Rehat reckoner: slow but steady

WAT-ER WHEELS They still lift rain-harvested water even today in parts of Bundelkhand

BUNDELKHAND REGION OF UP & MP: Persian wheel may be breeding its last in Egypt where it is said to have been originated in ancient times, but is live and kicking in two districts of the water-challenged Bundelkhand region—Lalitpur (in Uttar Pradesh) and Tikamgarh (in Madhya Pradesh).

Persian wheel, which is also known as Bucket Wheel or Water Wheel, is called ‘Rehat’ locally and in xuan in the region since the times of Chandella dynasty—sixth century onwards.

“Nothing has changed about this water-lifting device since Chandella—except that steel replaced wood in most moving parts of the device” says Professor Nilesh Pujari Pathak, a Bundelkhand historian and retired head of department of History, Banaras Hindu College.

Fields after fields in the district have rehats in action to irrigate vegetable crops during the interlude between Rabi and Kharif cropping seasons.

“But unlike the bucket-wheel operated by only 30 buckets and now it has 40. Earlier the buckets were made of wood, but now they are made of aluminium,” says Brijendra Kishore, who has his two-are field in Khajuri panchayat in Tikamgarh. A nearby ancient pond—Otevan Tal—made by tapping a rain rivulet recharges his well.

He said farmers around him use rehat to irrigate all crops. He had tomatoes, turnips and review three times in the field. Rehat is a glorious example of irrigation system that judiciously uses the rain-harvested water in parts of Bundelkhand. Rehats were common in all the areas where there were small or big ponds, small or big dams. The water harvested in the reservoirs recharges the wells.

“Because it uses physical work of animals and men, and works slow, they do not extract water indiscriminately. Unlike the modern day water pumps that throw water haphazardly at a push of a button. A rehat is even relevant today in the region,” says Dharmendra Tripathi, a drought-affected farmer in Tikamgarh. While they all use bucket-wheel to irrigate the crops, more farmers名校 pupils in Tikamgarh district.

(Next: Ancient MRON/22)

*A farmer irrigating field by using the rehat.*