

## **Religious spots within forts and fort sites: a study in cultural history of Bundelkhand region in India**

**Purushottam Singh**

Vikramajit Singh Sanatan Dharm College Kanpur  
India  
dadajhansi@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Bundelkhand geographically situated in exactly the south of the Ganges plane is memorable due to the ancient references. Firstly, saints, devotees, hermits were attracted from Ganges plane towards the isolated, solitary pleasing zone of Vindhyatavi. (Singh, Rajendra, 1994, pp.1, 2) The history of Bundelkhand starts from the Chedi dynasty. (Singh, Rajendra, 1990, pp.80-85) The two famous cities of that time Shuktimati and Shahgeet are now a matter of research. After Chedis, Gupta rulers and Harsh Vardhan became the main rulers, but Chandelas were the first ruler who constructed with the capital of the region of Chedis. (Majumdar, 1951, p.252) The Bundelas and Marathas can also be regarded in this sense. There was no fort without religious spots. The religious spots in the forts of Bundelkhand were the center of belief not only for royal families but also become the center of faith and reverence of general people. Therefore these sites have gained unique and peerless fame. The religious sites within the forts played an important role in preserving and recharging the cultural heritage up to the centuries in Bundelkhand. These became the cause of cultural and religious harmony between the royal families and general people. These religious centers always released the message of prayer, peace and wish of prosperity from the royal family. Many times these temples and other spots provided the faithful with links between the royal families and general people which resulted to be the cause of welfare rule in the region. The paper is concerned with the historical importance of these religious spots. This paper is an effort to explore the dignity of the historical and religious spots within the forts of Bundelkhand region in India.

*Keywords: Fort, fortress, parapet, tirtha (i.e., sacred place).*

### **Resumen**

Bundelkhand geográficamente situado exactamente al sur del plano Ganges es memorable debido a las antiguas referencias. En primer lugar, santos, devotos, ermitaños fueron atraídos desde el plano del Ganges hacia la zona aislada, solitaria agradable de Vindhyatavi. (Singh, Rajendra, 1994, pp.1, 2) La historia de Bundelkhand se inicia desde la dinastía Chedi (Singh, Rajendra, 1990, pp.80-85). Las dos ciudades famosas de la época Shuktimati y Shahgeet ahora son objeto de investigación. Después de los Chedis, Gupta y Harsh Gupta Vardhan se convirtieron en los principales gobernantes, pero los Chandelas fueron los primeros gobernantes que construyeron la región con el capital de Chedis (Majumdar, 1951, p.252) Los Bundelas y Marathas fueron también pueden ser reconocidos en este sentido. No hubo fuerte sin lugares religiosos. Los lugares religiosos en los fuertes de Bundelkhand jugaron un importante papel y fueron centro de la creencia, no sólo para las familias reales, sino también se convirtieron en el centro de la fe y la veneración de la gente en general. Por lo tanto, estos sitios han ganado una fama única e

incomparable. Los sitios religiosos dentro de los fuertes desempeñaron un papel importante en la preservación y la recarga del patrimonio cultural durante siglos en Bundelkhand. Estos se convierten en la causa de la armonía cultural y religiosa entre las familias reales y las personas en general. Estos centros religiosos siempre enviaron el mensaje de la oración, la paz y el deseo de prosperidad de la familia real. Muchas veces estos templos y otros lugares procuraron a los fieles con vínculos entre las familias reales y la gente en general lo que resultó la causa de las reglas de bienestar en la región. El documento describe a la importancia histórica de estos lugares religiosos. Este artículo es un esfuerzo por explorar la dignidad de los lugares históricos y religiosos dentro de los fuertes de la región Bundelkhand en la India.

*Palabras clave:* Fuerte, fortaleza, parapeto, tūrtha (es decir, el lugar sagrado).

## Introduction

Bundelkhand located in the heart of India is well known for its ancient geological structure, mixed relief pattern, semi-arid climate and rough stony soils on one hand and on other to its remarkable historical background, culture and language. At present the extension of area is contradicted but generally seven district of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) named Jhansi, Jalaun, Lalitpur, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Banda, Karvi are clearly part of it with six districts of Madhya Pradesh (M.P.) named Datiya, Tikamgarh, Chatarpur, Panna, Damoh & Sagar. In this way the location of Bundelkhand region in India is in between  $23^{\circ}8'$  to  $26^{\circ}30'$  N latitude and  $78^{\circ}11'$  to  $81^{\circ}30'$  E longitude with 71,816 square kilometers total geographical area. (Singh Rajendra, 1989, 539) Bundelkhand which was known as Chedi in Mahajanpada Aga (600 B.C.), was ruled by Chedi rulers earlier and after words Guptas, Kalchuris, Chandelas, Sultans, Mughals, Bundelas, Marathas and British colonial rule; but only Chandelas and Bundelas were the founders of the particular culture of this land, paying devotion to the local population.

The Chandela rulers of Bundelkhand constructed the great temples of Khajuraho on one hand, as well as huge tanks and water bodies for public welfare on another. Though these tanks were constructed for the water conservation, it was not imagined at that time that the tanks will become a great factor in the future for the ecological balance in the area. These huge tanks and historical water bodies are the certificate of historical contribution of rulers of Bundelkhand in the field of ecological balance.

### Illustration 1. Vishwanath Temple (Khajuraho)<sup>i</sup>



Bundelkhand was facing scarcity of rain water (75 mm in NW to 125 mm NE) which is not only insufficient but also unreliable.

