there.

Near Man Mandir to the North side the Keerti Mandir or Karna bathroom. Vikramaditya palace is situated between Karna Mahal and Man Mandir. Originally this was used sometimes as open hall. The two storeyed Gujari Mahal is found near Gwalior gate before Man Mandir. Raja Man singh was attracted by one milkmaid virgin of Rai village and he brought her there. She was brave and beautiful. He

255 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.125.
constructed one separate palace for that newly weded queen of Gujari which is of 100 meters long and 76.3 meters wide. This is called Gujari mahal. Gujari Queen contributed much to music field. She put one condition to the king Man singh that she will habitate in any place, but will drink water only of Rai river of her village. The king accepted to this condition and constructed canal of 51 kilometers to bring water of Rai river. The water taps made up of stones found inside the palace, prove this folk tale.\textsuperscript{257} The famous Hindi novelist Dr. Vrindavan lal Verma has beautifully described this tale in his novel ‘Mriganayani’.\textsuperscript{258} A foundation stone is laid there at the main entrance of Gujari Mahal in which some engravings are found in Arabic and Persian. Now there is a Government museum in Gujari Mahal which is a very rich informative museums in India. It is running by Madhya Pradesh Government.

Near Man Mandir Jahangiri Mahal and Shahjahani palace are situated. Jahangiri mahal is of 96.2 meters long and 60 meters wide. The Shahjahani palace is of 107x56 square meters. These were constructed during Moghul period. The architectural technique is not so important of these palaces. The gauzy work of Vikramaditya Mandir, the bathroom in the second floor of karna Mandir and death cells of Shahjahani Mahal are here to be Quoted. There was one mosque constructed by Aurangajeb near Alamgir Gate.

The water and drainage system is very special one here in the fort. The pond were made by cutting the rocks. Stairs are constructed up to the water level in the bawadi. There are many other

\textsuperscript{257} Interview with Mr.\textbf{Avinash Chandra Mishra}; Deputy Director, Uttar Pradesh Tourism, Jhansi, at the Gwalior fort, Dated 10-11-2011.\textsuperscript{258} Verma Vrindavan Lal; \textit{Mriganayani} (Hindi) Virangana Prakashan, Jhansi, 1960. p.127.
ponds here like Bagadi Bawadi, Jauhar tal, Athkuanbawadi, Surajkund, Trikonia tal, Noorsagar, Anar Bawadi, Mansarovar, Katora tank and Rani tal. Assi Khambha is well protected from where water-supply was done to Man Mandir. The folk saying Aath (eight) kуван-Nau(nine) Bawadi is very much meaningful here. This water supply system is partially useful today also to the residents of the fort.

On the ascenting road towards the fort, very close to Urwahi Gate, many caves for the inhabilation of Jain saints and Jain statues are found there. The idol of Lord Adinath is of 19 meters heigh and the leg itself is of 3 meters long. There has not found such a statue anywhere in India. Many temples are also found inside the fort. Teli-ka-mandir was constructed in 9th century which is the best example of both Northern and Southern architecture. It is 29 meters tall and also an example of shakti upasana. The decorative carvings on the wide pillars are wonderful. The main place of idol-room as well as the mandap are joined together and the peak is barrel like one. Wonderful carvings and decorations on the main entrance add more beauty to the temple. One bigger and one small size two temples which is jointly known as ‘Sas-bahu-ka-mandir’ have been found here. It was constructed by king Mahipal in 1093 A.D. A very live symbol of Indian philosophy and endless life line the ‘Niyati Chakra’ is constructed here in this temple in an artistic way. The bigger one was of Vishnu temple which is almost ruined but the three storeyed wide mandap of this broken temple is still found as monument…. Rishi Mandir, Chaturbhuja Mandir

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259 Dube Dinanath; *Bharat Ke Durg* (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.126.
261 Amita Baig; *Forts and Palaces of India*, Om Book International, New Delhi, 2005. p.178
and Surya Dev Mandir are also here to worth mention. There is a foundation stone laid by king Mihirbhoj Pratihar in Chaturbhuja Mandir.262

