

Autonomy and Assertion: Bundela Rulers under Mughal Suzerainty

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that *Autonomy and Assertion: Bundela Rulers under Mughal Suzerainty* is an original work written by me. This study is based on my own research and understanding of the historical developments related to *Bundelkhand and the Bundela rulers in early modern India*.

While preparing this work, I have consulted a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including *chronicles, regional histories, archival materials, and modern scholarly writings*. All the sources and references used have been properly acknowledged wherever necessary.

This work reflects my sincere effort to explore the *regional history of Bundelkhand and to understand the political, social, and cultural role played by the Bundela rulers within the larger framework of Mughal India*. Any errors or shortcomings that may remain are entirely my own responsibility.

It is hoped that this work will contribute, even in a modest way, to the growing interest in regional history and historical research.



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I am deeply indebted to historians such as *Irfan Habib, Satish Chandra, R. C. Majumdar, Romila Thapar, D. C. Sircar, Jadunath Sarkar, and Athar Ali*, whose scholarship on medieval and early modern India offered valuable perspectives for understanding the larger political and social framework of the period. Their critical methodologies and historical interpretations have greatly influenced this work.

I also wish to acknowledge scholars and chroniclers associated specifically with the history of Bundelkhand and the Bundelas, including *W. Crooke, Alexander Cunningham, Vincent Arthur Smith, Bhagwan Das Gupta*, and the authors of regional

chronicles such as *Chhatra Prakash and Bir Charita*. Their writings, whether analytical or literary, helped in reconstructing the historical memory and political culture of Bundelkhand.

I am equally grateful to the *Persian chroniclers* and *court historians* whose works remain indispensable for the study of Mughal–regional relations. Texts such as *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Akbarnama*, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, and *Baburnama* provided significant historical insights and documentary evidence that enriched this research.

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PREFACE

The history of early modern India is often narrated through the lens of the Mughal Empire, with much attention given to imperial expansion, administration, and courtly culture. While these narratives remain important, they sometimes leave limited space for understanding the role played by regional powers that shaped the political and cultural landscape of India in their own distinctive ways. Among such regional powers, the Bundelas of Bundelkhand occupy a remarkable position. Their political resilience, regional identity, and continuous negotiation with the Mughal Empire reflect a history that deserves deeper scholarly attention.

This work, *Autonomy and Assertion: Bundela Rulers under Mughal Suzerainty*, seeks to explore the historical journey of the Bundela rulers and their relationship with the Mughal Empire between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Rather than viewing the Bundelas merely as subordinate chiefs under imperial authority, this study attempts to understand them as active political agents who asserted their autonomy through diplomacy, military resistance, strategic alliances, and regional consolidation. Through this approach, the work aims to contribute to the broader understanding of regional histories in early modern India.

The study traces the evolution of Bundelkhand from its early historical references to the rise and consolidation of the Bundela dynasty. It examines the emergence of Orchha as a major political center and discusses the role of rulers such as Rudra Pratap, Madhukar Shah, and Bir Singh Deo in shaping the political identity of the region. Special emphasis has also been placed on Maharaja Chhatrasal, whose struggle against Mughal authority became a defining moment in the history of Bundelkhand.

In the course of this research, a variety of primary and secondary sources have been consulted, including Persian chronicles, regional literary traditions, state gazetteers, genealogical records, and modern historical writings. Works such as *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Chhatra Prakash*, and *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* have been carefully examined to reconstruct the political and cultural history of the Bundelas. At the same time, this work recognizes the limitations and biases present within both imperial and regional sources and attempts to approach them critically.

This work has been a significant learning experience for me, not only academically but also intellectually. The process of engaging with regional history allowed me to appreciate the complexity of power, identity, and resistance in early modern India. I remain deeply grateful to my parents, teachers, and friends for their constant encouragement, support, and belief in me throughout this journey.

It is sincerely hoped that this work will encourage greater interest in the study of Bundelkhand and the Bundela rulers and contribute, in its own modest way, to the growing scholarship on regional histories in India.

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INTRODUCTION

The Regional History in early modern India is often seems to be marginalized in historiographical trends, especially when a vast empire is flourished across the territories. Such an imperial centric narrative draws the attention of scholars and it looks more fascinating and when the imperial authority is the **Mighty Mughal Empire** it inevitably draws greater scholarly research. At the same time, in order to explore the regional history of Bundelkhand and Bundelas there is a lack of sustained scholarly engagements and historical focus, making the region remained underexplored.

While the core focus of this study is early modern Indian history, the significance of the region Bundelkhand can be traced back from the ancient and Rig Vedic times. During the emergence of Mahajanapadas, the region of Bundelkhand was profoundly known as Chedi Mahajanapada on the bank of river Ken. With tracing the reference from Mahajanapada times, the early texts like Rig-Veda also highlighted the terrain landscape as Chedi in textual analysis.

The historiographical trends of early modern India has been shaped by the imperial centric narratives and hence, Mughals occupied the central attention of the scholars. Within this, while Mughal Empire have been celebrated in history as a vast empire with expanded territories and insights richness yielded across. The marginalization of the regional powers seems to be quite obvious and then depicted as merely subordinates or the peripherals. In a broader sense, the history of Bundelkhand and Bundela rulers remains slightly unexplored. Although works like Persian chronicles, regional scholarships, biographies, colonial historiographies highlights the insights of the region. At the same time, these works are often fragmented or very descriptive, that do not contain the sole analysis of the region but are centric to the Mughal authorities.

There remains a significant gap while tracing Bundela agency, as there were no analytical study that shows the Bundela - Mughal interactions. Bundelkhand as a region can be traced in history but that too, not as an autonomous state but as chieftain area. Whereas when scholars explores the region they seeks to examine the genealogies, chronological orders and the art and architecture of the area more precisely. At the same time the negotiation strategies, assertion of power, and most significantly Bundelas as active political agents remained insufficiently examined. This study seeks to address the gap by analyzing Bundelas as the active political agents and not merely as the subordinates. The study comprehensively examine the region Bundelkhand, Bundela rulers and the Mughal-Bundela relationship in early modern India.

In context of Bundelas and Bundelkhand, this study aims to evaluate Bundelas as the autonomous power in Mughal Suzerainty. While analyzing the objectives, looking into a broader sense it gives out how Bundelas asserts their power and negotiated with the imperial authority to allocate their identity. At the same time, it glanced upon the political strategies of Bundelas and their bittersweet relation with the Mughals.

At the core, this study evaluates– How the Bundelas asserted their power against the imperial authority ? What political strategies led by Bundelas to resist imperial control over them ? How the alliance formation that is, within Mughals and outside the Mughals (Marathas) shapes the Bundelas as an autonomous authority ?

The study also centralize on the hypothesis that Mughals were central to the early modern times but meanwhile the emerged regional powers like Bundelas are not passive agents or peripherals of Mughals but were as significant as they have asserted their power within the imperial structure by negotiation, resistance, and alliance formation.

The sources that have been analyzed with the context of Bundela study are primary sources emphasized as **Rig-Veda** The ancient text which is used to get information about the region Present day Bundelkhand. (Mandala– 8.5-37-39)

Maitreyi, court poet– Prashashti Kavya Gives detailed information about how the battles between *BIR SINGH BUNDELA AND MUGHALS* have been fought and the clash emerges. The reference of the Tuladaan that **Bir Singh Bundela** made and how he reconstructed the Temple of **Shree Krishna Janmabhoomi**.

Ain-i-Akbari – Abul Fazl When Abu'l Fazl sat down to describe Akbar's empire in the Ain-i Akbari, his gaze fell not only on the imperial court but also on the many local powers woven into the Mughal fabric. Among them were the Bundelas of Orchha, that had risen to prominence in central India. The text also leaves traces of their cultural identity. The Bundelas were known for their devotion to Vaishnav traditions — **Madhukar Shah**, for instance, was remembered for his piety towards **Lord Krishna** — and Abu'l Fazl acknowledges such traits while still making it clear that their loyalty ultimately flowed upward to the Mughal throne. The way he arranges this information subtly transforms local rulers into ornaments of Akbar's empire: their bravery, their religious zeal, their wealth and elephants, all presented as assets that enhanced the emperor's universal sovereignty.

Lal Kavi– Chhatra Prakash, composed by Lalkavi, is one of the most significant literary chronicles of seventeenth-century Bundelkhand. It narrates the turbulent relationship between the Bundelas and the Mughal Empire, focusing particularly on the reign of **Raja Chhatrasal Bundela** (1649 – 1731). Scholars often describe the work as both history in verse and a political manifesto, since it documents wars and alliances while simultaneously

celebrating Bundela valor. Against this backdrop, Chhatrasal emerges as a freedom-seeker. The text celebrates his refusal to remain a subordinate mansabdar, his decision to carve out independence, and his **Guerrilla warfare** against imperial forces. Later in life, Chhatrasal allied with the Marathas (famously with **Peshwa Baji Rao**), and Lalkavi weaves this into the poem as part of a larger story of regional powers breaking away from the weakening Mughal grip.

Massir-i- Alamgiri, composed by Saqi Musta'id Khan in the early eighteenth century, as one of the most important chronicles for reconstructing the political history of Aurangzeb's reign. It gives a detailed analysis on Aurangzeb's battles with Bundela ruler **CHHATRASAAL**, Along with that the alliance of Chhatrasaal and Peshwa Baji Rao I of Maratha Empire.

Mughal Royal Decrees This text is all about the Mughal Farmāns and Sanads, which were basically official royal orders. These documents, usually written in Persian, were used by the emperors to confirm land assignments, grant special privileges, or transfer revenue rights.

Akbar's orders to Orchha A bunch of these are still kept in the Orchha State Records (*The eastern Bundelkhand state Gazetteer*). These are also mentioned in the famous book, the *Ain-i Akbari*. These documents officially recognized the Bundela rulers as mansabdars, which meant they were high-ranking military officials who received land in exchange for their service.

Aurangzeb's decrees : In his historical record, the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, **Saqi Musta'id Khan** wrote about how Aurangzeb would issue these farmāns to either give or take away jagirs (land grants) in Bundelkhand. This was his way of rewarding loyalty or punishing disobedience.

W.R. Pagson – History of the Bundelas, explores the history of the Bundela dynasty. Key points about

his work include: Pagson's focus was on the Bundelas, particularly during the decline of the Mughal Empire. He narrated how the Bundelas played their part in this significant historical period. For his research, Pagson relied on "Chhatra Prakash" and other local historical accounts to construct the story of the Bundelas.

The eastern Bundelkhand State Gazetteer highlighted how the Bundela rulers emerged as a fighter of their autonomy and how the house of Orchha established their solidarity. The Consort of Madhukar Shah – **GANESH KUNWAR** who bought the idol of **Lord Shree Ram** from Ayodhya and made it as **Orchha ke Raja Ram**. Along with this a study of regional interpretations given by scholars like **Gorelal Tiwari and Bhagwan Das** worked to evaluate the extraordinary tasks that have been done by Bundela rulers. At the same time, Scholars like **M. Athar Ali**, **M. Alam** and more who wrote about the mighty rule of Mughal Empire.

This dissertation will adopt a qualitative and analytical historical methodology, with a dual focus on chronological and thematic dimensions. The chronological framework will trace the evolution of Bundela – Mughal relations across successive

reigns, while the thematic framework will examine key aspects such as military alliances and conflicts, administrative negotiations, and patterns of cultural patronage. Such an approach allows for the integration of temporal progression with thematic analysis, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of Bundela political strategies and Mughal responses.

On looking into this, the study deals with the Bundela powers in Bundelkhand and their relation with imperial authority from sixteenth to eighteenth century, along with it explains the region Bundelkhand, origin of Bundelas & evolution and advancement of house of Orchha dominantly. The core theme of this work is centered on Bundela rulers under Mughal authorities and there

negotiating strategies by which they enhanced their autonomy.

This research is significant because it seeks to broaden the study of regional historiography by bringing the history of the Bundelas more centralize on discussions of early modern India. During this, it challenges the tendency to interpret the political history of the period primarily through an imperial lens and instead emphasizes the active role played by regional powers in shaping historical developments. At the same time, the study acknowledges certain limitations, particularly the uneven and often ideologically shaped nature of the available sources, as well as its deliberate concentration on political developments rather than an exhaustive treatment of socio-economic or cultural change.

In order to engage systematically with the research questions outlined above, the dissertation is organized into four substantive chapters, each dealing with a specific dimension of Bundela political history. Every chapter addresses a distinct thematic and chronological aspect of the study, together these form an interconnected narrative that traces the emergence, consolidation, and assertion of Bundela power within the broader framework of early modern Indian politics. Through this structure, the dissertation seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Bundelas negotiated their position vis-à-vis the Mughal Empire, while simultaneously constructing and defending their regional authority in Bundelkhand.

Chapter 1 seeks with the understanding of the region Bundelkhand, how it emerged and came into being from *CHEDI EMPIRE* to the present day Bundelkhand, along with that the political background of the region that includes a detailed analysis of transforming politics of Bundelkhand. Also, it evaluates the theories of the origin of Bundelas in the region and how the regional historians believed it as the blessing of *Goddess Vindhyavasini* of Vindhya ranges. For

the references there is no detailed work except for brief descriptions in *BIR CHARITA*, *CHHATRA PRAKASH* and for topographical analysis *THE EASTERN STATE GAZETTEER OF BUNDELKHAND* is cited. For the better understanding of the region and their position during Akbar's reign, nature of conflict that ensued was important to prepare an account of their activities in Bundelkhand region. During Sultanate period and especially 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. Along with this is a brief description of society that includes - the social stratification, occupation, economy, and the cultural and religious aspects of Bundelkhand.

Chapter 2 precisely discuss about the House of Orchha with respect to the rulers like *Madhukar Shah Bundela* and *Bir Singh Deo Bundela*. This chapter emphasize on 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 influent at the Mughal court but several Bundela chiefs also rebelled. The another part of the chapter focus on the Orchha state flourished under Bir Singh Deo Bundela along with a friendly relation have been established with Mughal supreme *JAHANGIR*. 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 recognized its hereditary ruler. As mentioned above Orchha had become a large and Powerful state under Bir Singh Deo.

Chapter 3 highlights the role of *Maharaja Chhatrasaal* in shaping the autonomous power of Bundelas against the Mughal crown. However there is no information in any contemporary or near Contemporary sources about the chiefs of Mahewa till the Rise of *Champat Rai*. This

chapter also focus on the career and achievements of Champat Rai and Chhatrasal with Special reference to their struggle against Mughal rulers. The chapter explores the military strategies of Bundelas and a vary nature emerged was a humble

relation of Bundelas and Maratha Peshwa specifically Peshwa Bajirao . At the age of 12.5 years, Chhatrasal lost both of his parents **Chhatrai (father) and Laad Kunvari (mother, a.k.a. Sarandha)** in the conspiracy of Mughals. He became homeless, had no support and necessary resources from any near and dear ones. Despite all the adversities, he struggled for the well-being of his people. *Chhatrasal fought 52 major Battles against the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb from the age of 22 until his Last breath at the age of 82 years.* The source that primarily referred was **CHHATRAPRAKASH authored by Lal Kavi** . Chhatrasal is the only known Hindu Maharaja who demonstrated love for the entire humanity through his actions. He proved himself to be a unique humanitarian Hindu Maharaja of medieval India. Chhatrasal protected not only Bundelkhand but also the Hindu society suffering from the Mughals. Maharaja Chhatrasal is the only king of the history of the world, not only of India, who, even

Accessed the throne, wrote poetry to boost public awareness and morale of the Hindu kings to uproot the Mughal invaders and increased the honor of the nation.

In the conclusion realizing that such a regional power like Bundelas who had established their Empire within a small region, had been asserting their power when the imperial Mughal Empire was suppressing other regional powers specially the Rajput chiefs. Bundela rulers like **Bir Singh Deo and Maharaja Chhatrasaal** were most powerful across and from whom the royal elites had also been frightened. Bundela Empire was a salient combination of cultural ethics and political autonomy that came across from multiple examples of temple building patronages and more. Lastly, Bundelas not only survived within the Mughal Empire but also, celebrated their authority and kingship with territorial expansion and systematic expedition to various imperial boundaries as well.

Chapter - 1

The Beginnings: Bundelkhand and Bundelas

Bundelkhand as a Region

Bundelkhand lies between the river Yamuna on the north, Jabalpur and Sagar divisions of Madhya Pradesh on the South, and river Kalisindh on the west and on the northwest and the river Tons and Vindhya (Mirzapur) hills on the east¹. During early modern times, the region of Bundelkhand was full of slope hills and covered with forest. As it received very low rainfall, the land was not suitable for agrarian practices.

At the same time rivers like Betwa , Dhasan and their tributaries flows through the region but as they remained dry most of the duration of the year hence, these rivers were also not very useful for agriculture and irrigation². Therefore Bundela rulers specifically **Bir Singh Deo** constructed a large number of lakes for providing water for irrigation and other essential usages. A topography restricted the economic growth of the region and compelled the inhabitants to depend upon their Neighbors for their livelihood³. Although four types of soil Called Mar, Kabar, Parua and Rakar are found in the region But because of scanty rainfall the land was not fertile And suitable for agricultural purposes and only maize, Jawar and bajra could be grown.⁴ Scholars try to demarcate Bundelkhand mainly by Considering Bundeli language and culture as the basis. From historical point of View, an attempt is made to identify Bundelkhand from the state boundaries of **Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela**, who expanded the Bundela state the most.

In this Context, this couplet is famous in folklore..⁴

It Yamuna ut Narmada, It Chambal ut Tons.

*Chhatrasal son laran ki, rahi na kahu hauns.*⁵

Some ideas regarding the boundaries of Bundelkhand region are as follows. In the **Gazetteer of India, Dr. George Grierson** writes⁶, "Bundelkhand is that area which is situated between Yamuna in the north, Chambal in the north-west, Jabalpur and Sagar divisions of Madhya Pradesh in the south, Rewa or Baghelkhand in the south-east and Mirzapur hills in the south-east." **Shri Jaichandra Vidyalkar** considers the area of Betwa, Dhasan and Ken rivers which includes the upper valley of Narmada

¹ The boundary of Budelkhand is described with slight variations. According to Cunningham (*The Ancient Geography of India*, ed. , Surendra Nath Majumdar Sastri, Calcutta, 1944, Vol. I, p. 555) the eastern boundary of Bundelkhand had been up to the river Betwa. For political geography of this region also see, Banda Collectoraie *Pre Mutiny Records, File, 1-22* ; *History of the Bundelas*, reprint Calcutta, 1928,p. 130; E. T. Atkinson, *Account of the North Western Provinces of India (Bundelkhand Series)*, Vol. I Allahabad, 1876, p. 01 ; James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central Western Rajput States of India*, Delhi, 1978, p. 01 ; R. V. Russell and HiraLal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, vol. IV Delhi, 1975, p. 438 ; W. Irwine, *The Later Mughals* ed. J. N. Sarkar, Delhi, 1921, vol. II, P. 216 ; *The Gazetteer of India*, vol. I, p. 42 . For a detailed discussion on the role of topography in its historical perspective see, p. 8-1-; *Cordington, k. de. B, A Geographical Introduction to the History of Central Asia*. G. J., 1944, p. 27-30

² *Lahori*, I (b), p. 107 ; Inayat Khan, p. 156; p. 51 ; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, p. 72.

