History and Polity

Nestled in the Vindhyachal range and situated in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, the town of Chanderi encompasses within itself several layers of cultural efflorescence. The town, divided into outer and inner sections, is composed of a labyrinth of lanes full of archaeological remains — both religious and secular, beckoning one to unravel the realms of the historical fabric that envelops it.

The town of Chanderi, also known in the past as Chandragiri and Chandrapuram, has witnessed the rise and fall of several dynasties but there is no actual consensus on when it was found, primarily due to the lack of written evidence. The history of its foundation is inextricably linked with popular musings of myth and folklore. One legend claims that the town of Chanderi was established by Lord Krishna’s cousin, King Shishupal, in the early Vedic period. Another attributes its foundation to King Ched, who is said to have ruled over this region around 600 BC.

View of the fortification wall and the Kirti Durg from the town below.
The most illustrious of all legends, however, is the ‘Miracle of Water’, witnessed by King Kirtipal of the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty, which spurred him on to shift his capital from Boodhi Chanderi, around 11th century AD, to the present town of Chanderi. Legends are many and are popular amongst the local population as they impart to their town elements of myth and grandeur. However, the earliest inscriptional evidence mentioning the town of Chanderi is found in the 11th century AD. The town of Chanderi also figures in the travelogues of the famous chroniclers, Al Beruni (973-1048 AD) and Ibn Batuta (1304-1369 AD).

In the 8th century AD, the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty established its sovereignty over Boodhi Chanderi, making it a sizeable township complete with all the regalia befitting a town. Boodhi Chanderi, which is presently in a state of neglect and oblivion, has yielded remains of Hindu and Jain temples, some of which are now housed in the Chanderi Museum. The town itself was abandoned in the 11th century AD when King Kirtipal shifted his capital to present-day Chanderi, followed by the mass-migration of his people. The genesis of the present town of Chanderi can therefore be linked to this exodus. Kirtipal and his protégés laid the foundations of this town, crowned by the Kirti Durg, which stands atop a hillock, a magnificent metaphor for honour and valour.

The Gurjara-Pratiharas established their sovereignty over northern India in the 7th century AD, after the effective decline of the Gupta Empire. They were known to be brave, strong and fierce, and ruled till the 11th century AD. Dadda, the founder of the Pratihara dynasty, established Gurjara rule at Nandipur (Nandol), in present-day Rajasthan. Gurjara rule permeated the region around Chanderi in the 8th century AD, leading to the foundation of Boodhi Chanderi.

Not much is known about the Gurjara-Pratihara kings of the region around Chanderi, other than the information yielded by an inscription found at Chanderi. This stone inscription originally belonged to a medieval temple which is no longer extant, and is now preserved in the Gwalior Museum. It mentions the names of 13 Gurjara-Pratihara kings who ruled over Chanderi, but only describes the life of King Kirtipal, the seventh king, in detail. According to this
The fort illuminated at night.
inscription, King Kirtipal constructed three entities bearing his name — Kirti Durg, Kirti Narayan temple and Kirti Sagar. Kirti Durg alludes to the magnificent hill fort of Chanderi. Kirti Narayana was a Vaishnav temple built either inside the precincts of the fort or near the fort, which, no longer exists. Kirti Sagar alludes to the tank near the fort. The paucity of written evidence has obscured the finer details of the Gurjara-Pratihara rule in Chanderi. However, it is said that the downfall of the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty began in the last decades of the 11th century AD, and most of their territory, including Chanderi, was seized by the , who made Narwar their capital.

The town of Chanderi was lost to the Delhi Sultanate when Ghyasuddin Balban, a minister of Sultan Naseeruddin, attacked Chanderi in 1251-52 AD. Maharaja Chahad Deva, the last Kachchawa-Kachhawaha king of Narwar, was defeated and Chanderi was incorporated into the domains of the Delhi Sultanate. After securing the sovereignty of the Sultanate over Chanderi, and overseeing the foundation of the Jama Masjid, Balban returned to Delhi. As a result, the authority of the local rulers returned. When Allauddin Khilji became the Sultan of Delhi in 1296 AD, he unleashed a campaign of conquest, annexing Chanderi, Vidisha, Ujjain, Dhar Nagri, Mandu and Malwa. It is mentioned in an inscription that as a result of the success of these conquests, celebrations in Delhi lasted for seven nights. Allauddin installed one of his most trusted nobles, Malik Tamar Sultani, as the Governor of Chanderi. In the next decade, Chanderi was taken over by the Tughlaq dynasty under Sultan Mohammad Bin Tughlaq. In 1321 AD, Shahzada Ulugh Khan was made the Governor of Chanderi and held office till 1342 AD, after which Aazam Malik took his place. In 1342 AD, the famous traveller and chronicler, Ibn Batuta, passed through Chanderi and wrote about his experiences. He extolled Aazam Malik for his kind, compassionate and humane demeanour. He described Chanderi as one of the big cities in India with a sprawling bazaar full of people and goods. He stated that the temple inside the hill fort — Kirti Durg — was made by earlier rulers, and if a drum was to be beaten inside it, the sound would not escape outside because of the temple’s colossal size. This temple, however, is no longer extant. From 1351-1388 AD, Chanderi remained a part of the Delhi Sultanate, after which it was seized by the Malwa sultans, who incorporated it into their domains.

The Malwa Sultanate was founded in 1392 AD by Dilawar Khan Ghori, the governor of the Delhi Sultanate in Malwa. Dilawar Khan asserted his independence from the Delhi Sultanate in 1392 AD but was able to assume control only in 1401 AD, making Dhar the capital of his new kingdom. He was succeeded by his son Alp Khan, who assumed the title of Hoshang Shah and took over the reins of power in 1404 AD. In the meanwhile, his younger brother Qadr Khan established a separate, rival sultanate at Chanderi in 1407 and for seventeen years Chanderi remained a sovereign sultanate in itself. Qadr Khan constructed the Delhi Darwaza, which he dedicated to his father. He ruled over Chanderi till 1424 AD after which Hoshang Shah incorporated it into the domains of the Malwa Sultanate, and Qadr Khan’s legacy was doomed.
The ogee arch is the principal architectural element employed in this commemorative construction.
into oblivion. Hoshang Shah then undertook construction projects in Chanderi which included the Tapa Baodi, Singhpur Pond and Basan Baddu Masjid.

In Mandu, Hoshang Shah died a natural death in 1432 but his son, Tajuddin, who succeed him fell victim to the malevolence of his minister Allaudin Mahmud Shah Khilji, who poisoned the Sultan and usurped power in 1436. Allaudin Mahmud Shah Khilji’s reign witnessed building activities on an unprecedented scale, including the construction of the Koshak Mahal, Moti Masjid, Badal Mahal Gate, Governor’ Muzzafar Ibrahim Shah’s Palace, Hazrat Mahamshah Tomb, Chandai baodi, Hazrat Khatmuddin Tomb and Hauz Khas Lake in Chanderi. He was an efficient administrator who kept a close eye on the activities of his ministers. He ruled Bundelkhand and Malwa for 36 years until his death in 1468 AD. He was succeeded by his son Ghyasuddin Khilji.

Ghyasuddin Khilji installed Sher Khan and his son Jiman Khan as the governors of Chanderi. Both worked in conjunction, undertaking many building projects. Several havelis, serais, baodis and gates such as the Kati Ghati were constructed during their governorship. Ghyasuddin Khilji’s reign was marked by peace and harmony. Neither did he attack neighbouring kingdoms nor was his kingdom attacked. He was extremely fond of food and a recipe book, decorated with beautiful miniature paintings — the Nimat Nama — was compiled. In 1500 AD, Ghyasuddin passed away and was succeeded by his son Nasseruddin Khilji.

Nasserudin Khilji was known to be a very cruel and untrustworthy ruler. During his reign, Malwa was plagued by political and social unrest. His subedars conspired to dethrone him but Nasseruddin got wind of their plans and had all of them killed. He even had the governor of Chanderi, Sher Khan, killed in the most brutal way imaginable. He had him crushed under an elephant’s legs. Despite all this, building activities continued to flourish. The Gol Baodi, Mirza Bawdi Baodi and Parta Pura Masjid were constructed. Nasserudin Khilji died in 1510 AD and his son Shahbuddin Mohammad Shah Khilji II was made the Sultan of Malwa.

During Shahbuddin Mohammad Shah Khilji’s reign, Malwa was witness to continuous warfare and turmoil. From 1512-1515 AD, the Sultan of Delhi, Sikander Lodi, seized Chanderi and incorporated it into the domains of the Delhi Sultanate. In 1520 AD, Chanderi was attacked and taken over by Rana Sangha, the king of Chittor. Rana Sangha bestowed the rulership of Chanderi upon Medini Rai, one of his most trusted allies. Medini Rai ruled over Chanderi till 1528 AD, when the Mughal onslaught led by Emperor Babur was victorious in capturing the fort at Chanderi.

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The saga of the Mughal onslaught on Chanderi is both tragic and inspiring. Babur’s forces, encamped on the outskirts of Chanderi, were ready to launch an attack on the town. Babur sent messengers to Medini Rai and commanded a reply within 24 hours. Medini Rai was holding a large marriage ceremony in the fort and when he received Babur’s message, there was panic all around. The terms of the message stated that either Medini Rai and his men leave Chanderi untouched or surrender to Babur and his forces. Babur, in his message, also gave Medini Rai a third option — that of war. None of the three options seemed viable to Medini Rai and his men, the recurrent fear being that all of the women would fall into the hands of the Mughal ruler as they were trapped in the fort and could by no means escape to safety from the impending battle.

During the night, Babur’s spies spotted a great deal of activity taking place within the fort. Logs of wood were being assembled and lit; soon a fiery glow could be seen emanating from the fort’s walls. Babur’s troops, meanwhile, had secretly cut a road through the hill in order to install their cannons. 24 hours had elapsed since Babur sent his messengers and there was no word from Medini Rai. Babur took this as an acceptance of the terms of war and prepared his troops for battle. He sent his spies to assess the situation since there was an eerie silence around the fort. His spies peered into the fort walls and were aghast to see the corpses of thousands of Medini Rai’s troops. The women, in order to protect their caste and honour, had committed jauhar by jumping into the blazing pyres of wood.

Babur was greeted by an awful sense of death and sacrifice as he entered the fort. The last of Medini Rai’s troops, numbering approximately 300, charged towards Babur’s forces wielding swords. Babur, in his memoirs — the Baburnama — mentions that their attack was so fierce that he had to order his army to fall back. A frightening battle ensued and in the end, Babur’s forces prevailed. Babur won the Chanderi fort in the January of 1528 AD. He appointed Ahmad Shah Khilji as the ruler of Chanderi on payment of tax amounting to 50 lakhs in return.

After Babur’s death in 1530 AD, his son Humayun became the emperor. In 1538 AD, Humayun’s reign was halted by the onslaught of Sher Shah Suri, who usurped power and announced himself as the emperor of the Mughal Empire. Humayun was forced to flee to Persia. Meanwhile, Sher Shah Suri installed the Raja of Raisen, Puranmal, as the governor of Chanderi. Puranmal was an absolute tyrant; he was responsible for killing hundreds of Muslims and kidnapping their daughters, whom he incorporated in his harem. The people of Chanderi were
completely distraught and helpless. When Sher Shah Suri visited Chanderi in 1540 AD, Puranmal flattered him profusely and assured him that the people of the town were extremely satisfied. Sher Shah Suri was greatly impressed and extended Puranmal’s term as governor. While passing through the markets and residential areas of the town, Sher Shah Suri’s cavalcade encountered several women standing on rooftops, taking off their bangles and throwing them at the emperor. Sher Shah was extremely disturbed at this display of disaffection. He then realised that popular opinion was against Puranmal because of the vices he had committed and decided to punish him. Puranmal got wind of this and fled along with his family. But Sher Shah’s troops were quick to react and managed to catch up with him. Puranmal, after sighting Sher Shah’s forces, made his horses jump into the Maseed Ghat lake in a fit of haste and drowned along with his entire retinue. Sher Shah then installed Shujat Khan as governor in 1540 AD. He held office till 1546 AD.

Humayun returned to India after Sher Shah Suri’s death in 1546 AD. It was during this time that Mallu Khan, the then Malwa Sultan, captured Chanderi. In response, Humayun sent his brothers, Askari Bagh and Hindal Mirza, to recapture the town. After Humayan, his son Akbar succeeded him as emperor of the Mughal Empire in 1555 AD. He took over Chanderi in 1569 AD and made it a sarkar of the Malwa suba. During Akbar’s reign, Abul Fazl, his chronicler and most trusted confidant, described Chanderi as a town worth visiting, with plenty of stone-built houses, palaces, bazaars, mosques and stepwells. In 1605, Jehangir, on behalf of the Mughal court, handed over the rule of Chanderi to the Bundela Rajputs.

In congruence with the theories detailing the origin of Rajputs, the story of the origin of Bundelas is also rooted in myth. It is believed that the Bundelas were the progeny of Hemakaran, a Kshatriya king, who is said to have lived in Kashi in the 12th century AD. He devoted his life to the worship of goddess Vindhya vasini and was prepared to decapitate himself in order to please the goddess. As he took the sword to his neck, the goddess herself appeared and averted the
The sword had made some contact with his neck and drops of blood fell on the ground. The goddess was very impressed by his devotion and granted him a boon. Hemakaran wished that his family should rule for the same number of generations as the drops of blood that fell from his neck. The goddess granted him his wish and also gave him a large part of Kashi. Thus, the name Bundela came into existence, derived from bund or a drop, alluding to the drops of blood.

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When Ram Shah acquired Chanderi, it was in a deplorable state. The Kirti Durg fort and most of the city’s palaces were in a dilapidated condition. Extremely disturbed by the condition of Chanderi and his brother’s betrayal, he tried to recapture Orchha in 1606 AD but was defeated and was captured as a prisoner of war. In 1607, however, Jehangir issued orders for his release and returned the territory of Chanderi to him. Ram Shah ruled over Chanderi and the outlying areas for the next 22 years. He built his residence at Lalitpur, 40 kilometres from Chanderi, and devoted a lot of his energy and resources to renovating many of Chanderi’s monuments and buildings. He also established a village named Ramnagar. Ram Shah died in 1628, following which his older son, Sangram Shah, was made the ruler of Chanderi, while his younger son, Vitthal Rao, inherited Lalitpur.