Every monument of the fort has got the different techniques of construction by various rulers. One may see there the chain of palaces, group of temples, the idols of Jain Teerthankaras, Bawadis, tanks, tunnels, basement, ancient foundation stones, museums, and the various carvings on the gates and entrances. This fort is treated as gem among the forts available in India, because of its spacious construction, beauty and the style. An archeologist has written that this fort was not constructed by man hands. Many experts like Kanigham, Harihar Niwas Dwivedi, Shri Kalyan Kumar Chakravarthi have done much research on the archeological aspect of the fort. Still so many glorious aspects of the fort are untouched by archeologists and researchers. Totally, this fort is a pilgrim place for art, music and archeological remaining. In allover Northern India the co-ordination of Aryan and Dravidian architecture found only here. The tomb of famous singer Tansen is situated near the Gwalior gate. The other famous places are the Jayavilas Mahal which is constructed in Italian design, Gulam Goush Mohammad tomb and museum of coins.

**Narwargarh fort**

Narwargarh fort straddles the Vindhyan crests, a granite range overlooking a lazy bend in the Sindh river. Desolate and rugged, the monsoon-drenched ruins of crumbling palaces in the citadel took down on the cluttered town of Narwar, 400 feet below. The classical

262 Dube Dinanath; *Bharat Ke Durg* (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p.126.
name of Narwar is Nalapura, derived from Nala, the consort of the fabled beauty, Damayanti. It is said that Nala, descended from Kusha, son of Lord Rama, built the original fort.

James Tod wrote;\textsuperscript{263} ‘Narwar... We may... without hesitation, adopt...A.D. 295 for the period of Raja Nala, whose history is one of the grand sources of delight to the bards of Rajpootana... 'Tod was drawn to ‘Dhola Maru re Duha’, the lyric and bardic tale of the chivalrous Dulha Rai, a twelfth century prince, who left his patrimony at Narwar and forged the way for the establishment of the house of Amber-Jaipur.\textsuperscript{264}

The twilight of legend and fact suggests that Narwargarh was a fortified settlement of the Nagas, their emergence in the third century coinciding with the Kushana decline. The Nagas were non-Aryans; at their peak, they were dominant from Hastinapur to Vidisha. Narwar was part of the Gupta empire from the fourth to the sixth century.\textsuperscript{265} It became part of Harshvardhana’s domains during the first half of the seventh century the last of the Hindu kingdoms to qualify as pan-Indian. Kannauj was the capital, though Narwar’s size and strength accorded it considerable autonomy.

Narwar was a cultural hum in the eighth century. The poet-dramatist Bhavabhuti spent many years here.\textsuperscript{266} Narwar is believed by Alexander Cunningham to be Padmavati, the flourishing city

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\textsuperscript{264} Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006. P.114.
\textsuperscript{265} D.N.Jha & K.M.Srimali; \textit{Prachin Bharat ka Itihas}; Directrate of Hindi Medium Execution, Delhi university Delhi, 1981,P.207.
\textsuperscript{266} Sharma Rita; \textit{The forts of Bundelkhand}, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006. p.115
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of Bhavabhuti’s ten-act romantic social play Malati-Madhavam, characters of which included Malati, daughter of Bhurivasu, a minister, and Madhavam, a young student and son of Devarata, a minister of another state. Other characters in this drama portraying the day-to-day living of the times are Madayantika and Makaranda. Bhavabhuti’s other works were Mahavir Charitamon Rama’s early life and Uttar Ramacharitam, which portrayed Rama's return from exile and subsequent enthronement in Ayodhya.267

Bhavabhuti’s eminence in Sanskrit drama literature is second only to Kalidasa: he was often invited to the court of Yashovarman (720-750) in Kannauj.268 The king was an advocate of Vedic Hinduism, a patron of the arts, and progressive enough to depute emissaries to China, then under the T’ang dynasty (618-907) whose zenith coincided with Yashovarman’s reign. The Varma dynasty of Yashovarman spanned the period from Harshvardhan's death (647) till the conquest of Kannauj (816) by the Pratihara Rajputs.