³ *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of North-Western Provinces of India*, Vol. I, pp. 2-5; *Sher Shah and His Times, Qanunqo*, pp. 429-30.

⁴ *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, pp. 75-5 ; Atkinson, p. 54 ; W. Bums, (ed.). *Sons of the Soils*, 1941, p. 46

⁵ Shyamlal, Munshi, *Twarikh-e-Bundelkhand (Urdu)*, Naugaon, 1884, page-1

⁶ Grierson, George 'A', *Linguistic Survey of India*, Volume-1, quoted from Imperial Gazetteer of India (Central Provinces)

as Bundelkhand⁷ *Historian Vincent Arthur Smith* is of the opinion that, "The area ruled by the Chandela rulers is Bundelkhand. This area is spread till Narmada in the south of Ganga and Yamuna⁸. Giving utmost importance to geographical facts, renowned *Geographer Prof. Ramlochan Singh* has considered seven districts of Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh, besides four districts and two tehsils of Madhya Pradesh bordering it, as Bundelkhand.⁹

Dr. R.K. Tyagi has considered all the districts of Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh, besides six bordering districts and two tehsils as Bundelkhand.¹⁰

The study area is currently spread across Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Its area is situated between 2308⁰ north latitude to 26030⁰ north latitude and 7811⁰ east longitude to 81030⁰ east longitude.¹¹ The northern boundary of Bundelkhand is determined by Yamuna river, western boundary by Sindh river and north-eastern boundary by Bhandar hills. While the southern boundary is in Vindhya Plateau. From administrative point of view, this region is spread in four Divisions, which have 13 districts, 60 tehsils and 89 development blocks. The Total area of the entire region is 71618 square kilometers. According to the 2001 census, 15.49 million population resides in 108 cities and 11587 rural Settlements¹² During the Chandel period, it was famous as **Jejak Bhukti**. Which is also called **Jaibhukti** or **Jaibhoomi**.¹³

Bundelkhand was also known as *Dasharn Pradesh*, which **Kalidas** has discussed in the verse 23 of Purva Megh in "Meghdutam". Meanwhile, the region Bundelkhand is said to be as CHEDI EMPIRE of Mahabharata whose ruler was SHISHUPALA, and the same references can be seen through earliest text: **Rig-Veda** verse number 8.5-37 & 8.5-39.

ता मे अश्विना सनीनां विद्यातं नवानाम् ।

यथा चिच्चैद्यः कशुः शतमुष्टानां ददत्सहस्रा दशु गोनाम् ॥ (8.5-37)

माकिरेना पथा गाद्येनेमे यन्ति चेदयः ।

अन्यो नेत्सूरिरोहते भूरिदावत्तरो जनः ॥ (8.5-39)¹⁴

Here, during analyzing it by **H. H. Wilson** on Rig-Veda 8.5.37 And for 8.5.39¹⁵

"Become appraised, Asvins, of my recent gifts, how that Kāsu, the son of Cedi, has presented me with a hundred camels and ten thousand cows."

Kāsu, the son of Cedi (Caidya), is the donor celebrated in this stanza; it is a dānastuti, or praise of gifts. He is said to have given a hundred camels and ten thousand cows to the Ṛṣi. The term Caidya denotes his descent from Cedi. The mention of camels (uṣṭra) is of some interest, as indicating their use among the people of the period.

⁷ Vidyalankar, Jaichandra, 'Bharat Bhumi Aur Uske Niwasi', Allahabad, p.-65

⁸ Hans, Dr. Krishnalal, *The aforementioned page-5*

⁹ Singh, Ramlochan, 'India: A Regional Geography', Varanasi, 1971, Page-603

¹⁰ Tyagi, Dr. R.K., "Grassland and Fodder Atlas of Bundelkhand", IGFRI, Jhansi, 1997, Page-13

¹¹ Singh, Rajendra, "Forts: The Corridor of Urban Environment in Bundelkhand", research paper presented in International Seminar, BHU, Varanasi, 1990, Page-2

¹² *Census and Statistics Handbooks of Different Districts*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, 2001

¹³ . *Archaeological Survey Report, Volume-2, Page-95 Madanpur inscription of Chauhan ruler Prithviraj Chauhan III (Samvat 1239)*. Arun Rajasya pautren Shri Someshwar Soonuna. *Jejakabhukti desho ayam Prithvirajen lunita*

¹⁴ *Rig-Veda Samhitā, Maṇḍala 8, Sūkta 5, Verses 37 and 39*

¹⁵ 15. H. H. Wilson, *Rig-Veda Sanhitā: A Collection of Ancient Hindu Hymns*, Vol. IV (London: Trübner & Co., 1866), Mandala VIII, Sukta 5, and Verse 37: "Become appraised, Asvins, of my recent gifts, how that Kāsu, the son of Cedi (Caidya), has presented me with a hundred camels and ten thousand cows." Wilson notes that Kāsu, designated as caidya (descendant or inhabitant of Cedi), is celebrated as a liberal donor in a dānastuti passage. Verse 39: "Let not the intelligent go by a difficult path; another, more liberal and bountiful, becomes the leader of the people." Here, Wilson interprets the verse as a general moral reflection, without specific historical reference.

“Let not the intelligent go by a difficult path; another, more liberal and bountiful, becomes the leader of the people.”

The intelligent (cetaayah) are exhorted not to proceed by a difficult path; a more liberal and bountiful leader is preferable for the guidance of men. The verse conveys a general moral reflection rather than any specific historical allusion. Here the mention of Chedi is exactly the same what was a Mahajanapada Chedi in ancient times.

From the Census of 1891 it is clear that the Population of Bundelas was not very large, On the basis of the foregoing discussion about the topography of the region it may be concluded that in spite of favorable land man ratio of Bundelkhand the density/must have been very low.¹⁶

The climate and topography of Bundelkhand that have been discussed so far shows a limit to the economic growth in the region. Agriculture is most reliable occupation for the people. But for the income of empire and rulers the land revenue comes up as the key source. Due to irregularities in topography neither peasants nor the ruling class survived on it. Land possession comes up as the major problem when there is a major section of land comes under possession of Bundela ruler, could not maintain large military contingent. With this the citizens and inhabitants were needed to be dependent largely upon their Neighbors for livelihood. The nature deprived the people of Bundelkhand at the same time blessed with varied scenic beauties. From accounts of *Lahori*, *Salih* and *Bhimsen* it is highlighted that places like *Orccha*, *Datia* and *Dhamuni* were important sites of pleasure with multiple lakes, and with varied flora and fauna. Mughal emperors and princes and the nobles too frequently visited places of Bundelkhand for entertainment and on hunting.¹⁷

Looking at the background of Bundelkhand in the Gupta period

Bundelas: Origin and Evolution

It is firmly believed historically that The Bundelas belonged to Gaharwar tribe of Rajputs. The first well known ruler of the dynasty was Kasi Raj, popularly known as Pancham who came to Bundelkhand from Benaras at the time of the conquest of northern India by **Muhammad Ghori** in the closing years of twelfth century¹⁸

His successors after expelling Chandelas and Khangars who were the dominant chiefs of the region established their rule in the Bundelkhand region in the later half of the the thirteenth century. It seems because of their long rule in the region of Bundelkhand they were more popularly called as Bundela Rajputs¹⁹. Although, the origin of Bundelas is often

¹⁶ W.Irwin, *The Later Mughals*, vol.II, p. 217, on the basis of the Census of 1891 he has estimated the Total population of the Bundelas inhabiting in the districts of Banda and native Bundelkhand to 1,00,000. The population of the Bundelas who resided in other places of Sagar and Damon is not Known because for these two places we have no authority to estimate their numerical strength. For a Good discussion to estimate the population of different places during the Mughal period see, W. H. Moreland, *Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Cambridge, 1929; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, Bombay, 1963

¹⁷ Lahori, I (b), p. 122 ; *Amal-i-Salih*, I. P. 307 ; *Dilkusha* p. 3

¹⁸ *Bir Charita*, p. 486; *Dilkusha* p. 5a ; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 04; *Masir-ul-Umara* vol.I. p. 105; Sir Herbet Rislay and N. S. Meyer, ed. *The Imperial Gazetteer of Inida vol. IX*, reprint, p. 69-70; W. Crooke *The Tribes and Castes of the North-western Provinces and Oudh*, reprint, Delhi, 1974, p. 163. Taking into account Mirzapur tradition, Crooke mentions that the Bundelas are descendent of a Family of Gaharwar Rajputs, of village Gaura, near Vindhychal. Of their ancestors one took service With the Raja of Panna, an independent state between Banda and Jabalpur. The Raja died childless, And Gaharwar adventure took possession of the fort. They treated themselves superior to other Rajput Clans like Baghelas, Dars, Gaur, Umath or Sengar who are known as Sakuri group. Contrary to this R. V. Russell and Hira Lal in *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India. IV*. p. 412-38, Mentions that the Bundeli held an inferior position and were of impure blood among the other Traditional Rajputs who are divided into thirty six great clans or races, D.L. Drake. Brackman. Comp. And ed., *Jhansi Gazetteer*, reprint Allahabad, 1929

¹⁹ *Bir Charita* p. 486; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 05, in detail mentions the early life of Pancham and the harden attitude of his elder brothers and his deprivation from the property of the family after his father's death. His visit to the goddess Vindheya Vasini for justice and his severe devotion and so forth. For the history of the Chandelas, see. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajuraho*, p. 140; Smith, *Early History of India*, p. 394, and 'A contribution to the History of Budelkhand,' JASB, part I. 1881, p. 1-53; N. S. Bose, *History of the Chandellas*, Calcutta, 1956

debated. Some scholars believed that it is branch of Rajput lineage while some connects them to Suryavanshi Rajputs. At the same time, the scholars often believed about Chandela descending theory. So, initially the region of Bundelkhand was under Guptas and then Chandelas came into power and later the Bundelas. There are various theories about the origin of Bundelas as given –

Initially, it is explained that Bundela origin situates then with Prestigious Suryavanshi lineage Rajput. This view is largely expressed by bardic tradition and genealogical records attempted to connect Bundelas to North Indian Kshatriyas. Scholars like **H.H. Wilson** and **R.V. Russell**²⁰ accepted this tradition with caution. At the same time **W. Crooke** documented these claims in his works.²¹

Another important theory was descendancy to Chandelas that often suggests political continuity. This argument is mostly celebrated by historians like **Vincent A. Smith**²² and **R.C. Majumdar**²³ who focused on overlap of geographical area and administration. This theory often lacks with concrete inscriptional evidences that connects these two dynasties directly. Furthermore, this often treated as circumstantial instead of definitive explanation.

Within this context, analysis of indigenous socio political conditions of Vindhya region, it is proposed by historians that they were the local warrior tribal groups who underwent in Rajputization in early modern India. **D.C. Sircar**²⁴ posed questions through his epigraphically analysis of further genealogies, meanwhile **Romila Thapar** highlighted a broader framework for understanding such transformations as part of medieval social mobility and state formation²⁵. This approach is believed to be more historically aligned.

According to a bundeli folktale, the term BUNDELA (BOONDELA) is derived from a deep rooted practice, where Pancham offered drops of his blood to Goddess Vindhya Vasini to secure a divine sanction for his kingship. **Alexander Cunningham**²⁶ and **W. Crooke** depicts the cultural and religious dimension of such authority. Although this tale isn't historically verified, but these regional tales provides a deep understanding of how polity was sacralized to establish legitimacy. Within the historical analysis, in ancient times, Bundelkhand was the part of Mauryan Empire. After the decline of Mauryan Empire with the ruler, Vrihadraatha, the Shunga Dynasty was established. In the transitional phase a new genealogical emergence can be seen. The archeological findings and identifications like bricks and coins have shown emergence of Mitr Dynasty, that lead to the beginning of new chapter of Indian history.

With the ancestry to Chandelas and Gaharwar Tribe Pancham Bundela started ruling over the region of Bundelkhand. According to Chhatra Prakash Virbhadra the successor Of Pancham, defeated Sattar Khan, imperial officer posted In Bundelkhand region in an open battle . He also conquered The fort of Kalpi from the Kalachuri ruler and established his power at Kamrohoni (Mahoni) in Jalaun district²⁷ Sometimes in the latter half of the thirteen century his Successor **Sohanpal** fought a

²⁰ . H. H. Wilson, *A Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus* (Calcutta, 1846), p. 12–15. R. V. Russell and Hira Lal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1916), p. 85–88.

²¹ .W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol. II* (Calcutta, 1896), p. 290–292.

²² Vincent A. Smith, *The Early History of India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), pp. 385–387.

²³ R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. V* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957), pp. 210–212.

²⁴ .D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization, Vol. I* (Calcutta, 1942), pp. 45–47.

²⁵ .Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 366–368.

²⁶ Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Reports, Vol. XXI* (Calcutta, 1885), pp. 34–36

²⁷ *Bir Charita*. P. 486; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 05, *Archeological Survey of India, U*, p. 453; *Imperial Gazetteer of India vol IX*, pp. 69-70; *Jhansi Gazetteer, vol. XXIV*, p. 175, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, I*. p. 96; *Tribes and castes of the Central Provinces of India, vol. IV*, p. 438; *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteer Jhansi of Esha Basatn Joshi, vol. XXIV*, Lucknow, 1965, pp. 31-35.

battle with Khangar king **Hurmat Singh** and transferred his capital from Kamrohoni to Garh-Kurar.²⁸ Shortly afterwards he also brought the entire Khangar kingdom including Jaitpur, Jhansi and Orchha under his control. Later on another ruler of dynasty Medni Mal Added Sinhora and Mahoba to his kingdom.²⁹

Prior to it, the region of Bundelkhand had a massive change in the authority of the kingship. From 319 BC to the end of 5th century, Bundelkhand was ruled by Gupta Dynasty. They have constructed **Dashawatara Temple** in Deoghar. **BudhGupta** in Airen region have already written multiple Prashastis. These Prashastis often depicts the role of Gupta rulers in making the age as Golden age. After Guptas, the Vardhan dynasty came into being and most prominent ruler was **Harshavardhan**. With the decline of Harsha and Vardhan dynasty, the royal Kalachuri empire established. They have made prominent accounts in terms of architecture. The structures like Karna Dahiya **Temple of Amarkantak**, temple of three peaks and **Chausath Yogini Temple** in **Bhedaghat**.

The era of Chandelas was marked for massive development within the mountainous and forest state. They have introduced urban planning and offers the spread of agrarian development, new irrigation technologies and for that big ponds have been developed. Along with that forts, castles, and multiple temples have been constructed. Besides this, the glorious Chandela dynasty was under the control of **Pratiharas**. As elaborated by **Bhagwan Das Gupta**, independent Chandela rulers like **Harsha** and **Yashoverman** were also under the feudatory of Pratiharas.³⁰

Chandelas ruled almost till 500 years within the region from 831 - 1315. The genealogy begins with **Nannuk** (831 - 850), and then goes on as— **Vakapati** (850 - 870), **Jai Shakti** and **Vijay Shakti** (870 - 890), **Rahildev** (890 - 910), **Harshadeva** (910 - 930), **Yashoverman** (930 - 950), **Dhangdeva** (950 - 1002), **Gandeva** (1003 - 1025), **Vidhyadhar** (1025 - 1035), **Vijaypal** (1035 -1045), **Devaverman** (1045 - 1060), **Kirtiverman Deo** (1060 - 1100), **SalakshanVerman** (1100 -1110), **Jaiverman** (1110 - 1120), **Prithvi Verman** (1120 - 1128), **MadanVerman** (1128 - 1160), **Yashoverman II** (1160 - 1165), **Parmideva** (1165 - 1203), **Trailokya Verman** (1204 - 1242), **Veer Verman** (1242 - 1286), **Bhoja Verman** (1286 - 1290) and then the last ruler **Hameer Verman** (1290 - 1315). With this, the Chandela rule came to end and rise of new power by **Hemkaran** that is lately known as **Pancham** is started.

From the details of *Bir Charita*, *Chhatra Prakash* and *Bundela Vanshavalis* , it emerges that from **Pancham** to **Malkhan Singh** about ten Bundela chiefs (**Virbhadra**, **Arjunpal**, **Birbal**, **Sohanpal** (d. 1299), **Sahjendra** (1299 - 1336), **Nanak Deo**, **Prithi Raj** (1360 - 1400), **Medipal** (1400 - 1415) and **Arjun Deo** ruled over Bundelkhand region³¹.

The **tenth Chief Raja Malkhan** (d. 1507) was the first Bundela ruler who came into direct conflict with Lodi Sultans of Delhi. According to *Chhatra Prakash*, in 1482 **Sultan Bahlol Lodi** Attacked and defeated **Kirat Singh**, the Tomar ruler of **Gwalior**. The Bundela ruler Malkhan fought against the Sultan on the side of Kirat Singh and after the defeat accepted his over lordship.³²

Rudra Pratap was the first important ruler of Bundelkhand who succeeded his father Malkahn in 1507 . Taking full advantage of internal dissension among the Lodis after the accession of **Ibrahim Lodi** and invasion of **Babur** Rudra Pratap considerably increased the territorial limits of his kingdom. He annexed some portions of the kingdom of Ibrahim Lodi and when Babur conquered Chanderi and Kalpi from Medini Rai Rudra Pratap along with other chiefs of the region also accepted the over lordship of the Mughals.³³

²⁸ About the date of the conquest of Kurrar by Bundela chief is disputed, see, '*Contribution to the History of Budelkhand*, pp. 44-45; *The Later Mughals, II*, p. 217; *Orchha Gazetteer*, p. 15

²⁹ *Bir Charita* p. 487; *Chhtra Prakash*, p. 10.

³⁰ Bhagwan Das Gupta, "*Ancient Bundelkhand: A Historical Survey*," *Madhyadesh (Diwali Special Issue, 1970)*, p. 12.

³¹ *Bir Charita*. Pp. 485-88; *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 3-10

³² *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 11; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 190 .

³³ *Babur Nama*, tr. Annettee S. Beveridge, vol. II, second edition, 1929, pp. 590-92

In 1531 **Rudra Pratap** founded the city of Orchha and made it as his capital.³⁴ **Bharti Chand**, eldest son of Rudra Pratap ascended the throne of Orchha after the death of his father in 1531. For about one decade Bharti Chand ruled without any trouble apparently on account of his friendly relation with the Mughals. But after the overthrow of **Humayun** (1540), Sher Shah sent an army against the Bundelas for having friendly relation with the Mughals and encroaching upon the imperial territories. The Bundelas offered very strong resistance and it appears that the Sur army was not very successful in its objective³⁵

The campaign of 1545 marks a crucial moment in the contest between regional powers and the expanding Sur Empire in Bundelkhand. In this year, Sher Shah Suri laid siege to the strategically significant fort of Kalinjar, then under the control of **Kirat Singh**, a Baghela chief associated with Gwalior. The Bundelas, maintaining amicable and politically aligned relations with the Baghelas, extended military support. This alliance reflects a broader pattern of regional consolidation in the face of imperial expansion.

