

**“Bundelkhand: Socio-Economic Profile of the Region”****Amarjeet<sup>1</sup>****Abstract**

*As compared to other regions of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, Bundelkhand region is considered one of the most backward regions. The region has no good transport means neither railways nor roadways. The means of transportations are dependent on the broken roads. The few block headquarters of the districts in the region are accessible only through the narrow roads passing through the rough terrain making the movements of the available vehicles difficult. The frequency of the government buses is very irregular and one has to waste the precious time without any gains. Further, during rainy season it is very difficult to reach the villages. The weathered rocks cause water logging and turning into the mud. All these makes Bundelkhand region isolated with respect to the other regions.*

*An attempt is made to present a holistic perspective of the Bundelkhand region. In this paper, all phenomena of a region like Physiography, Climate, and Demographic Characteristics etc have been discussed in the regard of Bundelkhand region. The study has been based on secondary sources.*

**Key Words:** *Bundelkhand Region, Chandela Dynasty, Economic Development, Land use, Agricultural development. Settlement Pattern.*

**Introduction**

The Bundelkhand region is situated in the central part of India. In its north lies the extensive gangetic plains and Vindhyan Mountain range is spreaded in the south of the region. The region covers a total of thirteen districts in the two states. Seven districts of Uttar Pradesh covered are Jhansi, Jalaun, Lalitpur, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda and Chitrakut. Datia, Tikamgarh, Chattarpur, Damoh, Sagar and Panna are six districts of Madhya Pradesh that are covered by the region. The total land surface area covered by the region is 7.08 million hectares (mha). The region lies between 23°20' and 26°20'N latitude and 78°20' and 81°40'E longitude (NGSI, 1989).

**History of Bundelkhand**

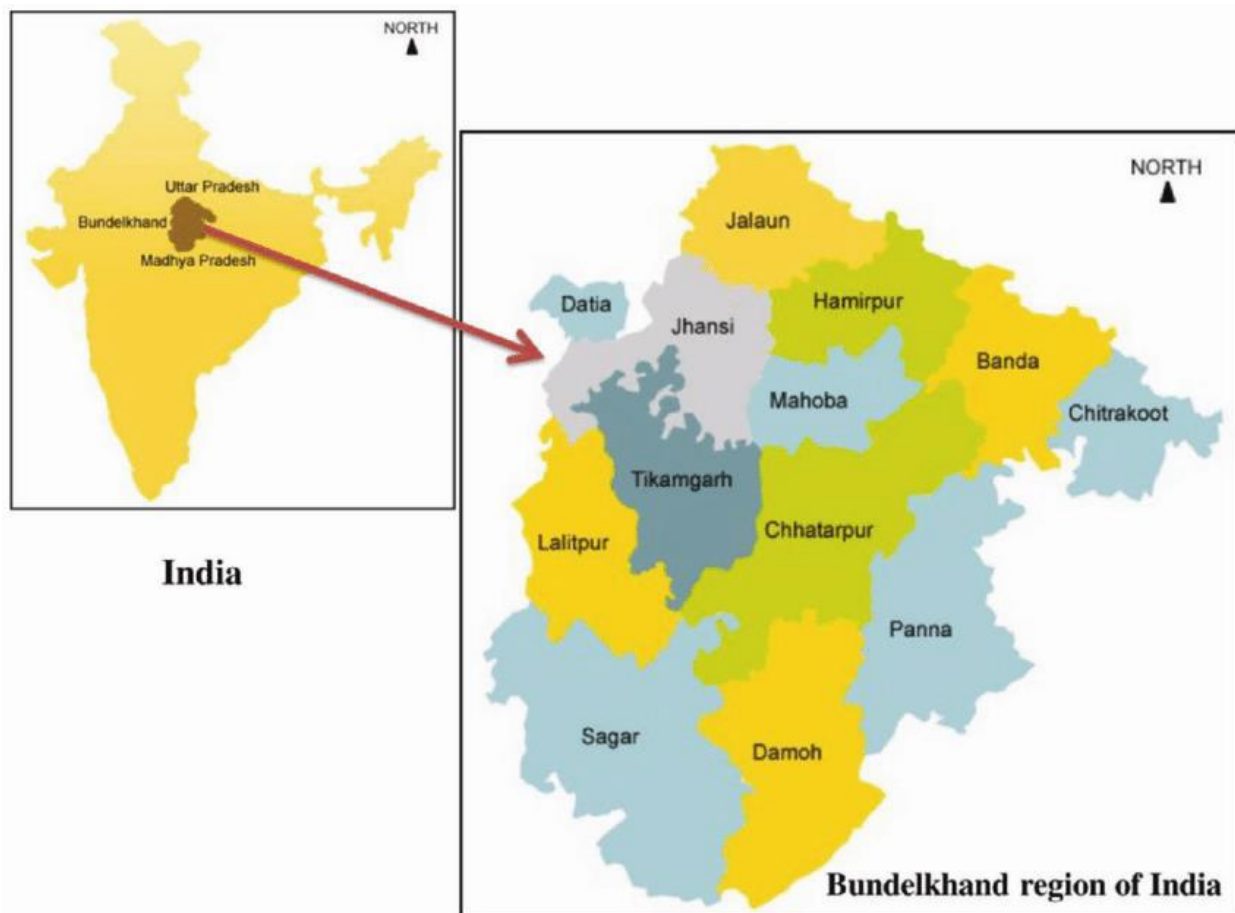
The region of Bundelkhand depicts certain proofs of early settlements. These proofs can be found through rock paintings found in the Patha locale of Chitrakoot and also in other districts of Madhya Pradesh such as Sagar, Chattarpur and Panna. References to Bundelkhand region has been found in the epic Ramayana. Chitrakoot forests are known to have given shelter to Rama, Lakhman and Sita while spending their years in exile. The references to the region are also found in the descriptions of Mahabharata where Chedi kingdom was situated between Ken and Betwa regions of the Bundelkhand region. Excavation of coins at Eran, a locality situated north-west of