These circumstances encouraged the nature of water collection according to availability of favorable sites for tank construction. The middle transitional belt between the northern plane and southern highlands, which is roughly in between  $24^{\circ}33'$  to  $25^{\circ}30'$  N

latitude, presented the ideal conditions for the tank construction. Therefore 15 tehsils of 6 districts in

Jhansi (tehsils Jhansi, Mauranipur), Mahoba (Mahoba, Charkhari), Tikamgarh (Tikamgarh, Jatara), Chhatarpur (Laundi, Chhatarpur, Vijawar Tehsils) and Panna (Panna, Ajai Garh Tehsils) are in the particular zone. The presence of hard rocks like gneiss, granite sand stone and time stone surrounded by patches of agricultural lands are favorable geographical condition for water collection. The large heartedness of Chandela rulers converted the dream into truth of the people of this thirsty land. These were Chandelas who have taken keen interest in tank construction. Names of many tanks constructed by Chandelas have suffix Sagar (Sea) e.g., Keerat Sagar, Madan Sagar, Rahil Sagar, Barua Sagar in U.P. part of Bundelkhand with Radha Sagar, Gwal Sagar in M.P. part as they are huge and cover large area. The number of these historical tanks scattered in 15 tehsils of Bundelkhand is about 100. History of construction of many tanks is not available now but it is very clear that tough granite base, surroundings of hills, presence of water supply source and residence of rulers were important factors for selection of construction site. Madan Verman, Keerat Verman, Rahil, Parmardi Deva, Dhanga (950 – 1008 A.D.), Ganda, Vidhyadhar was the prominent rulers taking interest in tank construction. Most of these tanks are constructed along the human settlements, which is remarkable point (Singh, P., pp.19-35). At present the historical tanks are surrounded by natural scenes, picnic spots, religious locations as well as many of them are symbol of ancient cultural activities and festivals. If these historical tanks may be maintained properly, they have capacity to change scenario of water ecology in Bundelkhand. The tanks which were the symbol of aristocracy and source of water supply for most of the population now are center of illegal jobs and polluted water. Silt setting and illegal capturing are main problems of the tanks, therefore water carrying capacity of almost all the tanks is decreased to less than half of its actual capacity. Bands of dams are weak and most of the water of tanks is captured by fungi, grasses etc.

History and culture of Bundelkhand region were marked by geographical features. Far away from the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, Bundelkhand is situated in ranges of Vindhychal with river Yamuna as northern border (Brockman, 1921, p.15). This is mandatory to know about geographical features of the region because culture is deeply associated with surface, topography, soil and drainage patterns of an area.

### **Brief geographical background**

There are four prominent systems related to structure of the region. The Archian system is the oldest one which and can be recognized by the presence of granite and gneiss. Bundelkhand granite is of many types as per composition and colour; pink and gray colored granite is important. The second system is known as Gwalior Series or transitional system. This system is composed of sand stone, lime stone and quartzite commonly found in Datiya district. Third structure is known as rocks of Vindhychal range spread in middle part of Bundelkhand featuring layers of sand stone. According to Professor R.L.Singh, tectonic activities in southern Bundelkhand region has greatly influenced this system. The fourth structure is made of river deposits in northern belt of region due to presence of Yamuna, Pahuj, Betwa, Dhasan, Ken, Bagain rivers. Therefore geomorphology of Bundelkhand region is consist of oldest to modern structures which decides the topography, soil and underground water of the region. (Atkinson, 1874, p.524)

### **Topography**

The topography is always important in historical studies because it provides surface to human settlement and cultural evolution. Bundelkhand is subject of interest among Historians due to presence of all three major forms i.e., hill, plateau and plane. The southern part of Bundelkhand is hilly area of Vindhychal range with hillocks and scattered hills while northern part is plane attracting human

settlement. Basically slope is towards south to north resulting in plane. Thus the study area consists of the following three while discussing topography-

1. Southern high land
2. Middle Transitional Belt
3. Northern deposited plane

The southern high land has slope towards north. It can be separated from middle transitional plateaus belt by contour of 250 meters having average height from sea level 300 to 500 meters. It contains hillocks of Bhandar and Kaimur.

The middle transitional belt is most important regarding tank construction. This fact is one of the major conclusions found during the survey. In this transitional belt, hard rocks are hidden by river deposits showing ideal condition for water collection. This part has a slope towards north & north-east. Generally this belt is decided between contours of 150 m and 250 m. It has small rivers like Shahzad, Sanjana, Jaimini, Bagain and Payaswini. The average height from sea level varies between 100 meters to 280 meters as 280m in Babina, 255.15m in Jhansi, 174.6m in Garutha, 149.4m in Gohand, 210.3m in Mahoba, 121.8m in Akauna, 129.9 m in Chitrakoot and 102.6m in Rajapur, the eastern point. This transitional belt has scattered hills and small plane which converts in to big plane tending towards northern belt.

The northern deposited plane is formed by great river Yamuna and its tributaries. This part is spread over Datiya, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Banda & Karvi districts. The belt is the most fertile land of the zone because Yamuna and other rivers form DO-AAB (catchment area between two rivers) like between Pahuj and Betwa; Betwa and Dhasan; Ken and Baghain etc.