Despite their combined efforts, the **Baghela–Bundela** forces were unable to resist the superior military organization of the Sur army. Their defeat underscores the asymmetry between imperial resources and regional resistance³⁶. Although Sher Shah's sudden death during the siege disrupted command, it did not alter the outcome; Kalinjar ultimately passed into Sur control, indicating the structural strength of the Sur military apparatus beyond the leadership of a single ruler.

Under **Islam Shah Suri**, efforts were made to consolidate these gains and discipline recalcitrant regional powers, particularly the Bundelas. However, repeated campaigns into Bundelkhand failed to secure lasting submission. This failure can be attributed to two interrelated factors: the inhospitable terrain, which constrained large-scale imperial operations, and the effective localized resistance led by chiefs such as **Bharti Chand** and **Madhukar Shah**. Their ability to sustain opposition demonstrates the limits of centralized authority in frontier zones. The decline of Sur power following Islam Shah's death created a political vacuum that regional actors were quick to exploit. **Raja Ram Chand** of the Baghelas, in alliance with the Bundelas, reoccupied Kalinjar sometime after 1550.³⁷

This episode illustrates not merely a recovery of territory but a reassertion of regional autonomy, highlighting the cyclical nature of control in early modern north India, where imperial dominance remained contingent and frequently contested.

³⁴ *Chahatra Prakash*, p. 11; *Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer*, p. 17; *Orchha Gazetteer*, p. 17; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 190; cf. *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XIV*, p. 137, states that the city of Orchha was founded by Bharti Chand. The son and successor of Rudra Pratap. Orchha is on the left Bank of the river Betwa, 8 mile south of Jhansi district.

³⁵ *Masir-ul-Umara, II*, p. 37. It only refers that a number of battles between the Sur rulers, Sher Shah and Islam Shah and the Bundelas, Bharti Chand and his brother Madhukar Shah, were fought. But it fails to provide any details of these battles and their consequences. It shows that the Surs were Not very successful against the Bundela, because of the sudden death of Sher Shah at Kalinjar. Similarly, during the reign of Humayun no battle between the Mughals and the Bundelas is reported. Thus, one can assume that the cordial relation established by Babur with the chiefs of Bundelkhand And the Bundelas was maintained during the reign of Humayun also. *Jhansi Gazetteer, XXIV*, p. 101; Cf. *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteer of Jhansi*, p. 41. The name Rudra Pratap is an error in place of Bharti Chand. The former is wrongly said to have waged many wars against Sher Shah and Islam Shah. As mentioned above, Rudra Pratap died in 1631 and Sher Shah's accession took place after Nine years in 1540.

³⁶ Abbas Khan Sherwani. *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, tr. Brahmadeva Prasad Ambashthya, Patna, 1974, pp. 716-18

³⁷ *Akbarnama vol. II*, pp. 498-99; *Masir-ul-Umara, II pt. I*, p. 105; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 191, has Wrongly mentioned the Baghela chief, Raja Bharti Chand of Bhatt, as Bundela chief Bharti Chand. Also see, *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, vol. II, pp. 595-96.

The Society: Structure , Economy, and Practices.

The social structure of Bundelkhand within Bundelas can often be determined by the State Gazetteers. These provides a wide glance of social customs, traditions, economic practices and more. The reconstruction of society of the states like Orchha, Datia, Panna, Charkhari, Bijawar and more provides an analysis of socio economic and religious structures of the bundela society.

Society.

The Society of or cha was predominantly agrarian,³⁸ caste plays a crucial role in social framework. Brahmanas are the superior to all other classes and have ritualistic rights the society was deeply following patriarchy which depicts almost negligible literacy rate of women. Other societal groups like Lodhis and Gurjars were the production groups.³⁹

In the majority of the parts of bundelkhand such social structure is being seen. Datia exclusively comes up as the example where social differentiation can be seen in even access of the resources as well.⁴⁰ States like Samthar, Bijawar and Charkhari have similar social stratification but at some point these regional authorities have bit more rigid societal structure.

Economy

For the states like Orchha, Datia and other, agriculture and pastoralism are two predominantly accepted economic activities. As *W.R. Pogson* argued, "The prosperity of the country depends on its agriculture"⁴¹. Crops like millets wheat and pulses along with the trade of forest produce items in the local market are essentials on which bundelkhand economy relies. State of panna also includes mining as one of the important economic activity as the area was rich in precious stones and diamonds

Tradition and religion

attire reflect the climatic and economic condition of certain area and class. Usually men wore dhoti and pagdi and women wore sarees and Ghaghra. religious practices like local deity temple structured and core influence of vaishnavism within Orchha shows a great devotion it is because as it was given a royal patronage from the emperor festivals specifically does Sarah shows the martial grace of ruling elites and festivals like Holi and Diwali are centered to the social structure and everyday life.

The region Bundelkhand is diverse from the rivers covering it from major directions along with the landscape of Vindhyaachal ranges. The region initially marked for its Mahajanapadan value as Chedi Mahajanapada. Later on, developed as the territory of Guptas, then Chandelas, and Pratiharas. Lastly emerged with the origin of Bundelas by Pancham Bundela and named as to be Bundelkhand. Bundelkhand includes present-day region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. But it is one of the regions which have conserved their own tradition, customs and even the regional rule. Nowadays also, the rulers, the traditions, and every other practice is still alive in Folklores and Folk stories of Bundelkhand that have been preserved as a part of history.

While looking to the society, it includes every caste and class within the society. Dominantly agrarian, the economy extends to mining and cattle rearing as well in various states. Also, the trade of forest products with the local community markets is likely to be so normal for every class. Brahmanas have superiority within the caste order and every other caste is subordinate to it. Dusshera is one of the important festival that shows martial efficiency. These encourages the people and motivates the authority to fight against the imperial authority of Mughals. These events and incidents of courage and bravery

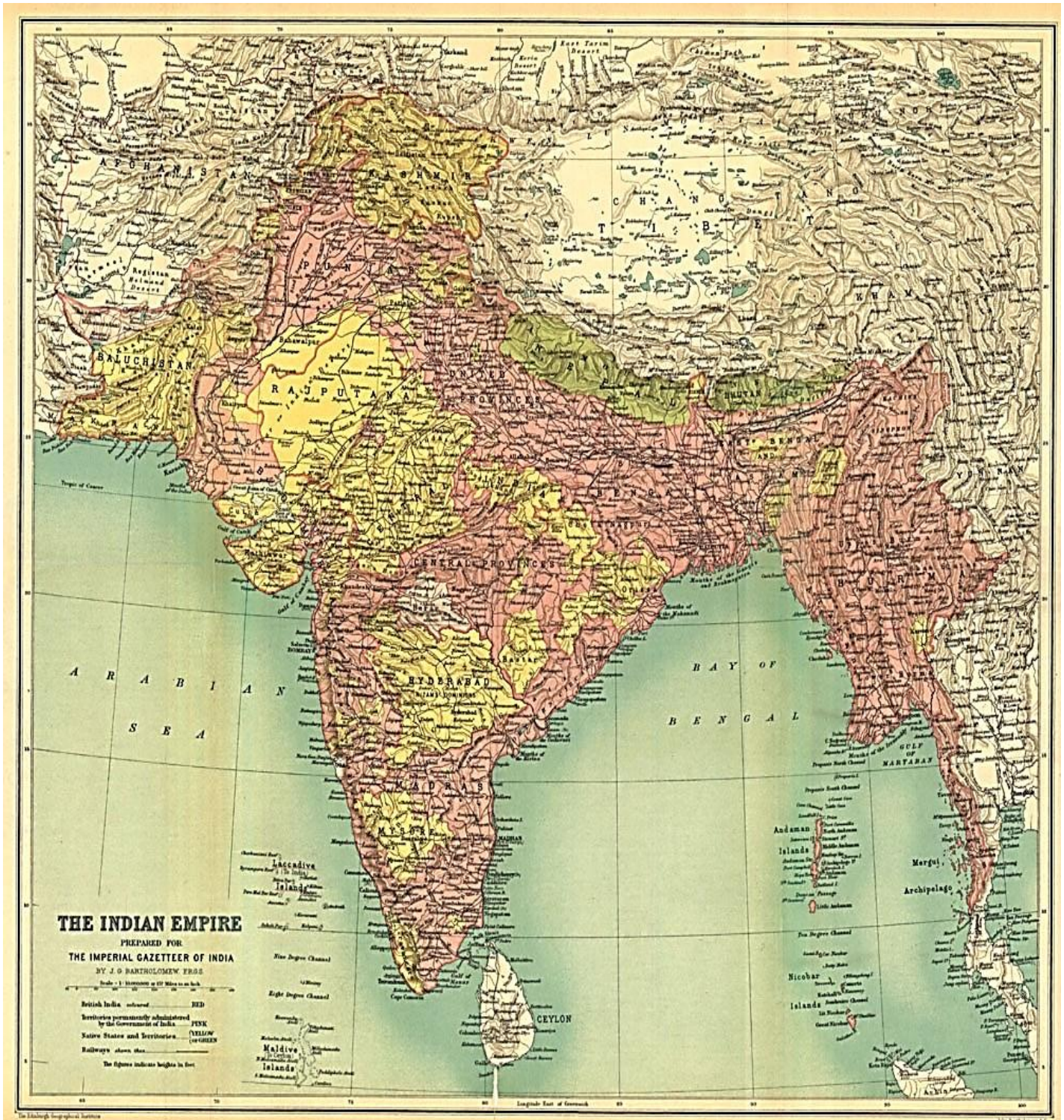
³⁸ Gupta, B. D. (1980). *Life and times of Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers , p 158

³⁹ Luard, C. E. (1907). *Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer (Central India State Gazetteer Series)*. Allahabad: Government Press, p.37-40

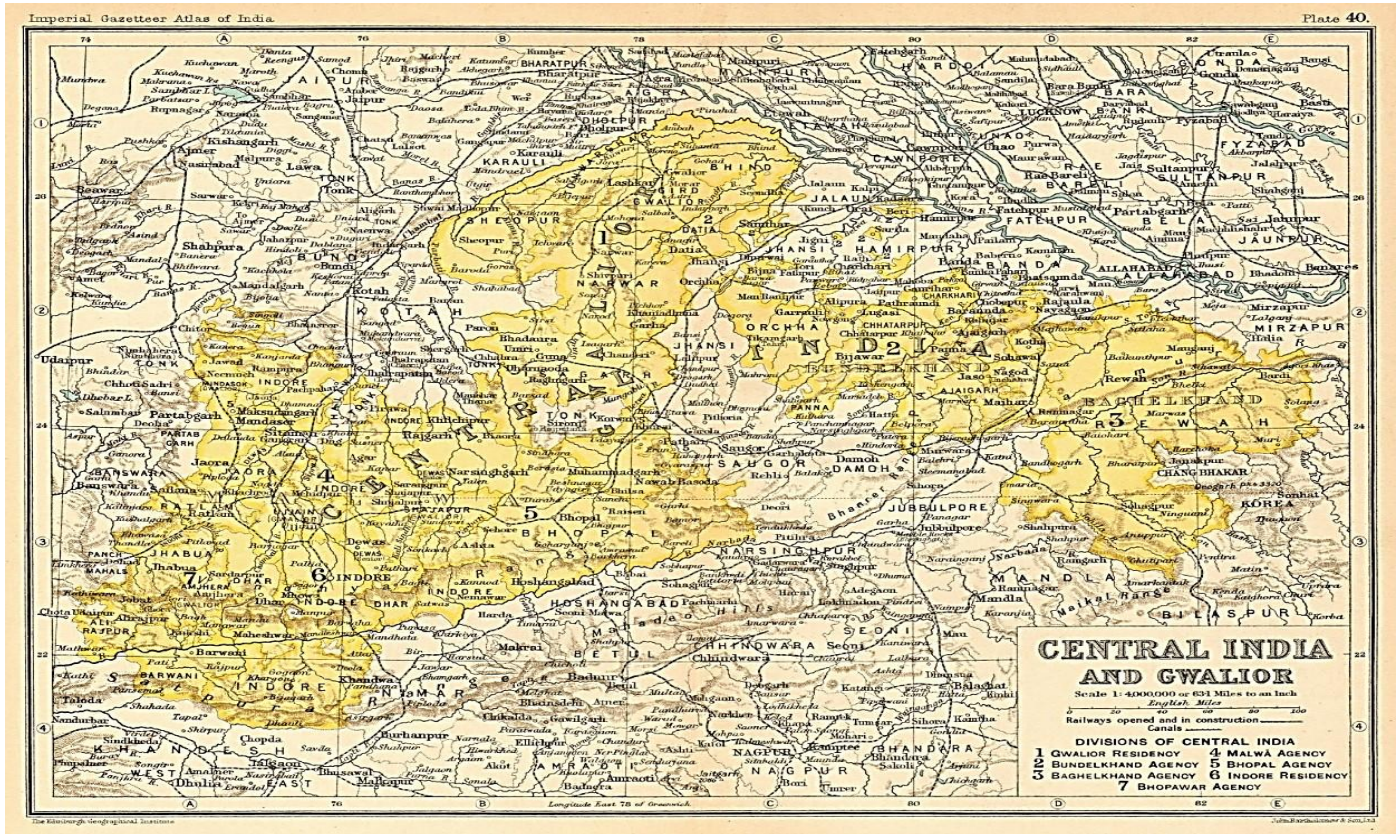
⁴⁰ Luard, C. E. (1907). *Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer (Central India State Gazetteer Series)*. Allahabad: Government Press, p, 109

⁴¹ Pogson, W. R. (1974). *A history of the Boondelas*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation,p.132

are still in records of Bundela Dynasty and people believe the kings as their God who have supported them when there was an invasion of Mughals, either for territory expansion or for to disturb ongoing governance of the ruler.

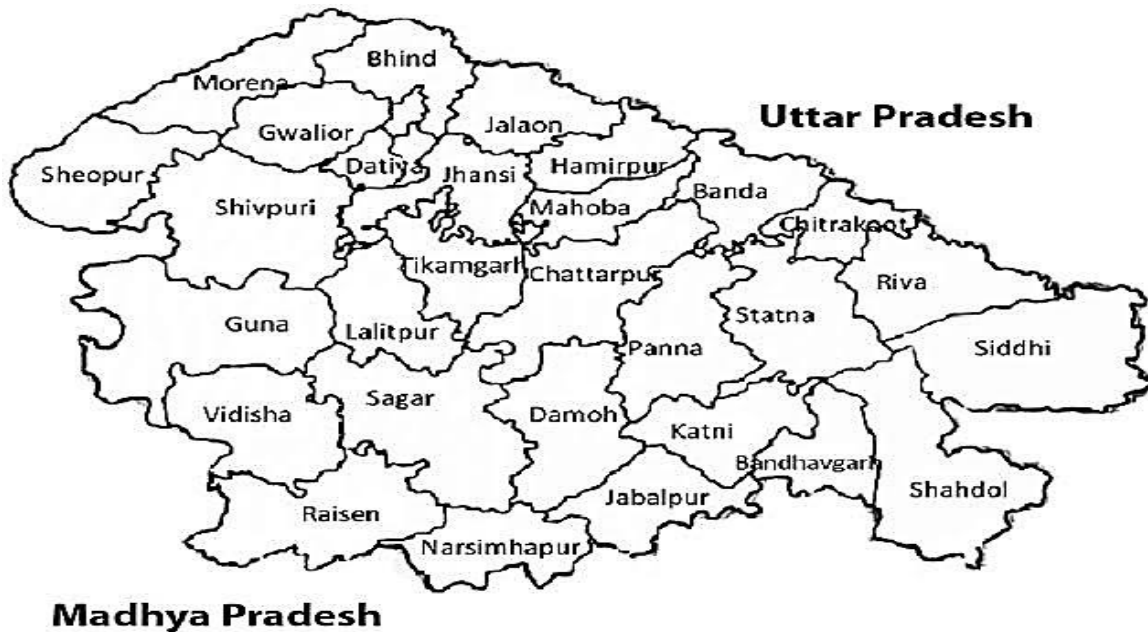


The map of India during imperial times. Taken from Digital South Asia Library.



The map includes the zones of Bundelkhand. Taken from Digital South Asia Library .

The map of present day Bundelkhand which covers the vast area of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.



Taken from Wikipedia.

Chapter-2

The House of Orchha and Relation with Mughals

The Background...

Within the Bundela Dynasty, one of the powerful rulers was **Rudra Pratap** decided to shift the *capital of the kingdom to Orchha*. And on **21 April, 1531** Orchha had been developed as a capital city of Bundelas. Probably at the same time region is said as Vindhylkhand or Bundelkhand⁴². Earlier to this, the terms like Bundelkhand have never been into existence.

Within Orchha the emperor is designated as, “ *Sri Surya Kulavatansha Kashishwara Pancham Graharwar. Vindhylkhand Mahamandalishwar Sri MahaRajadhiraj Sri Orchha Naresh.....*”⁴³. With the rising importance of Orchha it has been become a major political centre of the region and **Madhukhar Shah Bundela** was one of the emperor who had been invited in Mughal Court of **Akbar**.

Raja Madhukar Shah

Raja Madhukar Shah ascended the throne of Orchha in **1554**, after the death of his elder brother, **Bharti Chand**.⁴⁴ From the local history of Bundelkhand, it appears that at this time he had under his possession the Paraganas of **Mau Mahewa, Pandra, Haraspur** (in Jhansi), **Dungarpur** (in Datia) , **Katera, Magawan** and **Jundra**⁴⁵The Bundelas (Bharti Chand & Madhukar Sah) were able to bring such large territories under their sway mainly because of the civil war conditions prevailing in the Sur Kingdom after the death of Islam Shah.

Raja Madhukar, according to local source also fought several battles against Mughal forces during the early years of Akbar's reign and captured many neighboring Mughal territories. The imperial army under the command of **Nizam Khan, Ali Quli Khan** and **Jam Quli Khan** was defeated by him at **Chelarat, Baroni and Bharner**. As a consequence of these victories many neighbouring areas of Mughal territories came under the Bundelas⁴⁶. Although no contemporary source refers to these campaigns but the **Masir-ul-Umara** in a way fully corroborates the campaigns and victories in following words: ‘He (Raja Madhukar) became famous by his skill, diplomacy, courage and bravery and surpassed his ancestors’. In course of time he occupied many places in the neighbourhood. As a result of his large Property, following and the increased territories, he became proud and challenged Akbar's authority.⁴⁷ A comparative study of the territories held by Madhukar in **1554** and in **1592**, when he expired, further substantiate our contention.⁴⁸ But in spite of strong position of Raja Madhukar and the difficult situation with which the Mughal empire was faced, Akbar appears to have made no attempt to establish friendly relation with the Bundelas. Although the Bundelas were one of the earliest local chiefs to have accepted the over lordship of **Babur** and apparently continued doing so under **Humayun**.⁴⁹ After sudden death of Humayun and at that time Akbar was a minor. So the initial four years of Akbar's reign were influenced by **Bairam Khan** and emperor had no major role in it. Mughal Empire was highly unsatisfied during the reign of Bairam Khan even when he saved the empire by his bold moves. In **1560**, emperor holds the reins of Government in his hand and overthrow Bairam Khan. By this the **Turani** nobles got provoked and there were frequent rebellions by them that made providing indigenous support for establishing young emperor. While multiple **Afghan Chiefs** had accepted the over lordship of Mughals and can't be relied upon especially when some of the Afghan Chiefs were defying the authority. The another way to establish

⁴² *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1902): 108.

