

The Chambal Valley: Once A Cursed Shelter Home for The Bandits, Now Blessed With Education & Reforms



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Abstract

The Chambal valley which covers a wide range of area touching the three major states of India, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, is enjoying a new dawn through its revolutionary and unexpected transformation. As it is well known, once it was a shelter home to the bandits and other anti-social-elements who lived in wilderness with no discipline, humanity and system. Dacoity, loot, robbery, kidnapping, murders etc. were their occupation, and in order to protect themselves from the police and administration, they used to live amidst the unapproachable ravines found all over the valley. The valley for a long time witnessed only a chaotic situation, and whatever there was, it was all against humanity and approved norms. It was an absolutely cursed place with gangs of dacoits and bandit queens. Isolation was the only meaning of life known to the inhabitants here. They survived, but it was an ill survival which hardly had any meaning and any positive contribution to the society.

Unlike the other known valleys, the Chambal valley is known for a high temperature, ravines, barrenness of land, isolated life and the promotion of anti-social and illegal activities throughout. The valley is a cursed place where traces of civilized living are unseemingly. It had long been a secure shelter home to the criminals, particularly the ones belonging to the three states Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The jurisdiction of each of these states being separate and independent, the criminals of one of such states would find shelter in the area of the valley that fell in the jurisdiction of another state. Hence, gradually the valley became home for the criminals belonging to the different states.

Keywords: Cursed, Bandits, Wildness, Isolation, Full Of Life, Scenario, Return To Normal Life, Indisciplined Mode Of Living, Wild Living, Ransom, Kidnapping, Ill-Survival.

Introduction

The Chambal valley provided shelter not only to the male bandits but also to the female bandits or bandit queens who took delight in committing dacoity, robbery, murders and kidnapping for the sake of taking revenge or avenge or for ransom that helped them survive enjoying a luxurious living. Phoolan Devi, Kusuma Naain, Seema Parihar, Babli are some of the Bandit queens that became a name of terror for several years. Among the male bandits who found shelter for a long time in the valley, and who created terror here for a long time were- Tehsildar Singh, Mohar Singh, Madho Singh, Ramesh Sikarwar, Lara, Jagan Gurjar, Chhote Lal Meena, Janga & Phoola and the members of the Gadaria gang. These Once seeming blood thirsty Chambal valley seems to be returning to normalcy with the efforts of the political leaders and social activists.

Rationale & Justification

The Chambal valley as a whole reveals a tremendous change during the last few years and decades. The theme for the study was selected just because at present there is hardly anything that was a few years ago. Once a synonym for bandit area, terror, violence and wildness, now it has a system under which the inhabitants in the valley lead an organized family life enjoying all the blisses, and all free from its so called curses. It is no longer unsafe, unapproachable, absolutely uninhabited and merely a sheltering place of the dacoits and anti-social elements. Now it is full of life, greenery, natural beauty, beautiful locations and law and order. The people visit the valley for picnics and excursions, studies, shooting and for several other purposes both alone and with friends and family

members. The changing scenario in the Chambal valley with full and systematic life, facilities, changing attitude and mentality of the inhabitants and governance moved the researcher to study its past and present, and on the basis of the study, to explore the various possibilities of change and progress in the entire range of the Chambal valley making it a safe place with an easy approach to all its parts, and a tourist place making it popular with the tourists belonging to the four corners of the world.

Objectives of The Study

1. To study the literature available on the various aspects associated with the Chambal valley
2. To be familiar with the geographical area of the Chambal valley
3. To learn about the states which constitute the Chambal valley
4. To expand the knowledge about the positive aspects of the Chambal valley
5. To explore the negative aspects of the Chambal valley
6. To point out the various specific geographical, social and cultural features of the Chambal valley
7. To satiate the curiosity about the life in the Chambal valley in the past
8. To find out the various causes that made the Chambal valley a suitable sheltering place for the bandits
9. To learn about the problems of the people in the Chambal valley
10. To observe the emerging changes in the Chambal valley
11. To make a comparative study of the law and order in the Chambal valley in the past and at present
12. To spot out the changing socio-cultural and educational scenario in the Chambal valley
13. To know about the administrative set up in the Chambal valley
14. To study the occupational background and scenario in the Chambal valley
15. To be familiar with the contribution of the Government in bringing about reform in the Chambal valley
16. To produce and mirror the current changed scenario in the Chambal valley
17. To study the past and the present of the Chambal valley
18. To explore the various possibilities of the progress and transformation in the Chambal Valley
19. To spot out the rare spots in the valley that can be developed as the tourist points in order to draw the tourists of the world
20. To give suggestions as to how the Valley can be made a safe tourist place