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Sagar town, depicts the urban settlements which date back to the Mahabharata period. The coin depicts the Bundelkhand region as Erikana and appears to be important region till the Gupta period. After the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Bundelkhand region got divided into smaller kingdoms. Certain parts of the region were also taken over by Gond tribals. The Chandelas ruled over the region from 10<sup>th</sup> century to 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D., who took over this region from Gurjar Pratiharas of Kannauj. They came out as formidable power and their influence was further strengthened by Yashovarman and his son Dhanga.

**Fig. 1: Bundelkhand Region: As Part of India<sup>2</sup>**



The Chandelas were patron kings of architecture which includes temples and tanks. They were aware of the water problem of the region and built numerous tanks to overcome the situation. They emphasized on building tanks near to the temple to signify the importance of the water as a natural resource. The credit goes to Yasovarman who constructed large Vishnu temples in Khajurao (Chattarpur) and Lakshman temple. Rule of Yashovarman was characterized by tolerance. This is evident from the Jain temples found in the limits of Deogarh fort. Lands,

<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.bundelkhand.in](http://www.bundelkhand.in)

dwellings and gifts were given to Brahmins which is verified from the proofs found in the Bundelkhand region.

Chandela's were attacked by Mahmood of Ghazni of Afghan during Vidyadhara's reign but he failed to hold the territory. Ghazni had to retreat after a long siege at the Kalinjar fort in Banda. About half a century later, Prithviraj Raso and Parmal Raso were composed which are literary pieces depicting the conflict between the Chandela ruler Paramardideva and the ruler of Delhi Prithviraj Chauhan. The Kalinjar fort was taken over by Turkish Muslims when Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated by Muhammad Ghori. After all, Alauddin Khilji took control of the Kalinjar fort in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Whole region came under Bundela Rajput rule in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Bundela Rajputs were followed by the Mughal rulers in the region but the rough terrain and rugged topography of the Bundelkhand region made them loose the grip over the region. Nominal authority was based at Kalpi under the rule of Akbar. Bundela Chiefs did revolt the leadership of Chhatrasal, which led to a war of independence. Bundela received the cooperation of Marathas in the endeavor, and Marathas were entrusted with a large part which also included Jhansi. There were regular wars under the leadership of Marathas and Bundelas struggled till they got the region at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The part of the region that came under British was known as British Bundelkhand. Formalization of this region took place in 1802 with the signing of treaty of Bassein. The provision was made in the treaty to give leases to some local rulers. It states that after signing the bond or ikrinama, the rulers could not control the lands. Separate British officer was assigned to look after the provision.