⁴³ Gupta, Ayodhya Prasad, *Sanskritik Bundelkhand*, Naman publication, 2004, pp. 19

⁴⁴ *Bir Charita*, p. 487; Notes of Blochman, *Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I*, p. 546; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 14; *Masir-ul-Umara Vol. II, part I*, p. 106. Bharti Chand was childless and hence no opposition on the succession of Raja Madhukar is reported after former's death in 1554.

⁴⁵ *The Central Indian State Gazetteer series, Eastern States, Bundelkhand Division* (Lucknow, 1907), Vol. VI-A, p. 17.

⁴⁶ *Bir Charita*. P. 487; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, Vol. XXIV, p. 192; The names can hardly be identified.

⁴⁷ *Masirul-Umara*, Vol. II, part I, pp. 106-7; Also see, *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XIV*, p. 137.

⁴⁸ *Zakhirul-ul-Khawanin*, Vol. III, ed. Dr. Syed Moinul Haq, Karanchi, 1970, p. 60.

⁴⁹ At the time of his accession, Madhukar San held the parganas of Mau Mahewa, Pandra, Haraspur (in Jhansi), Dungarpur (in Datia), Katera, Megawan and Kundra under his possession. By 1592, when he died, beside above said territories he had included parganas of Pichor, Kachhoa, Paharia, Gaur and Shivpur or Sipri in his kingdom. (The Central India State Gazetteer Series, Eastern States, Bundelkhand Division

power across was to understand the possibility of obtaining support from *Rajputs and Indian Muslims*. These elements become an important idea of Akbar's Policy.

As well as, during his first visit to **Ajmer** in **1562** Akbar married **Bhar Mal's** daughter and admitted **Bhagwan Das** and **Mansingh** son and grandson of Bhar Mal Kachhwaha. And later this tradition is followed by many other rajput houses⁵⁰. While establishing the empires, neither Akbar nor Madhukar Shah Bundela took initiative to establish friendly relation. But during the time of **Rudra Pratap** and **Bharti Chand** accepted the over lordship of Humanyu and Babur.

During first half of sixteenth century, Bundelas were flourishing across the region of Bundelkhand at the same time they were not that politically established so that they can be a threat to stabilized Mughal Empire. While this phase have been seen as a very disturbing phase of Akbar's rule because here: the nobilities mainly the Turanis were rebellious and demanding sincere attention of Akbar. On the other hand, Akbar was stressed to at least conquer all those territories that have been under the Mughal Empire during the time of his father and his grandfather⁸⁵¹ For example, the whole of the eastern India was under the Afghans, Malwa and Gujrat had independent ruling dynasties and similarly the whole of Rajputana had become independent. Akbar, as briefly mentioned above, no doubt wedded the help of some local elements to bring his nobility under imperial control and also in his plan of conquest and consolidation. With these ends in his mind he admitted two local elements-Indian Muslims (Shaikhzadas) and Rajputs in his nobility. Among the Indian Muslim only members of leading families of mystics and powerful local chiefs were considered for service, (the Afghans were just not considered for any appointment for major part of his reign because of their hostility to the Mughal)⁵².

Within this context, the Bundelas came into being a very unique role in the region of Bundelkhand and were not in Mughal services during this period while, the rajputs especially of Ajmer Suba were under Mughal lordship and even had transformational jobs with large promotional promises by the empire. The regional histories and the family records of Bundela often evaluate the intermittent hostilities taken place with them and the Mughals during the early reign of Akbar. Considered as a petty chief clan with very limited access to resources, Bundela claimed their descents with thirty-six clans of Rajput. Even as a fighter clan, Bundelas were less resolute and very impatient of discipline⁵³ And with all this, Bundelas were not that useful to Mughals and so they have always been neglected by Mughal emperor Akbar. Meanwhile when there was a Nobility rebel within the Mughal Empire, Raja Madhukar Shah Bundela took advantage a campaign of conquest was established and Madhukar Shah was successfully extended their territorial boundaries and conquering the other chief clans of the region Bundelkhand. He also made attempts to conquer neighbouring Imperial territories.⁵⁴

It was only In **1573**, that Akbar took a serious view of the activities of Raja Madhukar who had over ran *Sironj and Gwalior*. An army under **Sayyid Mahmud Barha** was sent against him. The Mughal officer claimed to have achieved a great victory over Raja Madhukar, but the Raja could not be completely suppressed⁵⁵.

After 3 years, in **1576** Madhukar Shah again tried to expand territories and invaded the imperial territories, large armies were sent from **Sadiq Khan**, **Askaran Kachhwaha** and other nobles to chastise him. It appears that at this stage Akbar wanted to offer some concessions to Raja Madhukar before starting the war against him, because he asked his commanders to come to

⁵⁰ *Rajput Clans in the Mughal Nobility : The Bundela Case'* K. K. Trivedi, Bhubaneswar, IHC, 197

⁵¹ Chieftains During the Mughal Period Under Akbar; *'Nobility under Akbar and the Development of his Religious Policy (1560-80)'*.

⁵² *The Emperor's Relation with Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir'*, Afzal Husain, IHC, Bhubaneswar, 1977.

⁵³ *Sher Shah and His Times*, p.430

⁵⁴ *Zakhiral-ul-Khawanin*, Vol. III, p. 61; *Masir-ul Umara*, Vol. II, part I, pp. 106-7

⁵⁵ *Akbarnama* (tr.) H. Beveridge, Vol. III, reprint 1977, p. 77; After his great success against Raja Madhukar, Sayyid Mahmud Barha reported to emperor Akbar that he had performed such and such Feats of valour. Asaf Khan who was also present at the court remarked. "Miranjj/this victory was due to the good fortune (Iqbal) of the king." Sayyid Mahmud Barha believed that Iqbal was the name of one of the royal officers and replied, "why do you tell untruths, Iqbal was not there, it was I and my Brethren who wielded the two handed swords." Akbar smiled and bestowed on him all kinds of Favours; *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 37; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 192.

terms with the Raja. But Raja Madhukar, being over confident of his strength, refused to accept the over lordship of the Mughals. Now a war with the rebels became inevitable.⁵⁶ The first engagement with the rebels took place at **Karhara**, held by **Parman Parmanand Panwar**, a tributary chief of Raja Madhukar Shah⁵⁷. After capturing the fort the royal forces marched towards Orchha. On the bank of **river Sawa (Satdhar)**⁵⁸ the rebel was very well contested between Raja Madhukar Shah and Mughal nobles. In this battle, the eldest son of Madhukar Shah, **Horal Deo** along with *more than 100 of rajputs* have been killed in the battlefield meanwhile **Ram Shah** another son of Madhukar Shah fled from the battlefield. Now the imperial authorities won the battle decisively and Sadiq Khan captured the Orchha Fort and divided several areas of it as his quarters.

Raja Madhukar Sah finding himself incapable of continuing the struggle against the imperial

army, sent his nephew, **Som Chand**, to Sadiq Khan to request the emperor to grant him pardon.⁵⁹ It appears that the emperor conceded to his request and Raja Madhukar was not only pardoned but reinstated in his dominion in accordance with Akbar's policy towards chieftain.⁶⁰

After the battle, Madhukar Shah remain submissive and obliged to Mughal court. Also, being a true *vaishnavite* Madhukar Shah used to wear **Krishnanandi tilak**. When he was invited in Mughal court of Akbar, beyond the tradition of Mughal Empire, he wore the same tilak. When Akbar asked him to remove the tilak then he just said that *he would prefer to be dead instead of removing tilak*.⁶¹ Akbar got arrogant but he needed to accept the tilak of Madhukar Shah. History remembers this tilak as **Madhukar Shahi Tilak**, as Akbar named it. During the Deccan campaign, in **1586-87 AD**. **Mirza Aziz Koka** and **Shahabuddin Ahmad** were appointed from Mughal Nobility. At the same time Madhukar Shah was also ordered to join the imperial army. As Madhukar Shah reached to the imperial base camp near Orchha. He escaped the place and moved towards Orchha and planned a rebel. In consequence to this, the imperial army attacked Orchha and destroyed it badly. **Indrajit**, his son, who strengthened the **fort of Khajwa** to Oppose the imperial army was also defeated and forced to flee.⁶² Akbar pardoned once again to Madhukar Shah when he asked again for peace and calmness. Beyond this, when **Prince Murad** got charge of **Malwa** in **1592 AD**. Mughal armies from **Agra, Kannauj** and **Gwalior** were ordered by Akbar to accompany the prince for his assistance⁶³.

But when the Prince reached Gawalior on His way to Malwa, Madhukar who was also ordered to accompany Murad not only failed to come to offer his submission but was in open rebellion⁶⁴. After this several more conflicts can be seen between imperial power and Madhukar Shah. At this time Madhukar Shah was holding a large set of army but still got defeated. And died through a natural cause in the same year i.e. **1592**⁶⁵. Besides the territories that he inherited from his brother **Bharti Chand** he succeeded in annexing the parganas of **Pichor, Kachhoa, Kunch, Paharia, Gaur** and **Shirpur or Sipri** in his kingdom by **1592**.⁶⁶ These territorial expansion of Bundelas under Madhukar Shah gives indirect evidences from the contemporary sources that Madhukar Shah was also involved in various conflicts and battles with Mughals. After the death of Madhukar Shah, Ram Chand, the eldest son have offered a large tribute to Prince Murad.

⁵⁶ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 209-10; *BIT CharUra*, p. 487; *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, part I, p. 10

⁵⁷ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 230; Karhara was near Orchha; *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, part I, p. 106; The Central State Gazetteer Series, Eastern States, Bundelkhand Division, Vol. VI-A, p. 17; Parmanand owed *allegiance to theiBundela chief. Raja Madhukar; Jhansi Gazetteer*,-p. 192.

⁵⁸ River Sawa (Satwardha) was on the north of Orchha.

⁵⁹ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 324-27.

⁶⁰ *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, part I, p. 106.

⁶¹ Gupta, *Prachin Bundelkhand*, Deepawali publication

⁶² *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 324-27; *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, part I, p. 106.

⁶³ *Muntakhabut TauarJKh* tr. W.H. Lowe, Vol. II, Second edition, 1973, p. 391

⁶⁴ *Akbarnama*, III, pp. 526-27

⁶⁵ *Akbarnama* Vol. III, pp. 526-27; *Muntakhabut-Tawarikh* p. 391; *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol. 11 part I, p. 107.

⁶⁶ *The Central India State Gazetteer Series, Eastern States Bundelkhand Division* Vol. VI, A, p. 19

Thereafter on the orders of the Prince he proceeded along with Yar Mohammad, the son of Sadiq Khan to offer his submission to the Emperor and presented himself at Srinagar⁶⁷. The emperor bestowed on him the kingdom of his father and subsequently awarded a mansab of 500⁶⁸. Two other sons of Madhukar, Har Deo⁶⁹ and Bir Singh Deo⁷⁰ were assigned Basneh (in Jhansi) and Baroni respectively.

Protecting Devotion:

A female safeguarding the idol of lord Rama from Mughal incursions.

Madhukar Shah was one of the powerful authority of Bundelkhand. While **Ganesh Kunwar**, prominently known as **Ganesh Bai** was consort of Madhukar Shah. She instead of being a submissive woman like others, was a connecting link between devotion and the temporal rule. Various acts of her can be seen as important sources of legitimized power of Bundelas. Ganesh Kunwar was the queen who have connected the regional authority with traditions and shape the kingship ideologies. Being the utmost followers of **Vaishnavism**, She have made the pilgrimage to **Ayodhya**.⁷¹

She moved to the city of Lord Rama for penance and chastity. At the bank of river Saryu she found the idol of lord Rama in Blackstone only. The queen evacuated the idol and took it along her. It was the time when the **Mir Baaki**, the commander of **Babur** have demolished the **Ram janmabhoomi temple**. The contemporary sources of Mughals didn't even analyse such regional traditional authorities. Ganesh Kunwar brought the idol of lord Rama to Orchha and a

temple have been established for **Lord Rama**⁷². It is named as **Raja Ram Mandir**, and the idol was installed within the temple and settled for first time.⁷³ With the installment of idol, the lord Rama have been introduced as the **ruler of Orchha** and titled it as **Orchha ke Raja Ram**. It shows the true **vaishnavite** belief of Madhukar Shah and Ganesh Kunwar Bai, that they have made an idol as a sovereign of their state.⁷⁴ Within the context of early modern India, where women were subjugated under the imperial Mughal authorities. At that moment Ganesh Kunwar Bai become an intermediary between the ruling authority of state and the traditions and provides legitimacy.

Bir Singh Deo Bundela.

The Bundela history during the time of **Bir Singh Deo Bundela** shows different dynamics. At a point there is peace and brotherhood across the empire while on the other side, there is a vigorous territorial expansion across the imperial territories as well. Bir Singh Deo was the **fourth son of Madhukar Shah Bundela**. He was married to **three Rajput girls** all belonging to **Dhandera clans**.⁷⁵ Even after being from Rajput clan but the wives of Bir Singh Deo did not belonged to superior Rajputs of **Ajmer Suba**. While evaluating the cause of it, **W. Crooke** states that the *Rathor, Sisodia and kachhwaha*

⁶⁷ Akbarnama, Vol. III, pp. 604-5; Muntakhabut Tawarikh, Vol. II, p. 391; however Mentions that Ram Sah presented himself at Lahore; Eastern States (Bundelkhand Gazetteer), p. 109; Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteer of Jhansi, p. 4

⁶⁸ Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, p. 163; Ram Chand's name is included in the Aim among the mansabdars Holding the rank of 500 during Akbar's period, Tazkirat-aql-Umara, Br. Mus. Add. 16703 (microfilm in the Department of History, A.M.U.), f 151 (a); Cf, Keshav Granthavali Bir Charitra part III, of Keshav Das, ed. Vishwanath Prasad Mishra, First edition, 1959, p. 495.

⁶⁹ Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer, p. 109.

⁷⁰ Masir-ul-Umara, Vol. II, part I, p. 107.

⁷¹ Gupta, B. D. (1980). Prachin Bundelkhand (Vol. 1). Jhansi: Bundelkhand Prakashan, pp. 156-160.

⁷² Tripathi, K. P. (1962). Bundelkhand ka Itihas. Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, pp. 210-214.

⁷³ Luard, C. E. (1907). Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer: Orchha State. Allahabad: Government Press, pp. 29. 33.

⁷⁴ Tripathi, K. P. (1962). Bundelkhand ka Itihas. Allahabad: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, pp. 212-14.

⁷⁵ Bir Charita, pp. 488, 611. The three wives of Bir Singh Deo were Rani Parvati, Guman Kunwari and Pancham Kunwari who were the daughters of Shyam Singh Dhandera of Shahabad, Parmar Singh of Khairwan and Dhandera of Shahabad respectively.

Rajputs considered themselves superior to the Bundelas or *Gaharwal Rajputs*. Because of such social discrimination they would not establish matrimonial relation with their inferiors (Bundelas)⁷⁶.

After the demise of Madhukar Shah Bundela, there was a war of succession among the sons. **Ram Chand** being the eldest one ascended the throne and got recognition from Akbar.⁷⁷

Bir Singh was very ambitious and opposed the appointment his brother and rebelled openly. Soon after he shifted himself to *Baroni* and hold the jagir that he used to have from the times of his father Madhukar Shah. Along with his brothers **Indrajit** and **Pratap Rao**⁷⁸ and occupied *Pawayan, Tomargarh, Narwar, Kelaras, Berchha* and *Karhara*.⁷⁹ Hathnoura was also captured by Bir Singh Deo after killing of its official **Bhagjang Jangra**.

Such a sudden incursion of Bir Singh Deo forced the Mughal officers posted at *Bhander*⁸⁰ to vacate it and subsequently he conquered *Iraj* from **Isa Khan** without much resistance.⁸¹ When emperor Akbar was apprised of the situation, he immediately sought that Bir Singh Deo must be expelled from newly occupied territorial region. So he, issued the *farmans* to the **Askaran of Gwalior, Ram Shah of Orchha, Abdur Rahim Khan, Jagannath** and **Durga Das** directing them to charge up on Bir Singh Deo in the territories that he have occupied. The imperial army reached at *Chandpur*⁸² where **Jagman, Hasan Khan, Hardor Panwar, Raja Ram Panwar and Durga Das**⁸³ who were the local zamindars, accompanied them against Bir Singh Deo.

With a proper war blueprint, the imperial troops were divided into two parts. First, that was leading by Raja Ram Panwar and Hasan Khan from the east. While from the North of Baroni, Askaran, Jagannath and others attacked on Bir Singh. A destructive battle fought across the region, and the *purohit* of Ram Shah, **Manjram** was dead fighting bravely till his last breath. As being a regional ruler, Bir Singh did not had that efficient and vast military, so along with the disposal of army he left the battlefield. In spite of that the Mughal army could not achieve a decisive victory and the campaign was given up temporarily⁸⁴. For the second expedition, Akbar appointed **Abul Fazl**, one of his nine gems of the Mughal court in 1594. With the orders and directions of Akbar, Abul Fazl led the expedition to adopt conciliatory policy towards the rebels of Bir Singh.

A negotiation table had been introduced by Abul Fazl by appointing **Pandit Govind Das**. But Bir Singh Deo, being a courageous and outright ruled denied for any kind of discussion. As the doors of all negotiations have been closed, then another Mughal official **Abdullah Khan** intervened and offensive act have been launched against him. Bir Singh was defeated and chased out of Orchha, but he was not completely suppressed. As a matter of fact, Bir Singh Continued to offer resistance to the combined armies of Ram Sah and the Mughals and even succeeded in occupying *Erich, Bhandar, Karhara* and *Orchha*

⁷⁶ W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Vol. II, pp. 163-65. He further states that likewise, the Bundelas also looked down The Rajput Clans of Sakuris, Baghelas, Gaur and Sagar. The Panwars, Dhanderas and Chauhans were regarded by Bundelas as their equals. Due to this superior and inferior complexity we do find all the wives of Bir Singh Deo belonging to the Dhandera Clan of Rajput

⁷⁷ *Akbarnama*, III, p. 604; *Bir Charita*, p. 487; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 13.

⁷⁸ *Bir Charita*, p. 488. Indrajit and Pratap Rao held the Jagirs of Kachhowa and Paharia Respectively. Also See, *Sagar District Gazetteer*, p. 235.

⁷⁹ Ibid. These places were located in Gwalior, See *Gwalior Gazetteer*, p. 271-74

⁸⁰ Bhandar is located near the village called Chirgaon in Jhansi district in 25°-44' N and 78° AS'E. on the left bank of river Pahuj. During the period under discussion it was a pargana or mahal of Iraj Saskar. Its ancient name was Bhandakpur *Gwalior Gazetteer*, p. 203.