The Kachhwaha Rajput, Vajradaman, chief of Narwar, seized Gwalior from his Pratihara masters at the close of the tenth century. The Kachhwahas, with Narwar and Gwalior forts under their rule, became a separate entity; they withstood the Paramaras at Dhar and forestalled hostility from the Chandellas by recognising them as first-among-equals in the region. The Kachhwahas joined the Hindu confederacy under Jaipal-I of Lahore against Mahmud of Ghazni

267 Shiv Balak Dwivedi; Sanskrit Sahitya Ka Itihas, Grantham, sahitya Ratnalaya, Shivala road Kanpur, 1989, P.206.
268 Ibid, P.207.
The alliance was defeated. Later, the Kachhwahas acknowledged Mahmud's overlordship.\textsuperscript{269}

The Kachhwahas were chiefs of Narwar-Gwalior for about a century, when its lovelorn ruler, Dulha Rai, captive to his bride's beauty, left the domain in the care of a sister's son, a Pratihara, who usurped the kingdom. Dulha Rai migrated from Narwar.\textsuperscript{270} Endowed with a generous dowry, a supportive father-in-law, some chicanery and much valour, he was able to establish a kingdom in Rajputana's Dhundhera region. Dulha Rai's son and successor, Kakil Dev, went on to draw the first contours of Amber.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Sultanate was consolidating. The Pratiharas of Narwar-Gwalior came under pressure when Iltumish (1211-36) besieged Gwalior in 1232, forcing its ruler Sarang Deo to take refuge in Narwar fort. In 1251, the Sultanate armies under Balban attacked Raja Chahada Deva who held Chanderi and Narwar. Enormous booty fell into Balban's hands. Chanderi and Narwar were annexed to the Sultanate's Malwa province. Timur's invasion in 1398 crippled the Sultanate, opportune for the Gwalior Tomars, who seized Narwar fort.

The Tomars reluctantly accepted Delhi's authority when the Sultanate steadied under the Lodis, but gave offence by giving asylum (1502) to the Dholpur ruler, fleeing from the Sultan, Sikander Lodi (1489-1517). The Sultan launched an offensive on Narwar fort held by the Tomars. It was a protracted operation on the

\textsuperscript{269} Krishna Das; 'Bundelkhand Ka Itihas' (Hindi); Santosh Bhawan, near state bank Chhatarpur (M.P.), 1974. p.230.
\textsuperscript{270} Ashant Tripathi; 'Bundelkhand ka Itihas' (Hindi), Sharda sahitya kutir, 86 Purani Najhai, Jhansi, 1991. p.184.
steep Vindhyan scarps. A Sultanate force was beaten back, as also reinforcements. The Sultan himself came, but had to retreat. The arduous siege ended only when the defenders were starved out. After the fort's capitulation in 1508, the Sultan ordered a general massacre.

The Sultan though born of a Hindu mother, the daughter of a goldsmith was given to bigoted frenzy. All the temples were destroyed. The Sultan stayed on to construct mosques and repair the city walls, and the Jhansi, Gwalior and Dabra gateways. The outer walls were extended to a circumference of ten miles commanded by a strengthened bala hissar, or inner citadel. The Kachhwahas returned when Prince Askarn of Amber was installed at Narwar by the Sultan of Delhi, Islam Shah Sur (1545-55). This marked the coming alive of the Narwar-Amber trail, laid centuries earlier by Dulha Rai. Earlier, in 1547, Askarn had seized the Amber throne after slaying a brother. An elder brother, Bihari Mal, backed by Mewat's Afghan governor, Haji Khan, confronted Askarn, who stepped down. Amber was left to Bihari Mal. Haji Khan's interest was on account of his marriage to Bihari Mal's daughter. The Afghan, to prevent domestic discord, prevailed upon the Sultan to award Narwar to Askarn.