Maratha ruler of Jhansi was entrusted for the British protection in 1806 and in 1817 the Bundelkhand region was brought under the Central India agency by keeping in view the recognition of the king's hereditary rights. When the raja died without leaving an heir, the territory of Jhansi was annexed into the British Empire. The Rani of Jhansi played a significant role against annexation of Jhansi and died in the battlefield. The Baghelkhand agency was formed in 1871 and later merged with Bundelkhand in 1931. This merger was finally known as Vindhya Pradesh in 1947.

### **Physiography**

R.L. Singh (1993) has given detailed information on the Bundelkhand region in his book- "India, A Regional Geography". The Bundelkhand region is having varying height above sea level. Around 67% of the area falls below 300m which forms the northern and central part of the region. And the remainders 23% area of the region has height between 300m and 450m with some parts of Vindhya range rising up to 600m. The region is characterized by rocky terrain and primarily comprises non-arable land which is further divided into four categories or sub regions: In the north-Bundelkhand plains, in the central and south-Bundelkhand upland and in deep

south- Sagar and Damoh (Vindhyachal) plateaus. Geography Sagar plateau forms the parts of Malwa Plateau and Damoh plateau forms the parts of Vindhyachal.

The region contains a soil which is a mixture of black and red-yellow soils. This soil lacks in organic nutrients. Parau, a variety of red soil, seems yellowish and light-colored. This soil is sandy and shows characteristic property of showing aeration. The soil is spreaded in Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh and is suitable for cultivation of wheat. Black soil is divided into two categories: first *kabar* which covers Lalitpur, Jalaun, Banda and Hamirpur districts in the uplands and plains. *Kabar* is good for cultivating gram and jowar; second *mar* which is known as black cotton soil. It is rich in organic content and does not require fertilizers. The region depicts a unique blend of geologic and geographic features which have influenced the human development in the region.

### **Climate**

The climate of Bundelkhand is semi-humid. Generally hottest day of the year is observed in May and the coolest days are observed in December or January months of the year. Because of the radiation from the rocky soils and lack of haze, temperatures are usually higher in the local region. Local squalls of small intervals are reported in summer months. This give rise to dust clouds and their thickness sometimes increase to make it murky sky during the daytime.

The region records an average annual temperature of over 25°C. Monthly mean temperature values vary significantly and the resultant temperature range is very high.

Mean temperature range in summer is around 30°C in May-June. The temperature is brought down by the monsoons to 22°C- 25°C during the September month of the year. During this time humidity varies from 70% to 80%. The mean annual precipitation remains in between 75cm and 125cm. So, the average precipitation for the region may be considered as 100cm and recorded mainly in monsoon months from June to September. Around three fourth of the rain falls in these three months, and the total amount is highly variable and capricious. The uncertainty in the rainfall makes the region prone to famines, droughts and deluges. Shallow western depressions also cause winter rain the region which is extremely beneficial to the Rabi crop.

### **Mineral Resources**

Some of the nation's rare mineral deposits are found in the Bundelkhand region. In the medieval period, Panna region was famous for the diamond reserves but this has faded with time. Presently Bundelkhand region is most importantly known for variety of stones available for the construction. The region is famous for gigantic blocks of medium to coarse-grained varieties of pink and grey granite which is found in the Panna, Sagar, Chattarpur, Datia, Banda, Mahoba, and Lalitpur. Two famous types of stones called Jhansi Red and Fortune Red are mined in Chattarpur and these are unique to this region. Different colored sandstones like white, red, pink, cream and buff are spreaded over the Panna and Sagar Districts. Due its softness the sandstone

can be easily cut into the delicate designs and architecture. Khajuraho temple in the Chattarpur district is the example of its usefulness. Lalitpur grey and Lalitpur yellow are the two known varieties of sandstone found in Lalitpur. Lower value stones is crushed and used in the construction of roads and buildings. Limestone and dolomite reserves are found in the districts of Sagar, Damoh and Panna. Apart from granite, silica sand found in the Mau tehsil of Chitrakoot is the most precious resource of Uttar Pradesh Bundelkhand. The deposits here are believed to be the best source of glass sands in India. Low grade iron ore and rock phosphate is found in Lalitpur. Rock phosphate is an essential part of the fertilizer industry. The clay needed in different industries is provided by the districts of Datia, Panna and Tikamgarh. The Ken River region provides agate pebbles which are used in making artifacts and trinkets.