⁸¹ *Bir Charita*, p. 489; *The Eastern State (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer*, p. 19

⁸² Chandpur, 7 miles south of Pichhour, a pargana of Narwar where a fort was constructed by Bir Singh Deo. *Gwalior Gazetteer*, p. 281.

⁸³ Durga Das was the uncle of Ram Shah and brother of deceased Raja Madhukar Shah

⁸⁴ *Bir Charita*, pp. 490-91 mention the first campaign in very detail.

although only temporarily.⁸⁵ Outcome of continuous wars with imperial army and the army of Ram Shah, the authority and position of Bir Singh was possibly declined. He required a support to re-establish the army and cantonments. At the same time, Prince **Salim** of Imperial Mughal Empire had certain disagreements with his father Akbar. He shifted and established himself at *Allahabad*, where he got to know about Bir Singh Deo, a ruler who have rebelled openly against the Mughal Empire and was also not been suppressed.

Prince Salim and Bir Singh Deo..

For Salim, who was looking for someone who can kill Abul Fazl, Bir Singh Deo's daring exploits and acts against Mughal Empire and army makes him more curious to meet Bir Singh Deo. He ordered one of his favorite noble **Muzaffar Khan** (a barha sayyid) to contact Bir Singh Deo . Bir Singh along with his retainers in the presence of Muzaffar Khan presented himself before Salim at a place called *Shahzadpur*. According to *Bir Charita* ever since his arrival to Allahabad Bir Singh was specially favored by Salim.⁸⁶

In August 1602 A.D. when Prince Salim came to know that Abul Fazl was coming back to Agra from the Deccan he was extremely worried and frightened.⁸⁷ Salim's feelings towards Abul Fazl had been clearly recorded in a *tuzuk* where he mentioned "Since his (Abul Fazl) feelings towards me were not honest/ he Both publicly and privately spoke against me. At this Period the August feelings of my royal father Entirely embittered against me it was certain that he obtained the honour of waiting on his (Akbar) it would be the cause of more confusion and would prelude me from the favour of with union with him (my father)"⁸⁸.

The above remark made by Prince Salim, gives out adverse consequences of Abul Fazl's visit to Agra, the royal court. So he decided to kill him on the way to the court of Agra. Also, when cordial and kind of informal relations have been established between Prince Salim and Bir Singh Deo. Prince Salim have trusted most on Bir Singh Deo and now Bir Singh was one of the favourite nobles of Salim, undertook the responsibility to kill Abul Fazl.⁸⁹ It is the question that sometimes arises that why Salim did chose only Bir Singh for this act? The reason behind this, as Bir Singh was most suited for the murder of Abul Fazl because - he was quite aware about the topographical conditions, ranges and all. At the same time, Abul Fazl have to cross the Bundela territories to reach Agra. As there were clashes earlier between Bir Singh Deo and Abul Fazl, a clear and most aware person for such conditions was Bir Singh Deo only. As a reward for this work Prince Salim promised him to grant the gaddi of Orchha⁹⁰ and the rank of 5000.⁹¹

⁸⁵ *Bir Charita*, pp. 489-90. There is no reference of the Occupation of Orchha by Bir Singh Deo and the related Developments in any of the Contemporary or near Contemporary Persian sources. *The Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer*, p. 19, only refers to the Occupation of Erich and other Jagirs in Bundelkhand region By Bir Singh Deo in 1592 AD.

⁸⁶ The above facts are corroborated from the details of *Akbarnama* (Vol. II p. 1217) that before the murder of Abul Fazl (1602) Bir Singh Deo had been in the service of Prince Salim. However it does not mention Muzaffar Khan's contact with Bir Singh Deo; *Bir Charita*, p. 502.

⁸⁷ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 1217; *Bir Charita*, p. 502; *Halat-i-Asad Beg Qazwini*, p. 01; *Turuk-i-Jahangiri*, pp. 14-15; *A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of India*, tr. Brij Narain/ ed. Ram Sharma, first edition, 1957, p. 28; *Masir-i-Jahangiri*, ed. Azra Alvi, Department of History, A.M.U. 1978, p. 30.

⁸⁸ *Tuzuk*, pp. 24-25; *A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of India*, p. 29, states "Abul Fazl is my old enemy. If he see my father my ruin is certain. I must consider what is to be done about it". *Memoirs of Emperor Jahangir*, p. 56, further narrated "" (Jahangir) am compelled to add, that under the influence of his (Abul Fazl) displeasure on this occasion my father (Akbar) gave to my son Khusrau, over me every advantage of rank and favour, explicitly declaring that after him Khusrau should be King". *Bir Charita*, fully corroborates the above details and adds that besides Abul Fazl some other senior nobles were also hostile to Salim; Also See, *Masir-i-Jahangiri*, p. 31

⁸⁹ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, 1217; *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, p. 02; *Tuzuk-i-Jhangiri*/ Vol. I, p. 25; *Zakhiratul Khawanin*, Vol. II, p. 363. According to *Bir Charita* (p. 502), the whole issue of Abul Fazl (his attitude towards Salim and his proposed visit to Agra on Emperor Akbar's advice) was discussed at the court of Salim at Allahabad in the presence of Bir Singh Deo; and on the request of the Prince Bir Singh agreed to kill Abul Fazl,

⁹⁰ *Bir Charita*, p. 505.

With the help of **Champat Rai**⁹² and **Muzaffar Khan**, Bir Singh have made a full strategic plan

to over took Abul Fazl at a place called *Sarai Berar*, between *Narwar* and *Antri* near Gwalior on *11th August 1602 A.D.*⁹³ Abul Fazl got killed as a small army troop with him and the battle was a tough contest between Bir Singh and Abul Fazl as Abul Fazl was fighting bravely.⁹⁴ The head of Abul Fazl have been severed from his body by Bir Singh Deo. As *Bir Charita* explains it as

“आवत हैं जीते अभयपद लैनहार, दैनहार दक्षिण नगर को।
सालनि ज्यों, तालनि ज्यों, केसव तमालनी ज्यों तेरे भुवपाल साइरस घोरघर को।
दीनों धोडि छितिनाथ साहिब सलेमसाही महावीर वीर सिंह मधुकर को।
अब्बुफजल मदमत गजराज राज मारि डारयों सखा सेख अकबर को।”⁹⁵

Champat was sent along with it to Allahabad where it was presented to Prince Salim. He was overjoyed and celebrated the day.⁹⁶

When Akbar got to know about murder of Abul Fazl by Bir Singh Deo, according to *Halat-i-Asad Beg* “He (Akbar) was extremely grieved, disconsolate Distressed and full of lamentation. That day and night he neither shaved, as usual, nor took opium but spent his time in weeping and lamenting”⁹⁷. The orders have been issued to **Raja Rai Raya**, **Raja Man Singh** and other official present in vicinity of *Antri*⁹⁸ to capture and punish the assassin Bir Singh Deo. As the pressure of Mughal arms rises, Bir Singh was required to take shelter in the forests.⁹⁹

Within same year, after some time, Bir Singh made expenditure to fort of Bhandar and occupied it, but soon imperial army expelled him. With the struggles of setting him up back there, Bir Singh had a fierce battle with Rai Ray an in the fort of Irij on the bank of *river Betwa*¹⁰⁰. He strategically escaped from the fort when he got to know that imperial army is about to capture

⁹¹ *A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of India*, p. 29. No other contemporary source mentions about the assurance given to Bir Singh regarding the restoration of gaddi of Orchha or the rank of 5000. But the remarks of Jahangir in the *Tuzuk*, p. 25, "if he would stop that seditious - monger (Abul Fazl) and kill he would receive, every kindness from me", and *Akbarnama's* (Vol. III, p. 1217) remarks 'as the Sheikh (Abul Fazl) was proceeding to the court unattended, he (Bir Singh) should put an end to him. He then dispatched the villion after having made him hopeful of many favours', broadly corroborates *Bir Charita*; also see, *Masir-i-Jahangiri*, p. 32.

⁹² Champat Rai was born at a village of Mor Pariyar, near Mahewa in the state of Orchha. He passed his early life in Obscurity. He seems to have been a loyal follower of Bir Singh Deo and his successor Jujjhar Singh (The Later Mughals, Vol. II, p. 219).

⁹³ Bir Singh collected an army numbering 5000 mounted soldiers. At all the palaces in each village he posted scouts to bring news (of Abul Fazl's movements), so that he may know when it was time to come out and attack (*A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of India*, p. 29); For details see, *Bir Charita*, p. 505; *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, pp. 2-4; The tomb of Abul FAZl is located at Antri in Gwalior.

⁹⁴ *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, p. 02; *A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of India*, p. 29; *Masir-i-Jahangiri*, pp. 32-33; *The Badshahnama of Abul Hamid Lahori*, ed., Maulawi Kabiruddin and Abdul Rahim, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1867, pp. 238-39. The total army of Abul Fazl consisted of three hundred Soldiers. Most of them were newly recruited who were Facing an enemy (Bundelas) for the first time;

⁹⁵ *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, p. 5; *Bir Charita* (p. 505)

⁹⁶ For the details of the War see, *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, pp. 5-6; *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 1216-21; *Tuzuk*, Vol. I, p. 25; *Bir Charita*, pp. 501-507; adds that Champat was sent with the head to Allahabad; *A Contemporary Dutch chronicle of India*, pp. 28-29; *Zakhiratul Khawanin*, Vol. II, pp. 360-63.

⁹⁷ *Halat-i-Asad Beg* p. 8. For other details of grief and sorrow of the emperor, Nobles and the people at the court and outside see, *Akbarnama*, Vol. in , pp. 1219-21; *Bir Charita*, pp. 505-8; *A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of India*, p. 29.

⁹⁸ *Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 1217 The place was in Sarkar Bayanwan. At the time of Abul Fazl's murder Rai Rayan and Man Singh the Mughal nobles, were there with 2 or 3000 horse.

⁹⁹ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 12 20-21; *Bir Charita*, p. 508; *Masir-ul-Umara*, pp. 423; *Jhansi Gazetteer* Vol. XXIV, p. 193.

¹⁰⁰ On the bank of this river the fort (Irij) was situated; *Halat-i-Asad Beg*; p. 10.

the fort.¹⁰¹ According to Asad Beg, Rai Rayan undertook himself to guard the river bank and the Raja of Gwalior and others were placed to guard the three Other sides of the fort.¹⁰² According to local tradition Bir Singh took shelter with Salim at Allahabad after fleeing from Irij.¹⁰³

With the failure of expedition Asad Beg was appointed as the *commissioner to investigate* whole issue and highlight the role of mobile nobles who were responsible for allowing Bir Singh to fly far from Fort. As Beg reached to the camp to Rai Rayaan, the officials tried to manipulate and win over him by giving him heavy bribes and expensive gifts but at the same time Assad beg rejected all such offerings. After thorough investigation he had published a report which had been approved by Akbar lately.¹⁰⁴ The report pointed out that the escape of Bir Singh Deo was due to the lackness in functions of the officials and the commanders with which he just secretly escaped. But at the same time he added that the intentions behind such malfunctioning were not hostile. As a result of the report, Akbar recalled all the officials including Rai Rayaan.¹⁰⁵

Around 1605 CE, the son of Abul Fazl, **Shaikh Abdur Rahman** was appointed to take charge of Mughal army and expedition against Bir Singh. While, Bir Singh in Bundelkhand had re-captured Orchha and was started settling down there. **Raja Raj Singh, Abdullah Khan** and **Patar Das** accompanied Abdur Rahman for the campaign. A hotly contested battle have been fought that Imperial army defeated Bir Singh Deo who himself was severely injured and number of officials of Bundelas have been died in the battlefield.

However, Bir Singh managed to escape again by poisoning the wells of the region so that the imperial troops untenable. The royal forces were required to leave the place because there was no source of water other than that poisoned one. Around the same time across 1605, demise of Akbar shattered the Mughal Empire.¹⁰⁶ And with this, the another expedition or campaign against Bir Singh was failed. The imperial army won the battle, but still they were unable to suppress the Bundela forces around them. Bir Singh didn't only followed the directions of Prince Salim but he had always been a problem for Mughal Empire and it's Suzerainty.

From the details elaborated above, it can be clearly analyzed that from the demise of Raja Madhukar Shah in (1592 AD) to death of Akbar (1605), Bir Singh remained as a rebellion, openly challenging the Mughal imperial authorities. The successive failures of Mughal forces of the campaigns of suppression of Bir Singh was evident to the Bir Singh's bravery and bundela authority but at the same time it affected the prestige of Akbar.

The success of Bir Singh was also because the Mughal officials were not that steadfast towards any rebel.¹⁰⁷ The imperial expedition in the regions like Bundelkhand had also seem to be very difficult due to varied geographical conditions and

¹⁰¹ *Akbarnama*, pp 1222-24;

¹⁰² *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, pp.10

¹⁰³ *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteer of Jhansi*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, p. 10

¹⁰⁵ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 1225; Cf. *Bir Charita* (p. 508); Kesav Das is of the view that the imperial army was badly defeated by Bir Singh Deo in 1602 AD; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XIV, pp. 137-38.

¹⁰⁶ *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, pp. 156-57; *Masir-ul-Umara*, Vol.I, p. 4 23; *Umra-i-Hunud*, p. 349; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 194; The information about campaign against Bir Singh is brief. We have been able to trace the details with The help of *Bir Chrita* (pp.509-10), which adds That Bir Singh met in person to Prince Salim at Datia At a time when the royal forces under the command of Sheikh Abdur Rahman were chastising him. On this Occasion Bir Singh was given robe of honour by Prince Salim. It seems that the Kachawaha nobles who were Also present with the Prince were unhappy with the Favor given to Bir Singh Deo by him. This was obvious Because Kachawaha and other Rajput clans of Ajmer Suba considered Bundelas inferior to them. It further States that one of causes of the failure of the Imperial forces to seize the fort and capture Bir Singh was the deep ditch around the fort of Orchha. The intention of *Bir Charita*(p.519) that the forces Under the command of Abdur Rahman were badly defeated By the Bundelas and whole booty was captured by them Can- hardly- be "accepted in" the 'light'"'-of other Contemporary evidence. However, we may accept/ as Mentioned above, that Abdur Rahman" no 'doubt failed in Capturing Bir Singh.

¹⁰⁷ *Halat-i-Asad Beg*/ p. 162.

topography. Bir Singh got success in it through *Guerrilla* tactics of warfare which was certainly new to the imperial forces . Finally, Bir Singh Deo also had the support of almost all other Bundelas chiefs, because the successor of Madhukar Sah, Ram Shah had become unpopular for taking the support of Mughals after surrendering the independence of Orchha.¹⁰⁸

Accession to the Throne –

With the death of Akbar the hardships and struggles of Bir Singh came to end. Prince Salim, to whom history known as **Emperor Jahangir**, accessed the throne of Mughal Empire and a cordial relations between Bundelas and Mughals can be seen in history. The succession of Jahangir was a remarkable transitional phase of Mughal Empire. Bir Singh Deo was recognized as a ruler of Orchha, as promised by Jahangir¹⁰⁹. This accession to the throne was strongly opposed by the family of Ram Shah. As a part of his attempt to establish cordial relation with the family members of his elder brother Ram Shah, Bir Singh took Sangram Shah, Indrajit and Bharat Shah with him and presented them before the emperor for royal favours¹¹⁰. He was granted the whole territory of Bundelkhand including *Jathara*¹¹¹ by the Emperor in 1605¹¹². But the decision was greatly resented by Ram Shah who left Iraj and occupied *pathari*¹¹³. When Bir Singh came to know of it he immediately proceeded from the court and reached at *Piparhat*¹¹⁴ and without much resistance he took over Pathari from Ram Shah. After this loss Ram Shah established himself at *Bangawan*, the place situated at a distance of half a kos from Pathari¹¹⁵

The trial of establishing cordial relations with his brother's family was just an attempt to fix everything thing out within the family clan. But they resented badly. At the same time, Bir Singh was a great ruler. Within Bundelkhand and Orchha the subjects were in huge support of Bir Singh and this was thought to be the biggest achievement of Bir Singh . Jahangir himself mentions the reasons for this Promotion in the Tuzuk in the following words, "I promoted Bir Singh Deo, a Bundela Rajput, who had obtained my Favour, and who excels his equals and relatives in valour, Personal goodness and simple heartedness to the rank of 3,000,the Emperor Mentions him as the lion of the forest bravery and Crocodile of the river of the forest."¹¹⁶ In *Bir Charita* , Also he has been praised for his bravery, ability , courage And victory etc.¹¹⁷

During the final years of Jahangir's reign, Bir Singh took massive advantage of deteriorated heath of the Emperor and prevailing political chaos at the court extended his power over the territories of neighbouring zamindars (the Gond Chiefs of eastern Malwa) and acquired a large fertile territory. He also heavily bribed the Mughal officers to regularize this acquisition.¹¹⁸ According to **Nainsi**, Bir Singh possessed under him about 81 big and small parganas consisting of 1,25,000 villages and 28 strong forts.¹¹⁹. The extension of territories by Bir Singh Deo is also confirmed when we compare the jama given in Nainsi's Khyat and that of the Ain. The jama given in the Khyat of the parganas which he possessed both in Zamindari and jagir . . comes to 15,28,00,000 dams¹²⁰(Rs. 38,20,000) is higher than the jama of the Ain¹²¹ . The pay claim

¹⁰⁸ *Eastern State Bundelkhand Gazetteer*, p. 19 Bir Singh had the support of his two other brothers, Indrajit and Pratap Rao and other Bundela chiefs, Champat Rai, one of the descendants of Rudra Pratap. He had at least seven sons who also assisted him in his every walk of life.

¹⁰⁹ *Bir Charita*, p. 545 Also see, *Halat-i-Asad Beg*, p. 54-55.

¹¹⁰ *Bir Charita*, p. 521.

¹¹¹ Jathara was an important pargana of Orchha state.

¹¹² *Bir Charitra*, p. 522.

¹¹³ Pathari, a name given to any tract located in hilly region of Bundelkhand. Here, Pathari was a Village in Sagar district.

¹¹⁴ Piparahat, a village in district Sagar assigned in Jagir to the family of Ram Shah by emperor Akbar.

¹¹⁵ *Bir Charitra*, p. 525.

¹¹⁶ *Tuzuk*, 314.

¹¹⁷ *Bir Charitra*, pp. 497, 584-85, 612; He has been compared with legendary ancient Indian heroes And Kings like Raja Bharat, Vikramajit, Ram Chand and others in respect of courage, bravery and Truthfulness.

¹¹⁸ *Lahori*, I, pp. 238-251.

¹¹⁹ *Munhat Nainsi Khyat*, I, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur, 1960, pp. 127-28.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*.