Narwar and Amber were now bonded in family. The two Kachhwaha brothers in Bundelkhand and Rajputana were together in making their submissions to Akbar. The Kachhwaha-Mughal proximity was further secured in wedlock when Bihari Mal sealed a

271 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006. P.117
relationship with Akbar through another daughter.\textsuperscript{272} This princess from Amber bore Salim, the next emperor. In Narwar, Askarn joined the Mughal operations to bridle Madhukar Shah of Orchha.\textsuperscript{273} Later he accompanied Akbar's revenue minister Todar Mal to Bihar to quell a rebellion. Askarn was engaged in administrative reform parleys by the emperor, and Narwar fort emerged a beehive of activity.

Akbar visited the fort headquarters of the Narwar sarkar of the Malwa province. The dense forests around Narwar provided the emperor opportunity to hunt the elephant and the tiger. The description in Alexander Dow's The History of Hindostan (1973, p 234) is vivid; '...hunting one day on the way near Narwar, a great royal tigress with five young ones took the road before him. Akbar advanced to the animal, while his retinue stood trembling with fear and astonishment to behold the event. The king having meditated his blow, spurred on his horse towards the fierce tigress, whose eyes flamed with rage, and with one stroke of his sabre, cut her across the loins and stretched her dead upon the ground. The omrahs who were present, in excess of joy, ran to kiss his royal stirrup, and offer their thanks to god for his preservation.'\textsuperscript{274}

During Akbar's reign, Narwar was visited by Father Monserrate, a Portuguese priest and traveller, who was also tutor to the emperor's son Murad. The Jesuit was witness to the festivals of Holi and Moharram at Narwar; he commented on the

\textsuperscript{272} B.N.Luniyan; \textit{‘Akbar Mahan’}; Laxinarayan Agrawal, Hospital Road Agra, 1984, p.115
\textsuperscript{273} Gorelal Tiwari; \textit{‘Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipta Itihas’} (Hindi), Nagari Pracharini, Sabha Kashi, Varanasi, 1935, p.131.
\textsuperscript{274} Dow, Alexander; \textit{‘The History of Hindostan’}; Vol. II, Today & Tomorrow’s Printers & Publishers, New Delhi, 1973, p.234
surrounding areas being infested by robbers. Later, during Jehangir's time, an Englishman, William Finch, visited Narwar. He described the town to be one of considerable size, encircled by a wall. He also described the narrow pathway that led steeply to the fort, which according to him was well guarded by soldiers.

The Kachhwahas were vulnerable in Shahjehan's reign, having backed Prince Khusro's son Dawar Baksh against Prince Khurram in the Mughal struggle for succession after Jehangir's death. Khusro was the grandson of Amber's Raja Bhagwan Das through a daughter the sister of Man Singh of Amber. Khurram, on becoming the Emperor Shahjehan, dispossessed Narwar's Kachhwaha chief of the fort. Aurangzeb restored the fort back to the Kachhwahas in consideration of their support and valour in Mughal military operations. Narwar fort remained an important Mughal administrative centre, with the Kachhwahas as kiledars. Imperial troops were maintained and military hardware serviced. After the collapse of the Mughals, the Scindia became the overlord of Narwar. The Kachhwahas were resentful. Matters reached a head when Man Singh, a Kachhwaha referred to as the Raja of Narwar was imprisoned in Gwalior fort. He escaped, fought the British in the 1857 uprising, but later fell into their hands. Man Singh ingratiated himself with his captors by betraying the revolutionary leader Tatya Tope and getting him trapped.

276 Ibid, p.34.
277 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi, 2006. p.122.
An imposing flight of steps leads into the fort. The Alamgiri Darwaza, named after Aurangzeb, is followed by an ascent to the Sayyidon ka Darwaza, so called because of repairs carried out by the Syyid governor of the fort. And then, the Pir Darwaza. The climb becomes steeper till the Gaumukhi Darwaza is reached; the last gate on the ascent, it is also known as the Hawa Paur due to the invigorating gusts of wind at the fort entrance.