Rudrapratap Singh, a descendant of Hemakaran, founded the city of Orchha in 1531 AD and made it the capital of Bundelkhand. The glorious years of Bundela rule over Chanderi were preceded by a battle, a battle between two brothers of the Bundela dynasty — Ram Shah Bundela and Veer Singh Bundela. Ram Shah, the older brother, inherited Orchha and Veer Singh was given the smaller jaagir of Badoni. As a result, there ensued a battle between the two brothers. Veer Singh allied with Jehangir, the Mughal prince, and helped him in killing Abul Fazl in 1602 AD. Jehangir then awarded the capital of Bundelkhand — Orchha — to Veer Singh in 1605 AD and conversely demoted Ram Shah by transferring him to Chanderi, which marked the start of 253 years of Bundela rule in Chanderi.
Bharat Shah’s reign commenced in 1642 AD, and like his predecessor, allied with Shahjahan. Being a keen student of weaponry and artillery from childhood, he provided assistance to Shahjahan in the Empire’s military campaigns, leading his men to victory on almost all counts. He helped suppress the rebellions of the Bhonsle ruler, Jai Karan, and Jhoojhar Singh of Orchha. He was an able and efficient administrator and was greatly revered by his people. He died in 1654 AD and was succeeded by his son Devi Singh Bundela. Bharat Shah’s cenotaph can be found near the Parmeshwar pond in Chanderi.

Devi Singh revolutionised the administrative apparatus and undertook building projects on a large scale out of which, Singhpur Village, Baba Ki Baodi and Paithani Mohalla Mosque deserve special mention. During his reign, Chanderi grew to incorporate 17 parganas and the yearly income was estimated to be 22 lakhs. He assisted Emperor Aurangzeb in suppressing the civil war which had erupted in Orchha. Devi Singh was also a great scholar and writer, and wrote some of the well-known granthas of his time. Out of those, the most celebrated were Ayurved Vilas and Devi Singh Nidaan. Characterised by unparalleled progress and communal harmony, his reign came to an end when he died in 1663 AD. His cenotaph also stands near the Parmeshwar pond. His son Durg Singh built a mosque on the east side of his memorial and a temple on the west side, a metaphor for communal harmony, which was one of the hallmarks of his reign.

Durg Singh took forward the legacy of Devi Singh, and Chanderi, as a result, continued to flourish. Like his father, Durg Singh also allied with Emperor Aurangzeb, and helped him in suppressing the Banjara rebellion and played an important role in Aurangzeb’s military campaign against the Marathas. In 1673, Shankar Rao, a Maratha ruler, attacked Chanderi but had to concede defeat at the hands of Durg Singh and his army. Durg Singh founded a village called Pranpur, situated three kilometres east of Chanderi. The village was named after his queen Prankunwar. At Pranpur, he had two beautiful stepwells, called the bawdi Jhalari baodi and Sarai baodi, built. He also had the Panchamnagar Mahal constructed, which unfortunately, was submerged during the construction of the Rajghat dam. Durg Singh ruled for 24 years till his death in 1687 AD and was succeeded by his son Durjan Singh.

Durjan Singh ascended to the throne at a time when the influence of the Mughal Empire had begun to wane. Aurangzeb’s Deccan campaign dealt a massive blow to the Empire, and drained a lot out of the treasury. Aurangzeb’s death in 1707 AD left the Empire in a state of anarchy. Durjan Singh therefore decided to sever all ties with the Mughals. But when Chanderi was attacked by the Maratha prince, Pandit Govindraj, the Mughal rulers sent emissaries to woo Durjan Singh to support the Empire once again. The twin forces of the Mughals and Durjan Singh helped in keeping the Marathas at bay. During Durjan Singh’s reign, a significant portion of the state’s income was utilised for the development of public works, and many religious and utilitarian structures were erected. Of special significance is the Qaizon ka Bagh, a garden with a beautiful mosque and ashram, which, according to inscriptional evidence, was gifted to a Sufi saint. Durjan Singh ruled over Chanderi for 14 years till his death in 1733 AD, after which his eldest son Man Singh took over.

Anirudh Singh managed to cut all ties with the Mughal Empire and ruled over Chanderi for 28 years. He was considered a very religious person and constructed
the Lakshman temple on the banks of the Parmeshwar pond, near the cenotaphs of his ancestors. Anirudh Singh died in 1774 AD and his son, Ram Chandra, took over the reins of powers.

Ram Chandra’s rule was marked by lawlessness and anarchy. He had his uncle Hate Singh killed, which led to a great rift within the royal family. This resulted in the virtual breakdown of administration, putting Chanderi on the path to decline. Ram Chandra moved to Ayodhya with his family, partly out of guilt and partly due to his inability to handle the situation in Chanderi. He remained in Ayodhya for the rest of his life and devoted himself to the worship of Lord Ram, expressing no desire to return to Chanderi. After being coaxed by royal officials, he appointed his son Prajapal as the ruler of Chanderi in 1791 AD.

Prajapal Singh, on analysing the situation in Chanderi, vowed to restore the city to its former glory. He made Lalitpur his centre and successfully combated the forces of revolutionaries who were trying to overthrow the Bundela Empire in Chanderi. He returned to Chanderi only after it became a thriving city once again. He managed to consolidate his power to a great extent but at the expense of picking up many enemies. In 1802 AD, he was assassinated while on a hunting trip.

Maud Prahlad, Prajapal’s younger brother, ascended to the throne in 1802 AD. Enamoured by luxury, he inclined towards indulging in excesses. As a result, the administration of the state dwindled. In 1811 AD, the Chanderi Fort was taken by Colonel John Baptise Filose for Daulat Rao Scindia and Chanderi was incorporated into the Scindia estates. Incapable of facing the onslaught of the army of Gwalior, Maud Prahlad fled to Jhansi and Daulat Rao Scindia appointed Colonel John Baptise as the governor of Chanderi the same year. Maud Prahlad was later granted a small jaagir of 31 villages in the area around Baanpur and Talbahat. In 1838 AD, Maud Prahlad was made the king of Baanpur. He died in 1842 AD and his memorial can be seen in the village of Baanpur.

Kunwar Mardan Singh, the last of the Bundela rulers, was born in 1802 AD. At the time of his birth, Chanderi was in a state of poverty and the administration was a shambles. His area of jurisdiction was reduced to a single jaagir near Talbahat and the village of Baanpur was his only in name. Mardan Singh possessed great administrative and military acumen and rose to the occasion by steadily gaining respect in political circles. He captured some of the most notorious dacoits of Chanderi and handed them over to Commissioner Hamilton in Lalitpur. As a re...
Chanderi suffered a lot during the 1857 uprising; it was plundered incessantly and partially burnt down. On December 12, 1860 AD, following a treaty signed between the British and the Scindias, Chanderi was returned to the Gwalior estates. After 1947, the princely state of Gwalior, which included Chanderi, became a part of the newly formed state of Madhya Bharat, later reconstituted and named Madhya Pradesh.
People and their culture

The term culture refers to a comprehensive set of beliefs, ideas, rituals and customs of an ethnic group which are crystallized over time. It becomes the sole element which guarantees the cohesion of a vast number of people, binding them together by legitimizing their existence. However, culture is not a frozen and unchanging reality and evolves constantly.

The town of Chanderi is home to Hindus, Muslims and Adivasis, the culture of each being very distinct from the other and yet very similar in certain respects. Their constant intermingling has fostered the creation of a composite culture solemnized by communal harmony.

Spread over an area of 18 square kilometres, the town of Chanderi is divided into two broad sections – Andar Shahar and Bahar Shahar, each consisting of a labyrinth of settlements interspersed with architectural masterpieces in the form of palaces, mosques, temples and havelis, exemplifying the union of splendour and simplicity.

Andar Shahar comes within one of the seven fortification walls of Chanderi. It is the inner sanctum of the city since it houses most of the city’s temples including the illustrious Jageshwari temple and the Chaubisi Jain temple. Devotees throng the halls of these temples while the Brahmans, the facilitators of the almighty, busy themselves by chanting hymns and distributing Prasad. The Jains and Maheshwaris, the traders of the town, are seen ensconced in their shops, negotiating with prospective buyers. The sprawling havelis of Andar Shahar, some more than 600 years old, never fail to enthrall with their heraldic deport-
ment and beckoning jharokhas. The three-tiered market place, an innovation of the Khilji Sultans, is fascinating both in design and concept. In the medieval times, the lower tier was meant for people of humble origin, the middle tier for nobles and merchants on horses and the upper tier for the royal retinue on elephants.

Maidan Gali, a prominent colony in Andar Shahar, is home to upper class Muslims like the Sheikhs, Mughals, Sayyids and Pathans. While most of them are landowners, some have also joined the ranks of white collar officers. The periphery of Maidan Gali, which consists of modest dwellings, is inhabited by Sabzi-faroshi and dhobis. Sabzi-faroshi can be seen lining the streets with their vegetable carts, while the dhobis are engrossed in their daily chores of washing, drying and ironing clothes. Temple bells jingling, the call of azaan, children playing, elders talking, goats braying/bleating, in all a cacophony of sounds blending with the ordered and rhythmic reverberation of the loom, characterize the streets of Andar Shahar.

Inhabited by Kolis, Ansaris, Rajputs, Banias, Basors, Khatiks, Dhimars, Ahirs, Ghosis and Adivasis, Bahar Shahar is truly representative of the heterogeneous character of Chanderi’s population. The settlements, most of them modest in appearance come alive with
the sound of the loom, punctuated occasionally by the cantankerous call of a goat. Weaving is the sole means of livelihood for the Kolis and Ansaris. It is a skill which is passed on from one generation to another, binding families in the same way that the cloth is bound. The Kolis, Ansaris, Sabzi – faroshis, Ghosis and Pathans are also engaged in making beedis, which again is a skill that is taught to the younger generation. The children of these households can be seen rolling beedis religiously in their verandas and courtyards while their parents toil relentlessly at the loom. The Banias can be seen in the market of the town, busy supervising affairs in their grocery stores.

Bamboo weavers, traditionally called Basors, sit cosseted in their courtyards, weaving different kinds of baskets, boxes, fans and sieves. Goats and hens, belonging mostly to the Hindu butchers, Khatiks, roam around freely, adding to the hustle and bustle of the narrow lanes. The Ahirs and Ghosis can be seen fussing over their cows and buffaloes, trying to keep them apace, leading them to the luscious green fields in the countryside. The Dhimars flock the many lakes and ponds of the town, throwing in their nets and catching fish to earn a living.

Belonging mostly to the Gond tribe, the Adivasis live in thatched huts on the outskirts of the town. A typical day in the life of an Adivasi begins early in the morning when he, along with his family, ventures into the forest to collect gum, wood, honey and herbs. These items are then brought to the market in the evening and sold. Only then can the provisions for the family be purchased, depending on the money he earns. This is his circle of life, from the jungle to the market and then home.

The Loha pitas, who are nomads, line the streets of Bahar Shahar from the months of June to October. Their makeshift settlements, made mostly of black plastic or tarpaulin sheets surmounted on bamboo poles, seem rudimentary and crude, and yet at the same time, exude a certain kind of charm. It is their way of life, to wander from one place to another with their bullock-carts, settling down only to work and earn a living, mostly as blacksmiths, making utensils – pots, pans, knives, farming equipment and other utilitarian items.
Before a basket can be woven, reeds need to be prepared from the bamboo shoots.

A man counting and binding together finished beedis.

The languages spoken in Chanderi are varied; Muslim families speak a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, while Hindus prefer to converse in Bundeli. A little sprinkling of English is common, especially among the younger generation. Attire in Chanderi is conservative, corresponding to the protocol prevalent in the many small towns of India.
The languages spoken in Chanderi are varied; Muslim families speak a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, while Hindus prefer to converse in Bundeli. A little sprinkling of English is common, especially among the younger generation. Attire in Chanderi is conservative, corresponding to the protocol prevalent in the many small towns of India. Hindu women are mostly seen in saris; however younger girls also wear salwar-suits. According to custom, a newlywed Hindu bride has to wrap a cotton shawl over her sari when she steps out of the house. Even though the traditional dress for Hindu men is dhoti-saluka, they have to a large extent adopted western attire including jeans, t-shirts, shirts and pants.

Muslim women mostly wear salwar-suits and some put on veils or naqabs when they step out of the house. There are three types of naqabs – Turkish, Arabic and Hindustani. The Turkish naqab is the oldest; it is white in colour and is worn with a cap. The Arabic naqab is black and covers the salwar-suit entirely and the eyes are visible through a thin transparent jali. The Hindustani naqab is the most commonly used, it is black in colour and only the eyes are visible in it, with the mouth and forehead covered. The traditional dress for Muslim women is the gharara-kameez, which is worn chiefly on weddings. Muslim men have varied attires which include sherwanis with churidar pyjamas, pathani suits, pants and shirts. Muslim men also wear caps of different kinds including Turkish, Aligarhi, Lakhnawi and Arabic.
Adivasi women wear saris tied in a rudimentary fashion, allowing them freedom of movement since they have to tend to daily chores as well as help their husbands with their work of gathering essentials from the forests. Adivasi men are mostly seen in workmen’s clothes which include dhotis, vests, t-shirts and shorts. Adivasis are extremely dexterous and agile, and these qualities are made manifest in their simple and comfortable attire.

Loha pita women exhibit a riot of colour in their attire. Their delicately tied lehenga-cholis of variegated hues are a metaphor for their colourful and eventful lives. In comparison, men dress relatively simply in dhoti-kurtas or sometimes even t-shirts, but are always seen in bright coloured turbans.
The palette of the inhabitants of Chanderi is assorted, corresponding to their faith, caste and social standing. Brahmans, Banias and Jains enjoy elaborately prepared vegetarian foods including dal baati, kheer-poodi, aalu subzi, guja papariyan and karhichawal. Dhimars, Ahirs, Kolis and Khatiks are more partial to maheri (a traditional dish made of corn), dal bhajiya, spicy vegetables like kankaua, baramasi, katila and rajgira and prefer a meal consisting of mutton, chicken or fish on weekends. The Muslims have an elaborate palate, incorporating both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes like dal-chawal, subzi-roti, gosht-roti, mutton stew, biryani, sevaiyaan, dal ka halwa and zarda pulao. In contrast, an Adivasi’s resources allow him to eat only roti and chutney made of ground red chillies, onions, garlic and salt.