¹²¹ *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. And ed. By J.H.S. Jairetee, Vol. II, 1949, pp. 198-200,210-24.

against his mansab of 5,000/5,000 would have come to no more than 5,84,00,000 dams (Rs.14,60,000).¹²² Thus, his income from these parganas was almost three times of his salary claim. The reason for exceeding the jama of the salary claims, it seems came from those places which he had acquired with the bribery from the Gond chiefs during last years of Jahangir. An attempt has been made to locate these places on a map so as to give an idea of the extensive possession of Bir Singh Deo in Central India. It shows that he had control over a large areas of the sarkars of **Bayanwan** and **Iraj** in the north and deep into the Gondwana region of Malwa in the south. It would be difficult to work out the areas which were assigned to him as jagirs in lieu of his Mansab.¹²³

Besides that Bir Singh Deo had more than 20,000 Cavalry at his disposal.¹²⁴ From the accounts of foreign Travellers like **Hawkin** and **Finch**, that he Always stood on the left side of the emperor Jahangir at The court and was one of his confidential nobles.¹²⁵ According to Jalal Hisari, he used to perform the Weighing ceremony (**TULA DAAN**) once or twice a year, a privilege Reserved for the Emperors only¹²⁶. Finally, to say in the Words of **Shahnawaz Khan**, he acquired so much territories, Wealth, popularity with prestige that no territorial chief Could become his equal.¹²⁷

Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple and Bir Singh Deo

As like his father Madhukar Shah, Bir Singh Deo was also a *devoted vaishnavite*. And it was the time when the Hindu Temples of the religious cities like *Mathura, Ayodhya and Kashi* have been destroyed by the *Mughal royal forces*. The temple of **Krishna Janmabhoomi, Keshav Dev Temple** and **Dakshina Dwara of Vishram Ghat** of *Mathura* have been rejuvenated by Bir Singh Deo.

The temple Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi, is popularly known as the **birthplace of lord Krishna**. The temple was earlier constructed by the great grandson of lord Krishna **Vajranabha**¹²⁸. Later, the **Garg Samhita** highlights that Vajranabha played the key role for establishing Krishna shrines and images across the *Mathura and Brij region*.¹²⁹

When the temple of *Krishna Janmabhoomi and Keshav Dev Temple* have been destructed with the orders of **Aurangzeb**, and the masses within Mathura were suppressed. At that point, Bir Singh Deo comes up as a saviour of not only Dharma but the subjects too. *Massir-i-Alamgir* highlights, “The temple of Keshav Rai at Mathura was demolished by order of the Emperor”¹³⁰. It shows the evidence of existence of a Hindu Temple out there and that have been destroyed by the Emperor Aurangzeb. The Keshav deva temple and Krishna Janmabhoomi have been presented within the same complex. And Bir Singh Deo provided patronage of more than 33 crores to renovate and rebuilt the shrine. As **Cunningham** notes, “*The great temple of Keshava Deva... was built by Raja Bir Singh Deo of Orchha.*”¹³¹ He further notes: “*A structure of great size and magnificence... rising high above the surrounding country.*”¹³²

Regional historians like **Bhagwan Das Gupta**¹³³ and **Gorelal Tiwari**¹³⁴ explains the patronage of this temple in great detail.

¹²² For the details of Mansab System during Jahangir’s period see, Irfan Habib “*The Mansab System, 1595-1637*”, *Indian History Congress* (1967), Patiala session, pp. 228-49. K.K. Trivedi is of the view That the contemporary sources are silent on this development because no objection was raised on the Part of emperor Jahangir.

¹²³ See the map.

¹²⁴ . *Dilkusha*, p. 3a

¹²⁵ *Early Travels in India*, (1583-1619), ed. William Foster, p. 163.

¹²⁶ Balkrishna Brahman, *Gwalior Nama*, p. 138a.

¹²⁷ *Masir-ul-Umara*, I, p. 424.

¹²⁸ *Vishnu Purana*, Book V, Chapter 38–40

¹²⁹ *Garga Samhita*, Mathura Khanda (sections on Vajranabha; pagination varies by edition)

¹³⁰ *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, Trans. Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta, pp. 60–61

¹³¹ Alexander Cunningham *Archaeological Survey of India Reports*, Vol. III, pp. 22–23

¹³² Alexander Cunningham *Archaeological Survey of India Reports*, Vol. III, pp.23

¹³³ Bhagwan Das Gupta ,*Prachin Bundelkhand*, Vol. I, Jhansi, 1980, pp. 156–160

¹³⁴ Gorelal Tiwari, Works on *Bundela polity and religion*, pp. 201–205

They emphasized on grants given to the construction of shrine in the form of *Asharfis*. Being a political authority, Bir Singh Deo not only established the shrine but also have made it big enough so that, the artwork look magnificent.

In present scenario, the *Krishna janmabhumi shrine* and the *keshav Rai temple* is still in news and debates. This is because of the *temple mosque dispute* that have been occurred in a piece of *land of more than 13 acres*. The condition have been deteriorated as much as the case of the dispute have been sent in *High Court of Uttar Pradesh, prayag Raj* that is earlier known as Allahabad. the dispute is basically about a common wall between the temple and the mosque . Observers like **F.S Growse**, while analyzing the structure of Idgah mosque that have been constructed on *Katra keshav Rai*, which is locally believed as the *original birthplace of lord Krishna*, he analysed that, the *Shahi Idgah Mosque* have been built on a temple that have been stood here for centuries. Another important aspect was the reused material that, Aurangzeb have asked to use. The Spolia (remains) of earlier structures have been clearly seen across the Mosque.¹³⁵ The case is still proceeding in the court, and the final verdict of court will give the ownership of this disputed land to any of the party.

¹³⁵ Growse, F. S. (1880). *Mathura: A district memoir* (pp. 82–85). Allahabad: North-Western Provinces Government Press.

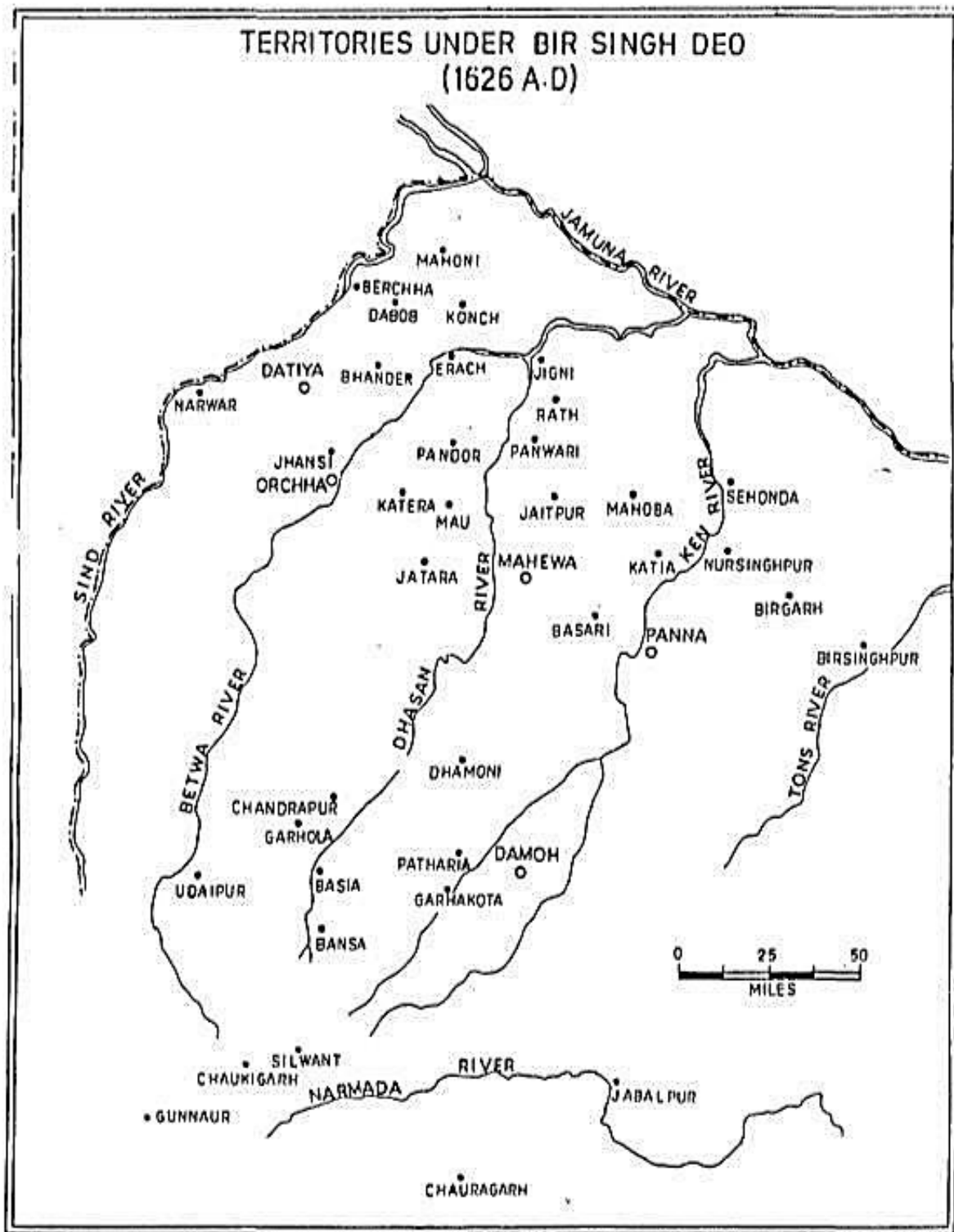
The *house of Orchha* have been the most plausible within Bundelkhand. The rulers like Madhukar Shah who was continuously asserting his power from the imperial authorities of Mughals. From expansion of boundaries over new territories to making campaigns on Mughal territories also. Along with that the gender specific role of *Ganesh Kunwar Bai*, at the time where the royal Mughal women were not allowed to step out of the *harem*. In such deteriorated situation of women, she went for pilgrimage and decided dominantly to took over the idol of lord Rama to Orchha and make it the supreme power and sovereign of Orchha. This bridge between culture and political advancement made Madhukar Shah a great ruler within Bundelkhand.

The succession of Bir Singh Deo was full of struggle and rebels but with the accession to the throne, he made various developments within Orchha and Bundelkhand too. Along with this, it was the time when *Mughal emperor, Jahangir* was obliged to *Bir Singh Deo* .

Bir Singh died a natural death in **1627 A.D.** in his territory ¹³⁶and was succeeded by his son **Jujhar Singh**.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *Masirul Umara*, Vol. I, p. 424; Cf. *A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of India* (p. 88), He died in 1626 A.D.

¹³⁷ *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p. 356



The map taken from –Ahmad A., *The Bundela Nobility and Chieftaincy under the Mughals*, CENTRE OF ADVANCED , DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY ALIGARH MUSLIUNIVERSITY ALIGARH (INDIA) , 2000

Chapter 3

Maharaja Chhatrasaal

The Background

The Mahewa house¹³⁸ was one of the remarkable administrative authorities of Bundelkhand. Mahewa was the principality of Orchha, begin acting as a separate house from 1531, when **Udaijit**¹³⁹ was assigned for the jagir of this tract of land by his father, **Rudra Pratap**, who was the founder of Orchha state.¹⁴⁰ The grandson of Udaijit, **Bhagwat Rai** was the first **chief ruler** of the house. He made **Mahewa** the **capital city** and succeeded in annexing the parts of Dangiya kingdom¹⁴¹ that includes the parts of Eastern Bundelkhand¹⁴²

The study of this house becomes more important under its famous sardars like **Champat Rai** and his son **Chhatrasal** respectively. They served under different Mughal emperors as nobles but most of times they continued challenging the imperial authority.

CHAMPAT RAI (1592-1661)

Champat Rai was the **fourth son** of **Bhagwat Rai** who witnessed the reign of **four great imperial Mughals: Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb**. Due to lack of sources, the information about his early life is very limited¹⁴³ except that he was born in **Periyar**, a village 5 miles south to Mahewa. The early reference of Champat Rai is evolved with Bir Singh Deo when latter accompanied Bir Singh to revolt against Mughal Emperor **Akbar** in **1592**. Like many other zamindars of Bundelkhand, Champat Rai also served with complete dedication and loyalty towards Bir Singh during the time of **1592 - 1605**. He was trusted of Bir Singh Deo as he was sent to **Prince Salim** after murder of **Abul Fazl** with his **severed head** to Allahabad. Champat Rai was **awarded a robe of honor** by the Prince when he presented it to him. Afterwards he returned to Bir Singh Deo at **Baroni** and continued to serve him till his death in **1627**.¹⁴⁴

After the death of Bir Singh Deo, Champat Rai then served the successor who accessed the throne of Orchha that is, **Jujhar Singh**. On the eve of the second rebellion of Jujhar Singh in **1635**, Champat Rai successfully united the local Zamindars and brought them under Jujhar Singh; although they were repulsed by the imperialists.¹⁴⁵

He had also advised Jujhar Singh to attack on Mughal armed forces, as the Imperial forces were planning to make a collective campaign against Bundelkhand. But Jujhar Singh refused to do so and a fierce battle had been fought. When it was the time of negotiations and settlements with the imperialists, Champat Rai was one of the **representing member from Bundelkhand**. However negotiations started against his advice of negotiations and the conditions that have been introduced by ShahJahan for settlements were so harsh that no settlement could be made and a clash became inevitable.¹⁴⁶

With the assassination of Jujhar Singh, the throne of Orchha was been captured by **Debi Singh of House of Chanderi**. In such a short period of time Champat Rai succeeded in uniting the staunch supporters of Jujhar Singh and demanded that the **throne of Orchha** be restored to **Pirthvi Raj** the only surviving son and successor of Jujhar Singh.¹⁴⁷ The pressure of Bundela opposition was this much that Debi Singh was unable to suppress the resentment and to maintain himself in Orchha. Thus,

¹³⁸ Mahewa, 23 mile S. E. of Orchha. Udaijit appropriated the surviving buildings of a nearby town Called Patan to his territory of Mahewa. For details see, *The later Mughals*, p. 219.

¹³⁹ See, the *family chart of the House of Mahewa*.

¹⁴⁰ *Chhatra Prakash*, pp.13

¹⁴¹ The eastern half of Bundelkhand came under the control of the Bundelas during the period of Madhukar Shah and specially in the time of Bir Singh Deo. This tract of land was formely known as Dangiya Raj and its rulers were called as the Dangiya Rajas. The capital of the Bundelas named Orchha was situated on the western side of Mahewa or Dangiya Raj. The Bundela sardars of Mahewa Who owed their allegiense to the Rajas of Orchha extended their territorial boundaries in those Neighbouring principalities which were weak as well as not in subordination to the Rajas of Orchha. See. *Bundelkhand Gazetteer*, pp. 371-72; *The later Mughals*, p. 219.

¹⁴² *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴³ *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ *BirCharitra*, pp. 495-510.

¹⁴⁵ *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ *Qazwini*, pt. c. pp. 344-45; *Lahori*, I, b, pp. 98-100; *Amal-i-Salih*, JJ, pp. 82-83; Inayat Khan, p-150.

¹⁴⁷ *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 17.

Emperor Shahjahan's attempt to enthrone a loyal Bundela chief at Orchha who could also be acceptable to Bundelas failed miserably. But after the dethronement of Debi Singh, the Emperor took another strong Step; the entire kingdom of Orchha was annexed in the Mughal Empire and brought under **Khalsa** and **Baqi Khan** was appointed as the *faujdar* of the region.¹⁴⁸

Champat Rai and his followers harassed the Mughal officers posted in the region by regular attacks taking advantage of the difficult **terrain**. Besides that they also started suppressing the peasantry by destroying agriculture and plundering their properties. Because of that it became difficult for the Mughal officers to collect land revenue.¹⁴⁹ Taking advantage of the rebellions of Bundelas the chief of **Antri**, **Iraj** and **Bhander** stopped paying taxes to the imperial government. From the arzdasht of **Khan-i-Jahan Barha** whose Jagir was in Bundelkhand and from the reports of the representatives of **Abdullah Khan Firoz Jang** it is evident that due to the uprising of the Bundelas the collection of land revenue in the region was not possible.¹⁵⁰

When there was successive failure of imperial authorities and officials to suppress the peasantry rebels and actions of authorities of Bundelkhand, **Shahjahan** appointed **Khan Dauran**¹⁵¹ as *Subedar of Malwa*, to punish the rebels and to establish peace over the region. Ironically, none of the contemporary sources highlighted his role in Malwa to suppress the rebels and other activities. From the evidence it appears that the operation led by him and Baqi Khan completely failed and Champat Rai emerged much more powerful.¹⁵² Taking advantage of preoccupation of the emperor Shahjahan in the region of **Qandhar** and **Kabul**, Champat Rai plundered Mughal Territories like **Sironj**, **Ujjain**, **Bhelsa** and **Gwalior** in **1639**. The local imperial authorities failed to check even in roads.¹⁵³

After the return of imperial army from Kabul and Qandhar in **1640** Shahjahan took the rebellious activities of Champat Rai seriously afresh. He removed Baqi Khan who was posted at Islamabad (Jathara) because of his complete failure in quelling the revolt of Champat Rai. The imperialist continued to pursue their offensive and very shortly they again attacked the rebel at **Khailhar** in which the eldest son of Champat Rai, **Sarvahan** was slain.¹⁵⁴ However the Emperor was not satisfied with the progress of the campaign mainly because Champat Rai could not be captured; therefore, Abdullah Khan Firoz Jang was recalled from Islamabad in **1640**.¹⁵⁵

The task of eliminating Champat Rai and his brother **Sujan Rai** was now entrusted to **Bahadur Khan Rohilla**. But before Bahadur Khan could reach Islamabad and mobilize his armies the rebels disrupted the lines of communication between **Agra** and **Malwa** by surprise attacks on *Mughal outposts*, ravaging the crown lands and driving off the cultivators of the region. However, Bahadur Khan after making full arrangements made successive attacks on the rebels during **1641-42** but he also failed to suppress the rebellion completely and Champat Rai continued to defy the imperial authority.¹⁵⁶ According to **Chhatra Prakash**, when imperial officials were not able to set up proper peace in the region, **Debi Singh** again requested the Emperor

¹⁴⁸ *Qazwini*, pL C, p. 410; *Lahori*, I (b), pp. 270-7; *Amal-i-Salih*, E, p. 188.

¹⁴⁹ *Qazwini*, pL C, p. 410; *Lahori*, I (b), pp. 270-7; *Amal-i-Salih*, E, p. 188

¹⁵⁰ Arzdasht of Muzaffar Barha in *Gwaliornama*, p. 3a-b.

¹⁵¹ The appointment of Khan-i-Dauran against Champat Rai was mainly due to two important reasons. The first cause was that suba of Malwa was adjacent to Bundelkhand. The second factor was that he had played significant role against the Bundelas in 1635.

¹⁵² *Qazwini*, pt. c; pp. 410-11; *Lahori*, I (b), pp. 271-72; *Amal-i-Salih*, U, p. 189.

¹⁵³ *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 20-21; *Lahori*, II, pt. I, p. 27 does not refer to the attack and plunder of places mentioned above.