While discussing the drainage system of the region, we must mention the tributaries of river Yamuna like Kali Sindh, Pahuj, Betwa, Dhasan, Ken, Bagain & Mandakini etc. because these rivers are the life line of the Bundeli people. Kali Sindh is the river flowing in the western part of Bundelkhand originating from Sironj. Kali Sindh meets Yamuna after a distance of 300km from its origination at Jagammanpur in Jalaun district. Pahuj is the main tributary of Kali Sindh. Betwa is most important river of the Bundelkhand region. Famous scholar Rajendra Singh explained in his study that the personality of Bundelkhand is the result of the erosion of river Betwa. (Singh, R., 1990, pp.80-85) Betwa originates from village Barkhera (district- Raisin, M.P.) and travels 564 km up to its confluence with the Yamuna at Hamirpur. The Betwa flows 184 km in M.P., 225 km in U.P. and 145 km at common border of U.P. and M.P. Dams of Rajghat, Maatatila and Parichha are associated with Betwa. Dhasan is the biggest tributary of Betwa. Besides Dhasan, Ajar, Halali, Burman, Sagar, Kaliyasoat, Bina, Nian, Narayani, Gunchi, Arjun, Parwaha, Jaimini & Birma are tributaries of river Betwa. The ancient name of Betwa was Betrawati (i.e. flowing through Bamboos). The catchment area of Betwa between Kali Sindh and Dhasan is almost 43,542 square km, which is the lengthiest among all rivers of Bundelkhand. Ken is an important river in the middle-east zone of Bundelkhand. Its ancient name is Karnawati (B.C. Law & Singh, R. have supported this fact). Ken originates from district Damoh of M.P. and ends at Chilla in Banda district with river Yamuna. Urmil, Chadrawal and Sunar are main tributaries of Ken. Bagain and Mandakini are the rivers in eastern Chitrakoot zone of Bundelkhand. Water in both rivers comes from natural sources of Vindhychal range as well as small flows of Ranj, Madrar, Barar, Kareyhali, ban-ganga, barua and Payaswini. The flow of water in the above mentioned rivers becomes maximum in rainy season in zone of religious importance. In above mentioned scenario of drainage pattern of Bundelkhand, Yamuna is a

river of national importance which decides the northern boundary of Bundelkhand region. The matter of strange while discussing drainage of Bundelkhand is that flow of all rivers except Yamuna is from south to north. Yamuna separates this zone to Kanpur zone and proved as important means of travel since ancient times.

### **Brief historical background**

The early history of the region may be tracked back to the Paleolithic age as evidenced by the discovery of choppers, hand axes and the pebble cores made by clipping hard stones of convenient size at Lahchura in the region. Polished stone of Neolithic age have also been excavated (Ghosh, A., 1967, p.45). In primitive times the major part of the region was covered with forests and would have been inhabited by Gonds, Kols, Bhils etc. (Atkinson, E.T., 1874, p.524). The cultural zone of Bundelkhand was known through different names since ancient times. According to Puranic tradition the earliest known Aryan people who settled in this region, lying between Yamuna and Vindhyaachal were known as Chedis (Raychaudhury, H.C., 1953, p.126). The Mahabharat describes the Chedis as being blessed with knowledge of the eternal law of righteousness. The Chedi kingdom was one of the principal *janapadas* that flourished about 600B.C. Very little is known of the subsequent period about the history of this region till the fourth century B.C. when Mahapadma Nand who is described as exterminator of the entire Kshatriya race uprooted the Vitihotra dynasty and extended his own rule over the region (Sastri, K.A.N., 1952, p.17). After the Nandas were overthrown, the region became the part of Mauryan Empire. A minor rock edict of Ashoka was found at Gurjara (district Datia) in the region (Majumdar, R.C., "Ancient India", Delhi, 1964, p.106). The Sungas succeeded the Muaryas and confined central portion of old Mauryan Empire including Bundelkhand. During the rule of Pushyamitra Sunga (184-148B.C.) a Greek invasion took place probably under Menander, whose coins have been found in abundance at Pachkhura in Hamirpur district by Cunningham in 1878.

Towards the end of first century A.D. the region came under the domination of Kanishka (78A.D.). (Majumdar & Pusalkar, 1962, p.99) After him, the history of the area was shrouded in obscurity until approximately the middle of the third century A.D. when Vindhyashakti (255-275A.D.) rose to power near eastern Malwa and occupied large tracts of northern M.P. Vindhyashakti is probably not the personal name but the title of the founder of Vakataka dynasty (Majumdar & Altekar, 1960, pp.96-97).

Vidhyashakti's son and successor Pravarsena I (275-335A.D.) is the only ruler of the dynasty, who assumed the title of Samrata or emperor. He succeeded in extending the Vakataka hegemony and performed *ashwamedha Yajna*. It seems that the zone partly came under the Vakataka sway and partly under the Bharsivas, a branch of Nagas, whose sphere of influence extended at the time from Gwalior and Mathura in the west and probably Varanasi & Mirzapur in the east. About the middle of the fourth century A.D., the area came under the political domination of Samudra Gupta (321-375A.D.) and continued to be part of Gupta Empire still the beginning of sixth century (Majumdar & Pusalkar, 1960, p. 64). In Budhagupta's reign (477-500A.D.) the feudal family of the Parivrajaka Maharaja in Bundelkhand rose to prominence under Hastin, whose record mention a general reference to Gupta sovereignty. During the middle of the sixth century this region appears to have come under the sway of Tivara (563-580A.D.), a Punduva king of south Kosala. The next reference about the history of Bundelkhand is gathered from the description of Huien Tsang, who visited the region in 641-642A.D. He mentions the tract of which this zone formed as "Chi Chi To" (Cunningham, A., 1963, p.405), which was about 4000 li in circuit. Its capital was about 15 li in circuit and more than 1000 li to the north east of the Ujjain. The history of the zone developed in darkness for about half a century after Harsha's death. During the period of instability, a branch of Gaharwara, might have come to Mahoba and its immediate neighborhood.