Celebrated with great fervour and accompanied by pomp and extravagance, festivals are occasions of happiness and togetherness. Apart from the major festivals celebrated all over India, many fascinating festivals celebrated in Chanderi out of which Guru Purnima, Bhujariyan, Viman Otsav and Rang Panchami are of Hindu affiliation, while Muharram, Urs, Ghaze Mian ka Mela and Shab-e-Baraut are of Muslim affiliation.
Guru Purnima

Celebrated in the Hindu month of Shravan, Guru Purnima is a commemorative festival in which pupils pay homage to their deceased gurus as well as ones who are alive. It involves the preparation of a huge banquet that is laid out in the many temples of Chanderi. Devotees throng temple halls and pay homage to their respective gurus, after which they proceed towards the banquet serving sumptuous kheer, puri-subzi and prasad.

Attire in Chanderi is conservative, corresponding to the protocol prevalent in the many small towns of India. Hindu women are mostly seen in saris. Even though the traditional dress for Hindu men is dhoti-saluka, they have to a large extent adopted western attire including jeans, t-shirts, shirts and pants. The traditional dress for Muslim women is the ghararakameez, which is worn chiefly on weddings. Muslim men have varied attires which include sherwanis with churidar pyjamas, pathani suits, pants and shirts. Adivasi women wear saris tied in a rudimentary fashion. Adivasi men are mostly seen in workmen’s clothes which include dhotis, vests, t-shirts and shorts. Lohapita women exhibit a riot of colour in their attire.
Bhujariyaan

Celebrated a day after Raksha Bandhan in the Hindu month of Bhadrapad, the festival of Bhujariyaan immortalizes the brother-sister relationship. Brothers and sisters give each other a fistful of parched wheat which is subsequently sown into an earthen pot. After nine days, the dainty wheat stalks are collected and exchanged. This is followed by the usual distribution of sweets and gifts. The Adivasis also celebrate this festival with great enthusiasm; Adivasi men gather at the Hauz Khas talab in Bahar Shahar and perform a special dance known as the Bhujariyaan dance nine days after Raksha Bandhan. With peacock feathers in one hand and dandia sticks in the other, they dance away to glory on the rhythmic reverberations of the pipa, rumtula and dholak.

| The Bhujariyaan dance being performed by the local Adivasis. |

Vimanotsav

Vimanotsav is celebrated in the month of Kuar with great fervour and enthusiasm by the Jain community of Chanderi. A procession which includes miniature statues of the 24 Tirthankaras, heads towards the sacred Khandargiri temple. Prasad is served after devotees finish paying homage to the Tirthankaras. The Jains plunge fully into the festivities by closing their shops for the day.

Dolgiyaras

Dolgiyaras is celebrated in the month of Bhadon by the Hindus. Devotees gather in the main bazaar with miniature statues of all gods and goddesses on their shoulders. The procession then heads towards the Parmeshwar pond for jal-vihar which entails sprinkling of holy water on these statues by the Brahmans.
Rang Panchami

Legend associated with this festival claims that Lord Ram Chandra crossed Chanderi in the month of Phalgun during his thirteen year long vanavas and sanctified the land. To this affect, Rang Panchami is celebrated five days after Holi in the month of Phalgun on a hill top at Karila. The celebration begins at dusk with the Raee dance performed by Bednis, women of the Bediya caste, under flaming torches held aloft by men. More than five hundred thousand men from Chanderi and its surrounding areas are audience to this great spectacle.

Ghaze Mian ka Mela

Ghaze Mian ka Mela is a fun filled festival which takes place at the Shehzadi ka Rauza on the last weekend of the month of Jesht. Not much is known about its history and relevance or about Ghaze Mian, the man after whom it is so named, in spite of this, it is celebrated with great enthusiasm. Families gorge on an assortment of sweetmeats and seasonal fruits like gond ki mithai, halwa and watermelon. This festival holds special significance for newlywed couples. On the first day of the mela, newlywed women immerse their husbands’ sehras in the Parmeshwar Pond. On the second day, the girl’s side invites the boy’s family for a picnic followed by kite flying, this program is traditionally called ‘bagh mein jana’.

Muharram

The event of Prophet Mohammad’s son in law Ali’s death is commemorated with great reverence in Chanderi. Three full-size Taziyahs are prepared for the ceremony namely Badshah Ka Taziyah, Wazir Ka Taziyah,-Banjari Tola, Dudua ka Taziyah, Shahevilayat ka Taziyah and Chowk ka Taziyah. The structure of each Taziyah is wooden while the outer covering is made of cloth, a practice distinct from other places where newspaper is the preferred covering for a Taziyah. On the eve of the 7th day of the Islamic month of Muharram, three processions start from Andar Shahar, Bahar Shahar and Maidan Gali, led by their respective standard bearers. These processions congregate at Mohalla Badal Mahal where the Fateha Khwani is read out followed by the distribution of sweets. They then assemble at Imambada at dusk where a sacrificial fire is lit. The ceremony begins when a metal palm is thrown into the fire and a man out of the whole gathering feels that the soul of a jinni has entered his body. Within a few minutes, he jumps into the fire, retrieves the glowering metal palm from the flames, wraps it in a piece cloth and starts running. Before he gets too far, he is chained by the crowd who start running, with him in the lead. The mourning ceremony continues on the 8th, 9th and 10th days of the month of Muharram. Processions take place at different times, followed by programs of fencing. On the evening of the 10th day, after all the hullabaloo is over, all the processions meet at Delhi Darwaza and head towards Karballa, led by the Baadshah Taziyah and followed by the Wazir ka Taziyah and the Banjari Tola.
Urs

Urs commemorates the glory of Hazrat Wajihuddin Yusuf, a Khalifa of the great Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya. In the reign of Allauddin Khilji, Hazrat Wajihuddin was ordered by Hazrat Nizamuddin to go and settle in Chanderi and work for the people there. He reached Chanderi in 1305, established his khanqah and soon gained thousands of followers. These devotees came not only from Chanderi and the surrounding areas but places as far flung as Bengal. The festival of Urs is a three day affair which begins on the 27th of March and ends on the 29th. Devotees from all over come to Hazrat Wahijhuddin’s dargah and pay homage to this great reverend. This is followed by three days of celebration and qawwali programs. The biggest fair in Chanderi takes place during Urs which is attended by both Hindus and Muslims.

Shab-e-Baraut

Taking place in the Islamic month of Sha’ban, Shab-e-Baraut is traditionally celebrated to atone and seek pardon for one’s sins. In Chanderi, it involves the whole Muslim community in the practice of commemorating the dead. Men gather in graveyards near their homes around midnight and pray for forgiveness and peace for the deceased. Afterwards, men head towards mosques and request for mercy and salvation, both for themselves and the deceased.
Places of Interest

Koshak Mahal

This simple yet imposing building, located on the Isagarh road at a distance of 4 kilometres from Chanderi proper, was built in 1445 AD as a victory monument. Chronicler Mohammad Kasim ‘Farishta’ in his Tarikh-e-Farishta mentions that the palace was built by the Sultan of Malwa, Mehmood Shah Khalji, to commemorate his victory over Sultan Mehmood Sharki in the battle at Kalpi. The massive building is square in plan and with four detached sections at the four corners at the ground level. These are separated by way of two huge corridors placed at right angles at the centre. The central quadrangle formed due to the corridors has a cross-arch vault ceiling. The passages are faced by tall, arched entrance doorways at the centre of each of the four sides of the ground storey. The bare outer walls are relieved by smaller arched openings and balconies. The little ornamentation includes the patterned jalis or lattices and brackets.

Initially planned as a seven-storeyed structure, as suggested by its original name, Kushk-e-Haft Manzil or ‘the edifice with seven-storeys’, at present it shows only three complete storeys and a part of the fourth. There is no consensus on whether the intended seven storeys were ever completed. Some claim that the upper storeys have collapsed with time, while others believe that the project was never finished.

One legend has it that the real reason the Sultan ordered the monument’s construction was to provide employment to the people of Chanderi. At that time, the people of the town were facing a severe shortage of work and using the pretext of the victory at Kalpi, the project was initiated to provide the people with work and pay.

It is suggested that once the first storey was completed, the builders were faced with the problem of raising the heavy stone blocks to the second level. This was resolved by burying the first storey under dirt to create a slope on which the blocks could be carried uphill. Each storey was similarly constructed and finally the dirt was cleared away to uncover the entire structure.

The stone used in the construction of the palace was quarried from near Fatehabad and the Chhiyoli River. The removal of these boulders resulted in the creation of two large water bodies, which are now known as Mallukha and Sultania ponds.
The Koshak Mahal is an imposing sandstone structure.
The series of arches above the central corridor.
Shehzadi Ka Rauza

This elegant structure, built on a 12 feet high platform, stands near the Parmeshwar Pond. On the outside the wall has been divided into the tall first storey and the slightly shorter second storey which are relieved by a series of arched depressions. The purpose of this division, achieved by the chaïja, is purely ornamental. The inside of the monument, is a single square room with only one true storey. The most striking element of the monument are the unusual, serpentine brackets which support the eaves at both the levels. Inside the tomb, at the centre of the floor, are placed two exquisitely carved tombstones. As the outside, the inside walls are also decorated with perfectly proportioned arched indents. Sequences of arches have been employed as squinches that would have once supported the superstructure.

Originally, the whole structure was roofed by a large central dome which was surrounded on all four corners by small minaret structures. But the entire dome and two of the four minarets have now mostly collapsed. Also visible on the parapet portion above are the remnants of coloured tiles which probably once faced the entire structure.

Attributed to the 15th century, the building is actually a tomb built by the then Hakim or governor of Chanderi in the memory of his daughter Mehrunissa. The story behind the memorial goes that Mehrunissa had fallen in love with the chief of the army. Her father, however, was against the alliance and decided on drastic action when his requests went unheeded. The army was to go to battle soon, so he hired some soldiers and asked them to make sure that the commander did not return alive from the battlefield. The commander was grievously injured but he somehow escaped and managed to ride back to Chanderi. His strength finally gave way and he fell from his horse at the exact spot where the memorial now stands. When Mehrunissa heard of the tragedy, she rushed to find her lover but when she reached his side he had already succumbed to his wounds. Unable to bear this sorrow, she ended her life as well, right beside him.

The Hakim had loved his daughter dearly and he decided to bury both of them together and build the beautiful tomb. He made a pond around the tomb to make sure nobody could reach it, a metaphor for their impossible love. This pond no longer exists and the tomb is instead surrounded by farmland.
There is only one arched doorway leading into the mausoleum.
Ramnagar Palace and Museum

The road through the Kati Ghati gate leads up to the Ramnagar Palace which is also a museum maintained by the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Archives, Madhya Pradesh. Termed as palace, the structure is in fact a hunting lodge and retreat which was built by Durjan Singh Bundela in AD 1698. The stone blocks used in its construction are not consistent in size, shape or decorative carving. This clearly indicates that these blocks were sourced from older monuments and ruined structures in the vicinity.

Objects on display include fragments from Hindu temples, idols of deities as well as some well-preserved examples of Sati stones. The temple remains range from the 9th to the 12th century while the Sati stones belong mainly to the 16th to 18th century. These remains were collected from villages which were submerged under water after the construction of the Rani Lakshmibai Sagar.

Surrounded by lush greenery on one side and the Mehjatiya Pool on the other, the palace serves as a popular picnic spot. The Governor Bahjat Khan had ordered the creation of this artificial lake and it was initially named Bahjat Khan Pond but the name was later distorted to Mehjatiya. This lake is of historical importance as well. It was here that Babur had camped the night before he mounted the attack on the Chanderi fort, on January 28, 1528.
The mausoleum was originally crowned by a dome but this has now disappeared.

Purana Madarsa

Built in 1470 AD under the aegis of Mahmood Khilji I of the Malwa Sultanate, this splendid structure is actually the tomb of a mudarris and the aalim of the darool uloom or university which was functional during this period, and the ruins of which can be seen in the vicinity. The term madarsa is a misnomer; it probably got associated with this monument due to the presence of a madarsa in the surrounding area.

The square central chamber is surrounded by an open, arcaded corridor on all four sides. The walls of the tomb boast of intricately carved jaalis in which the six pointed star, analogous to the Star of David, finds keen expression along with other decorative motifs. The lower portions of the walls do not have lattices but are similarly carved with elaborate geometrical patterns. Roundels with beautifully carved flowers flank the upper portions of the arches and arched facades, both on the interior and exterior walls.

The chamber is accessed through a single arched doorway in the middle of the front wall. Within this chamber are two tombstones, placed next to each other, which are engraved with exquisite geometrical and floral patterns in high relief. Also, on the interior of the western wall, the central section is ornately carved with mihrabs to indicate qibla or the direction of prayer.

The structure, made entirely out of sandstone had five domes, the biggest of which stood in the centre, surrounded by four smaller ones. However, the entire super-structure has now completely disappeared.
Kati Ghati Gateway

This heraldic structure, cut entirely out of living rock, is situated on the southern edge of Chanderi, forming a link between Malwa on the south and Bundelkhand on the north. Standing tall at 230 ft above ground level, the gate itself is 80 ft high and 39 ft wide.

The legend associated with the construction of this gate is extremely tragic. The gate was to be cut in order to welcome the Sultan of Malwa, Ghyasuddin Khilji, who was to arrive in Chanderi the very next day. A frantic Jiman Khan announced an award for any mason who would be able to carve out the gate in one night. Only one mason accepted the challenge and assured Jiman Khan that he with his crew would accomplish the task. The next morning, Jiman Khan was pleasantly surprised to see the gateway in place, but on further inspection he noticed that it lacked the provision for door hinges. Since the gate was located at a strategically important spot, it was mandatory for security reasons, that there be a door in place. Jiman Khan refused to pay the stone mason for making this mistake. The latter walked away empty handed despite the fact that he had accomplished the impossible feat. Dejected and inconsolable, he later committed suicide. Till today, the Kati Ghati Gate stands without a door.

An inscription both in Devnagari and Nask scripts, in languages Sanskrit and Arabic and Persian respectively, on the eastern wall of the gate states that its construction was completed on 12th March in AD 1495 by Jiman Khan, the son of the then Governor of Chanderi, Sher Khan, who had the fort under his control.