### **Water Resources**

Several rivers of Yamuna river system drains the Bundelkhand region. The important rivers of the region are Yamuna, Ken, Betwa and Pahuj in the west. The river Yamuna flows in the north of the region and Ken in the east and Betwa and Pahuj in west. The Yamuna River flows from west to east. It has several first order tributaries namely the Betwa, Ken, Pahuj, Baghain, and Paisuni which flow from south to north. There are second order tributaries of Yamuna also. These are Dhasan, Jamni, Birma, Sonar, Katne, Bewas, and Kopra. Sindh and Chambal rivers flow through the west. The southern section of the Bundelkhand region is formed by the Malwa, Udaipur and Gwalior. Around 25% of the water available in the Bundelkhand region is contributed by the River Betwa. This river flows through both states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Irrigation in the region is supported by the rivers Betwa, Ken, Pahuj and Dhasan. Seasonal fluctuations of these rivers are very pronounced. For example, for both seasons the water discharge volumes are different. Ken River's annual water discharge is 800 cusecs, but in winter it comes down 300 cusecs. It reduces to nothing in the month of May. Such fluctuation poses a threat to the security of the irrigation in the region.

As per the reports released by the WaterAid India paper on 2003-2007 droughts, it is estimated that more than 5000 tankers were used during the months of May-June 2008 all over the Bundelkhand region to cater to the domestic needs of the water. Most of the hand pumps released no water. Only 7% of the villages out of the 131 villages of Uttar Pradesh Bundelkhand region had enough water to meet the domestic water demand. Potable water was available for only a month in more than 60% of the villages. Women of the region had to spend at least 4 hours a day to collect potable water in the quantity of around 20 liters.

### **Natural Vegetation**

The vegetation cover of the Bundelkhand region has been lost to the large extent. Semi-arid type of vegetation is found here. This type of vegetation is found mainly in the parts of Banda, Datia and Hamirpur districts also along the rivers like Yamuna, Betwa and Pahuj. The range of flora found here includes *Salmaliamalabarica*, *MahucaIndica*, *Diospyrosmelanoxyton*, *Zizyphus*

varieties, *Butea monosperma*, *Acacia catechu* and *Acacia nilotica*. Teak vegetation is found in districts like Sagar and Damoh but the commercial production of timber does not take place.

Vegetation also forms the source of livelihood for the people living in areas of Bundelkhand. Tendu leaves, Mahua flowers, fruits and seeds and firewood are the sources of livelihood, especially for the population living in hilly areas. The people living in hilly areas include Kols in the Patha region of the Chitrakoot district, Sahariyas living in Lalitpur district and the tribal people living in the surroundings of the Panna district. Mahua and Tendu are the important part of the tribal life and form the seasonal source of income for the people living in the forests and their surroundings. The income from forest produce can be increased significantly by establishing a new relationship between the forest officials and the people living in the forests. The rights and duties of the tribal people must be realized to them to make best usages of the forest resources. The rights of the tribal people need to be revered and the forest management authority must be more cooperative.

### **Land Use and Settlement Pattern**

It is evident from the history that the structured settlement in the Bundelkhand began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century after the rise of the Chandel Rajputs. This started with the people coming from the northern Gangetic plains. Initially total population was confined to the small villages, along trade routes and to the small forest tracts. Presently most of the rural population resides in country side with their houses made up of the mud and bricks. They stand erected in the midst of the fields. Concrete, corrugated sheets and thatch are used as the building materials.