Vegetation peeps through the cracks. Where kings once ruled, cattle and the cowherds now reign. Vandalism is on display, with paving stones uprooted and stucco facings wrenched out. A two-acre square tank, thirty-feet deep and hewn out of a single rock, was the fort's main source of water, but it has been dry now for more than a century.

The buildings in the fort are a blend of Hindu and Muhammadan. The Mughals left their imprint in the fort through a simply-designed garden, which has four raised irrigation channels crossing at the centre. These channels divide the space into quarters. Geometric ordering of foliage, brimming waters and ablution tanks are in ample evidence at Narwar. The Mughals borrowed the idea of these ‘paradise gardens’ from Persia.

There is a Roman Catholic cemetery in the fort. The square-shaped walled-in cemetery encompassed some 10,000 square feet. From the eighteenth century, European artillerymen had come to be increasingly employed to train troops and cast guns. Crude iron

278 Amita Baig; Forts and Palaces of India, Om Book International, New Delhi, 2005, p.198.
279 Sharma Rita; The forts of Bundelkhand, Rupa & Co., 7/16, Ansari Road, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, 2006. p.124.
was produced in the vicinity. The Portuguese as well as the Germans were given service in large number by the Mughals. The French were employed by the Scindia. The flaking walls of a small chapel are consumed by shrubbery. The remains of an altar can be identified, topped as it was by a cross. There are a number of tombs in the cemetery, including that of a German, Cornelius Oliver, who died in 1747. A Portuguese-inscribed stone can be seen. Another tombstone in Persian records the death of an eight-year-old European girl, Margharita—probably Portuguese—the daughter of a doctor.  

A story is told about the Nats, a wandering tribe of rope performers, who avoid entering Narwar. Many hundreds of years ago, when the fort was beleaguered, the local chief needed to send a missive across. For the purpose, a rope was stretched out from the fort. But no one dared to walk on the rope, though the desperate chief promised half his kingdom. At last, a woman volunteered. She made the Raja repeat his promise in the presence of the courtiers. The Nat walked on the rope and delivered the letter. When she was returning, the Raja, to keep his possessions intact, cut the rope. The woman was killed in the fall.  

Rampura Fort

Bundelkhand wrapped in myths and history nestles in its fold, several forts which offer unique opportunity to experience the royal

280 Ibid. p.125
281 Interview with Mr. Dinesh Chandra Goswami, Assistant Professer (History), Govt.P.G.College Gwalior, at the Narvargarh fort, Dated 13-11-2011.
grandeur of erstwhile Rajas and Maharajas. One such fort that stands majestically as the back drop of the village Rampura stoically defying its decadent grandeur that time has worth. Its sheer magnificence lies in the way it has been built on the rugged terrain of Bundelkhand. It was built by the Kachawaha Rajputs.282 One fourth of the fort has succumbed to the erosion of time and one half of the fort is the living quarters of the present owner who plans to open the fort to visitors who want to experience a few days of feudal rustic living resident of this fort and has taken on the mammoth task of its maintenance. Laboriously endeavoring to set up a few rooms as heritage Home stay to begin with, where guests would have a different kind of experience.283 A drive through the forest and visiting the ravines which at one point of time was the hiding experience the rustic ways of the Bundelkhand dwellers. At sundown an evening with the folk dancers and their legendry folk tales for entertainment.284

Historically Rampura has been and continues to be the base for the leader to the Kachawaha clan of Rajputs of this area. The area is referred to as Kachawahagharh. The former home of the clan was at Narwar, where they ruled till 1129 A.D. Tradition relates that Raja Dulha Rai had two sons. The elder son, Baikul Deo, remained at Narwar and his descendants later shifted to Lahar in Madhya Pradesh and from there to Rampura.285 The younger brother

282 Dube Dinanath; Bharat Ke Durg (Hindi), Department of Information & Broadcasting, Govt of India, New Delhi, 1993. p. 214.
moved towards Rajsthan to later establish his empire at Amber and Jaipur.