The text, in eleven lines of prose, written in Naskh letters, reads as follows:

The high gateway of Ganpati and the tank have been completed in the name of the Khanzada Jiman Khan, son of Sher Khan, may Allah forgive them, during the reign of the king of kings, Ghiyas-ul-Dunya wal-Din, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty, on the 14th Jumada in the year 900 H.
Behti Math

Located 3 kilometres away from the village of Behti, which in turn is 20 kilometres south-east of Chanderi, is the 5th century Behti Math temple that has escaped the attention of tourists and authorities alike. However, being a well-preserved Gupta period construction, examples of which are extremely rare, its importance is undeniable.

Built upon a base of two mouldings, the stone temple is a square in plan with plain unadorned walls. The pillars and pilasters however are elaborately carved with floral scrolls, in half medallions, vases overflowing with foliage, kirtimukhas, stylized lotuses etc. Also striking are the makara headed spouts, one of which is still in place.

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The temple is made entirely from the locally available sandstone.
Nanuan Rock Paintings

Near the village of Nanaun, along the river Urr (Urvashi), can be found the earliest imprints of human existence in the region. Sandstone rock formations, which would have served as shelters from sun and rain for the prehistoric man also became the canvas for his art. These rock paintings can be found in a region of 3 kilometre from Chota Bharka to the Bharka waterfall.

Most are simply executed in red ochre and depict themes which reflect the concerns of wandering humans of the age. Scenes of hunting, humans carrying weapons and riding, animals including bulls, cows, deer, stags, tigers, elephants, camels, monkeys, crocodiles, snakes etc. as well as birds and even beehives are drawn. Time period of the paintings ranges from the prehistoric Palaeolithic age when stick-like line drawings were made to the Neolithic age when figures with internal patterning and filled-in forms were done.

The paintings at Nanaun are not the only rock drawings in evidence in the area. Similar drawings have been found in cave shelters at Raja Caves, Gidkhal, Chirol (along River Belan), Bharki, Aamkho (along River Ghoda Pachad), Deokani hills and Thubon (along River Lilat). Most recently discovered are the ones at Maidan Chhar and Chimla-Mamon.
Idgah

This mosque, situated a short distance from the main town, was built in AD 1495 by the Governor Sher Khan during the reign of Ghiassuddin Khilji. It consists of a two-storied arched facade with minarets on either side. In front of this is an 80 feet by 100 feet stone platform where Muslims of the area gather to this day to offer prayers on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Zuha.

One of the central mihrabs has a tablet installed which is etched with an inscription, in verse form, in Persian language, written in Naskh letters.

An approximate translation of the seven lines that form the text is:

Gratitude is to God that Mansad-i-Ali ‘Sher Khan’, who is of noble origin, was inspired to construct this edifice.

That distinguished man completed this namazgah in the reign of the king who rules the world, Ghyasuddin.

He is that Ali for whom the title of Sher Khan is appropriate, as the designation of Sher – i – Haque was befitting to the fourth Caliph Ali.

Time has never set eyes on a building like this whose spotlessness and cleanliness is incomparable throughout the world.

The year from the Migration was nine hundred and it was the thirteenth of the month of Ramazan, when (the idgah) was completed with the benevolence of the Maker.

O Lord! Save from harm its builder for as long as the sun and the moon remain in the revolving sky.

Also, as long as the days of Id and Friday are observed, make the towers of his position and prosperity eternal like the sky!
The mosque is essentially a façade wall fronted by an expansive courtyard.
Khandargiri Temple

About 2 kilometres south of town, on the Ramnagar road is the Khandargiri temple complex which is a popular pilgrimage site for the Jains.

The most impressive part of the centre is the towering statue of the first Jain Tirthankara Rishabhnath, also known as Adinath. Carved on the surface of the hillock, the statue is a striking 45 feet in height and has a powerful presence. The image recalls the colossal statues of the Buddha that were destroyed in Afghanistan.

Besides this statue, the hillside has been carved 6 caves within which are found images of the other Tirthankaras as well, but on a smaller scale. Also, there are two caves which have been carved into the rock face. Within these caves too, inscribed statues of the Tirthankaras can be found. The inscriptions reveal that the earliest among these sculptures is over eight hundred years old.

The site is most interestingly, known for the oldest available inscription in the region of Chanderi. Also carved on the rock-face, it belongs to the first century BC and is in the Brahmi script.
Badal Mahal Darwaza

This structure, rising to a height of 50 feet, is the most eminent among all monuments in Chanderi. Situated at the southern end of the inner city, within one of the seven interlocking walls which enclosed specific areas of the town, this free-standing darwaza was built in the 15th century, during the reign of Sultan Mahmood Shah Khilji I. It is said that this gateway stood at the entrance of a palace, Badal Mahal, but this palace no longer survives.

The gate itself consists of an arched entrance on either side of which are tall fluted minarets. The door arch is fringed with decorative scallops. Above the door is a gap and right on top is another arch, inserted with jaalis of four separate patterns. The jaalis are rimmed with ornamental spearhead motif. Flanking the door are two floral roundels, smaller versions of which also decorate the minarets. Also among the ornaments are miniature arched facades and other geometric motifs.

Its importance as an iconic monument is clear as it form is now etched as a seal which is put on the letters which are posted in Chanderi. This is also the stamp which Madhya Pradesh Handloom Department puts on the hand-woven sarees which Chanderi is famous for.
The entryway is an ogee arch with a scalloped edge on the inside.
Singhpur Palace

Set in the midst of the Vindhyachal hill ranges, the Singhpur Palace is located at a distance of 4 kilometres from Chanderi. This three-storeyed structure was built under the orders of Devi Singh Bundela in the year 1656 and served as a hunting rest house. Near the palace is a pond which, according to an inscription, was built by Malik Haiwat Nizam in 1433 during the reign of Hoshang Shah Ghori. The thick forest and the nearby lake make it an ideal place of retreat.

Originally, the Singhpur Pond was installed with an inscription that is now preserved in the Archaeological Museum at Gwalior. The inscription, in Persian, comprises eleven couplets written in verse. Inscribed in relief in Nask script, the letters were unclear in some places but the entire inscription has been successfully deciphered.

The translation reads as follows:

In the reign of the exalted, the dispenser of justice, Solomon of the age and cherisher of equity,
a king who captures lions and elephants, a hero who has subdued Orissa, Jainagar,
the conqueror and protector of the world, Shah Hoshang, a full moon of the sky, who is like the resplendent sun,
through the grace of god, this flowing bounty (i.e. this pond),
comparable to an ocean that you can see in entirety,
was constructed, with good intent and sincerity of heart, in the name of the guiding Sheikh,
who is that pearl, namely Burhan, son of Yaqub, who is a pearl from the ocean of Wajih – ul – Haq,
by Malik Haibat Nizam Jashghuri, whose awe has the awe of Hyder.

The height of the pride of his magnanimity is such that it appears to surpass nine heavens.

In purity and sweetness, the water of this tank is limpid like the water of Kauser.

O generous Lord! On the day of resurrection, make his full reward, for this good deed synchronized with his good end!

Reckon that on this completion, it was tenth of Shawwal, of the year eight hundred thirty-six from the Migration.

It is clear from the inscription that the tank was built by Malik Haibat Nizam Jashghuri when Hoshang Shah was the king. It was constructed to commemorate the name of Sheikh Burhan. This is possibly the same sheikh Burhanuddin who is mentioned in an inscription found on the entrance of a tomb in the family graveyard of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya. The date of completion given in the Islamic calendar, corresponds to the 30th of May, 1433.
Verdant green forest envelops the Singhpur Palace on all sides.
Kirti Durg

The Kirti Durg was first constructed by the 11th century Pratihara king Kirti Pal and is named after him. The structure we see today is not the original fort, it has been rebuilt several times and added to by subsequent rulers like the Mahmood Khilji, Durjan Singh Bundela and others.

Built on the highest point of the Chandragiri Hill, the fort is a characteristic sight in Chanderi and is visible from virtually every point in the town and beyond. Its 5 kilometres long perimeter encloses several monuments which are worth a visit. On one end is the Khilji mosque whose arches and pillars are carved with graceful floral ornaments and verses from the Holy Quran. Hawa Paur, Naukhanda Palace and the tomb of Hazrat Abdul Rahman Narnuli are all points of interest. The Baradari is a vantage point, said to have been constructed in one day, which not only gives a commanding view of the city but also of the ruined Kirat Sagar, the Kati Ghati gateway, and Babur Katan. The sight of the setting sun from this point is especially picturesque.

The importance of Chanderi in the times past is clear from the many attacks that were mounted on this fort by successive campaigners. The most famous of these was the attack by Babur in 1528 which had led to the mass ritual suicide or jauhar by over 600 Rajput women. The memorial of this tragic event can also be seen within the fort premises. Also present are the Baiju Bawra memorial, the Gilaua Taal and an English soldier’s gravestone.

There are three different ways to approach the fort. The first is the originally planned route which passes through the Khooni Darwaza and Hawa Paur. The fort can also be reached by first climbing up to the Jageshwari Temple and then ascending another steep staircase. The main approach used these days is a modern motorable road.

In 1908, when the erstwhile Maharaja of Gwalior Madhavarao I Scindia was visiting Chanderi, an architect Hashmat Ali constructed a bungalow on the northern verge of the fort which is now a PWD guest house and is commonly referred to as Kothi.
The Jama Masjid, with a capacity of holding over 2000 persons at the time of prayer, is the largest and the oldest mosque in Chanderi and possibly all of Bundelkhand. The foundations of this impressive monument were laid when Chanderi came under the control of the Delhi Sultanate following the taking of the city by Ghyasuddin Balban.

The entrance bay of the mosque is elaborately decorated with leaf ornaments and floral and geometrical patterns. This, however, was not originally carved for the mosque but brought from the ruined palace remains at Tamarpura. The bay leads to the spacious, stone-floored central courtyard with arched passageways on the right and left. The eaves of the passageways are supported by the slender, serpentine brackets which are characteristic of monuments built in Chanderi during that time. Within the courtyard is a wuduchashma which was used earlier by the people to wash their hands and feet before offering namaz. However, it is now dry and no longer in use.

Beyond the courtyard is the main sanctuary which is roofed with three globular domes. The domes themselves are crowned by metal spires which are ornamented with the lotus motif, an influence of Hindu architecture. Between the three domes are two triangular barrel vaulted roofs.

An inscription on a stone slab installed in the east wall of the mosque does not refer to the mosque at all and instead is inscribed with the name of Dilawar Khan Gohri. This plaque was also, in all probability, derived from the ruins at Tamarpura.
View of the northern passageway.

Details of the decorated arches within the main hall of the mosque.
Jageshwari Temple

The founding of this temple is interlinked with the lore of founding of modern Chanderi, when the Gurjara-Pratihara king Kirtipal is said to have witnessed the Miracle of Water. Although no inscription has been found to corroborate the date of its foundation, certain elements of the temple appear to belong to the 11th and possibly earlier centuries.

Situated on a hillside, the temple is reached by climbing a long flight of stairs from the foot of the hill. Another approach to the temple is the steep flight of stairs which descends from near the fort Kirti Durg. The main idol of the temple is the face of the goddess Jageshwari, which is located in an open cave. The modern temple has been built around the cave to accommodate the devotees who come for darshan and puja. Also within the temple complex are installed two large shiva lingams whose surface is carved with 1100 lingams. Another lingam is carved with the faces of Lord Shiva on all four sides.

Several natural springs, whose water is considered sacred, flow down the cliff side near the temple. Shrouded in greenery, with sounds of birds, monkeys and cascading water, the temple has the atmosphere of being set deep within a forest.

After climbing up some distance on the stairs, on the left, is a pond which is referred to as Sagar and where the water of all the springs is collected. Remains of four ancient temples have been found around this pond.
Hazrat Nizamuddin Family Tombs

Approached by the Chanderi Mongawali road, situated near the Nizamuddin crossing, in the Andar Shehar, this site is under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. Although the tombs are referred to as those of the family members of Hazrat Nizamuddin, more accurately these belong to the followers of the Chishtia Nizamia sect.

The complex is scattered with the gravestones, most of which lie under the open skies. Some of the important ones, however, are housed within domed tomb structures. Only one of the tombs is still intact, the domes and portions of the walls of four others have collapsed. What is most impressive is the highly intricate stonework which is found both on the tombstones and the tombs.

One of the tombs has an inscription which mentions that it was constructed in 1425, during the rule of Hoshang Shah Ghori by his minister Malik Salar, during the governorship of Malik Nasiruddin. This suggests that the entire complex must have been built over the 15th century.

This inscription is to be found on the lintel of the door of the tomb. It consists of ten couplets and one line in prose and though slightly eroded, it has been deciphered. It informs us that the tomb is of a renowned saint of the time, Sheikh Burhanuddin who passed away on the 14th of October, 1420. The importance of the inscription lies in the fact that it is the earliest one to note Hoshang Shah as the title of Alp Khan.

A rough translation of the text, which is in Persian, is as follows:

In the age of Hoshang Shah that is, the king of the world, this tomb, which is like the supreme heaven, was constructed.

What a radiant dome it is in the courtyard of the green dome. It is as if a bezel has been placed in the circle of a ring.

Malik Salar, the illustrious and noble minister to the king, laid the foundation of this tomb like Ridwan ...in the time of the holder of the iqta of the shiq of Chanderi.

Malik Nasiruddin who is devoted to His Exalted Majesty.

When this tomb was constructed, the date was eight hundred and twenty eight years after the Migration (of Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Medina).

It was sixth of the month of Shawwal, eight hundred and twenty three years after the Migration when His Holiness, the Sheikh, departed from this world.
A world of knowledge, Burhanuddin was also the pole star of the planet. With his departure, faith itself was miserable.

He left for the garden of Paradise so that the black-eyed hours might use the dust of his feet as collyrium. Jamal, (son of) Ula, received divine guidance for its construction...

Shams, (son of) Farid has composed this text which contains the dates of both events, may God always alleviate his affairs.

The servant of the court, Saifuddin, son of Shajawal.
A restored mausoleum and the carved tombstones within the complex.

This ornate and meticulously carved mihrab decorates a wall inside one of the tombs.
Chanderi Chronicles

Dargah Makhdoom Shah Wilayat

Hazrat Maulana Wajihuddin Yusuf spent his early years at Kalkahari, near Delhi where he was born in the year 1260. As a young man he left for Delhi, where he became a disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. During the reign of Alauddin Khilji, Hazrat Nizamuddin sent Hazrat Wajihuddin to Chanderi to look after and serve the people here. Hazrat Wajihuddin reached Chanderi in 1305 and soon gained thousands of devotees from not only Chanderi but even other places, who began to frequent his khanqah.