¹⁵⁴ *Lahori*, II, pt. I, pp. 193-94; *Masir-ul-Umara*, I, p. 420; *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁵ *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁶ *Lahori*, II, pt. I, pp. 221-247; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 24. For a detailed account of Bahadur Khan See, *Masir-ul-Umara*, IV, p. 12

ShahJahan to give power of Orchha again to him. Shahjahan refused to accept his proposal.¹⁵⁷ *Chhatra Prakash* Specifically mentions that on the request and suggestions Of some of his senior nobles on the **4th June, 1642** the Emperor finally restored the **Gaddi of Orchha** to **Pahar Singh**, son of Bir Singh Deo and also a loyal feudatory Bundela chief.¹⁵⁸ Champat Rai who was fighting for the cause of Bir Singh Deo's family and because of this reason he Had mustered the support of the Bundelas, however, Realized it impolitic and unworthy of himself to oppose the appointment of Pahar Singh as the Raja of Orchha when The latter reached at Islamabad with a large army. Therefore, Champat Rai submitted himself before Pahar Singh and also joined the service under him. His offences Were consequently pardoned by Shahjahan.

However, the relations of Pahar Singh and Champat Rai were not cordial for so long and latter left Pahar Singh. Champat Rai joined the service of **Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh** after **1642**.¹⁵⁹ In **1644** Champat played an important role in the reduction of Palamun.¹⁶⁰ He also accompanied Prince Dara Shikoh for the recoquest of Qandhar in **April, 1653**.¹⁶¹ Although the campaign proved an utter failure but Champat Rai was awarded a mansab of 500/500 by the Emperor as a reward for his good performance in course of the seige of the fort.¹⁶² Beside that, he was also assigned the *jagir of Konch*, a very fertile tract of land yeilding three lakhs. Pahar Singh was greatly annoyed at the decision of the Emperor and to counter it he *presented a gift of nine lakhs of rupees to Prince Dara* and succeeded in getting the same jagir for himself. The decision of the Prince greatly aggrieved Champat Rai who left the court and returned to Mahewa and resumed his rebellious activities after serving the Mughals loyally for about twelve years (**1642 - 1653**).

During war of succession within Mughal Empire (**1657 - 59**) **Prince Aurangzeb** was locating the region at the *bank of Chambal river*, finding all the important routes to **Dholpur** from area of **Gwalior**. At this point, Imperial forces were also properly defending the region. When Aurangzeb was passing through the region of Chambal, he got to know about Champat Rai, a Zamindar of Mughal Empire who was involved in rebellions against the Mughal Crown. Being in a crucial stage that maintaining Mahewa by own and then Imperial Prince seeks help, Champat Rai became extremely important ruler for the region. Aurangzeb basically wanted to cross the Chambal without any difficulties and for that matter he was seeking help from Champat Rai.¹⁶³ The subordinates of Prince, **king of Datia Subhakaran** and **Bahadur Khan** immediately went to establish contact with Champat Rai to win over him.¹⁶⁴ Champat Rai agreed to help Prince Aurangzeb and joined Aurangzeb's services for some time. Aurangzeb being overwhelmed had awarded Mansab of **1000/500** and several other grants have also been awarded.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁷ *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 25-26. No other source mentions the request of Debi Singh for the Re appointment as the raja of Orchha.

¹⁵⁸ *Lahori*, II, pt. I, pp. 284; 3034; *Masir-ul umara*, II, p. 471; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ *Lahori*, II, pt. I, p. 303; *Masir-ul-Umara*, II, p. 510; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 30 adds that Champat Rai joined the service under the Prince on the suggestion of his mother.

¹⁶⁰ *Lahori*, II. Pt. I, p. 304; *Masir-ul-Umara*, II, p. 50.

¹⁶¹ *Lahori*, II, pt. I. 357-58. *Masir-ul-Umara*, II, p. 50; Lai Kavi (*Chhatra Prakash* p. 31) wrongly Mentions that the campaign to Qandhar under Prince Dara proved a grand success and the fort was Finally occupied by the imperial army.

¹⁶² *Waris*, p. 269 (b); *Amal-i-Salih*, III, p. 432; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 31 simply mentions that Champat was given the mansab.

¹⁶³ *Alamgir Nama*, I, pp. 80-85; *Dilkusha*. P. 13(b).

¹⁶⁴ *Dilkusha* p. 14a; Bemier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire* (1658-68), ir. A constable revised, V. A. Smith, second edition, London, 1916, p. 46; Nicolo Manucci, *Storio Do Mogor* (1656-1712) I. tr. Irwine. Indian Text Series, Govt, of India, London, 1907-8, p. 258; *Chhatra Prakash* mentions that Bahadur Khan was sent to Champat Rai with the farman of Aurangzeb. The author of this source However doesn't refer to the role played by Subhakaran in winning Champat Rai over because of the Fact that he is very hostile in his work, towards the rulers of Orchha, Datiya and Chanderi.

¹⁶⁵ *Alamgir Nama*, p. 78; *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 39. States that Champat Rai was given 14 lakhs of Charakh by Aurangzeb.

Champat Rai reached to the camp and informed the Prince about the tactics to cross the river from **Gorakhtal** where it was not only shallow but very safe way to escape through uneven rocks and dense forests.¹⁶⁶ At the battle of **samagar** on **9th June 1658** champat Rai bravely fought from the side of Prince Aurangzeb under the command of **Mohammad Azam** who was leading the vanguard.¹⁶⁷

Champat Rai after **victory** had been **awarded** with **rank of 5000**¹⁶⁸ and **Jagirs of Shahzadpur, Iraj, Konch and Kaner**¹⁶⁹. Champat Rai along with his son fled to Lahore with Aurangzeb to maintain army there. With the departure of Aurangzeb they have also left the region and rebelled against the imperial forces that had rendered the routes to Malwa unsafe.¹⁷⁰

Bhimsen gave inconvincible reason for the flight of Champat and his son from Lahore by simply stating that they revolted again due to "their folly and lack of intelligence."¹⁷¹ At the same time, **Lal Kavi** mentions that Aurangzeb ordered Champat Rai to set back to Malwa. The details of Lal Kavi had also not been assumed as facts because these are not corroborated by present details and the political developments. With the mentions of **Chhatra Prakash**, the royal messenger reached to Champat Rai and behaved arrogantly and asked Champat Rai to make the orders of Aurangzeb in motion as earliest otherwise, the case of demotion will be enacted against him. The words of royal messenger made Champat Rai in great grief as he was not expecting such a revert from Aurangzeb even when Champat Rai supported him at every difficulty. Instead of following the orders, he revolted and shifted to newly granted **Jagir of Iraj**.¹⁷² With this resentment of Champat Rai, the Mughal Prince Aurangzeb was highly disappointed and after the **battle of khajua** he appointed Debi Singh as the ruler of Chanderi. One of the most destructive battle had been fought between Champat Rai and imperial force of Aurangzeb. However Champat Rai was not been captured by the Imperial forces as he had been escape and took shelter in **Shahgarh**. Shubhkaran being the alive of Aurangzeb had started the siege to the fort in which champat Rai was staying and hence, Champat Rai was required to leave that place as soon as possible. As it was the time of war of succession in the Mughal Empire so Aurangzeb reached **Delhi in May 1659** and **prisoned his elder brother Dara Shikoh**.¹⁷³ After the siege of Shahgarh, Shubhkaran and Champat Rai tried to have diplomatic negotiations but the conditions presented by Shubhkaran were too harsh to accept so Champat Rai refused to accept and fled to **Bedpur**. The combined and large army of **Debi Singh, Sujan Singh** and the **Mughal officers of Malwa** consisted of **16,000** cavalry Forced the rebel to leave Bedpur and take refuge at the Court of **Indraman Dhandera of Sahara** (in Suba Malwa) who was on good terms with Champat Rai.¹⁷⁴

Efforts had been made so that Mughal forces cannot breach the capital Sahara, in such act multiple Dhanderas have been killed. Lately the Dhandera ruler had been arrested by the imperial forces of Mughals and Champat Rai, who was now incapable to manage the rebellion had been **killed in November 1661**. Debi Singh and Sujan Singh were rewarded by Aurangzeb for their success in eliminating the rebel. The jagirs of Champat Rai were confiscated and brought under **Khalsa**.¹⁷⁵

Maharaja Chhatrasal (1649-1731)

¹⁶⁶ *Dilkusha*, p. 15b; cf. *Waqiat-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 16-20.

¹⁶⁷ *Alamgir Nama*, I, p. 92.

¹⁶⁸ *Dilkusha*, 15a; *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, II, p. 127, however simply mentions that Champat Rai was Promoted. Whereas *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 39-41, states that Champat Rai was given a mansab of 12000/12000 after the battle of Samugarh.

¹⁶⁹ *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 42. No other source mentions the grant of these jagirs to Champat Rai

¹⁷⁰ *Alamgir Natna*, 1,208; *Dilkusha*, 16a; *Muniakhab-ul-Lubab*, pp. 127-28.

¹⁷¹ *Dilkusha*, 16a.

¹⁷² *Chhatra Prakash*, p. 43.

¹⁷³ *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 45-50

¹⁷⁴ *Alamgir Nama*, II, p. 632; *Mutakhab-ul-Lubab*, II, p. 128; *Tavemier*, II, p. 48; *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 55-58.

¹⁷⁵ *Alamgir Nama*, p. 633; *Tavemier*, II, p. 48; cf. *Manucci*, I, p. 260, wrongly mentions that Champat Rai was, killed by Emperor Aurangzeb after the battle of Samugarh and that he had 15,000 Cavalry and 3,00,000 infantry at his command (p. 66). For a detailed account of Champat Rai's last Days and his death see, *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 58-66; *The Later Mughals*. Chapter, IX, pp. 225-28

“धनि चंपति के औतरी, पंचम श्री छत्रसाल ।

जिनकी आज्ञा सीस धरि, करी कहानी लाल ॥”¹⁷⁶

Chhatrasal was the fifth son of Champat Rai was born in 1649. He was of twelve and half years old when he had lost both of his parents. He was distressed, without any of the resources as Aurangzeb had already confiscated the Jagirs that had been given to his father.¹⁷⁷ Lately, he went to Deoghar along with elder brother Angad. But their poor financial condition Forced them to join Mughal service.¹⁷⁸

Angad and **Chhatrasal** joined Mughal imperial forces in **1665** from Bundelkhand region in the expedition against **Shivaji Maharaj** of **Deccan**. It was the time when both the brothers have fought multiple battles for the Mughal Empire bravely. At the same time, **Chhatrasal** had been given small Mansab by Aurangzeb that too on the recommendation of **Jai Singh**.¹⁷⁹ In spite of his meritorious performances across all the wars, Chhatrasal was not awarded with high Mansabs.¹⁸⁰ **Bhimsen** clearly states that due to this he was “desperately worried”.¹⁸¹

In such a desperation he left the imperial army without prior permission of the commander and set himself to move towards Deccan, where he can get enlightenment from **Shivaji Maharaja**. Chhatrasal was highly influenced by the struggles of Shivaji Maharaja during the Mughal campaign of Deccan. Shivaji advised Chhatrasal to go back to the ancestral land and maintain rule over the region of Bundelkhand rather than being under subordination of imperial forces.¹⁸²

Around **1669**, Chhatrasal went back to Bundelkhand and it was the time when Aurangzeb had ordered for the destruction of **Hindu architecture of North Indian region**. When Chhatrasal tried to make collective expedition to imperial territories, he sought for help from many Bundela rulers like **Subhakaran, Sujan Singh** and **Ratan Shah** and others too, but all denied for help. It indicates that Chhatrasal had hardly any support base because they were not ready to unnecessarily spoil their relation with the Mughal Emperor. When there was no help coming from any of the region, Chhatrasal had started to strengthening himself independently of his own and started attacking on the Mughal out posts from the eastern state of Bundelkhand. With a very short span of time he was able to maintain a large number of troops as his army.¹⁸³

Chhatra Prakash mentioned that Chhatrasal had fought approximately thirteen battles between 1668-1678 with the imperial forces under the leadership of Mughal officials like **Fidai Khan, subedar of Gwalior, Hashim Khan (faujdar of Sironj), Randaula Khan (faujdar of Dhamuni), Tahanwar Khan, Anwar Khan, Mirza Sadruddin, Abdul Samad, Sayyid Bahadur, Sayyid Latif, Murad Khan and Shah Quli**. Chhatrasal also attacked to the local Zamindars and asked them to **pay Chauth** to him. The Zamindars who had been affected by this act of Chhatrasal were **Kunwar Sen, Dhandera & Keshav Rai of Bansa**. The places that had been plundered and attacked by Chhatrasal were **Chitrakut, Mahoba, Deogarh, Kolre, Senhura, Maraund, Sagar, Damon, Barhata, Bhilsa, Gwalior, Sironj, Dhamuni, Bansa and Kalinjar**.

¹⁷⁶ Chhatra Prakash, p.66

¹⁷⁷ Alamgir Nama, II, p. 633; Dilkusha, p. 66a; Chhatra Prakash, pp. 67-74; Umra-i-Hunud, p. 275.

¹⁷⁸ Chhatra Prakash, pp. 74-77.

¹⁷⁹ Masir-i-Alamgir, p. 39; Dilkusha, p. 66a; Masir-ul-Umara, II, p. 721; Chhatra Prakash, pp. 81-84. Also see, History of Aurangzeb, IV, p. 358.

¹⁸⁰ Chhatra Prakash, pp. 82-83.

¹⁸¹ Dilkusha, p. 66a.

¹⁸² Chhatra Prakash, pp. 84-88; D. B. Parasani, Marathayache Prakram Bundelkhand Prakram, p. 31-33. Also see. B. D. Gupta, p. 36.

¹⁸³ Dilkusha, p. 68a; Jhansi Gazetteer, XXIV, p. 197. Chhatra Prakash, pp. 105-76, gives a vivid and exaggerated account of all the above mentioned battles.

Out of those **thirteen battles** that had been fought against **Mughal officials** of the outposts, the two of the battles remained inconclusive and only one battle have been won by Aurangzeb's imperial forces. Chhatrasal emerged victorious in majority of the battles that have fought.

Although, there are no specific references of these battles in contemporary **Persian Chronicles** but **Masir-i-Alamgiri** mentioned the appointment of above mentioned Mughal officers in quick succession, Indirectly corroborates the fact of unsatisfactory Performances of these officers against Chhatrasal.¹⁸⁴ In **1679**, Aurangzeb appointed **Jaswant Singh**, to suppress Chhatrasal and Angad Rai. Jaswant Singh along with imperial army went and captured Chhatrasal with his brother. On the request of **Jaswant Singh** they were not only pardoned but the Emperor also admitted them in the imperial service.¹⁸⁵ But it is very difficult to say how long Chhatrasal and Angad served the imperial authority loyally because we get references of them being in open Rebellion in **1686** and again submission before the Emperor in **1696**.

From a letter of Aurangzeb addressed to his third son, **Prince Muhammad Azam**, dated 1686 we come to know that **Chhatrasal and his grandson Pahar Singh** were in open rebellion. When they plundered the pargana of Malwa, Pahar Singh was killed by the Mughal officer named **Taluk Chand**.¹⁸⁶

Around **1681**, when Aurangzeb moved towards Deccan for a longer period from North it allowed regional powers like Chhatrasal to grow substantially within the region and strengthen their military strategies. During **1681-96** besides attacking the Imperial territories, now he extended his operation in the **Parganas of Chanderi** belonging to his own kinsmen. He also Succeeded in plundering imperial caravans on their way to the Deccan.¹⁸⁷

However in 1696 Chhatrasal was forced to Submit before the imperial authority and was appointed the **Quliedar of the fort of Satara** (Ajamtara) . But it is Really interesting that why and in what circumstances he offered his submission even the **Chhatra Prakash** is completely silent on this. 'After serving for four years (**1696-1700**) he again revolted and returned to his Ancestral land of **Bundelkhand**'¹⁸⁸.

According to the regional local sources, Chhatrasal conquered **Kalinjar** Along with a large part of **Banda** and **Hamirpur districts** in **1700**.¹⁸⁹ **Bhimsen** specifically mentions that the influences of Chhatrasal had extended beyond the **river Narmada** by the Year **1702**.¹⁹⁰ In **1703**, he proceeded west of the **river Dhasan** (in the western part of Bundelkhand) and over ran the Parganas of **Jhansi, Jalaun** and plundered **Iraj and Kalpi**.¹⁹¹ **Nima Sindhia**, a Maratha sardar devastated the province of Malwa on the instigation and with the help of Chhatrasal.¹⁹²

For the better outcomes and to control Chhatrasal, Mughal Emperor **Aurangzeb** had set up another outpost in Malwa under the control of officials like under **Diler Khan, Muhammad Khan Pathan** and **Bahlol Khan Mayana**. For gaining substantial support against this activity of imperial authorities he restored a number of places like '**Dhamuni** and others to those **Gond** and other chiefs of the Bundelkhand region to whom these places originally Belonged and had later on been conquered by the Bundelas And after 1635 annexed in the Mughal domain.'¹⁹³

¹⁸⁴ *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 65, 80,89,93,97, 126-28.

¹⁸⁵ *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 169; *Masir-ul-Umara* , II, p. 721; *Umara-i-Hunud*, p. 275.

¹⁸⁶ *Ruqqat-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁸⁷ *Dilkusha*, p. 141a; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 198.

¹⁸⁸ *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 424; *Masir-ul- Umara*, II, 721

¹⁸⁹ *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 198

¹⁹⁰ *Dilkusha*, 142a.

¹⁹¹ *Jhansi Gazetteer*, p. 198.

¹⁹² *Dilkusha*, p. 148b.

¹⁹³ *Chhatra Prakash*, pp. 165-67.

After the demise of Aurangzeb, taking the full advantages of internal dissensions, political chaos in the Mughal empire, frequent war of succession leading to the intrigue and division among the nobility,¹⁹⁴ Chhatrasal brought under his control eastern half of Bundelkhand.¹⁹⁵ At the time of his death in 1731 his kingdom comprised a number of important places like **Kalpi, Jalaun, Konch, Iraj and Jhansi in the west, Sironj, Guna, Dhamuni, Garhkota, Sagar, Bansa, Damoh and Kaihar in the south, Kalinjar and Chitrakut in the east**, yielding a revenue of **69, 23, 76** Rupees.