The massive embankment at Vijay Sagar Lake and the construction of the lake itself in addition to lakes at Bilki and Pawa in Mahoba are assigned to Gaharwaras (Atkinson, op. cit., p. 524). The construction of Kanduara Taal situated in the townships of Thana and Paswara, is credited to one Kanda Singh, an officer under the Gaharwara Raja. In addition to these, some other lakes and tanks in the area are also ascribed to Gaharwara rulers. The antique origin of these lakes is attested by the rustic style of their construction. During the first half of the eighth century Yashoverman, the vigorous ruler of Kannauj brought the region under his sway. After the death of Yashoverman mist again gathers over history of the area and it is not lifted until the rise of Pratiharas in the last quarter of the eighth century. The Pratihar ruler Vatsraja established his supremacy over the large part of the northern India. The other important ruler of the dynasty was Nagbhata II who extended the kingdom far and wide.

During the troublesome days of the conflict among Pratihar, Pala & Rashtrakoota to win Kannauj, a new power known as Chandel emerged in the Bundelkhand region under Nannuka, who established an independent chiefship. The Khajuraho inscriptions, which mention him as Pripa & Nahipati, confirm this fact (Mitra, S.K.1958, pp.27-29). Nannuka was very brave as verse 15 of Khajuraho inscription no.4 refers to him as one whose skill in the use of bows and arrow reminded people of great epic hero Arjun. It is said that Mahoba was brought by Nannuka, under his control, by driving away the Pratiharas. The region was known as Jejakbhukti after the name of Jeja or Jejak, the second Chandela ruler of the region.

The Madanpur inscription (1184A.D.) of famous Prathvi Raj III of the Chauhan dynasty indicates the region as Jejakbhukti. (Fuhrer & Hultz, 2000, p.98). The nephew of Jeja named as Rahila as mentioned in Khajuraho records, was a great warrior and undertook works of public interest in the village of Rahila about three km south west of Mahoba. After the death of Rahila, his son Harsha who succeeded the throne and ruled approximately from 900 to 925, began to enhance his political power by entering into matrimonial alliances with other contemporary powers. The reign of Harsha's son Yashoverman is also marked with significant political developments.

According to Khajuraho inscriptions, he was "a scorching fire" to the Pratiharas and gave a great blow to their prestige. He made the Chandelas independent and one of the strongest power of the northern India. Yashoverman was the first winner of Kalinjar fort. He defeated the Kalchuri ruler to win the fort. Kalchuris were the first known ruler of Kalinjar bearing the title "Kalinjarpurwaradhiswar." After this significant win, Yashoverman declared his new title "Kalinjaradhipati" (Tiwari, Gorelal, 1934, p.38).

Yashoverman was succeeded by his son Dhanga (950-1008A.D.) who was one of the greatest ruler of his times and the Chandel kingdom achieved great prosperity under him. The important event of his reign was severance of all connections with Pratiharas. He attained the supreme leadership after inflicting a defeat over the king of Kannauj. Undoubtedly the mantle of imperialism fell from the Pratiharas upon the shoulders of Dhanga (Bose, Nimai S., 1958, p.50). The boundaries of Chandel kingdom under Dhanga extended up to the Chedi area on one side and Bhilsa on the other. To the east he retained his hold on Ganga-Yamuna Doab up to Prayag, where he ended his life when he attained the age of one hundred years by drowning himself in the sacred waters of the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna. Dhanga was credited to build Kandariya Mahadeva Temple at Khajuraho, the apex of Nagara style in the world. He was not only the builder of an empire, but he also had the welfare of people at heart. Historical tanks and lakes are the living proof of this fact. In order to dispense proper justice to his subjects, he granted revenue free lands to learned Brahmins, so that they might settle into his kingdom and their services might be utilized by the King (Mitra, op. cit., p.69). Dhanga was succeeded by his son Ganda (1008-1017A.D.).

There is no epigraphic record of any other contemporary account of his short reign. He was succeeded by Vidyadhara, who was undoubtedly one of the greatest rulers of this dynasty. His greatness is not based on conquests, but on heroic part he took in the defense of his country against the

Muslim invasion, a fact even praised by Muslim historians. In 1017 Rajyapala, Pratihara King of Kannauj was defeated in an encounter with Mahmud of Gazni and forced to make a humiliating treaty. Vidyadhara attacked Kannauj and killed Rajyapala. It resulted in Mahmud's invasion of the Chandela kingdom in 1019 A.D. (Bose, p. 56). The Kalchuris defeated the Chandelas in the reign of Devaverman (1050-1060).

The Chandelas did not remain under the subjugation of the Kalchuries for long as Kirtiverman (1060-1100), the brother of Devaverman revived the fortunes of his dynasty defeating the Kalchuri king Karnadev. Besides being militarily a genius, Kirtiverman paid close attention to public works. In addition to other constructions in various parts of his kingdom, he is credited with constructing Kirat Sagar lake to the west of Mahoba. He was also a great patron of arts and letters. A highly philosophical drama like the "Prabodhchandrodham" was composed under his patronage. He also issued several types of gold coins. Kirtiverman was succeeded by his son Sallaksana Verman (1100-1115) also mentioned as Hallaksana Verman in the coins issued by him. He is reputed to have gained success over the Parmaras and Kalchuries. Not only he was able to establish peace and order in the state but he also improved the living standard of the people and raised the reserves of the royal treasury. His successor Jaya Verman (1115-1120) lost a portion of territory to the Gahadwala ruler Govind Chandra. His successor Prithvi Verman (1120-1129) did not succeed in restoring the lost glories of the Chandelas. Prithvi Verman's son Madan Verman (1129-1162) pursued a vigorous policy from the very beginning of his reign, in reviving the strength and organization of the Chandela power. He not only restored the lost possessions of his kingdom but even expanded his territories as far as Yamuna in north, Betwa in south west, Narmada in south and Rewa in the east. Besides being a great warrior, he also patronized art and literature. He is credited to constructing a lake of Mahoba which bears his name as Madan Sagar. It seems that the great Belatal tank was also built during his reign and by his order.