The Kachawaha who moved to Rampura defeated the Meaus, the original inhabitants of the area. The *Bhairoji temple* (the Kuldevata for the Kachawahas) was thus built in the center of the old fortress which was at the edge of the river Pahuja (a tributary of the Yamuna). However, the present Rampura fort is not built along a river. Tradition relates that on the spot of the present fort a goat had chased away a wolf and hence found to be an auspicious sign of strength and volour, and the venue was shifted. The Kachawaha clan though being over 900 years old, the Rampura fort in itself bears testimony to the glory of a greater part of these years. The first recorded holder of the title to the kingdom was Raja Jaswant Singh, who got his sanad from

286 Interview with Mr. *Shivram Kushwaha*, Lecturer (History), Govt. Inter College Gohan (Rampura) & Ex. M.L.A. Uttar Pradesh, Rampura fort, Dated 17-11-2011
287 Krishna Das; *Bundelkhand Ka Itihas* (Hindi); Santosh Bhawan, near state bank Chhatarpur (M.P.), 1974. p.197.
Emperor Jehangir in 1619.\textsuperscript{289} This title was there on recognized by the British Government. AKhillat of Rs. 5,000/- was also given to Raja Man Singh. It was during the British period, that the extent of the state was reduced to 28 villages. These boundaries were honoured till the last ruling king, Raja Chittar Singh. The present incumbent Raja Samar Singh owns the fort.\textsuperscript{290}

**Details of Rampura fort—**

The total land area of the fort inclusive of the built up area is 10 acres. The fort is constructed of bricks and limestone mortar. It has a split-level design of 4 stories. The fort has about 100 rooms, which include the Zenana area (women section) and Mardana area (men section). Stables, garages, servants quarters, cattle sheds, wells, granaries, temple, courtyards, rampart walls are spread over the fort area. The fort is surrounded by a moat, which is presently being modified for fisheries. Despite its age (600 years), the present owners are still using the fort. However, some areas do require repairs. The fort overlooks the ravines. Ravines are a unique topography that can be both thrilling and adventurous for anyone. Various safaris (horse, bullock cart and camel rides) can add to the excitement.

At a distance of just 15 kms. is Pachanada (an area signifying the confluence of five rivers- Pahuj, Kunwari, Sindha, Chambal and Yamuna.), cruise down the glorious Yamuna at sunset in local fishing boats and experience the magic this area has to offer. The other

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\textsuperscript{289} Ashant Tripathi; \textit{Bundelkhand ka Itihas} (Hindi), Sharda Sahitya Kutir, 86 Purani Najhai, Jhansi, 1991.p.163.
\textsuperscript{290} Interview with Mr. ‘Raja Samar Singh’ owner of the Rampura fort and palace, Rampura fort, Dated 19-11-2011.
\end{flushright}
small forts in the vicinity are- Gopalpura, Teehar, Saravan, Sewnda, Machhand, Lahar and Kalpi.

**Jagammanpur fort**

Jagammanpur fort is situated in North–West corner of district Jalaun (U.P.), the meeting place of Five Rivers- adjoining district of Etawa (U.P.) and district Bhind of M.P. This fort was built in 1593 by Jagman Shah. Leaving 11th Presence and blessing of Sant Tulsidas who laid the foundation of the fort and presented to the Raja one “Ek mukhi rudraksha” one “Dahinaverti shunkh (conch)” and a “Lakshminarayan bati”. These are still worshiped and kept in the temple inside the fort. Every year in October a festival / function is held by the Raja in which public also participates with pomp and show. A mela is held in the village. People from far and wide come to see the fort and the festivities on the day and have the Darshan of deity of Sengar Rajputs. Every year in November near the confluence of five rivers ‘Pachnada mela’ is being held at Bisrat Ghat. About 3km. away from Jagammanpur fort on Yamuna river bank at Kanai Kheda remains of the earlier fort are there and one old Shiva temple is there.