The then Governor of the province, Malik Tamar became envious of Hazrat Wajihuddin’s popularity and instigated his army to attack the khanqah and the devotees. The situation became so volatile that Hazrat Wajihuddin was asked to move to Lukhnauti, in Bengal. He travelled to Delhi to seek guidance from Hazrat Nizamuddin whereupon he realized that he had been given the responsibility of serving the people of Chanderi and he had to fulfil it. He returned to Chanderi where he built a new khanqah and continued his service till his passing in 1328.

Hazrat Wajihuddin’s dargah is built near the Rajghat road. Around his tomb are the tombstones of the most dedicated of his followers. Even today the faithful come to pay their respects and seek his blessings.

Every year from March 27 to 29, the Urs celebration is organized where his devotees flock to the dargah to offer chaadars and pray for the fulfilment of their wishes.

To the left of this dargah are the mausoleums of two other Muslim saints. The decorative jaali work and carving seen on their walls is as lavish as that of the Nizamuddin tombs. The structures are however crumbling and in desperate need of restoration and recognition.
Chandraprabh Jain Temple

This Jain temple is situated in the Hath ka Pura neighbourhood, within the Bahar Shehar. Hath ka Pura which was earlier called Manganj used to be the area where most of the prosperous Jain businessmen had their houses in the past.

The exact date of foundation and construction of the temple is not found inscribed but some of the statues installed within the temple have dates which correspond to AD 967 which is the oldest, 10th century and AD 1204. The temple is dedicated to the eighth Tirthakara of the Jain religion and devotees from not only Chanderi but other places as well come to pray at the temple.
Delhi Darwaza

One of the main gateways in the city fortifications, the Delhi Darwaza was probably given this name as it faced north towards Delhi. Today it forms the main entrance to the busy Sadar Bazaar, Chanderi’s main shopping area.

On the walls flanking the gate can be found large carvings of soldiers mounted on elephants and holding weapons. What is most surprising about this depiction is that such figural representations are almost never found on Muslim constructions.

An inscription in Persian and Arabic above the arch of the gate states that the construction of the gate began during the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq of the Delhi Sultanate, under the direction of Dilawar Khan Ghori. It was completed in the year 1411 when Hoshang Shah was the Sultan of Malwa.

The Delhi Darwaza, an example of the corbelled arch, was an entry point in the city ramparts.
Jugal Kishore Temple

Situated on the Chanderi Mungaoli road near Harkund Baodi, the exact inception date of this Shaiva temple is unclear as the only inscription found is unreadable. Only the date which is probably AD 1214 can be deciphered.

Within this temple is another temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Ganesh, whose architecture appears to belong to the Bundela period. A shiva lingam installed here, however, is certainly ancient.
Choubisi Jain Temple

Located within the inner city, near the Rajmahal, the Choubisi temple is another attraction for the Jain pilgrims who visit Chanderi.

Built in 1836, the temple is not as old as some of the other Jain pilgrimage sites in the vicinity, yet its fame is enough to attract tens of thousands of pilgrims every year. The temple is in two parts. The first part is ancient with a large domed roof which has the symbols of all 24 Tirthankaras rendered upon its inside. This part also houses a giant statue of Bahuvali.

The second part houses large statues of the 24 Tirthankaras, each carved from a specifically coloured stone as according to the Jain belief system, each Tirthankara was born a particular colour. Written on a wall inside the temple is the couplet:

Do gore, do sanwale,
do hariyal, do laal.
Solaha kanchana varna hain
tihun bandon, tihun kaal.

That is, two are fair, two are black, two are green and two are red. Sixteen are gold, who we will worship for all three aeons.

The temple also has a large collection of Jain manuscripts palm leaf manuscripts written in Sanskrit. The temple was constructed by the then landlord Choudury Lala Savai Singh Hridayshah.

The shikharas of the miniature sanctums, each housing one of the 24 Tirthankaras.
Qurbaani Chabootra

Located 2 kilometres southwest of the main town, the Qurbaani Chabootra is a large stone platform which is said to have been built as a declaration podium by the Khilji sultans.

Around 120 ft long and 96 ft wide, the platform is made up of cream coloured sandstone. A large staircase has been built on the southern side to enable climbing up to the top of the platform where the mazaars of two Muslim saints have also been built.

The platform is in an extremely precarious state and in need of immediate attention and restoration.
Tomb of Hazrat Kamal Shah

Hazrat Kamal Shah was a sufi saint who preached in Chanderi and is said to have had mystical powers. He passed away on the 10th of January, 1416, following which this tomb was built. Situated near the Hauz Khas, it is still frequented by his devotees.

Built during the 15th century, the tomb is a simple square chamber with a domed roof.

An inscription in Persian fixed on the upper portion of the structure.
Qazion Ki Baodi

Situated near the Purana Madarsa, this baodi or stepwell was built in 1485 by Qazi-ibn-Mehran under orders from the then ruler of Chanderi, Sher Khan.

The well is circular and two staircases descend to the well from opposite sides. There are two arched entrance bays and these are flanked by two inscriptions. The inscriptions inform us that four constructions were carried out during the reign of Sher Khan Ghazi. These were: this stepped baodi, a palatial caravanserai, a mosque and a garden known as Aatishay Namrood.

No vestiges of the garden remain and only ruins of the rest house can be seen. However, the step well and the mosque have survived.

The first inscription, on a tablet fixed to the right of the stairs leading from the west, consists of eight couplets.

Written in Persian in Naskh, the text reads as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Praise is to God who has made water the source of life and gave from water grades to the things of the universe.

He has in the same way imparted such lustre to the face of the prophets that they lead the whole world towards Paradise.

He also made people generous from it so that they may practice generosity for the house of the Prophet Muhammad.

Everyone practiced generosity according to his ability, in the reign of a king whose indication is such:

in the time of the Khilji king, Sultan Ghiyas-i Din, when the muqti in this land was Sher Khan, who is like Ali, Qazi ibn Mehran, in the hope of seeing the face of the Prophet, built a stepwell, a mosque and a garden for the sake of God.

God guided him, and gave him courage to build this beautiful and bright structure. Although there were innumerable stepwells in this region, all were dry and of no use.

Qazi, through the bounty of the Glorious God has attained success and sufficiency. And may he remain forever through the true faith of men of aspirations.

No one has seen such pure water. For this region, the bounty of the generous God is sufficient.

The sweet water is like sugar and honey. The date of the completion of this work is eight hundred and ninety.

Oh God! Through your favour, accept his (builder’s) intention and grant him the mediation of the Prophet on the day of Retribution.

Every learned man who will read this poem of memento, should pray with is heart, saying, ‘Oh Creator God!

Protect the faith of the man who has constructed this enduring well from the deceit and mischief of Satan.’

For this good deed, it is hoped of the favour of God that his good action will be accepted. The helpless Mohammad, son of Khwaja, has composed this, and hopes that men of understanding will pray for his faith.
In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

In the reign of the Khilji king, Ghiyas, son of Mahmud, whose word and actions both are accepted and praised, through the auspicious and ever-enduring government of Sher Khan Ghazi who carried off the cap (of superiority) from his equals in battle, the leader of both the worlds, namely, Malik Qadi, son of Miran, who is the noble among nobles and servant of God, in the year eight hundred and ninety from the Migration of the Prophet, at an auspicious omen of stars and good fortune, built a stepwell which in sweetness of its water, seeks but cannot find its equal in the whole world.

How can I compare it to the water of Zamzam, Nile, Euphrates or Bactrus? Who can exist before it?

This is specially meant for the benefit of the low as well as the high. One who does not derive benefit from there is useless.

It is acceptable in the world like your (builder’s) personality. May it always be accepted and your enemy be rejected!

He also constructed a sarai near it, which is like the city of Baghdad; in it is a garden sparkling like the fire of Nimrod.

On all sides, it is ornamented and bedecked like Paradise and in all directions there is unlimited splendour.

May the builder of the sarai and the stepwell stay (in the world) as long as the shadow of God is spread over His creatures!
Battisi Baodi

This stepwell, located to the north-west of the city, is the largest of all stepwells in Chanderi. It is square in shape, each side being 60 ft in length and 4 storeys deep. Steps descend from one storey down to the next and at each storey there are eight ghats. The number of ghats total to 32 which has given this Baodi its name. The main stairs are on the southern end which proceed through two doorways. Flanking the stairs are two inscriptions in Arabic and Persian, written in the Nask script. The inscriptions inform us that work on this baodi was begun during the reign of Sultan Ghyasuddin Khilji by one Taghi, who was the son of the then collector or shariq-ul-mulk and the structure was completed in the year 1484. The inscription also tells us that besides the Baodi, a garden, as well as a mosque, which has been compared to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, was also built.

Another inscription, to be found above the second gateway, gives the name of the artist who etched the two inscriptions.

To the right side of the main entrance, are inscribed seventeen couplets of Persian poetry. Written in the Nask script, the text reads as follows:

Exalted be Allah, that this step well has now appeared on the earth, through the bounty and grace of glorified lord, at a happy time and lucky stars, In the reign of the generous and just king with cloud like hands and ocean like heart, Ghaysuddin, the just king with Alexander's dignity and Dara's glory.

Its building is in the kingdom of one, through whose rule the world endears: from that faith nourishing king, the title Shariq – ul – Mulk was conferred on him.

He is of the status of an angel and dignified like sky: his order is the decree of fate and his wish is the command of destiny.

He is Taghi, son of Fakhr, whom god has made famous in the world.

The great, pious and religious minded saint Badi – ul – Haq Shah Madr has assisted him and made him his select disciple in the world.

No chief like him who commands greatest respect, is gone from the days of Adam till now.

God has conferred upon him all the four great ranks till the day of resurrection.

The eyes of the people of the Shiq have not seen such a compassionate minister: neither in the west nor in the east, he has any equal worth the name.

How can Ibn Hamid sing his praises as are due? And hence, I should now proceed to describe the step well.

The limpid water of Khidr was concealed in the world from the eye of man: now this great chief has produced it in this region.

May allah grant us its drink! How sweet is the water which is sweeter than sugarcane! Or perhaps, it is the syrup of jujube, since it is as sweet as sugar.

The sugar of Egypt and sugar candy of China are not as sweet. How can sugarcane come up to its sweetness even though it is sweet?

Near the great stream (that is this step well) he has also constructed a mosque: this (that is the mosque) is Kaba and that (that is the well) is zam zam, and its enclosure is like the verdant garden.

All around the sweet smelling garden......flowers on all sides. But perhaps paradise has appeared in the world for, that is Tuba and this is Kauser.

The whole of this extremely pleasing: up to the brim......extremely well. Such an exhilarating and beautiful place has come into existence at the request of Yakub.

May the breeze of divine favour permanently blow for the builder. Since the genie, human beings and animals have derived comfort from that chief.

From the migration of the great messenger, the year was 900 less 10 and 5th of the last Rabi, when it appeared, that is was founded.

May its depth not appear as long as there is water in the sea! Oh god! Keep it full of sweet water forever!
Aameen, oh lord of the universe!

Hauz Khas

Located to the north-west of the city, near the Maula Ali hill, Hauz Khas is one of the largest ponds of Chanderi. Its inscription is no longer in place here but is displayed in the Gujri Mahal Museum in Gwalior. The inscription states that the Hauz-e-Khas was built probably by one Subhan, son of Yusuf, in the reign of Mahmud Khilji I and it was completed in the year AD 1467.

Five lines of the six line inscription are in verse, inscribed in Naskh in Persian language.

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

During the reign of Khilji king, the glory of religion and realm:
Abul Muzzafar Mahmud Shah, the ruler of kingdoms and nations.

This tank was constructed............................................................
By his efforts, courage and generosity this noble work remains
as a memorial of his noble deeds.

It has been completed in the year eight hundred and seventy
two of the Hijra by the will of Providence.

It is hoped that God the Great and Glorious may grant
Subhan son of Yusuf a resting place in the highest mansion
of paradise.
Gol Baodi

This Baodi is located some distance away to the south of the town, at the base of the Khandargiri hill. Two inscriptions have been found etched near its entrance steps. The first inscription mentions the construction of a well and a mosque by Sabah-i-Khair and Gul-i-Bihisht, the wives of Sheikh Burahanuddin during the reign of Sultan Naseeruddin Khilji.

The first inscription consists of eight couplets in Persian, written in Naskh calligraphy.

The text has been deciphered as follows:

The second inscription, fixed to the left of the entrance steps, basically repeats the information given in the first inscription. The date inscribed is, however, a later one and is most probably that of the completion of the project.

Praise be to Allah, that this well has become a replica of the stream of kauser, through the grace of god, which was conferred on the builders.

In the reign of the great king Nareeruddin wal duniya, who ascended the throne of Jamshid and through whom the world was enlightened.

Then, was also built a mosque which is full of light and from which the world received ornament; it is the Iram of lofty columns in the land, where it has appeared,

The builders, in constructing this well and this mosque, have made their good deeds flowing, thus imparting soul refreshing benefits to the inhabitant as well as the traveller.

Since the luck was in favour, the builders became mothers of the children of the pole star among the pole stars of the world, sheikh Burhan, son of Allah – ul – haq.

The names of the builders are Sabah – i – khair and Gul – i – Bihisht, who carried out many other good works but this is the greatest of all.

It was the month of Jumad – al – awwal, and its date was 24, year 900 and above it 8 from the migration.

Sadhan Shah composed the chronogram for the well and the mosque: at the time of composing the date, his mouth was filled with sugar.
Parshvanath Digambar Jain Mandir

Dedicated to the 23rd Tirthankar Parshvanath, this temple is situated within the Andar Shehar. It is popular among the Jain pilgrims who come to visit Chanderi from all over the country. Although the exact date of foundation of the temple is not known, it is certainly older than the Choubisi Jain Temple. A stone sculpture enshrined within the temple is dated to the 13th century.
Musa Baodi

Located within the Andar Shahar, this baodi was built in 1454 by the saint Hazrat Musa Quadin. A mosque which was also built by him and his mazaar are situated nearby. The water of this baodi is the cleanest among the waters of all other step-wells and is clear enough that a coin dropped to the bottom is clearly visible from the top.
Situated to the north-west of the city, near the Idgah the tomb is of Qazi Khatmuddin. An inscription tells us that it was built in the year 1455.