The site of fort at Mahoba near Madan Sagar founded by Madan Verman is now marked by a large mound covered with broken bricks and small mosque (Führer, A., 1969, p. 173). His many inscriptions near Nilkanth temple complex at Kalinjar are still found, starting with "Om Namah Shivay." His son and successor Parmardi Dev (1165-1202) popularly known as PARMAL was the last great king of Chandela dynasty. Most important event of Parmal's reign was his conflict with Prathvi Raj III, the famous Chauhan king of Delhi. The latter's attempt to extend his territories led to a serious and sustained conflict between the armies of the two. Two folk accounts through light over struggle. These two are "Prathvi Raj Raso" written by Chand Bardai with "Parmal Raso" or "Alha Khand" by Jagnik. According to Chand Bardai, Prathvi Raj advanced towards Mahoba with a large force. He stationed another large force at Hamirpur. Tradition has it that Prathvi Raj held his camp at Sirsagarh on the bank of river Pahuj. A bloody battle ensued for eight days in which Malkhan, a Samant of Parmal, after killing eight generals of Prathvi Raj met a heroic death whereupon Prathvi Raj himself took the command. It is said that the fall of Sirsagarh was due to the treachery of Mahil Parihar, the brother in law and Samanta of Parmal (Atkinson, op. cit., p. 132).

Mahil nourished a secret feeling of revenge against the Chandelas and hence, he sided with Prathvi Raj. He was also responsible for Alha and Udal, the two Banafar chiefs and the best warriors of the day, to have left Mahoba earlier to seek refuge in the court of Jai Chand, ruler of Kannauj. A number of localities are associated with the names of the champion brothers and their fame has travelled far beyond the limits of Bundelkhand (Mitra, op. cit., p. 122).

After the fall of Sirsagarh Prathvi Raj marched towards Mahoba and camped on bank of Betwa. Realising the gravity of situation, Parmal and his ministers, on the advice of Queen Malhan Devi, decided to seek temporary truce and in the meantime summoned the two Banafar chiefs from Kannauj. The Chandelas put up a strong resistance but they suffered in the battle serious losses and numerous casualties including Bramhajit, Udal, the son of Jai Chand and almost all brave Chandela generals. Alha too was wounded. Thus the Mahoba capital of Chandela kingdom was occupied by Prathvi Raj in 1182 A.D. Parmal had to face a greater enemy in 1202 in the shape of Turks under Qutb-Ud-Din Aibak who had penetrated into his kingdom. According to Hasan Nizami, the writer of Taz-Ul-Ma'sir,

Parmal put up a gallant resistance against the Turks, but he was compelled to capitulate due to the failure of water supply. After winning the Kalinjar fort, Aibak appointed Hazbaruddin Hasan Arnal as governor of Kalinjar.

Illustration 1. Mosque Sultanate Period, Kalinjar Fort<sup>ii</sup>



The history of Chandela dynasty as one of the powers to be reckoned with in northern India ended thus in 1203A.D. Chandelas regained the Kalinjar fort from Turks in 1229 but the glory of Chandelas had ended.

In the medieval period, Budelkhand was captured by Manmath Gaharwar of Benaras, Raja Bhar of Ujjain, Mewatis, Gayasuddin Tughlaq (1322), Firoz Shah Tughlaq (1351-1388) with Malik Us Sharq,

Dariya Khan & Zafar Khan as Amir of Sultanate. With the collapse of political citadel at Delhi as a result of Timur's invasion in 1398-99, the administration of Budelkhand was affected. Mahoba and Kalpi passed in to hands of Mahmud Khan, son of governor of Kalpi. Sikandar Lodi had gained possession of few parts of Bundelkhand in 1489. The southern part of Bundelkhand became under the influence of Babur (1528), when he moved from Kalpi to Malwa. Finally Akbar gained the Kalinzer fort in 1569 by seize of his general Majnu Khan Kaqs'al. Bundelkhand remained under Mughals up to the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir with the presence of Bundelas in the zone. Bundelas were warriors of Gaharwar branch originated from Benaras and the zone named after him as Bundelkhand. After the Chandelas, the Bundelas were the only rulers that had a soft corner with local Bundeli people and were involved with public welfare works in projects like the construction of tanks and historical water bodies. Sohan Pal was the first Bundela chief to be sovereign as he captured the famous fort of Garh Kunder from Khangars in midst of thirteenth century. Rudra Pratap, the seventh in descent from Sohanpal occupied Mahoba and all western parts of Bundelkhand. He constructed Orchha as the new capital of the Bundelas in 1531 on the bank of river Betwa.

