Bundelkhand in poetry: Water, water everywhere!

*Just like Rajasthan, the folk lore in Bundelkhand talks a lot about water. So much so that even its poetry uses water similes and metaphors profusely. Take for instance Alaia, the medieval epig-poetry of the region, which refers to 'water' several times.

"People in water-challenged area are far more romantic and respectful towards water. Bundelkhand and Rajasthan are such areas. Their folk-art reflects this. It is amazing to know how many different names people in Bundelkhand have for clouds in their local dialects. They have a specific name for specific kind of cloud. People in such regions cherish clouds and water more than the people in water-rich regions," says Rajender Singh, a Maganpurwary award winner and water activist from Aligarh, Bundelkhand.

The folk poetry and songs are replete with 'water' and water harvesting structures. Alaia Khana in a verse says:

"Jab naahe jis din mera man, jab mein aur hai jirge dahi hath in Madarsagar, wohi mera mera jirge dahi hath in Madarsagar mein..."

This old verse describes that it was its water harvesting systems that made Jatara a town. The verse goes like this: "Nabha hai, saawat kaa, chhapan tal daa re, khaatni nin naahe ni nin."

Another folk song begins: "Maha sa jirge dahi hath, Mahaa sa jirge dahi hath, Mahaa sa jirge dahi hath..."

A folk song describes beauty and significance of water bodies in a fort: "Aarath hai, naa haraaj, jis jis aur pahar, jiske aar aar ghar par huye hahar, hahar par..."

The water bodies in Bundelkhand are the best and the water has a flow (runway) in it as well. The poem describes a threat and warning that Prithviraj Chauhan (an invader here) issued to the Chandel king, Raja Parmardev. "Jhod ke Mahaa khandhar kaa dhaan, Dura aldr naka dhaan, will fill up Mahaa Kingdom and make permanent ponds everywhere.

Now, the contemporary folk groups — like Bundelkhand Sur Lifegaya — too sing about water. But they sing in pesud and sad ways instead of glorious rendition. Apparently because the water has turned scarce like never before in the region."