Qazi Khatmuddin Tomb
Chandai Baodi

Located in the northern part of the town, near the Rajghat colony this baodi is currently in a pitiful state. Two inscriptions one in Sanskrit and the other in Persian reveal that the step-well was built by one Chand, who belonged to the Baqqal (grocer) community.

In the reign of the king of the world, who imparts life and nurtures faith, the champion, the Khalji king, Mahmud Allaud-din ...

A well was built which is ...................... than the well of Babylon and Zamzam. Discover in it water as pure and pleasant as the water of the stream of Kausar.

Mahabat Khan Sultani is the muqti of the shiq of Chanderi.

On his behalf ......................... were........................ leader of munificence.

The two builders of the well were ... and Chand, the baqqals,

may God, the provider of livelihood and lord of power pre-

serve them.

They are.............brother’s son .............Chand.

They both were men of immense wisdom, though not very rich.

The year was eight hundred and sixty four, from the Migration,

When this huge striking well was skilfully built.
Moti Masjid

This mosque, at present in a dilapidated state, is located to the south of the town near the Dhobia Pond. The arches of the mosque are exceptionally beautiful, carved with floral and geometric motifs.

An inscription, in Persian, above the central mihrab, states that it was built in AD 1462 during the reign of Mahmud Khilji I by the then naib-e-ariz Muhammad, son of Zain.

Its seven verses have been approximately deciphered as follows:

Allah, Allah. This mosque was constructed during the reign of the supreme ruler, who is like Dara, Alexander and Arduwan.

The sun of two worlds, the moon of fairness and generosity, Mahmud Khilji Shah is the leader of the age.

Placed in its compound is a garden like the garden of Iram, whose mere likeness is the evergreen garden of Paradise.

The mosque is constructed by Muhammad bin Zain, the naib-i-ariz, who is brave as Karrar in war and generous as Hatim.

The quantity of account work he does in a moment, even the Accountant of the Sky cannot do a word thereof till eternity.

Oh God! Through your favour, watch over the builder and his descendants from the troubles of time.

The year was seven and sixty and eight hundred from the Migration of the
Mustafa and it was the first day of Rabi-ul-Awwal.

### Mahma Shah Tomb

Located at the peak of Mahma Shah’s Tekri, a standalone hill about three kilometres to the north-west of the town, the mausoleum is that of saint Hazrat Mahma Shah. On the first of every month the devotees of the saint come to the tomb to pray and offer chadars.

An inscription, dated to 1462-63 i.e. the reign of Mahmud Khilji, has been installed into one of the walls of the tomb. But it is not in situ as it records the construction of a step well and its dome. Replete with fanciful and implausible exaggerations, the inscription makes for interesting reading.

It comprises of seven couplets in Persian, written in the Naskh script and has been translated as follows:

In the reign of the king of genii and mankind, having the glory of Solomon, the respected and revered Mahmud Shah, the cherisher of Faith, this square well, which is like the well of Babylon, has been raised; the taste of its water is not to be found either in the water of Zamzam of Kausar. Jamal, son of Ula, son of Muhammad, son of Khidr, who in knowledge and practice is another Bu Hanifa, who in truth and shyness is akin to Abu Bakr and Usman, and who in justice and generosity can be compared to Umar and Haider respectively, constructed first a dome like the sky which carries its head above the pinnacle of the Empyrean.

If the heaven did not have it as the support, the existence of the seven skies in their position would have been doomed.

The year of its construction was eight hundred and sixty-seven from the Migration of the beloved Prophet Ahmad.

Near the mazaar is another mausoleum which incidentally belongs to the grandfather of the author’s maternal grandfather, Hazrat Abdul Rahim Baksh.
Aalia Baodi

This baodi is located in Fatehabad, near the Koshak Mahal. Two inscriptions, found fixed on the east side of the baodi, reveal that it was constructed during Gyaussdin Khilji’s reign by his shariq-ul mulk Malik Ladin and that besides this baodi, a garden, a grand palace and a mosque were also built nearby.

The seven verses in Persian have been translated as follows:
In the reign of the king, Gyasuddin Khilji, lord of fortunes, at Fathabad, Chanderi, this splendid palace was built.

What an impressive and glorious structure, like Paradise, this is! Ridwan is envious of its splendour and beauty every minute.

What a palace it is, that contains a baodi as well as a paradisiacal garden. Its waters are the very fountain of life.

Malik Ladin, who is the leading light of the majestic sky and minister of time, is the builder of this mansion, garden and step well.

He is the minister; the dastur of the kingdom, nazir and sahib and, for his magnitude, his title from the king is shariq-ul mulk.

The year from the Migration was two and two and nine hundred, and month of Duahil Qada, when the construction of this palace was completed by the benev-
Olence and mercy of God.

Oh Danyal, now end this speech with the prayer that may the builder of this stately home find pleasure and enjoyment in life forever.

Lal Baodi

Lal Baodi is a pond but it was originally a stepwell that has now submerged. Surrounded by shady trees, it is a popular picnic spot for the locals. In a hill near the pond is the tomb of a Muslim saint which is referred to as the Lal Baodi Takia.
Raja Rani Mahal

Renowned earlier for its palaces and havelis, Chanderi is once said to have had as many as 260 mahals. Today, however, only about 43 of these remain. Situated in the Andar Shahar, the Raja Rani Mahal or Rajmahal, as it is also known, is actually composed of two separate palaces. The imposing Raja Mahal is a seven storied structure which has now been attached to the smaller Rani Mahal. The two are though built in completely different styles and clearly do not belong to the same time period.

The two inscriptions found in a baodi within the complex are illegible but the style of calligraphy points to the Khilji period. This implies that the Raja Mahal must have been originally built by the Khilji rulers in the 15th century. The Rani Mahal, however, appears to be an earlier construction.

The upper portions of both the Raja and Rani Mahal, which are in the Bundela style, indicate that these structures were repaired and built upon in the 17th century when the Bundelas came to control the region. Reeling in a state of disrepair previously, efforts are now on to restore and preserve the palaces.
Khilji Sarai

This sarai or rest house was built in 1490 AD, during the reign of Gyasuddin Khilji by Qazi ibn Mehran. Although in ruins today, the towering minarets betray the structure’s majestic past. The building consists of an arched colonnade surrounding a central courtyard with the remains of three distinct gates and possibly a fourth one.
Pachmadhi Masjid

The name Pachmadhi is derived from the five vaulted domes that once roofed the mosque but are now entirely damaged. Situated near a small stepwell, this 15th century structure also has a basement underneath. The carvings seen on the Pachmadhi mosque are especially intricate and exquisite. If the capital of the Malwa sultans, Mandu is famous for its monuments, then Chanderi is acclaimed for the impeccable carvings found on many of the monuments here. Notable among these are the Hazrat Nizamuddin Family Tombs, Purana Madarsa and an unknown rauza near Maulana Wajihuddin Yusuf’s Dargah.
Mughal Darwaza

Situated in the Pathani Mohalla, this gateway consists of two lofty turrets flanking the arched doorway. Another arch would have crowned the gate but it no longer extant. The gate forms the entrance of a cemetery which has the tombstones of saints or other eminent people, many decorated with highly plastic carving.
Babur Kataan

Located to the southeast of the town between the Khandargiri hill and the rock-cut Sakalkudi Temple, this is nothing but an opening in the hill, created by cutting through the hard rock. It is believed to have been cut by Babur when he attacked the Chanderi fort in 1528, to enable the transit of his cannon carriers.
Bahadur Nizam Shah of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate was a minor when in 1600 Emperor Akbar’s son Prince Danyal attacked Ahmadnagar and imprisoned the entire royal family. Bahadur Nizam Shah spent practically all his life in the Gwalior prison and even died there. Upon his death in 1698, his body was being taken for burial in Ahmadnagar but it had to be buried at Chanderi.

Situated on the Chanderi Mungaoli road, near the Jama Masjid, this mausoleum is built in the Mughal style. Square in plan, the structure has four pillars on each of the four sides supporting a domed superstructure.

The tomb of Saint Sheikh Raji’s wife, which is built upon the Chakla Baodi is the only other tomb in Chanderi built in the Mughal style.

Ahmadnagar Sultan’s Tomb
This mazaar is located to the south of the town, near Chakla Baodi and is the burial place of the saint Hazrat Ismaeel, spiritual guide to the renowned Khwaja Khanoon of Gwalior. Besides Hazrat Ismaeel, also to be found within the campus are the tombs of his father and grandfather. Interestingly, his grandfather was the governor of the city of Madina in South Arabia. The mazaar continues to be a place of spiritual fulfilment for his followers, famous for the pierced screens that...
form the walls of the tomb.

Royal Horses’ Memorial

This memorial, located near the Parmeshwar Talaab, is dedicated to two horses believed to have been favourites of the Bundela kings. Said to have been built in their remembrance, the memorial consists of two stone plaques carved with the images of two well adorned horses.
Chanderi Chronicles

Bharat Shah Chhatri

This monument, built in 1642 commemorates the Bundela Bharat Shah and marks the spot where he was cremated. Built near the Parmeshwar Pond, the structure is octagonal in plan with sandstone walls crowned by a dome. Essentially of just one storey, the eaves on the outside are designed to make it appear double storeyed. Each alternate face of the second storey is relieved by a projecting balcony.

The highest of all Bundela cenotaphs and with the largest dome, the chhatri is in need of crucial restoration work.
Devi Singh Bundela Chhatri

Built in 1663, this chhatri is similar to that of Bharat Shah but is smaller in dimensions. With eaves at two levels, the building appears, on the outside, to have three storeys but inside it is just one structure.

Interestingly, three wall faces out of the eight are decorated with mosque-like arches and even carved with verses from the Holy Quran. These were possibly meant for his Muslim subjects for them to offer prayers for his soul on his death anniversaries.
Alam Giri Mosques

Alam Giri mosques, called so because they were built during the reign of Aurangzeb or Alamgir are ten in number. Scattered throughout the town, these are modest, single storeyed structures with only three arches in the main building with a courtyard in front. Distinctly different from the Khilji period structures, the mosques are interestingly decorated with figures of flowerpots and what appears to be a huqqa.
Bada Ganesh Temple

Situated in Andar Shahar, near Rajmahal, this Bundela period construction is the most famous among all temples dedicated to Lord Ganesh in Chanderi. A large stone block carved with a four-armed figure of the god Ganesh is the main idol of the temple. The temple is also known as Dhundraj as the people believe that a visit to the temple is enough to cure blurred and foggy vision.
Maula Ali Hill

This hill is named after the fourth Caliph Maula Ali, whose family was sacrificed in Karbala. It is said that a saint from Chanderi used to visit Karbala every year in the month of Muharram and bring back its holy soil. One year he was unable to go and as an alternative made a mound of the holy soil on this hill and prayed there. Since then the hill has been famous as the Maula Ali Hill. Also to be found on the hill are the mazaar of the saint Hazrat Bismillah Shah and an Alamgiri mosque.
Chakla Baodi

The largest among all baodis in Chanderi, the Chakla Baodi is a square stepwell built during the Khilji rule. It is said that the baodi was meant only for the ladies of the royal household and not the common people.

On the edge of the baodi are built two tombs, one belongs to Sheikh Raji’s wife while the other is without an inscription and probably of a saint. Also in the vicinity are the ruins of a large palace, possibly also of the Khilji period.
It is located to the south of town, on the way to Khandargiri.

Mansimheshwar Temple

Located near the Delhi Darwaza, the Mansimheshwar is a Bundela period Shaiva temple. A 23 line long inscription in Sanskrit mixed with local dialect is written in Nagari letters on one of the temple walls. It reveals that the temple was built in 1724 and the foundations were laid by Prince Man Singh Bundela.
Christian Tombstone
Situated near the Harkund baodi, this gravestone belongs to a European, probably a Portuguese. Built upon a high stone platform and marked with the Christian cross, the mausoleum is dated to 1819 but the rest of the inscription is unclear.

Ek Patthar ki Baodi
(near Aab-e-Zamzam Mosque)
Located in the Chandragiri hill, this baodi has been carved out of a single rock and collects the water from the various streams that flow down the hill, especially on the monsoon season. Nearby are three natural caves where earlier Muslim saints and mystics used to reside and pray.

Anirudh Singh Chhattri
Situated to the north-west of the town, near the Parmeshwar Pond, this chattri was built in 1774. It is a commemorative monument for the Bundela king Anirudh Singh who is famous for having declared independence from Mughal suzerainty.
Shri Sankatmochan Temple

Situated to the right of the main entrance to the Kirti Durg, the temple is dedicated to the Lord Hanuman. Built during the Bundela period, it is set amongst greenery and natural streams that flow down the hill.

Chintaharan Temple

A little to the north of town, on the Pichaur road, this ancient temple was actually rebuilt after being transported from its original location in the Panchamnagar village which was submerged due to the construction of the Raighat Dam on the Betwa.
Malan Khoh

Situated 3 kilometres from Chanderi, Malan Khoh is a place of great natural beauty with shady trees and plenty of streams. The place is also known for a Siddh Gufa which refers to a cave where sainthood is attained by a mystic. The hillside is carved out to form rock-cut caves in which are placed a shiva lingam and several sculptures of Lord Hanuman.

Bhimsen Caves

The Bhimsen caves are located at a distance of 25 kilometres from Chanderi in the Gadelna village, on the banks of the Urr River. Popular with both Hindu and Jain pilgrims, the site consists of ancient rock-cut caves which have been further carved with the images of Hindu gods and Jain Tirthankaras. An inscription dated to AD 942 has been found which names Vinayakpal as the then king of the region.

Of particular interest is a sculpture of the Hindu god Brahma, carved inside a cavity on the rock face, as Brahma images are very rarely found depicted.
Chanderi Museum

Located at the corner where the Mungaoli and Isagarh roads diverge, the Chanderi Museum greets the visitor ahead of the town. The magnificent stone faced building houses the sculptures and ancient artefacts recovered from Chanderi and its vicinity, particularly Boodhi Chanderi and Thubon.