Rudra Pratap was succeeded by Bharti Chand contemporary to Akbar. Among the Bundela rulers Maharaja Vir Singh Judev (1605-1627) was the finest ruler of Bundelkhand. His contemporary Mughal emperor Jahangir awarded him by title of "King of Bundelkhand" and primary mansab of 3000 jat. Vir Singh is still famous for public welfare works with prosperity. He started construction of 52 forts and 52 tanks at a time. Several people were employed during above mentioned construction. It is a matter of notice that Vir Singh Judev was credited for public welfare works after Chandelas at mass level. Vir Singh has credit to construct and renovate famous forts of Jhansi, Garh Kunder, Dhamoni, Datiya etc. He donated 81 monads gold to Keshav Rai Temple of Mathura in form of a Gold pillar, which was later on removed by Aurangzeb. His son Jujhar Singh became the next ruler of Bundelkhand. During 1636-41 Shah Jahan, Mughal emperor enraged at the preparations of Bundelas, who blocked up the route of Deccan, sent three separate forces into Bundelkhand –one under Mahabat Khan from Agra, a second under Khan-I-Jahan from south and a third under Abdullah from Allahabad. These forces soon reduced the zone under tranquility and punished severely all who had shown any opposition to imperial authority.

Illustration 2. Jujhar Singh Palace with Sawan Bhadon minar adjacent to RamRaja Temple Orchha (Tikamgarh)



After this crush of Bundelkhand, a new hero from Bundelas named Champat Rai came in scene since 1641. He opposed Pahar Singh, representative of Mughal. Champat Rai helped Prince Aurangzeb in battle of Dharamt in 1658 during war of succession. Champat Rai became King of Bundelkhand in 1658 by order of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

Champat Rai was assassinated by his wife Queen Sarandha in situation of revolt to Mughals.

Illustration 3. Orchha Complex



After Champat Rai, his fifth son Chhatrasal became the greatest leader of Bundelas. First he entered the Mughal army under Jai Singh commander in chief of Aurangzeb (Haig W., & Burn R., 1958, p.201) Seizing the opportunity of Aurangzeb's long presence in Deccan, Chhatrasal extended his power over the whole Bundelkhand. The Bundelas had become

masters of whole zone to the west of Chambal and the Yamuna. The following couplet is famous in Bundelkhand regarding the frontiers of Bundelkhand-

*It jamuna ut narmada, it Chambal ut tons  
Chhatrasaal so laran ki, rahi na kahu hauns*

Meaning that Maharaja Chaatrasaal Bundela expanded the kingdom which had the boundaries of four rivers named Yamuna, Narmada, Chambal and Tons or Tamsa. No fighter had desire to fight with him. Hence the Chedi or Jejjakbhukti was named after Bundelas finally and was known as Bundelkhand. (Gupta B.D., 1980). The religious spots are of two kinds; spots of forts and fort sites which are Hindu

religious spots and Muslim religious spots. The power is always worried about security. If it was not true, then the kings and warriors could never built forts for this purpose. Also, they surrender before some divine power to sustain their security, prosperity and strong position. Religious spots within the forts are strong proof of the above fact. There was no fort without religious spots. The religious spots in the forts

of Bundelkhand were the center of belief, not only for royal families but also become the center of faith and reverence of general people. Therefore these sites have gained unique and peerless fame. Some prevalent Bundeli lines like as “Kila Kalinjer ka mangat hai, Maniadev Mahobe kyar” prove this fact. It has also been observed that the forts which were obviously the center of political and diplomatic activities today are aligned as touristic attractions. For example, the giant fort of Kalinjar is remained as attraction of religious spots for people after its political sunset. The Orchha in the study region may be quoted here.

This is better to say a system of abode of blessed instead of one or two spots. The famous fort of Devgarh, where Vaishnava site is located, was converted into Jainelite step by step due to the appearance of many Jain temples.

Illustration 4. Devgarh Fort



Kalinjar is a Shiva spot due to complex of many religious spots including Nilkantheshwar temple. A huge mass of people arrive here during some festivals to release their vexation (Kalanjarati iti kalanjerah). The nature of images of divine powers of forts generally depend on the ruling dynasty

building the fort. These idols always have the royal worship. During the war days these idols have specific worship, which was a matter of curiosity for general people due to nice decoration and ornamentation of images.

Illustration 5. Nilkanth zone (Kalinjar)



Thus it is clear that these religious spots within the forts had the greater importance from the royal families as well as general public. The impact of these spots on the surrounding people continued to the centuries. Although in the time of survey, some people told stories about incarnations within the forts, that can't be easily believed. A brief account of these religious spots within the

forts of Bundelkhand (U.P.) is as below.

### Hindu religious spots

Various religious spots for example “Lord Krishna’s roaming Brij” is situated in the west and “Lord Rama’s recreation Ayodhya” is situated in east of Bundelkhand (U.P.). Through these spots Vaishnava religion became most popular because of geographical neighborhood of Brij and Ayodhya. Also the maximum temples of the above two deities are found in the region. The Chandela and Bundela rulers of Bundelkhand were almost Vaishnava and they believed in worshipping Vishnu, Rama and Krishna. The incarnations of Vishnu are found with different names in the forts of Bundelkhand.

Illustration 6. Vishwanath Temple (Khajuraho)



Chitrakoot became famous due to stay of Rama during the banishment. It is the reason why the people of the surrounding areas used pay their devotion to Rama. Significantly, royal families also thought that Rama was always ideal for them. The creation of post sixteenth century a three floured temple of Ram-Sita is situated in Todi-Fatehpur fort. Now only the temple is still remaining in the ruined