Chhatrasal and Peshwa Bajirao

Chhatrasal had strengthened **army** and power till **eighteenth century**, as it was the time when the Mughal Empire had been weakened and that allowing regional powers to establish a negotiated relations with other regional powers to uproot the Mughal Empire. Around **1728 - 29** there was a crisis in Bundelkhand, it was a time with which Chhatrasal had spent most of his life to maintain the preexisting independence of Bundelkhand from the various campaign have been enacted by Mughal forces. Persian Chronicles like *Masir-ul-Umara* had mentioned that Chhatrasal was on the position of a rebellion zamindar whose persistence requires and imperial control and correction.¹⁹⁶ When **Mohammed Khan bangash** on the orders sanctioned by Mughal authorities have attacked the regional power of Bundelkhand to control the rule over the reason of **Malwa, Mahewa and Panna**. This campaign further elaborated in the sources as both necessary and punitive act of the Mughal Empire with which the forces can capture and control the Chhatrasal supporters and his strongholds.¹⁹⁷

At this point of time, Chhatrasal called the **Maratha Peshwa Bajirao I** of Pune to seek help. As bundela traditional manuscripts and Maratha corresponding sources recalls it as ‘the aged ruler, pressed by misfortune, compares himself to one “sinking” and calls upon **Baji Rao** as the one capable of deliverance.’¹⁹⁸ The response from Maratha Peshwa had been recorded in *daftar*. The policy of Bajirao to remove Mughals from the center of authority had already been started and it had successfully exploited Mughals beyond Deccan. Bundelas not only provided fiscal extend but also a strategic corridor to Marathas for the campaign on Mughal Empire.¹⁹⁹ A quick shift of Bajirao was seen to Bundelkhand in **1729**. Persian chronicles which often celebrated Bangash as the prominent official, declares that it was the time when he was in lack of resources against Marathas.²⁰⁰ However, a decisive victory against Bangash had been locked by Marathas and Bundelas in terms use of different military tactics and The strategies. The operation not only emphasized the vulnerable political authorities of Mughals but also the efficient war mobility of

Bundelas and Marathas.²⁰¹ With the intervention of Maratha Peshwa in the war, it led to the rise of new relations. Chhatrasal granted *one-third portion of its dominion to Peshwa*.²⁰² This implies that the region of Kalpi, Jhansi and others carrying strategic importance in Bundelkhand had been incorporated within bundela and Maratha relationships.

The assertion of power within house of Mahewa with the rulers like **Champat Rai** and **Chhatrasal** had seen multiple ups and downs. The reign of Champat Rai had been marked with solidarity, loyalty towards Orchha and had multiple rebels against

¹⁹⁴ For a detailed study about a number of daunting problems with which the Mughal empire was Faced after the death of Aurangzeb see, *Parties and politics at the Mughal Court, (1707-1740)* and *Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*.

¹⁹⁵ *Chhatra Prakash*. pp. 167; *Masir-ul-Umara*. pp. 721-22; *Umara-i-Hunud*. p. 276; *Jhansi Gazetteer*, pp. 198-99.

¹⁹⁶ *Ma'asir al-Umara*, trans. H. Beveridge (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1911), Vol. II, p. 35.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

¹⁹⁸ Bhagwandas Gupta, *Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela* (Delhi, 1980), pp. 142-143.

¹⁹⁹ G. S. Sardesai (ed.), *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, Vol. I (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1930), pp. 112-114.

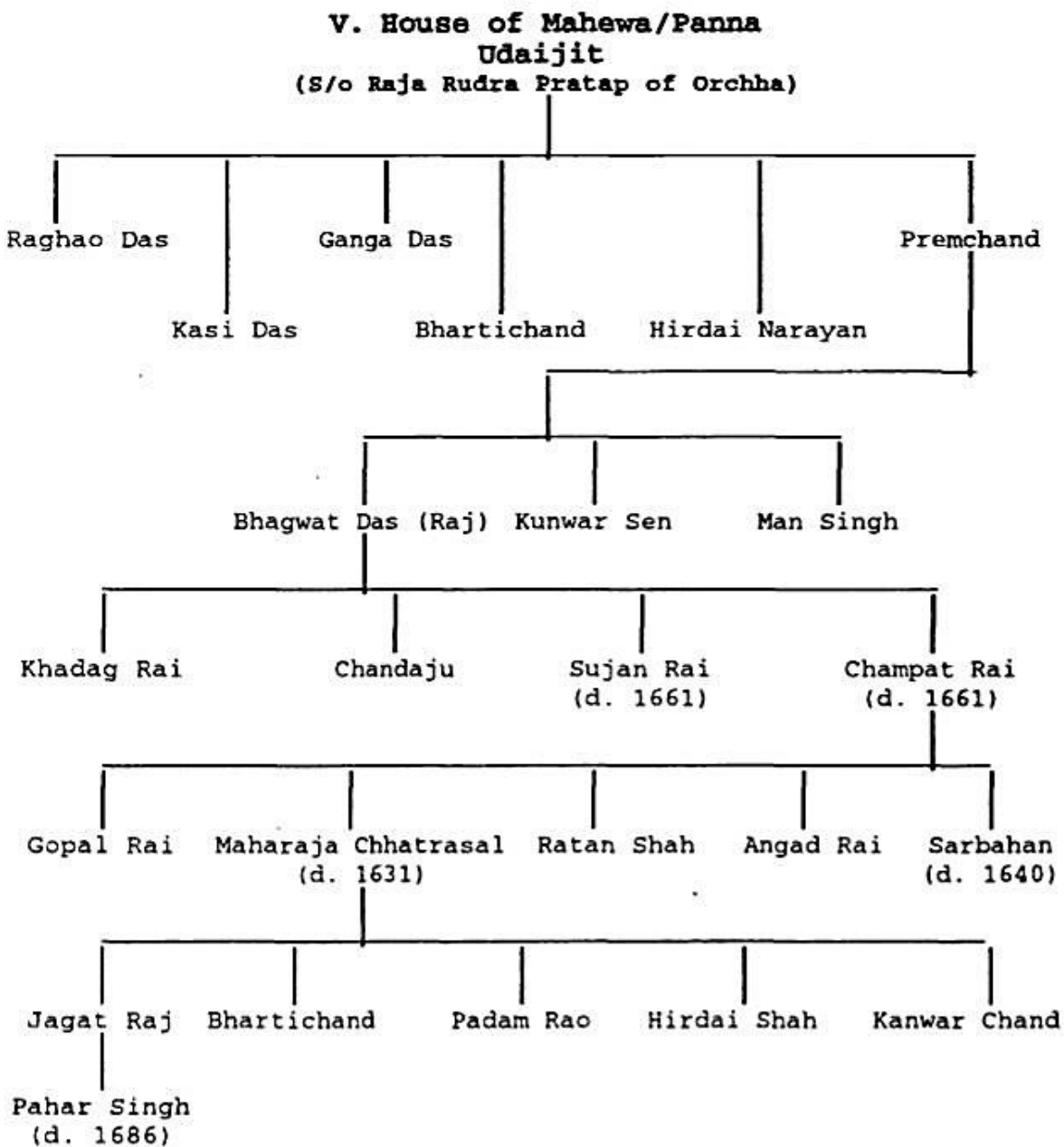
²⁰⁰ *Ma'asir al-Umara*, Vol. II, p. 39.

²⁰¹ James Grant Duff, *A History of the Mahrattas*, Vol. I (London: Longman, 1826), pp. 449-452.

²⁰² Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II (Calcutta, 1934), pp. 170-171.

Mughal officials. But soon after the death of Champat Rai a transitional phase occur within Bundelkhand, some of the Bundelas had already accepted the Suzerainty of Mughals and the successors of Champat Rai were homeless. Chhatrasal came into power after making multiple campaigns towards the Mughals. The reign of Aurangzeb was in final years, but still Chhatrasal struggled to establish his power within the region. **Fought around 13 battles and won 10 of them** was a remarkable victory of Bundela ruler against Mughal Empire. After the death of Chhatrasal at the ripe **age of eighty three years** his sons **Harde Shah** and **Jagat Singh** succeeded him as the rajas of **Panna** and **Jaitpur**.²⁰³

The **successor tree of House of Mahewa** taken from **Ahmad,A. (2000) Bundela Nobility and Chieftaincy under Mughals**, Centre of Study, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh,p.198



have

CONCLUSION

This dissertation set out to examine The Autonomy and Assertion: Bundela Rulers under Mughal Suzerainty within context of sixteenth to eighteenth century Bundelkhand. The study aimed to focus on Bundela rulers in Imperial centric Mughal historiographical trend. Situating it, within the broader framework of history, The study examined some of the key findings of the Bundela-Mughal interactions. The study seeks answer for the central hypothesis that Mughals were central to the early modern times but meanwhile the emerged regional powers like Bundelas are not passive agents or peripherals of Mughals but were as significant as they have asserted their power within the imperial structure by negotiation, resistance, and alliance formation. This dissertation analyzed the impact of Bundela rulers on Mughal Empire, the territories they captured, a friendly relation was also established when there was internal conflict within the Mughal Empire.

It has argued that the political conditions of early modern India were under control of Mughals but the regional powers like Bundelas of Bundelkhand have emerged as the prominent chief clan and later formed it as Bundela Dynasty. The Bundelas not only merely established themselves within the region but also showcases their authority of power to Mughals, thereby challenging the existing historiography which centralized Mughals as the most celebrated empire of the early modern times. Instead of looking on interpretations like Bundela rulers had established mesmerizing architecture, Fortifications and dams for their subjects and were suppressed under Mughal Empire, the study demonstrates that, Bundela rulers were not a subordinate regional power of Mughal Empire rather, Bundela Empire and rulers have struggled and rebelled against the Mughal imperial authorities so that they can assert their autonomous power.

Analyzing primary sources like *Bir Charitra*, *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Chhatra Prakash* and more gives the impression of Bundela relation with Mughals. The empirical approach of study examined sources in a manner to establish an interconnectedness within these different texts. The dissertation evaluates not only survival of Bundelas but also their celebrated autonomous power in north India, offering a vivid glance of the history.

The studies undertaken in this dissertation examines several interconnected findings that collectively provided a nuance understanding of the theme of Bundela Mughal Relations. Firstly

the study highlights the topography of the region and focused that the forests, Vindhya ranges, and the terrain had a different structure, which Mughals have never encountered before. Bundela rulers being deeply rooted within the physiography of Vindhya ranges, these geographical conditions acted as their Ally to dictate the assertion of power. The region of Bundelkhand also been emphasized as the region of crucial war zone between Mughal mainland to the area of Deccan. It basically worked as the frontier of the Deccan and thereby increases the political importance of Bundelas.

The sources like *Ain-i-Akbari* highlights that there was a submissive approach of Bundela rulers towards the Mughal Empire. At the same time, when regional sources have been interpreted it shows that there was a clear myth that Bundela rulers were submissive or suppressed with the campaign and activities of Mughals. The rulers like Madhukar Shah and Bir Singh Deo Bundela of Orchha have never been suppressed by Mughal Emperor Akbar. Beyond this, Madhukar Shah even made numerous campaigns to new territorial regions and to the imperial boundaries as well.

Bir Singh Deo had struggled for accession to the throne but at the same time he was also not suppressed by Mughal authorities, with the strategic political planning and regular engagements in rebels and battles Bir Singh Deo turned out to be the courageous ruler who can even fight against Mughal Emperor. In another case, Bir Singh popularly known as the mastermind behind the murder conspiracy of Abul Fazl. This implies that he used Mughal shadow to grow his own light because it was the time when Prince Salim was the biggest supporter of Bir Singh Deo which increased the influence of Bir Singh within the political structure of Mughals.

When there is a political alignment with Mughals, the culture of Bundelkhand flourished in a different way, here, cultural synthesis of politics can be seen when the kingship is not about rule of king, expeditions and other, Bundela rulers had great impact of culture and tradition in their administration. Vaishnavism flourished as a religion within Bundelkhand under Madhukar Shah Bundela , the establishment of temple of Raja Ram in Orchha and to make the idol as supreme power of

Orchha. Along with this, the involvement of Bir Singh in giving patronage to the renovation of Keshav Dev Temple of Mathura and Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi complex, these evidences depicts it as the cultural assertion of autonomy and power.

Another major finding was Champat Rai's reign, it was the time of war of succession within the

Mughal Empire. Champat Rai have witnessed the major changes of Mughal throne from Akbar, Jahangir, ShahJahan and then Aurangzeb. The struggle between Champat Rai and Aurangzeb had turned a transitional phase when the demands of imperial authorities rises and it was required for Champat Rai to maintain his honour and dignity.

Chhatrasal, being the successor of Champat Rai had a different ideology to maintain the harmony and peace within Bundelkhand and with the Mughals. Chhatrasal not just rebelled for the territorial expansion but his aim was to uproot the Mughal imperial authority from the land of India, he comes up with the idea of conceptualized independence. Within Bundelkhand Chhatrasal have flourished the boundaries till Malwa and the bank of Chambal. Such a territorial expansion and a great leadership of Chhatrasal have made Bundelkhand one of the most powerful regional powers across North India.

Chhatrasal have established a pan India relations with Marathas, Nizam of Deccan and more. The Maratha Empire at that time was at its peak, and when Mughal forces attacked on Malwa, then Chhatrasal seeks help from Maratha Empire. A hotly contested battle have been fought between Chatrasal and Mughals with the collaboration of Peshwa Bajirao and the battle has been won by Chatrasal and Marathas. This established cordial relations between Peshwa Bajirao who was established in Pune and Maharaja Chhatrasal.

All together, these findings indicate that, Bundelas had used strategic political techniques to establish their autonomous rule in the Mughal Suzerainty. There were multiple rebels that had been occurred during this time period by various Bundelas rulers and chiefs, these rebels were not only the battles between two parties but also indicated successive failures of Mughal officials to control the campaigns. It clearly shows that Bundela rulers were not been suppressed or accepted the Suzerainty of Mughals like Rajput's. At the same time, there was no matrimonial relation with Mughals established by Bundelas. Also the Mansabs and Jagirs have also been offered and given to the Bundelas when the latter have been involved in rebellions with the Imperial Princes against the Mughal thrones. Instead of being structured in isolated ideas of history the origin of Bundelas, their transformation from being a Chieftaincy to a regional and the rebels have established an interconnectedness, framing the role of Bundelas within Mughal Imperial power at the center. Along with this, it explains that the rulers have taken advantage of

internal clashes in Mughal Empire and increased their political influence in the region with administrative enhancement.

While addressing the central hypothesis of the study, *Bundelas were not passive subordinates and agents of Mughal Empire. Rather, they functioned as political actors who constantly established a diplomatic negotiation to preserve their Autonomy*, the study clearly offers a nuanced understanding that Bundelas were a separate regional power even when Mughal Empire had expanded its Suzerainty vast to the regions. It demonstrates that Mughals at the center as the prominent authority who ruled in the major parts of India, but the region of Bundelkhand was never been controlled by Mughals. It is because of the strategic political developments done by the Bundela rulers.

The study contributes to establish a regional centric approach of historiography of early modern India shifting the evaluative lens away from imperial centric and Mughal dominant approach of Historiographical trends. While doing this, it evaluates the political system of Orchha and Mahewa, where the rulers had established their authority of its own and didn't even allowed the Mughal forces to cross the boundaries of the states.

Despite all these contributions, there were certain limitations that must be considered. First of all the scarcity of sources, as working on a regional power when there is a huge empire flourished at the center, it is difficult to explore multiple sources. The sources that often seen for regional histories are religious texts which sometimes blur the boundaries and change entire narrative of the theme. Another limitation lies on the geographical scope, when discussing about a region specifically, it

doesn't not allow to generalize the methodology and the sources for that particular region for a certain period of time. So it is required to be context specific instead of being universally engaged debates.

For the further works in regional power of Bundelas and the region of Bundelkhand, one of the potential scope lies as the gender specific study of the region, where it includes the role of women across the region. The studies can further undertake a comparative study between a culture based sacralized kingship between various regions of Bundelkhand.

Ultimately this dissertation contributes to a more layered historiography of the region and

express the autonomous power of Bundelas within the regions of Orchha and Mahewa. It recognizes the regions like Bundelkhand as an important region of political, cultural and intellectual innovations. The study moves beyond the generalized narratives and explains the emergence of state in plurality of forms through which the polity have been conceptualized.

While re thinking the autonomous authority of Bundelas, the study highlights the assertion of power and Sovereignty of Bundela rulers that have been established from sixteenth to eighteenth century in the region of Bundelkhand. With this, the study demonstrates to understand the regional power of past along with their territorial expansion, political strategies and diplomatic negotiations with the imperial authority like Mughals.

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Appendix

**(i) Ram Chand (Shah) s/o
 Madhukar Shah**

Year	Zat-/Sawar	Source
1592-1605	500	Ain, I, 228; Tuzuk, Tazkirat- ul-Umara 151(a); 13; Cf. Vigat, II, 490-2.

**(ii) Raja Bir Singh Deo s/o
 Madhukar Shah**

1605	3000/2000	Tuzuk, 10
1611	4000/2000	Ibid, 100 Cf. Haw- Kins, p. 98-9.
1612	4000/2200	Ibid., 112
1615	4000/2900	Ibid., 137
1619	5000/5000	Ibid., 306
1627	5000/5000	Ibid., 356

**(iii) Jujhar Singh s/o Bir
 Singh Deo**

1622	2000/1000	Tuzuk, 356
1627	4000/4000	Lahori, I, 253
1628	5000/4000	Ibid., 296
1629	5000/5000	Ibid., 302
1635	d. 5000/5000	Lahori, I (b), 295

**(iv) Bikarmajit (Jagraj)
 s/o Jujahr Singh**

1627	1000/1000	Lahori, I, 183; M. U. I., 227
1630	2000/2000	Qazwini, Pt. b, 208; Lahori, I, 338; Z. kh, II, 93-101.
1635	d. 2000/2000	Qazwini, 359; Lahori, I (b), 139-40; Salih, II, 116.

(v) Raja Pahar Singh s/o Bir Singh Deo		
1627	2000/1040	Lahori, I, 121
1628	2000/1200	Ibid.; M. U. II, Pt. I, 470
1629	3000/2000	Qazwini, 130 (a); Lahori, I, 205; & Salih, I, 204; M.U.II Pt. I, 470
1630	3000/2000	Lahori, I, 303, M. U. II, Pt. I, 470
1632	3000/2000	Lahori, I (b), 298
1642	3000/3000	Lahori, II, Pt. I, 304.
1645	4000/3000 (1000 × 2 - 3h)	Lahori, 479; M. U. 471
1651	4000/4000 (2000 × 2 - 3h)	Waris, Pt. (b), 98
1655	d. 4000/3000	Waris, 199 (a); M. U. II, 472; <i>Chhatra Prakash</i> , 34.
(vi) Raja Sujjan Singh s/o Pahar Singh		
1655	2000/2000 (2-3h)	Waris, 199 (a); Salih, III, 107
1656	2000/2000 (2-3h)	Ibid., 261 (a); Ibid, 197
1657	2500/2500 (2000 × 2 - 3h)	Salih, III, 262
1658	3500/3000	<i>Alamgir Nama</i> , I, 341
1660	3500/3500 (2 - 3h)	Ibid., 586
1668	d. 3500/3500 (2 - 3h)	M. U. II, 883

(IV) Bundela Mansabdars of the House of Mahewa (Panna)

(i) Champat Rai s/o Bhagwat
Rai

1653	500/500	Waris, 269 (b)
1657	500/500	Salih, III, 482
1658	1000/500	Alamgir Nama, 78
1658	5000/ x	Dilkusha, 15 (b)
1661	d.	Alamgir Nama, 631- 2

(ii) Maharaja Chhatrasal
s/o Champat Rai

1665	300/ x	Masir-i-Alamgiri, p. 39.
1705	4000/ x	Dilkusha, 157 (b); M. U. II, 721
1707	4000/ x	Ibid.