**Table 1: Bundelkhand: Change in land use pattern (%) during 1985-2003<sup>3</sup>**

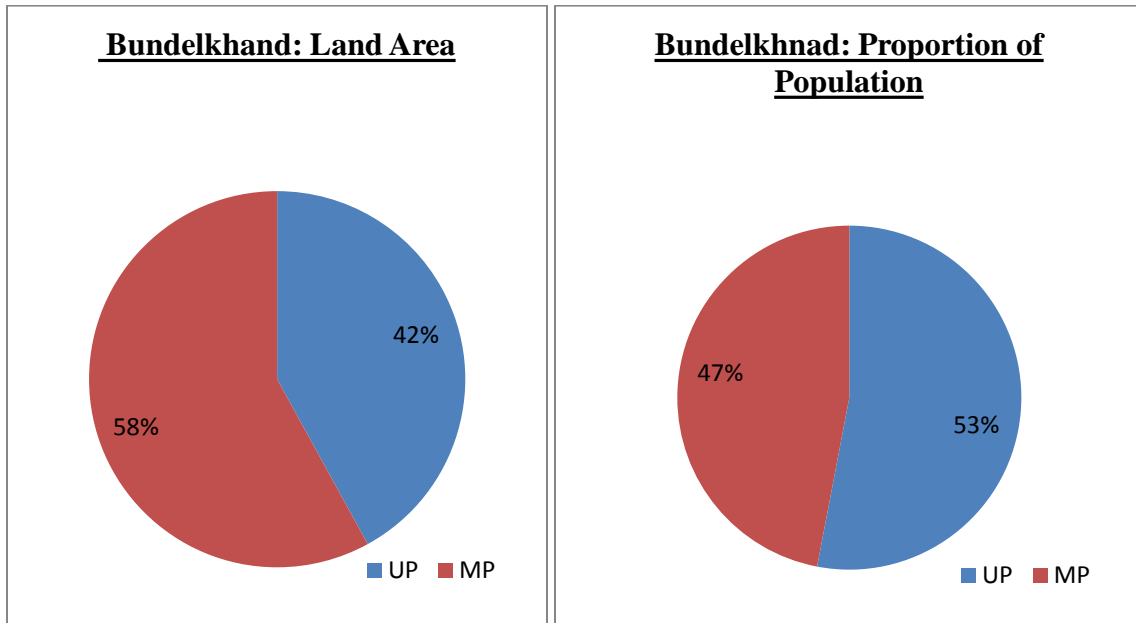
S.N.	Type of Land Use	1985	2003	Change
1	Forest/Open Tree Cover	18.71	21.41	2.7
2	Land Use other Than Agriculture	5.16	6.4	1.24
3	Fallow and Rangeland	13.36	5.48	-7.88
4	Wasteland	11.25	8.44	-2.81
5	Cropped Land	51.52	58.27	6.75

As per the reports of Inter-ministerial central team on Drought mitigation strategy in Bundelkhand, the forest and scrubs cover the 21.4 percent overall area of the Bundelkhand. 26.2 percent area of Madhya Pradesh and nearly 8.8 percent area of the Uttar Pradesh. Out of the

<sup>3</sup> Report on Drought mitigation strategy for Bundelkhand region of UP and MP (2008): by *Inter-Ministerial Central Team*.

total, around half of the land area is under cultivation and the rest is divided for other purposes. Moong, Urad, peas, soyabean, groundnut, mustard, sesame, lentil, barley, maize, paddy, sorghum, wheat, chick peas and some other crops are grown on the land under cultivation.

**Fig. 2: Bundelkhand: Land Area and Proportion of Population<sup>4</sup>**



The usual pattern of settlement is that the centre of the village is generally inhabited by farmers almost everyone having some neem trees in their courtyard. One side of the village is covered by orchards and other side by the tank which meets the water demand of the village. The whole village is surrounded by the fields sometime empty and other times laden with agricultural crops. On the outer side of the village are the maidans which are used for grazing and forms the boundary between the villages.

**Demography and urbanization**

According to Census of India 2011, total population of Bundelkhand is about 18.3 millions of which seven districts of Uttar Pradesh contributes 9.6 million and six districts of Madhya Pradesh contribute 8.5 million. The sex ratio of Uttar Pradesh Bundelkhand is 877 women per thousand men and Madhya Pradesh Bundelkhand is 930 men per thousand women against the Indian average of 940 women per thousand women. The average density of population of Uttar Pradesh Bundelkhand is around 277 per square kilometer which is much lower than the average population density of Uttar Pradesh i.e. 828 person per square kilometers. The density of population in Madhya Pradesh Bundelkhand region is 233 persons per square kilometers which

<sup>4</sup> Source: Census of India

is almost equal to the state average of 236 persons per square kilometers. Some of the districts of Bundelkhand report higher population density such as Jalaun, Hamirpur, Banda, Jhansi, and Tikamgarh while others like Panna and southern Damoh and Sagar record lower population density.