fort. A golden pitcher was established on the shikhara of the temple. Beautiful wall paintings located at the temple’s inner walls are now getting destroyed. A huge temple of Rama with basement is situated in the temple complex of Gursarai fort constructed in 1670 A.D. The temple contains enormous wall paintings. There is wall painting of a wonderful unknown quadrant, which has captured an elephant in its mouth and suppressed four elephants with its legs. The royal temple of Samthar palace is a fine temple of its own style, which is actually the temple having idol of Rama. The ‘Sita-Sage’, a sacred spot of Kalinjar fort is a center of attraction for people. A statue of Radha-Krishna is located near the temple of Rama in Todi-Fatehpur fort. The living wall paintings of that temple are getting destroyed due to lack of maintenance. These wall paintings were smuggled. Another one Krishna temple was founded in Banpur fort of Raja Mardan Singh Bundela, which is well known as temple of ‘Bihari Ji’. The British troops against Mardan Singh did target this temple in 1857 for the sake local devotion. Mangalgarh fort of Charkhari constructed on a hillock is memorable for its fine sculpture. Images of Radha-Krishna made from eight metals are located at the temple. A priest is in service of the temple nowadays. The images of Vishnu incarnations were placed mostly by Chandela rulers. An epithet of Vishnu named ‘Shesh-Shayee’ situated at Devgarh is a world class attraction for scholars. Laxmi-Narayan temple of Rampura fort of last fourteenth century is interesting. An image of Goddess Laxmi is situated in Gursarai fort which is in worst condition. Nrisingh temple in Bharatgarh fort of Tal-behut was constructed by Devi Singh Bundela, son of Bharat Shah. A huge lake accelerates the beauty of temple among the ruins of the palace in the fort. The temple has a fine gate. The inner wall of temple contains discrete paintings, which are decaying. Shiva which was assumed as a deity of welfare and victory is cause of worship of many statues of Shiva in forts of Bundelkhand. Among the Shiva spots, Kalinjar fort had the highest importance. Kalinjar is praised as abode of Shiva in Puranas. Nil-Kantheshwar temple is the most revered among

other seats e.g., Ban-Khandeshwar, Mandook-Bhairava, Kal-Bhairava, Rudra-Bhairava and Patal-Ganga (Singh, Rajendra, 1990, p.1).

Kalinjar which was a famous stronghold of Chandela rulers remained touch stone for great warriors and army chiefs after the tenth century. Shankargarh temple in Jhansi fort is surrounded by high rampart. Besides the regular visitors the huge gathering pays the tributes on the occasion of Mahashivratri. Pataleshwar and Gupteshwar were two famous Shaiva spots in Rampura fort but Pataleshwar is ruined now. Hanuman is famous as divine of defense and protection while Ganesh as the deity of good will. The idols of these two are found at the gate of forts also at earlier parts of forts. The defense wall of Jhansi city have images of Hanuman at its each gate which shows the protective significance of the images (Brockman, 1909, p.184). The Hanuman of Barua-Sagar fort is also of worthy importance. The ruined fort of Erich has an image of Hanuman at its slope towards the river.

Ganesh temples are mostly the impact of Maratha rule in the region. The Ganesh temples were erected in Jhansi, Gursarai and Banpur forts. Some historians have predicted that there was diplomacy behind the establishment of an image at fort's gate because Hindu invaders became afraid of people's feelings towards these. There are so many religious spots in Bundelkhand which have no puranic existence, therefore they must be related to household gods i.e. Kuldev (Roy, 1992, p.75). The statues of saints also reflect such type of form after some time. They have no significant history after their name, but they are highly honorable in local prospects. For example, the place of Sidhbaba in Charkhari fort, place of Nutbali in Bhuragarh fort, spot of Sidhbali in Moth fort, Sidhcave in Devgarh fort and the statue of Ghulam Gaus Khan in Jhansi fort are worthy of quotation. Maniadev is the famous spot in Mahoba fort which is more famous than fort. Perhaps the image of Maniadev is related to a goddess. These all above spots are not temples but certainly are specific. For example the place of Sidhbaba in Moth fort is said the place of saint who was lord of snakes. Country men visit for divine solution of snake biting. When a tourist enters in the ruins of the fort, he can easily observe so many snakes and mongoose living together near the platform of Sidhbaba.

### **Muslim religious spots**

Bundelkhand was ruled by some Sultan and Mughals during the time. Therefore several Muslim religious spots can be seen at forts in the region. An Islamic architecture style building containing several pillars is situated with the boundary of Mahoba fort. Local people call it Babur's Mosque. Similarly a mosque was erected in Erich fort and local people call it Jama Masjid and say it was constructed by Shah Jahan. But actually this mosque was constructed by Jiyauddin in 1413 A.D. with the foundation of some Hindu religious monument. The tomb of Pir in Maudaha fort is also an example as well as Chaurasi Gumbaj of Kalpi.

A stone fort was erected by Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda. A fair is held in summer in honor of Saiyid Salar, who is generally known as Ghazi Mian. There are three noted *dargahs*<sup>iii</sup> in Maudaha town called after Pir Shukru, Moti Shahid and Shaikh Chand. The dargah of Pir Shukru is considered holy, because when it rains the enclosure is filled with water but it disappears immediately.

The saint is said to have healed worms and had been visited by people who are similarly afflicted, or whose cattle suffers from similar disease and used the earth of dargah as medicinal application. The dargah of Moti Shahid Faqir who rose the great wealth, is similarly resorted by person suffering from fever. There are three mosques in Maudaha town one of which was built by Nawab Ali Bahadur and another by courtesan named Azimun-Nisha. The famous Jama Masjid of Banda along with Masjid of Sarwar Sahib was built by Nawab Ali Bahadur second, fighter of famous struggle of 1857. (Balwant Singh, 1988, p. 278)

The fortified post of Kalpi, the former residence of the rulers of princely state Jalaun, was dismantled in 1860 by the British and its place was taken by a market known as Whiteganj. The principal remains at Kalpi are the tombs of Madar Sahib, Ghafur Zanjani, Chol Bibi and Bahadur Shahid

and the great enclosure commonly called “Chaurasi Gumbaz.” This is located in the western portion of the town and is said to be the tomb of Shah Badshah Lodi.