Jagammanpur fort is four story square fort with moat on three sides (50 feet deepx100feetbroad) with approx 100 big and small halls and rooms (underground Tehkhana’s). There are two big bronze and two big iron entrance gate. One single Terrance 150 feet by 75 feet from where one can have a panoramic view of rivers and

291 Krishna Das ; *Bundelkhand Ka Itihas* (Hindi) ; Santosh Bhawan, near state bank Chhatarpur (M.P.),1974.p.205.
292 Interview with Mr.Raja Sarnam Singh owner of the jagammanpur fort, Dated 18-11-2011
ravines. It has total area nearly seven acres.\textsuperscript{293} It stands in the middle of the Jagammanpur town.

\textsuperscript{293} Ravindra singh; '\textit{Forts and Palaces in Uttar Pradesh}', Deparment of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh,Lucknow,1998.p.12
CONCLUSION

The history of fort has been composed, starting with the construction of the forts the architecture and science of building a house was developed. The forts provide ample space to decipher the history and simultaneous ultimately to link the past to the present and future. There are unparallel Arts in the Royal palaces, which can never be constructed today. The forts which were the best pillars of the Royal power up to 19th century, now remains a symbol of cultural heritage vanity of the country. Damaging the accomplishment of an unknown craftsmen, and the pledge of these forts is such loss to the country that could never be recovered.

It is a fact that the ramparts of the forts which with stood continuous firing of the cannons are being destroyed by our own people. This damage has occurred only after in the last 30 years after independence. It is a hard truth that during these 30 years the magnitude of the destruction is higher than the destructions occurred throughout our civilization.

In India there are number of forts. During modern period, the protection of these is not a heavy problem but it is a real challenge. These forts can be divided in to following four categories -

(1) The fort or some parts of the fort which are under the control of A.S.I.

(2) The fort or the palaces which are under the control of archaeological departments of state governments, autonomous or public works departments.

(3) The forts which are under private ownership.
(4) The forts which are abandoned, devastated and destroyed.

Under the control of A.S.I. there are about 175 forts and palaces or some parts of the forts as protected monuments. Under the control of state governments there are about 400 forts as protected monuments. Around 400 forts and small forts are under the control of private ownership of ex-rulers, ex-kings and grantees, while the remaining are abandoned and devastated. The condition of forts nearby the cities is full of compassion.

The bad and greedy vision of the idol thieves and smugglers of ancient pledges has always been there on these forts and their materials and on the articles like costly stones, doors and chains. The ramparts of the forts of Bundelkhand like Rampura, Jagamnanpur, Jhansi and Chanderi have been continuously in transgression. The residential houses have also been constructed there. The heritage is not the property of one person, but it is of the society. So we have consciously protect these heritages.

Preservation of the forts

The conservation of these archaeological monuments is of two kinds-

(1) Exploration.

(2) Preservation.

For the protection of these forts, Government of India has the following laws in force-

(1) The ancient monument and archaeological place ruins act-1958.
(2) Ancient monument and archaeology rule- 1959.
(3) Archaeology and Art entrusting act- 1972.
(4) These acts are also in different states.

The management of preservation by the state government archaeological department is satisfactory, but many of the forts remain as only ruins. These forts classified for preservation accordingly-

(1) All the forts which have national importance should be in control of the archaeological survey of India.

(2) The preservation of the forts which are under the control of state governments should be developed by the collective responsibility and management of Archaeological, forest, environmental and Public works departments, city corporations, Municipalities, district boards and village panchayat.

The preservation of some forts are being done by state governments for the development of tourism Chanderi, Orchha and Mandu in madhya Pradesh, Kalinjar, Jhansi and Charkhari forts in Uttar Pradesh are some that are under the supervision of tourism development. For promotion of tourism, the heritage hotels have been started in some forts. The heritage hotel of Madhya Pradesh tourism Development Corporation in Orchha forts is successfully.