Review of Literature

N. Krishnaswamy (2001) in the 93rd chapter entitled Vinoba's Peace Mission of the book 'Hundred Facets of Vinoba' observes Vinoba Bhave's unforgettable role in the abolition of dacoity in the Chambal valley. He observes that during May-June 1960, twenty dacoits surrendered at the feet of Vinoba, giving up their sophisticated arms:

1. Ramavtar Singh - Morena
2. Patiram – Morena
3. Srikisan - Morena
4. Maharaman - Bhind
5. Lachi - Bhind
6. Parbhu - Bhind
7. Lukka (Lokman) - Agra
8. Kanhai - Agra
9. Tej Singh - Bhind
10. Dareylal - Agra
11. Ram Sanchi - Bhind
12. Durjan - Bhind
13. Vidyaram - Bhind
14. Bhup Singh - Bhind
15. Jangjit - Agra
16. Matrey - Bharatpur
17. Bhagwan Singh - Morena
18. Ramdayal - Agra
19. Badan Singh - Agra
20. Kachere – Bhind

Jain, Sharad K., Pushpendra K. Agarwal, Vijay P. Singh (2007) in the study entitled 'Hydrology and water resources of India' observes that the Chambal River is a tributary of the Yamuna River in central India, and thus forms part of the greater Gangetic drainage system. The river flows north-northeast through Madhya Pradesh, running for a time through Rajasthan, then forming the boundary between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh before turning southeast to join the Yamuna in Uttar Pradesh state.

Hussain, S. A. (2009) in 'Basking site and water depth selection by gharial *Gavialis gangeticus*' writes that the area lies within the semi-arid zone of north-western India at the border of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh States, and the vegetation consists of ravine, thorn forest, a sub-type of the Northern Tropical Forests. Evergreen riparian vegetation is completely absent, with only sparse ground-cover along the severely eroded river banks and adjacent ravine lands.

Vishwa Mohan (January 15, 2015) in 'MP wants to level Chambal ravines into farmlands' observes that the Madhya Pradesh government wants to turn the ravines of Chambal- a unique geographical feature once famous for sheltering dacoits- into agricultural fields by leveling the twisting hillocks. The state has nearly 18 lakh hectares of ravines with steep but shallow gullies. The area covered by ravines is mainly along the banks of the river and its tributaries in districts, such as, Bhind, Morena, Shivpuri, Gwalior, Ujjain and Mandsaur covering a large range of the valley.

Shyam Saran (December 13, 2016) in his statement published under the head 'One Chambal, two tales: Why MP is hostile to river' observes the mythological significance of the Chambal river saying that According to a Hindu lore, Sharavan Kumar, who carried both his parents on a basket for pilgrimage, left his parents for a short while after drinking Chambal water. For some time, he started thinking that he was doing a foolish thing by carrying his aged parents on his shoulders, only to repent later after

which he again carried them and continued on his pilgrimage.

Water Resources Department, Govt. of Rajasthan (2016) reports that the Gandhi Sagar dam is the first of the four dams built on the Chambal River, located on the Rajasthan-Madhya Pradesh border. It is a 64 metre high masonry gravity dam, with a live storage capacity of 6,920 MCM (million cubic metres) and a catchment area of 22,584 km, of which only 1,537 km is in Rajasthan.

Swati Jain (September 11, 2016) in her report on the Chambal valley entitled 'Once Infamous, Chambal is now the Destination of Choice for Those Seeking Rugged Natural Beauty' observes-

1. The Chambal needs no introduction as it is famous for its alliance with the 'Bandit Queen' Phoolan Devi and as a setting for many Bollywood movies of the 70s and 80s, but the reason it grabbed my attention as the fact that it's yet unexplored.
2. An 80 km drive from Agra takes you to Chambal Valley which is located at the convergence of three states - Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
3. With a rich heritage stretching back many centuries, the Chambal valley has much to offer from its stunning landscapes, the splendid wildlife, crumbling ruins, its history, mythology, resilient people and their legendary exploits.
4. Chambal valley is home to the National Bird and Wildlife sanctuary which is a habitat for rare and endangered species.
5. The National Chambal Sanctuary is home to the gharial - a rare species of Crocodiles which once was said to be endangered.
6. Rare spotted Gangetic Dolphin, Marsh Crocodiles, eight species of Turtles, Indian Striped Hyenas, Golden Jackals amongst others.
7. An absolute paradise for the bird lovers, the sanctuary boasts the rapidly increasing and impressive list of birds with over 330 species of resident and migratory birds.
8. According to ancient Indian texts, the river is considered to be cursed. It is believed that the river originated from the blood of thousands of cows sacrificed by the Aryan King Rantideva.
9. Another legend states that it was cursed by Drapaudi for reasons unknown

Padmini Rani (September, 19, 2017) in 'Chambal's land leveling experiment leads to socio-economic disruption' surveys that the ravines of Chambal used to provide multiple livelihood options for its poor and marginal farmers. Leveling of land is triggering conflicts and increasing social inequity.