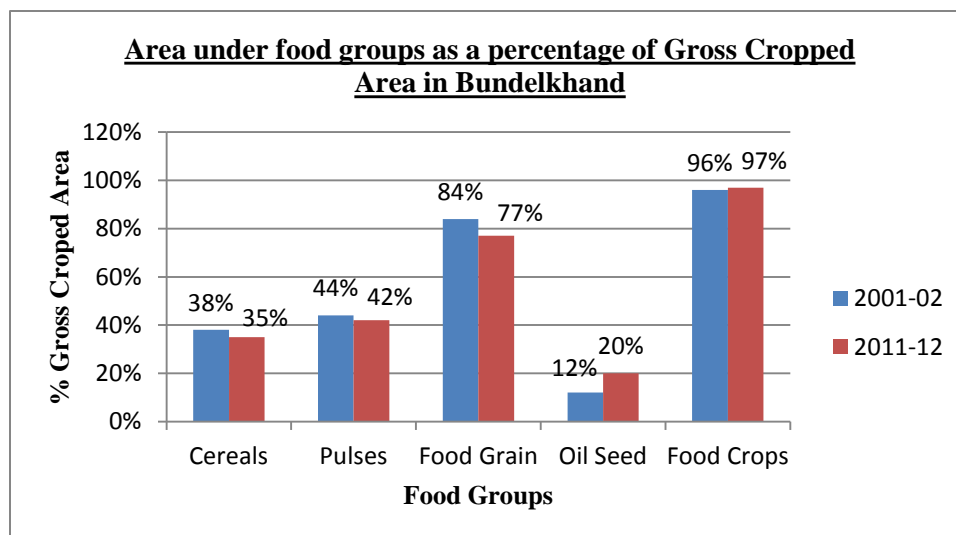
Bundelkhand region is characterized by lower level of urbanization where about 80 percent of the people live in rural settlements. But this pattern of settlement is not uniform throughout the whole region. For example, some districts like Jhansi have urbanization up to 42% and Chitrakoot district of Uttar Pradesh has urbanized population less than 10%. During the decade 2001-2011, the population growth rate in Uttar Pradesh was 20.09% and in Madhya Pradesh was 20.30%. In both the cases the population growth rate is higher than the national average of 17.64%.

The average population growth rate of all the thirteen districts of Bundelkhand region is 18.06%. The literacy rate of the region is also lower than the national literacy ration and the state literacy ratio. Workers constitute about 60 percent population of the region. Out of these workers around 60 percent are working as agriculture labours and cultivators.

**Agriculture**

Agriculture is the single largest prominent economic activity in sustaining livelihood of the people of the Bundelkhand region. Since to ensure agricultural production, assured irrigation is the most effective strategy, there are numerous major and minor irrigation schemes being run in the region. But these schemes have failed to improve the socio-economic needs of the region significantly.

**Fig. 3: Area under different food groups, Bundelkhand<sup>5</sup>**



<sup>5</sup> Source: Agricultural Statistics at a Glance (2013): Ministry of Agriculture, GoI

Irrigation services in the region are poor and do not have quality required for the efficient production of crops. Thus most of the area under cultivation is still dependent on the rainfall.

### **Industrial growth**

Before the establishment of British rule, many small industries were present in the Bundelkhand region. These industries were sponsored by the then ruling class. But after the 1857 revolution, due to the loss of royal patronage, the cottage and other industries started dying gradually.

Therefore, presently there are no such developed industries in the Bundelkhand region and Beedi making is only industrial employment besides agriculture. Around 200,000 people are directly employed in Beedi making. After 1990s stone quarrying has also developed as an economic activity in the region. Around 15% of the country's reserves are located in the districts of Lalitpur, Mahoba and Jhansi and they are contributing around 40 percent of the total diaspora production of India. Sand mining is practiced on a large scale on the banks of river Betwa in Hamirpur district. Chhattarpur and Panna districts are known for clay mining.