Illustration 7. Chaurasi Gumbaj (Kalpi)



The Chaurasi Gumbaj is built of blocks of concrete set in lime mortar with style very closely with that of Lodi period. The whole building is divided like a chess board into eight line of piers and seven lines of open spaces, thus forming 64 piers all connected by twice 49 arches, with the 49 intervening spaces covered by flat roofs. In the middle, there are four piers omitted and the

square space is thus covered by the by a lofty dome which rises about 60 feet above of flat terraced roof of the main body of the building. It is now in dilapidated condition. (Survey dated 16.02.2013).

Illustration 8. Interior of Chaurasi Gunbaj, Tomb of Shah Badshah Lodi. (Kalpi)



## Conclusion

The religious sites within the forts played an important role in preserving and recharging the cultural heritage up to the centuries in Bundelkhand. These become the cause of cultural and religious harmony between the royal families and general people. These religious centers always released the message of prayer, peace and wish of prosperity from the royal hides of forts. Many times these temples provided the faithful links between the royal families and general people which resulted the cause of welfare rule in the region. Nowadays, the forts are converting in to ruins gradually but these religious spots attract the people, though almost they are not in good condition. The festivals and fares held at these spots are not only the protector of cultural stream but also they are strengthening the social unity. The religious feelings of local people attempt to secure and make these temples and sites safe. They are also the actual centers of meetings of people to revive the historical memories of forts and royal dynasties. It is also noticeable that these spots require repair and protection because of the miserable condition in which they are. A little attention of the government and volunteer organizations can improve the

condition of these sites which will certainly strength the cultural, religious and harmonic relations of the surrounding societies.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Illustrations copyright reserved by Purushottam Singh, Secretary, N.A.A.G.S. (Kanpur) India.

<sup>2</sup> The term *dargah* means Sufi's tomb.

## References

- Atkinson, E.T.(1874) *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North Western Provinces of India* ,Vol.I, Bundelkhand division, Allahabad, 132, 524.
- Singh, B. (editor), (1988). *Gazetteer of Hamirpur*. Government of Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi, p.278
- Bose, Nimai Sadan, (1958). *History of Chandelas of Jejakbhukti*. Calcutta, 50, 56.
- Drake-Brockman D.L. (1921). Jalaun: A Gazetteer, Allahabad: Superintendent Government Press, 15.
- Drake-Brockman, D.L. (1909). *District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. Jhansi Allahabad, 184.
- Cunningham, A. (1963). *Ancient Geography of India*. Varanasi: Indological Book House, 405.
- Fuhrer, A. & Hultz, E. (Editors). (2000) *Epigraphia Indica*. Vol.ii, Archaeological Survey of India. (Reprint). New Delhi, 98.
- Führer, A. A. (1891). *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions: In the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Vol. 2). Printed and pub. by the superintendent, Government Press, N.-WP and Oudh. (Reprint 1969),173.
- Ghosh, A. (1967). *Indian Archaeology 1963-64 – A Review*. New Delhi: Government of India Press, 45.
- Gupta, B.D. (1980). *Life and times of Maharaja Chhtrsal Bundela*. Delhi: Radiant Publishers.
- Haig W. & Burn R. (1958). *The Cambridge History of India*. Vol. IV. Delhi, 201.
- Majumdar R.C. & Pusalker A.D. (1951). *The History and Culture of the Indian people: The Vedic Age*, Vol. I. Bombay, p. 252
- Majumdar R.C. & Pusalker A.D (1962). *The History and Culture of the Indian people*, Vol. II. Bombay, 99.
- Majumdar R.C. & Altekar, A. S.(1960). *The Vakataka Gupta age*. Delhi, 96-97.
- Majumdar R.C. & Pusalker A.D. (1960). *History and culture of Indian People*. Vol.III,3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Bombay, 64.
- Mitra, S.K. (1958). *The early rulers of Khajuraho*. Calcutta, 27-29, 69, 122,
- Raychaudhury, H.C. (1953). *Political History of Ancient India*. Calcutta. 126.
- Roy, Prof. B.N. (1992). *Kalanjara : A Historical and Cultural Profile, Department of History*. Pt. J.L. Nehru College Banda, 75.
- Sastri, K. N. (1952). Asoka and His Successors. *The Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, Banaras. 17.

- Singh, P. (2014). A Historical appraisal and Present Significance of Chandela's Tanks of Bundelkhand, India: Roli Prakashan Kanpur India, 19-35.
- Singh, P. (2013) Survey of Chaurasi Gumbaj (kalpi), PG council tour, V.S.S.D. College Kanpur , dated 16.02.2013.
- Singh, R. (1989). Evolution of routes in Bundelkhand U.P.: A Study in Historical Geography. *The Deccan Geographer*, 27. 2, 3. India: The Deccan Geographical Society Pune (India). 539.
- Singh, R. (1994). Bundelkhand: A Traditional Land of Fort Complex. *The Deccan Geographer*, 32, no.2. India: The Deccan Geographical Society Pune, 1, 2.
- Singh, R. (1990). Water resource and its management: A case study of river Betwa, *Indian journal of Landscape systems and ecological studies*, 13 (1)80-85.
- Singh, R. (1990). *Forts: The Corridor of Urban Environment in Bundelkhand*. Paper Presented at International Seminar on Urbanization, BHU Varanasi, 1.
- Tiwari, Gorelal, (1934). *Bundelkhand Ka Samshipta Itihas*,(in Hindi). Varanasi: Kashi Nagri Pracharini Sabha, 38.
-