Inaugurated on the 14th of September, 2008 the museum currently has displays in seven galleries. The first gallery, called History of Chanderi begins with a display of photographs of the rock paintings found at Nanuan village and other cave shelters, includes the tools and implements of the early man and goes on to the sculptures of the later centuries. Another gallery, titled Jain Gallery houses the statues of the various Jain Tirthankaras and remains of other Jain temples found at Thubon and Boodhi Chanderi. In the Vishnu Gallery stone images of the different incarnations of Lord Vishnu like Varaha, Vamana, Narasimha etc. are on show. I another gallery are displayed the photographs of monuments, the vistas of Chnaderi, cannon balls, arms and armaments and coins, recovered from the vicinity. In the open air gallery around the central courtyard are displayed around 10 inscriptions in Sanskrit as well as Persian and Arabic.

Outside the building, within the campus are exhibited scores of ruined doorways belonging to the Hindu temples also discovered at Boodhi Chanderi and Thubon.

The museum also has a library which houses around 3000 books on the history
of the region.

**Sakalkudi**

Located southwards, near Kirat Sagar at a distance of one kilometre from the city, Sakalkudi also includes a Siddha Gufa. A particular spring here does not run dry even in the summer months while during the monsoons several waterfalls begin to cascade down the hillside. Also found here is a temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman with Ganesh and other gods which is more than 300 years old. These images of Hanuman and Ganesha are carved on the hillside itself.

**Kathothi Khoh**

The place of another Siddha Gufa, Kathothi Khoh is situated 6 kilometres away from the town, on the Pichhaur Road near Singhpur Village. Also a picnic spot, it has lush trees and a number of springs.
Rajghat Dam

The foundation stone for this modern monument was laid by Late Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1971. Located on the border of the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, it is built upon the Betwa River. The catchment area formed by the dam is around 17000 square kilometres, which had led to the submersion of around 70 villages.

Three canals distribute water from the dam out of which two supply water to Uttar Pradesh while one supplies to Madhya Pradesh. Three turbines of 15 megawatt each are installed to produce electricity.

The length of the sand barrier constructed is more than 11 kilometres, which is longest sand barrier in any dam in Asia. The cement dam is 600 metres long and 73.5 metres high. Ancient villages, such as Panchmnagar, Bari, Toda, Sirsaur, Naredi were lost to the water and the sculptures recovered from these places
have been collected in the Ramnagar Palace Museum.

Lakshman Mandir

Situated near the Parmeshwar Taal, the Laxman Mandir is said to have been built by the 7th Bundela king Anirudh Singh in the 18th century. However, some of the sculptures and the carving on one pillar indicate a much earlier origin, possibly of the Gurjara Pratihara period. The Sheshanag is main idol of the temple.
Phuhariji Temple

Located near the Khooni Darwaza, main doorway of the Kirti Durg fort, the temple is on a spur of the Chandragiri hill. The only inscription within the temple is no longer legible but it is known to have been constructed during the reign of Medini Rai. This place also commands a comprehensive view of the city. Close by is a new temple called the Balaji Mandir which is dedicated to Lord Hanuman.
Narsimha Mandir

This temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu’s fourth incarnation, Narsimha. The temple is located below the Kirti Durg, near the Choubisi Jain Mandir. Although the devotees consider it to be of ancient origin, the structure of the temple appears to be of the Bundela period.

Matamadh Temple

Most of the Hindus of the town pay a visit to the temple before the wedding day preparations are begun. It is located to the north of town, near the Rajghat Colony and is dedicated to an incarnation of the Devi.
Masjid-i-Usmani

Not of much interest structurally, the Masjid-i-Usmani is of much historical importance. It is the first mosque in Chanderi which has the building and inscription both intact. It is the earliest among all extant mosques based upon the inscription found installed. Located in the Sadar Bazaar area of the town, the mosque has been dated to the reign of the Delhi Sultan Mohammad Shah Tughlaq son of Firoz Shah.

The inscription, written in Persian, in Naskh letters consists of eight verses arranged in four lines. It records the date of construction of the mosque as AH 795 or AD 1392 and describes Dilawar Khan, the then Chanderi Governor as a favoured courtier.

Another inscription recovered from the home of a Chanderi resident informs of the raising of a mosque in the reign of Alauddin Muhammad Khilji of Delhi in 1312. Although the mosque has not survived, its inscription presents the earliest written evidence towards the construction of a mosque in Chanderi.

The inscription, written in Persian, in the Suls script, consists of the four following lines:
This mosque was constructed in the reign of the kingdom of the magnificent Sultan Alaud-Dunya wal-Din, Iskander of the age, Abul-Muzaffar Muhammad Shah,
The Sultan, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty, and further his affairs and position, and in the time of the nayab of Amir-ul-Umara

The refuge of the great, Ikhtiyarud-Daulat wal-Din, the champion of Iran, Tamur Sultani, may Allah perpetuate his glories and increase his fortune!

The being, hopeful of mercy in the House of Peace, Ismail, son of Abdus-Salam, called Wajih-i-Najib, the muharrir attached to the district of Koyal, completed it on the twentieth of the month of Shaban, year eleven and seven hundred.
Dudua Tomb

This mausoleum is situated in the Dudua Mohalla of Bahar Shahar. Scattered around this tomb are the tombstones of prominent Muslims of that era. On a wall surrounding the cemetery are fixed inscribed tablets which inform us that during Ghyasuddin Khilji’s reign, when Sher Khan was Chanderi’s governor, a tomb, a mosque, a garden and a palace - raised directly on solid rock - were constructed.

This mosque is still used by the Muslims of the area and is in good condition. The tomb, however, is suffering from neglect. The palace, situated close by, retains all the initial four storeys. It is now a private property referred to locally as Ustadji ki haveli. Renovations have been carried out inside but the outside structure is original and clearly of the 15th century.

Tomb of Mahmuda Peer

The mazar of Mahmuda Peer, a 15th century Sufi saint, is now a place of faith more for the Jains and Hindus than the Muslims. His tombstone lies without a tomb structure, built simply upon a stone platform. The most prominent and devoted among his followers are also buried around the tomb.

In the vicinity are the ruins of at least seven small mosques, all the mosques belong to different time periods and can be identified only by their surviving platforms and pushts.
Rimjhai Baodi

The Rimjhai Baodi, located in the Madhao Nagar area of Bahar Shaher is in desperate need of attention and restoration. It is square in shape with steps descending down to the water which continues to be quite clean. An inscription is installed within the baodi walls but is eroded beyond decipherment.

Near the baodi is a mosque to which the baodi would have been originally attached, as mosques were always provided with a source of water for wudu and drinking purposes. The mosque is still frequented by the area Muslims. Structurally, both the baodi and the mosque appear to be 16th century constructions.

Dhankunwar Tomb

The Dhankunwar Tomb, believed to be of a eunuch saint, is situated in Bhahar Shahar, near the Hauz-i-Khas. The tomb is unlike the contemporaneous pillared tombs or those where the central burial chamber is surrounded by an arcade, instead the walls of the chamber are composed of large, monolithic blocks.

To be found around the tomb are gravestones, all beautifully decorated with highly plastic carvings. The tomb also has in its vicinity, a well by the same name and a large mosque which is possibly of the 15th century. The tomb itself appears to be a 16th century structure and is in critical need of protection and restoration.
Yunis’ Tomb

This cenotaph belongs to a Christian, possibly a traveller or a mercenary. The inscription on its headstone is in Persian, written in Nastaliq calligraphy, recalls the death of one Yunis. It mentions the date of death as 16th Jamadi ul sani, AH 1232, that is, AD 1816 and that the order for the construction the tomb was given by a Colonel.

The headstone is in good condition and is inscribed with a Christian cross. It is located in the Maidan Gali area of the town, near Mughal Darwaza.

Sheikh Cemetery

The largest among all medieval cemeteries of Chanderi, it is locally referred to as Sheikhon ka kabristan. It contains innumerable tomb structures which are now in a dilapidated condition. Also within the campus are three mosques, one of which is installed with an inscription dating to AD 1702. It mentions that a Sufi saint is buried nearby for whom a garden was laid out and a mosque was raised, during the reign of Durjan Singh Bundela. The cemetery is situated on the Pichhaur road, in front of the Rajghat Dam colony.
Deogarh

Located on the banks of the Betwa River, Deogarh is not only a place of captivating natural beauty but also of great historical importance. Situated 71 kilometres from Chanderi, today it is just a small village but in times past, it must have been a flourishing town and an important religious centre. The most famous of all archaeological remains found here is the 5th century Vishnu Temple, a masterpiece of the art and architecture of the Gupta period. The Nar Narayan, Vishnu Anantasayin and Gajendramoksha are sculptural compositions which reflect the great heights reached by the artists of that time.

Besides this, ruins of several other temples like the Varaha temple, along with their exquisite sculptures, belonging to the same period are also in evidence. Many of these sculptures are now preserved in the Deogarh Museum. The inscriptions found in Deogarh are written in three different scripts, Brahmi, Shankh and Devanagari, which puts the antiquity of the place beyond doubt. Also of interest is the hill fort, Kirti Giri, which was constructed by the King Kirtivarman in the 12th century.

The place is also home to thousands of Jain stone sculptures especially images of the Tirthankaras. The sculptures date as far back as 552 AD and are carved in rock-cut caves as well as placed in temples. This makes Deogarh a popular destination for Jain devotees who frequent the Sahu Jain Museum and Digambar Jain Dharamshala.

The place is also a haven for wildlife and nature enthusiasts as a large territory has been cordoned off to preserve the local flora and fauna, which is the Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary.

Some 10 kilometres to the west (as the crow flies) of Deogarh is Behti Math, an ancient temple of Hindu affiliation, which is also a Gupta period construction. It can be reached from Chanderi at a road distance of 18 kilometres.
Boodhi Chanderi

Situated on the right bank of the Urr River, Boodhi Chanderi, Chandrapuri of the ancient past, was a large settlement of the Gurjara Pratiharas and possibly their capital.

The place was first discovered in 1865 by the Indologist and first director of the Archaeological Survey of India, Alexander Cunningham. Later, the German traveler Claus Boone also visited the place.

The site consists of the ruins of around 55 temples as well as possible secular remains, all surrounded by a fortification wall. The temples are mostly of Jain affiliation. Three of these Jain temples have come under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India and are hence in a much preserved state as compared to the others which lie in state of serious dereliction.

Surprisingly, some of the structures possibly saw restoration during the Bundela period as some of the superstructures have features of the Bundela architectural style while the temple structures below are clearly of the 10th or 11th century.

One inscription, dated to the beginning of the 16th century, has been found carved on a sati pillar which mentions the name of the place as Nasirabad, after the ruler Nasiruddin Khiji. This implies that a small settlement might have existed even during the Muslim rule and it might not have been as abandoned as it is today.

Lying to the north of the Chanderi town, Boodhi Chanderi is reached by first going 12 kilometres along the State Highway No. 19 and then turning west for an 8 kilometre long off-road track. As the spot lies within dense forest and away from habitation, it is advisable for travellers to go in a sizeable group and carry food and water along. The place also affords great panoramic views with the Urr River and the Vindhyachal hill ranges forming the backdrop.
Thubon

From Chanderi, Thubon lies at a distance of 28 kms on the road leading to Ashok Nagar. Located between the rivers Urvashi and Lilawati, Thubon’s importance, historically, is as yet unrecognized. However, with the remains of innumerable temples in evidence, this significance is by no means deniable. Around 15 of these temples are still standing, some of which are Shaiva and others Vaishnava in affiliation; their time periods vary from the 10th to the 12th centuries. The temples have life-size sculptures of Lord Vishnu and his incarnations as well as those of Shiva, Parvati and other Shaiva deities. A particular monastic complex has about four temples surrounded by quarters which would have served as accommodation for the monks and mendicants. Interestingly, around the area are found sketches of deities carved on rock pieces. This shows that the place would have also served as a centre for image making during the medieval times.

Thubon is also one of the 15 famous holy destinations for the Jains with numerous Jain temples and ashrams located in the area. These Jain temples, which belong to the 12th through 17th centuries, number to 26.
Kadwaha

The earliest extant construction in Kadwaha is an 8th century monastery which appears to be Shaiva in affiliation and is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. The next structures belong to the 11th and 12th centuries. These are the half-preserved Hindu temples, of both Shaiva and Vaishnava affiliation, which would have been patronized by the Gurjara-Pratihara and Kachhwaha kings.

The only building from the Muslim epoch is a 15th century mosque, which was built during the reign of Alauddin Khilji.
Malhargarh

Malhargarh, now a small village situated 55 kilometres from Chanderi, is a place of historical and architectural importance. One of the most prominent monuments here is the Pathrigarh - Hasangarh Fort which was founded during the Mughal era. It later came to be controlled by the Khinchi rulers and in the 17th century it was under Malhar Rao Holkar.

Displayed within the fort are 9 large cannons which would have been used in numerous battles and skirmishes during the many years of turmoil seen by the place in earlier times. Also within the fort complex are a large pond, a modern temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman as well as a Muslim saint’s mazaar. Within the village precincts is the Jain Taran Taaran Temple.
Coinage

The study of coinage is central to the study of not just the political but also the social and economic history of a place. The areas in which particular coins are discovered give an indication of the extent of an empire while genealogies can be formed on the basis of names deciphered. The symbols and writing etched reveal the cultural and religious beliefs of the monarchs as well as the subjects. Coins are also indicators of the economic prosperity and technical and artistic advancement attained by the state.

The earliest coins found at Chanderi and its vicinity correspond to the inscriptions which reveal that the Gurjara-Pratiharas were the first significant rulers in the region. Essentially two different types have been found. The first variety are round and made up of copper; they have an image of Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu on one side while the other side has the name of the issuing king. The other kind, which is possibly of an earlier period, are of an irregular shape, probably triangular with rounded corners. These have what appears to be a fire-altar on one side while the other side is unclear.

With the arrival of Muslim rulers, there was a complete overhaul of the previous coinage prevalent in the Indian subcontinent. The depiction of images, forbidden by their faith, ceased to appear and were replaced entirely by inscriptions. The first significant finds in Chanderi, belong to the 13th century when the Delhi sultans had made their first forays into the region. Shamshuddin Iltutmish, the first sultan from Delhi, to extend his control over the region, was also responsible for introducing several reforms in the coinage of the Delhi Sultanate. He issued copper, billon, silver as well as gold coins which were all circular in shape. The silver tanka had his name and title on the obverse while the reverse had the Kalma within a circle. Around the circle was mentioned the year according to the Hijri Calendar and the name of the place of issue. Allaudin Muhammad Shah II, of the Khalji dynasty, who came to the Delhi throne in 1296, struck bilingual coins which had on the obverse his name in Persian inside a circle and in Nagari letters outside. Several of his issues also carried the title of ‘the Second Alexander’, that betrayed both his vanity and his ambitions.