Jeetendra Kumar (November, 2017) in the study 'An evaluation of agricultural development process in rural Madhya Pradesh: A case study of Dikhatpura village in Chambal region (1961-2015)' finds that at the beginning, some of the major agricultural developmental programmes and plans, such as Land Reform Act, Canal Construction, Green

Revolution, KCCY and MNREGA have played a key role in agriculture development such as, absorbing the surplus agricultural and non-agricultural labours, commercialising agriculture and encouraging the capital accumulation. But in long run all these programmes and plans failed to provide the stable employment opportunities in the village due to lack of institutional and non-institutional supports, such as fragmentation of land, extensive use of agricultural technologies, growing cost of cultivation, changing consumption pattern, higher growth rate of population, rampant corruption, caste and wage discriminations and so on.

Hypothesis

1. The outskirts of the Chambal valley are touched by the three states- Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan
2. In the past the Chamabal valley was a home of the bandits
3. The life in the Chambal valley was full of wilderness which knew no system
4. It was chiefly inhabited in the past by the bandits or the shelter providers to the bandits
5. The bandits in the Chambal valley were once meant for terror confined to robbery, kidnapping and demanding ransom
6. The Government played a dominant role in the abolition of dacoits
7. The Government schemes and plans brought new dawn to the Chambal valley
8. The efforts resulted into the revival of normal life, social upbringing, discipline and humanity
9. The present socio-cultural scenario of the Chambal valley reveals several unexpected changes in the life of the inhabitants
10. The Chambal valley is now governed under a system full of well-established law and order which protects the interests of the inhabitants in the Chambal valley
11. With the schools in the valley the children are being linked with elementary education
12. With the various other facilities provided by the governments the people are returning to the normal modes of living
13. Once full of wilderness and crime, the Chambal valley is now full of life, peace and happiness

Research Questions

1. What was the traditional form of the Chambal valley?
2. How many states does the area of the Chambal valley touch?
3. What are the specific features of the Chambal valley?
4. What type of people dwell in the valley?
5. What are the geographical and climatic conditions in the Chambal valley?
6. Is the Chambal valley easily approachable?
7. If no, how and why?
8. Why is it famous as a shelter home for the criminals and dacoits?
9. How is the social transformation in the Chambal valley taking place?
10. How can peace restored in the valley?

Remarking An Analisation

11. What efforts are being made to restore peace, law and order in the valley?
12. How is confidence in the inhabitants being developed for the survival in the valley?
13. How can the Chambal valley be developed as a tourist centre?
14. How can the study of the Chambal valley be helpful to the researchers, historians, wildlife lovers and scientists?
15. How can the locations in the Chambal valley be made fit for the shooting of the movies and serials?
16. Do the wild life lovers find the Chambal valley a suitable place at present?
17. What socio-cultural and educational reforms are taking place in the Chambal valley?
18. What political reforms are taking place in the Chambal valley?
19. What are the possibilities of industrial growth in the Chambal valley?
20. Is the transforming scenario in the Chambal valley positive or negative?

Methodology

Though based on purely observation and visits to the parts of the Chambal valley, the study serves as a theoretical study, as the secondary data collected through the available literature in the various sources on the theme were used for the purpose. The selected reviews helped the researcher get a sufficient feedback for the subject, while observation of the valley and interaction with the people as well as casual talks helped him be familiar with the emerging changes in the valley through the efforts of the government and NGOs. The approach adopted for the study was historical-analytical which helped the author go back to the past of the Chambal valley when it was not a safe place at all, and then to analyze the current scenario keeping in view both the past and the present.