According to the Planning Commission's Uttar Pradesh Development Report (2007), The contribution of Jhansi district in the industrial output of the is about 5-10%, while contribution of other districts of Uttar Pradesh Bundelkhand is less than 1% in industrial output of the state. Bundelkhand region does not have even a single sugarcane factory while the whole state is known for its sugar production. It being all population as farmers, there are negligible number of skilled laborers in the region. The efforts for the establishment of the industries and the desired growth of the industries in the region have been a failure. Jhansi being urbanized to some extent and its accessibility from Kanpur gives some hope for industrial development. Due to its location near industrial corridor towards Nagpur, Jalaun district may get benefitted. This aspect has been proposed by the erstwhile Planning Commission.

Proposal for boosting industrial development and investment in the Madhya Pradesh Bundelkhand region have been received by the Madhya Pradesh government. Cultivation of Jatropha for production of Bio-diesel has been proposed. Bundelkhand region does not have any specialization in the exports from the region. Some of the export products are tribal brass-work from Laitpur and Jhansi districts and betel leaf from Mahoba. Some varieties of stones are exported for example Shafar of Banda, granite of Chhattarpur and sandstone of Panna.

### **Institutions**

University of Jhansi is one of the important institutions of Uttar Pradesh Bundelkhand which was established in 1975 under the provisions of Uttar Pradesh Universities Act. Several colleges in the region are affiliated to University of Jhansi. There are 17 colleges in Jalaun, 14 colleges in Jhansi, 11 colleges in Banda, 7 colleges in Hamirpur and 5 colleges in Lalitpur district. Some of the well-known colleges are Government Degree College Manikpur, Chitrakoot and Veer Bhumi Government College in Mahoba. Many technical education and agricultural education colleges

are situated in the region. Some of the important ones are J C Bose Institute of Life Science, Institute of Engineering and Technology, Institute of Basic Sciences, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Institute of Biomedical Sciences, Institute of Environment and Development Studies, Vaidua Pt. R. N. Sharma Institute of Alternative Medical Education and Research and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Institute of Social Sciences. These institute offer courses on the wide range of subjects like agroforestry, horticulture, plant pathology, entomology, genetics and plants. Post graduate course in natural resource management and environmental biotechnology is also offered by University of Jhansi.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research has also established The Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute (IGFRI) in Jhansi. It is one of the premier Research and Development Institutions in South Asia for contribution in sustainable agriculture and animal productivity. National Research Centre for Agroforestry (NRCAF) is another important institute established by Indian Council of Agricultural Research in the Bundelkhand region. Mission of this institute is to improve quality of life of rural people through integration of perennials on agriculture landscape for economic, environmental and social benefits. These institutes are mandated to provide basic and applied research for the development of new technology which could support sustainable agro forestry practices related to farms, land development and incomes of farmers. These institutes also provide consultancy services to the farmers on the basis of the database information. The Uttar Pradesh Council of Agricultural Research in coordination with the State Agricultural Universities, Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research has developed solutions to the problems faced by agricultural sector. Allied sectors have also been benefitted from their research. With the efforts of these institutes, strong linkages have been developed among the government departments and other institutions which are related to the field of agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, fisheries, sericulture, natural resource management and allied disciplines. It being an apex institution supervises all the work related to research and development taking place in the Bundelkhand region.

Among other institutions are the remote sensing centers which have been established by National Remote Sensing Centre under the aegis of Indian Space Research Organization. ‘National Agricultural Drought Assessment and Monitoring System (NADAMS)’ Project is providing the necessary technology inputs for the assessment of agricultural droughts in the region. Real-time data on prevalence, persistence and severity level is provided by the NADAMS which help to assessing the drought conditions at the state as well as district level. Presently the NADAMS project is being run in nearly 13 states of Union of India which are prone to droughts and have agriculture as their main occupation. Uttar Pradesh is one of the states which is being benefitted from the project and this state publish yearly reports on its official website. Regional Remote Sensing Centre operates in Nagpur to provide services to central India, there are no Regional Remote Sensing Center especially for Bundelkhand region.

Bundelkhand, as a region attained its distinction because of its geographical homogeneity. The historical underpinnings have always preserved its unique identity where a chain of rulers ruled

giving this region a sense of region-hood. In the modern development frameworks, the region has been lagging behind in most of the development parameters. This is because of the special attention it needed, which has not been given, considering the special requirements of the region.

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