Coins struck in the names of the other rulers of the Tughlaq dynasty who succeeded the Khaljis at Delhi have also been recovered from Chanderi. During the last years of the Tughlaq rule, in 1392, a mint was established in Chanderi to issue coins in the name of the Sultans in Delhi. Also in 1392, Dilawar Khan, the Governor of the Delhi Sultanate in the province of Malwa, asserted his independence. He, however, refrained from issuing any coins and the Delhi coins remained in circulation till 1405.

It was in this year that Dilawar Khan’s son Hoshang Shah began minting the first coins of the Malwa Sultanate. These issues, in copper, silver and gold, were close imitations of the Delhi currency, in circulation previously. Allaudin Mahmud Shah I, a minister of Hoshang Shah, who ascended the throne in 1436, was possibly the greatest of all Malwa sultans and the founder of the Khalji dynasty of Malwa Sultanate. He introduced several modifications in the coinage system like the use of billon, besides the other three metals. Apart from circular, he also struck square coins and the square shape soon came to characterize Malwa coinage. On the round coins, the inscription was often set in a square and on the square coins, it was either in a circle or in a square bor-
der, set diagonally to the sides of the coin. All of his coins were inscribed with different honorific titles including al Halim al Karim, ala - ud – duniya waldin and amir – al – momnin etc.

His son and successor Ghyas Shah continued to issue similar coins and a favourite title of his that he inscribed on many of his issues was al sultan bin al sultan, that is, I am a sultan, and I am the son of a sultan. In 1530, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat captured Mandu, the Malwa capital and governed for four years. From 1536 – 42, it was ruled by Qadir Shah, a governor for Gujarat. The final independent ruler to govern Malwa was Baz Bahadur, who was conquered by Akbar in 1561. As a consequence of the unstable political situation, all three of these could only mint copper coins.

Following its annexation to the Mughal empire, Malwa and hence Chanderi began the use of Mughal coinage which was uniform across all its territories. In 1605, Jehangir appointed the Bundelas to administrate Chanderi and the mint in Chanderi (named Kankurti) continued to manufacture coins in the names of the Mughal Sultans in Delhi. There was a gradual decline in Chanderi’s importance and in 1893, the mint was also finally closed by the Scindhias after being in operation for more than 500 years.
Chanderi Chronicles
Weaving

Today, as also in times past, the mention of Chanderi brings to mind not the town but the fine, silken fabric woven here. With a loom in virtually every home, weaving is literally the heartbeat of the town; the streets reverberating with the incessant beats of the khatka.

The fortunes of Chanderi have always been entwined with the fortunes of its weaves. Hence, the history of the town will remain incomplete without a look at this artistic tradition.
History

There is no written record as to when and how weaving began in Chanderi. But considering particular events in history it is possible to suggest a plausible beginning.

Following his ascension to the throne of Delhi, Alauddin Khilji decided to expand his empire by annexing Chanderi, Malwa, Dhar and Ujjain. According to the Siyar ul-Aulia, a 14th century account written by Amir Khurd, an officer called Ain-ul-Mulk Multani was assigned to capture Chanderi. Ain-ul-Mulk was a disciple of the great sufī saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and he requested the Hazrat to send one of his Khalifas to accompany his battalion and thus ensure his victory. Hazrat Nizamuddin sent Hazrat Wajihuddin, who following the conquest decided to stay back in Chanderi where he established his khanqah. Wajihuddin soon gained thousands of devotees who came not only from Chanderi but even places as far flung as Bengal. The ruler who had been placed at Chanderi was one Malik Tamar who became extremely jealous of Hazrat Wajihuddin’s power and popularity. He instigated the army which attacked the Hazrat’s khanqah, causing many of his followers to flee. The situation became so bad that even Hazrat Wajihuddin was advised to move to Lakhnauti, in Bengal, by one of his followers who was from there. The premise is that since one devotee had migrated to Chanderi from Bengal, others must have too. Moreover, Hazrat Nizamuddin had many adherents in Bengal and Hazrat Wajihuddin was a facilitator for the Chishtia Nizamia sect. These devotees must have come to Chanderi seeking blessings as it was nearer to Bengal than Delhi. Dhaka, even at that time was a famous for its fine muslin and Lakhnauti lies very close to Dhaka. It was almost certainly these groups of people who were responsible for initiating weaving of the cloth which Chanderi is now renowned for.

The reflections of Bengali culture are seen today in the food habits especially of the Muslim weaver community whereby rice is eaten in at least one meal during the day and when eaten with fish the dish becomes a favourite delicacy. Further indications are observed in the names of places such as the Bengali Talaiya and Banga Bagh.

Moreover, mention of the Chanderi fabric began appearing in books within fifty years of this probable commencement. The Ain-e-Akbari, written by Abul Fazl during the Mughal emperor Akbar’s reign, talks about the fine weaves of Chanderi. The writer of Ma’ṣir-e-ʿAlamgiri, written during Aurangzeb’s reign, informs us of the existence of an imperial workshop in Chanderi which produced an extremely fine cloth, with gold and silver worked into it.
A British officer in the Chanderi battalion, RC Sterndale, wrote an account of the city in 1857. He states that Chanderi is famous for the muslin manufactured here, a fabric popular with the princes and nobles of North India and the Deccan. He describes the cloth as soft and transparent with its ends fringed with gold thread. He also claims that the material is extremely expensive, a pair of saris costing from eight hundred to one thousand rupees and sometimes even more.

The 1907 Gazeteer of the Princely state of Gwalior, says that the old tradition of weaving of a fine muslin cloth still continues in Chanderi although the industry is not so thriving now. It mentions that the cloth is uncommonly fine with beautiful borders in silk and gold. It also states that earlier all the cloth woven here used to be marked with the seal of the erstwhile Bundela dynasty, which was two prancing lions with a crown in between.

Pandit Phool Chand Jain in his Parvaar Jain Samaj ka Itihaas gives an account of the religious festival, Gajrath Mahotsav, celebrated at Deogarh in 1436. He writes that those who got the opportunity to ride on the elephant cart wore a pagdi or turban made out of the Chanderi fabric, as a mark of respect.

It is clear thus, that the antiquity of the handloom industry in Chanderi goes at least as far back as the 14th century and in the beginning this exceptional fabric could only be afforded by the royalty and the very rich.

During the modern times, the weaves of Chanderi have been conferred with several awards including the Presidents’s award for craft, State award and Kabir Award. The most recent fame received by Chanderi’s fabrics was during the 2010 Commonwealth Games held at Delhi. The winning athletes were gifted a Chanderi stole, multi-coloured and woven with the logo and mascot of the games.
A British officer in the Chanderi battalion, RC Sterndale, wrote an account stating that the Chanderi fabric was popular with the princes and nobles of North India and the Deccan. He describes the cloth as soft and transparent with its ends fringed with gold thread. The most recent fame received by Chanderi’s fabrics was during the 2010 Commonwealth Games held at Delhi, where the winning athletes were gifted a Chanderi stole.
Development

The cloth is composed of the tana, which is the warp or the length-wise, stretched out set of threads through which the bana or the weft is woven back and forth.

Since the commencement of weaving in Chanderi, till about the 1920s, only white and off-white cloth was woven with its ends fringed with zari or golden thread. Only hand-spun cotton thread was utilized, even in the tana, even though it was barely strong enough to be held under tension. The then weavers were highly skilled workers as they had to be extremely careful while handling the delicate cotton yarn. An assortment of garments including safas, pagdis, dupattas, lugadas, normal length saris etc. were produced. The courts of the Princely states of Gwalior and Baroda were major buyers of the fabric. In Baroda, a 120 feet long pagdi, was part of the royal ceremonial dress for the princes and maharajas.

Ram Narain Mishra, a prosperous sari trader, writes in his autobiography that he was the first to introduce coloured yarn in the production of Chanderi fabric. Initially the coloured threads were used only in the bana while the tana thread continued to be white. Hence, the resultant fabric was pastel coloured. Gradually, coloured threads were used both in the tana and bana so that richly coloured fabrics were created.

Today, raw silk, which is 20-22 deniers thick, is used in the tana in almost every sari. Silk does not only impart a lustrous finish to the fabric but is also stronger and hence much easier to work with. Sometimes zari is used with silk in the warp to make a full tissue sari but these are not woven very often. The thread count in the tana can vary from 4000 to 17000 and this will depend upon the quality required. More the thread count more will be the thickness and hence superiority of the fabric.

In the bana, cotton, mercerized cotton, raw silk or kataan is used.

In the borders and bootis, mercerized cotton, silk and zari threads are utilized. The zari, which is sourced from Surat in Gujarat, can either be real or tested. It comes in three different shades: copper, silver and golden.
Earlier the looms known as the Throw-shuttle pit loom were in use. Weaving on this was a very time consuming process and it required two weavers to sit side by side on the same loom. The Nal Pherma saris were woven on this loom which had one colour in one border, another in the other border and a different one in the body of the sari. Nowadays, however, only the Fly-shuttle looms are in use and these are operated by a single weaver.

One of the earliest innovations in sari design were the Do chashmi saris which had one colour on one side and another colour on the other i.e. the saris were reversible. These were exceedingly difficult to make. Two months were needed just to set the loom to begin weaving and it took as many as 45 days to complete one sari.

The 1970s saw a revolution of sorts in the designs of Chanderi saris. Innovative borders such as the Ganga Jamani, Mehndi Range Haath, Sada Saubhagyawati Bhava became extremely popular and began to be demanded by women from all across the country.

The borders popular today include the Adda border which consists of a highly intricate design, the Nakshi is similar except for the outline of the border pattern which is done with a different coloured thread and the plain zari Patela border. Piping border is similar to Patela but has thinner stripe of zari or another coloured thread.
The yarn for weaving was earlier coloured with only natural dyes, but today both natural and chemical dyes are in use. Many of the names of the colours used are derived from natural things like fruits, vegetables, flowers, birds etc. Totai is parrot green while Mor Gardani is the blue-green of a peacock’s neck. Tamatarai refers to a bright tomato red, Pyazi is onion pink, Neembo Turanji is lemon yellow and Gajari carrot red. Angoori or grape-like is pale green while Naarangi is a shade of orange. Kesari is saffron, Badami almond-coloured, Chutney is sap green and Surmayi, a grey hue.

A trip to Chanderi will remain incomplete without a purchase of the town’s enchanting weaves. In Chanderi, saris and other textile products can be bought from either the shops that abound in the main market, Madhya Pradesh Handloom Department and other government agencies or the various self-help groups. However, it’ll serve many purposes for the tourists to shop from the various self-help groups formed by the weavers. Firstly, they’ll be able to see exactly how much effort goes into making the material and understand its true value. As the consumers and weavers will be face to face, there will be no price escalation by the intermediaries.

Consequently, not only will the consumer buy the product at a competitive price but more importantly, the earnings will reach those who have laboured to create it.
Technique

For Tana

In Chanderi, the process of weaving starts with the arrival of raw silk lachhis which come from Bangalore and Pune. This yarn is white and the first step taken towards making it into a sari is to dye it. Once the yarn is dry, it is rolled to form the pindi or dauga using a charkha. The dauga is made for around twelve to fifteen saris at one go. From the dauga, the yarn is rolled on to the tur which is a cylindrical wooden part of the loom. This work requires a lot of space and is hence carried out outside in the streets. This tur is referred to as bhim ka tur and it is fitted on the opposite end from where the weaver sits. At this end, the tana silk threads for the border of the sari are stretched taut using bags filled with gravel. The weight in these is assiduously measured as the balance has to be just right. A good quality sari has to have around ten thousand to seventeen thousand tana threads.
For Loom

Before weaving can be started, certain parts of the loom are prepared. These are the raach and the phani or kanghi. Every loom is fitted with two raachs which are responsible for lifting up and putting down two separate sets of the tana threads. The raachs are attached to pedals or pawdi to be operated by the foot. The processes referred to as raach bharna and kanghi chedna are carried out by the people in Naya-pura locality. After the raach is set, the naka threads are tied. These are meant for the bootis made on the body of the sari and their arrangement changes according in the change in design of the bootis. The threads used in the raach and naka are all strong nylon threads as these are constantly kept stretched and get abraded with the continuous passing of the tana threads. From the naka, the tana threads go on to the phani and through each gap between the teeth of the phani, two tana threads are passed to the other side.
For Border

The threads usually utilized in the border are mercerized cotton, degummed silk and zari. When fed into the loom, these are not rolled on to the tur like the silk yarn which makes the main border of the sari. This is because the cotton threads do not slack as the silk threads and hence have to be held tight separately. The design to be woven on the border is executed using the jacquard machine which is sourced from Varanasi. A graph is traced, according to the design decided upon, in which each graph square is either coloured or left blank. Using this graph, the puttha plates are pierced with the help of the jacquard plate where each piercing corresponds to a blank graph box. Once the entire design is punctured, the puttha plates are attached together and fed into the jacquard machine which is installed above the loom. When the weaver operates the jacquard pedal, the stencil moves forward one notch to the next line. With successive pushes of the pedal, the design is created. When one cycle is finished, the stencil starts over and this causes the border design to appear as a continuous series of the initial graph pattern.

Usually the other border of the sari is left plain for the first three meters after which the harness is attached for this end as well. This is because when worn, the first half of the sari is tucked in at the waist and does not show. If the border design is smaller, and less complicated, the jacquard is replaced by the doby which serves the same function. Its only shortcoming is that longer border patterns cannot be made using it.
For Bana

To weave in the bana thread is the final step in making the fabric. The bana yarn is also treated in the same way as the tana yarn, that is, it is dyed and then rolled on to the palita. Using the charkha, from the palita, the thread is rolled on to bobbins. Bobbins are fitted into the shuttle which in turn is inserted into the peti. A tug on the handle pushes the shuttle to the opposite end which takes along one strand of the bana thread. This action combines all the divergent tana threads. The bobbins are kept in water so that the bana thread is wet when woven. This gives the woven fabric a slight sheen and better finishing.
Select Bibliography

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