INTRODUCTION

The organisation of the nobility was one of the most important institution devised by Mughal Emperors. It played a significant role in the growth, organisation, administrative structure, social and cultural life of the Mughal Empire. Without a proper study of the character, organisation, composition and role of the nobility our understanding of the many aspects of the Mughal empire will remain incomplete. Scholars working on the Mughal history realised very early the importance of the study of the nobility and in almost all the important works the role of nobility was pointed out. However Satish Chandra in his Parties and Polities at the Mughal Court (1707-1740) for the first time analysed in detail the role of the nobility during the period of the later Mughals. His work was followed by M. Athar Ali’s The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb and The Apparatus of Empire. Several other research papers and monographs on the nobility of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan have also been published. In recent years the trend is to study separately the position of various racial, religious and ethnic groups present in the nobility. Full length studies have been made on Iranis, Turanis and Rajput nobility during various period of Mughal rule. Not only that monographs and research articles on important nobles and family groups of nobles have also been published.


   U. N. Upadhyay, Irani Nobility Under the Mughals.
Much works have been done on Rajput nobility in general as well as on important Rajput clans. For example, we have detailed works on Kachhwahas of Amber, Sisodias of Mewar and Rathors of Marwar (Jodhpur) etc. In these studies on the one hand the history of the clans have been discussed in detail on the basis of local sources and on the other hand their role in the Mughal politics has also been analysed on the basis of local sources, Persian chronicles and archaival materials.

But it is indeed surprising that no detailed study of the Bundela nobility and chieftaincy in the Mughal period barring one or two articles, have been published although they also claimed to be Rajputs belonging to one of the thirty six clans of Rajputs. In recent years B. D. Gupta has published two books—Life and Times of Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela and Chhatrasal Bundela (Hindi). As the title of books indicate the work cover the same period and

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—, 'The political Role of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Walinlallah, Enquiry, 6.
Radhay Shyam, Life and Times of Malik Ambar, Delhi, 1966.
I. H. Siddiqui, Mughal Relations with the Indian Ruling Eities, New Delhi, 1983
1. Ram Karan Asopa, Mewar Ka Mool Itihas (Hindi) 1939.
V. S. Bhargawas, Mewar and the Mughal, Delhi, 1966
Ahsan Raza Khan, Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the Reign of Akbar, Simla, 1977.
Rajiv Narain Prasad, Raja Man Singh of Amber, Calcutta, 1960
G. N. Sharma, Mewar and the Mughals, Shiv Lal Aarwal & Co. 1962
focusses mainly to Chhatrasal's attempts to establish an independent Bundela kingdom. These books hardly examine the role of Bundela chiefs and nobles during the periods of Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. Actually these aspects are beyond the scope of the books. Some other modern works like W. R. Pagson's *History of the Bundelas* and Pandit Kishan Narayan's *Tarih-i-Bundel khand wa Jalaun* also broadly deal with the period of the decline of the Mughal empire. Moreover both works heavily rely on *Chhtra Prakash* and other local sources. Besides that in almost all modern works on Mughal empire too the role of the Bundelas has been mentioned briefly, and that too is limited to a discussion on the murder of Abul Fazl by Bir Singh Deo or revolts of Jujhar Singh, Champat Rai and Chhatrasal.

In view of the above facts in present work an attempt is made to present a detailed study of Bundela nobility and chieftaincy from the time of their admission to Mughal service to the death of Aurangzeb.

We have divided our work into chapters. In the first chapter besides discussing the topography of Bundelakhand region which included the states of Orchha, Datiya, Chanderi and Mahewa we have also prepared a brief history of the Bundelas from 12th century to 1554 when they settled in this region; although this period is not the theme of the present work. But even for this period we have no detailed work except brief references in *Bir Charitra, Chhatra Prakash* and *Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela*. For better understanding of their position during Akbar's reign and the nature of conflict that ensued it was

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important to prepare an account of their activities in Bundelkhand region during Sultanate period and specially under the Lodis and the Surs when they not only expelled the Chandelas and Khanagars but also encroached upon the territories of the Sultans of Delhi and Surs.

In the second chapter we have discussed the history of Orchha state from the time of Madhukar Shah to Udvat Singh (1554-1707) the contemporary of emperor Aurangzeb. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part we have discussed the circumstances leading to the admission of Bundelas in Mughal services, emergence of Orchha as a vast and powerful state under Bir Singh Deo and revolts of Jujhar Singh. Although during this period Bundelas became quite influential at the Mughal court but several Bundela chiefs also rebelled. In the second phase the Orchha state became small because large parts of its territories were confiscated but the number of Bundela mansabdass increased and during the reign of Aurangzeb they came to enjoy unique positon at the court. During this phase their total mansab and numerical strength substantially increased in comparison to other clans of Rajputs.

As mentioned above Orchha had become a large and powerful state under Bir Singh Deo; and after the accession of Shahjahan Jujhar Singh twice rebelled and created very serious situation for the empire. Shah Jahan on the one hand sent military commands to suppress the revolt and on the other hand decided to curtail the resources of the kingdom in such way that in future they may not be able to create such problem. Therefore in 1629 he seperated Datiya from Orchha and assigned to Bhagwan Das who was recognised as hereditary ruler. In the third chapter we have discussed in detail the career of Datiya chiefs specially Rao Subhkaran and Rao Dalpat.

In 1605 Jahangir appointed Bir Singh Deo as the ruler of Orchha after dismissing Ram Shah. But Jahangir wanted
to have friendly relation with Ram Shah also. Therefore in 1611 Ram Shah was assigned Chanderi and its adjoining areas and he was recognised its hereditary ruler. In the fourth chapter we have discussed the career and achievements of Bundela chiefs of Chanderi with particular reference to their relations with Orchha, Datiya and Mahewa. Besides that we have also discussed the role of Chanderi chiefs in the contemporary political development at the Mughal court.

In the fifth chapter we have studied the career of the chiefs of Mahewa. The situation of Mahewa was a little different to Chanderi and Datiya because Mahewa was a part of the kingdom of Orchha and Rudra Pratap who was founder of the kingdom of Orchha himself in 1631 granted Mahewa to his son Udaijit. Since then according to Vanshavali and local sources the kingdom was ruled by Udaijit’s family. However we have no information in any contemporary or near contemporary sources about the chiefs of Mahewa till the rise of Champat Rai. We have discussed in this chapter the career and achievements of Champat Rai and Chhatrasal with special reference to their struggle against Mughal rulers.

In the conclusion realising that such a study might be one sided we have tried to look the Rajput nobility as a whole while assessing the role of Bundela nobles and for this we have prepared list of Bundela nobles along with their mansabs from the time of Akbar to Aurangzeb. We have separate list of nobles of Orchha, Datiya, Chanderi and Mahewa and mansab of Kachhwahas, Rathors and Sisodias during the period of Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. A detailed family chart of the Bundela chiefs of different houses has also been prepared.