Study Area

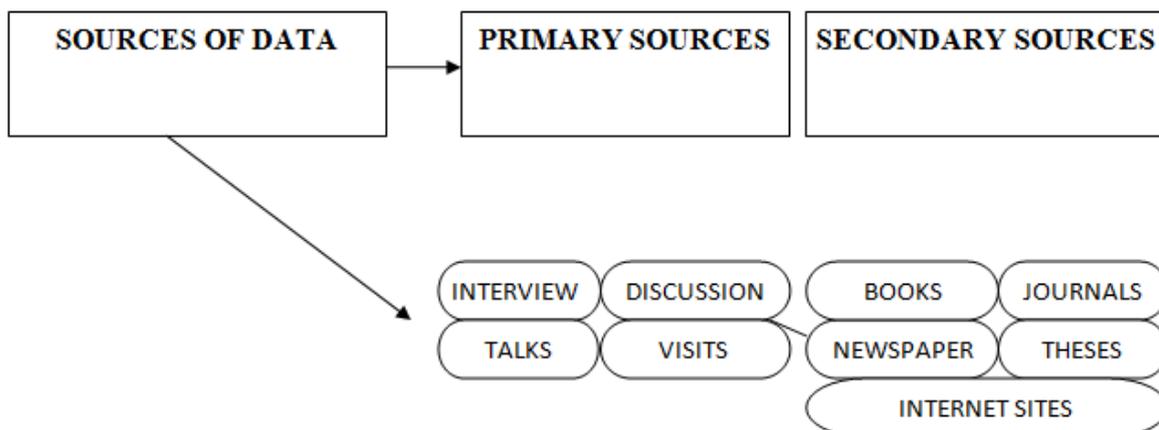
Part of the Chambal Valley falling in Dholpur district.

Type of Study

Theoretical Qualitative Research.

Approach of The Study

Historical-Analytical Approach.



Tools & Techniques

For the study, the primary data were collected through interview schedule prepared all casually, and through casual interaction with the inhabitants and the visitors that included both males and females. The books, magazines, research journals and research papers, dissertations, thesis and internet sites supplied the secondary data found suitable for the study.

Major Findings

1. The three popular states in India constitute the entire range of the Chambal valley. They are- Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan
2. The vegetation consists of ravine, thorn forest, a sub-type of the Northern Tropical Forests
3. There are four dams associated with the Chambal valley and Gandhi Sagar dam is the first of the four dams built on the Chambal River which is located on the Rajasthan-Madhya Pradesh border
4. Since 1970s the Chambal valley has been a favourite location for bollywood movies and serials

5. Most of the part of the Chambal valley is still unexplored and waiting for the scientists and visitors to explore it for several purposeful uses
6. Since the valley is touched by three states of India known for the international tourism, the valley has unlimited possibilities of being developed as a tourist place, as it has much to offer from its stunning landscapes, the splendid wildlife, crumbling ruins, its history, mythology, resilient people and their legendary exploits
7. Chambal valley is home to the National Bird and Wildlife sanctuary. It is the safest home to the elegators which is a rare species of Crocodiles
8. Rare spotted Gangetic Dolphin, Marsh Crocodiles, eight species of Turtles, Indian Striped Hyenas, Golden Jackals are found here
9. The valley is an absolute paradise for the bird lovers.
10. The Chambal valley has a mythological background
11. The Chambal valley is still undeveloped

Remarking An Analisation

12. The Chambal valley can be made useful for the agricultural growth
13. There are still several unexplored spots in the valley that can be developed as the tourist points
14. The ravines for which the Chambal valley is known, can be developed as the tourist points
15. The Ghats of the Chambal river with a beautified state are capable of promoting tourism in the valley
16. Through a planned irrigation policy, greenery and parks can be developed at the places all over the valley
17. Tourist villages developed by the State Tourism Department can be developed in order to attract the tourists towards the Chambal valley
18. Though exceptionally and only occasionally, the criminals of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan along with the criminals of several other states seek shelter in the valley in order to protect themselves from the police and administration
19. Through an effective administration the Chambal valley can ensure a comfortable and safe life to the people
20. The building planners and contractors can give a gracious shape to the valley, and thus, it can be a haunt to all
21. In order to bring the children of the Chambal valley closer to education and the main stream of education, the Government is opening primary, secondary and even senior secondary schools
22. Through the various government and non-government agencies, the inhabitants of the valley are being made aware with the importance of education and cleanliness
23. The number of schools is increasing fast in the entire Chambal valley
24. The result of the students in the schools in the Chambal valley witnesses the growing interest of the students and their parents in schools and education.
25. The illegal supply of the Chambal sand is almost banned, and it became possible through the efforts of administration that checked it at the cost of risk to life and limbs
26. The Chambal valley with the several flourishing development in all the fields, is now a safe and secure place to everyone.

Conclusion

Through the study, the researcher arrives at the conclusion that day-by-day the Chambal valley is

being free from the curse of being a shelter home of criminals and bandits; efforts are being made to restore peace by the state governments through the maintenance of law and order; basic facilities are being provided to the inhabitants; number of schools and health centres are being opened; new technologies for reshaping the Chambal valley and for agriculture are being developed and adopted; new vistas of development in the valley are being explored, the locations are being made approachable and the ravines are being modernized keeping in view the interests of the tourists. It is no more what it would be in the past a few decades ago, but something transformed with a new dawn bringing new hopes of life, survival, development and progress.

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