Though the use of these forts is less but they will remain to serve as tourist destinations if preserved properly. The preservation of the buildings alone is insufficient without the development and maintenance of the environment of surrounding the forts. Hence, the environment should be developed. More ever, these forts can be used now as cultural centres, youth hostels,
holyday camps, museums, heritage hotels, educational institutes, military training centres, industrial and handicraft training centres, research institute, archives, Navodaya Vidyalaya and tourism centres.

The hostel of Sindhiya public school in old military quarters in Gwalior fort, Provincial Army Cadet training centre in Chunar fort, use as tourist destinations of Agra, Delhi and Jodhpur fort are some examples of these kinds. The forts of Agra, Allahabad and Delhi are fully or partially in control of Indian army.

The following suggestions would be provided for the use and preserve of the forts-

(1) As the number of forts are many in India, it is not possible to preserve all at the same time. This is a very expensive work, but in the view of historical significance and architectural importance, they have to be protected at any cost.

(2) In different regions, the lists of the fort have to be made and among them, the responsibility of preservation of the special forts have to be made sure.

(3) A specialised team of archaeologists and architects is necessary for the protection and life of the forts. The forts of Chanderi, Baruasagar, Talbehat, Gwalior, Kalinjar, Jhansi, Charkhari, Samthar and Ajaygarh etc. can be developed as tourist destinations.

(4) Some of the forts are declared as protected monuments under the control of state governments and central government. Some of the forts are the property of the ex-kings. The paintings on the wall
are the most important in these forts. The other small forts there can be utilised as schools, hospitals, rest houses etc, so that they need not be devastated. The now opening Navodaya Vidyalaya can also be established there.

(5) The housing colonies have been constructed in some of the forts such as Orchha, Devgarh and Charkhari in the space available both inside and outside the forest. This should be strictly prohibited.

(6) The construction of markets and shops surrounding the fort are undesirable. Environment reforms should be introduced to transform the prevailing scenario.

(7) The forts are the symbol of history and historical heritage. Today, forts and fortification are no more used for military purpose. Hence, the only way to protect these forts is to develop the civic consciousness. The government alone can not bear the responsibility.

(8) Similar to Shiva Durga Darshan programme in Maharashtra, it is necessary to construct the mind of the people on the basis of a special programme for this purpose. This will promote the understanding and strengthen the social fabric.

(9) The people who pursue research take the responsibility to create awareness within the society. The academic can play a pivotal role in creating civic consciousness.

(10) It is true that our life has become more materialistic. Even the literate and well educated people are not interested in the protection of their heritage. Radio, television, newspapers and
political groups can play a role in developing the interest among people for the protection of the heritage.

(11) The use of the fort should be favorable to the dignity of that place.

(12) Near the Van Durgas (forest forts), the wild life sanctuaries should be developed. So that the environment reform programme will receive support. Many forts of the Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh can be model palaces for this plan.

Many of the devastated forts can be adopted by army, navy, para military forces, police forces, social service organizations, air lines, tourism development corporations and other organizations related to tourism and hotel industry and these organizations should look after the programme of fort protection development for the preservation of the forts.

As the essence it can be said that with the Government protection, the civic sensibility is also equally necessary for the protection of the forts. Some of the self service organizations have been doing some constructive work for the protection of the forts and ramparts. These organizations are Matdata Mandal, Jabalpur, Indian cultural (Nidhi) Mansion, Delhi and some of the universities. It is required now to instigate joint efforts like these for the protection of the forts to preserve the ancient heritage, history, art and culture and it is a demand of the age. Definitely there is commercial importance for the monuments and all of the countries are encashing on these, but it is possible only when we fulfill the task with foresight. Now it is required add up the study of history, thinking for preservation of culture and heritage in our daily life consideration. It
is the centre point of our national (pride) Vanity. It the centre point has to help up, the circumference will be protected one self automatically.