

Historical Places of Nagod State: A Study of Political, Cultural, and Archaeological Heritage

Balvendra Pratap Singh

Department of History,

Awadhesh Pratap Singh University, Rewa, Madhya Pradesh

Abstract: Nagod State, a former princely state situated in the modern Satna district of Madhya Pradesh, possesses a remarkably rich historical and archaeological legacy. Despite its modest territorial extent, the state contains a rich assemblage of monuments spanning ancient Buddhist civilization, Gupta-era art and architecture, medieval Rajput statecraft, and the colonial era. The historical sites of Nagod State—most notably Nagod Fort, Unchehara, Naro Fort, Bharhut, Bhumara, Khoh, Patani Devi, Lal Pahar, Shankargarh, and Kotara—collectively depict over two millennia of dynamic cultural evolution. This paper examines these key historical locations and evaluates their pivotal contributions to the political, religious, artistic, and archaeological landscape of Central India.

Keywords: Historical, Places, Nagod, State, Study, Political, Cultural, Archaeological Heritage.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nagod State was governed by the Parihar Rajput dynasty from the fourteenth century until its formal integration into the Union of India between 1948 and 1950. Historically referred to as Unchehara, the principality adopted the name Nagod following the decision of Raja Chainsingh to transfer the seat of power from Unchehara to Nagod in 1720.

Beyond its political history, Nagod has attained global scholarly recognition for its extraordinary archaeological remains, particularly the ancient Buddhist monuments at Bharhut and the landmark Gupta-period temples of Bhumara and Khoh. These locations attracted pioneering visual and textual documentation by renowned archaeologists such as Sir Alexander Cunningham and Rakhal Das Banerji, and they remain invaluable primary resources for reconstructing ancient and medieval Indian history.

II. KEY HISTORICAL PLACES OF NAGOD STATE

1. Nagod Fort (Nagod Palace)

Nagod Fort assumed its role as the administrative seat of the state in 1720 when Raja Chainsingh relocated the capital from Unchehara. The fort served as the primary residence of the Parihar rulers and the central locus of governance. It bore witness to key historical transitions, including the state's administrative affairs during the era of British paramountcy and Nagod's ultimate accession to independent India. The palace complex stands as a primary symbol of the political authority of the Nagod rulers and remains one of the former state's most vital heritage monuments.

2. Unchehara (Uchchakalpa)

Unchehara served as the original capital of Nagod State until the early eighteenth century. Historical traditions record that Raja Veerraj Judeo established his authority here after capturing Naro Fort in 1344. For nearly four centuries, Unchehara functioned as the military and political heart of the Parihar dynasty. Numerous ancient settlements and archaeological remains surrounding the town attest to its long-standing strategic importance across both ancient and medieval periods.



3. Naro Fort

Naro Fort holds a foundational place in the historiography of Nagod State. According to historical records, Raja Veerraj Judeo seized the fort from local rulers in 1344 to form an independent Parihar principality—an event considered the formal founding of Nagod State. The fort served as a core bastion of military strength, allowing the Parihar dynasty to consolidate territorial control over the surrounding region.

4. Kotara

Kotara is closely linked with the early history of the Parihar Rajputs prior to the establishment of their capital at Unchehara. Although few structural remains have survived to the present day, the site provides critical spatial insights into the early migration and settlement patterns of the ruling clan. Local oral traditions and historical references firmly connect Kotara to the initial phase of state formation.

5. Bharhut

Bharhut is the most globally renowned archaeological landmark within Nagod State. The ancient Buddhist stupa, dating to the second century BCE, was discovered in 1873 by General Alexander Cunningham. Its elaborately carved stone railings, gateways (toranas), and donor inscriptions rank among the finest extant examples of early Buddhist narrative art in India. These reliefs offer profound insights into Shunga-period Buddhist theology, trade networks, epigraphy, and artistic techniques. While most of the surviving structural fragments are preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, Bharhut firmly established Nagod on the global map of antiquity.

6. Bhumara Temple

The Bhumara Temple represents one of the finest surviving exemplars of classic Gupta-period stone temple architecture. Dedicated to Lord Shiva and dating to the fifth century CE, the shrine is celebrated for its exquisite spatial proportions, structural design, and intricate decorative carvings. Its discovery in 1920 substantially enriched modern scholarship regarding early Hindu temple development and underscores the sophisticated artistic achievements of the Gupta era in Central India.

7. Khoh

Khoh is another fundamental Gupta-era archaeological site situated within the historical boundaries of Nagod State. Field investigations and excavations have yielded monumental inscriptions, stone sculptures, temple foundations, and critical copper-plate grants. These copper-plate epigraphs have proved essential for reconstructing Gupta political history, shedding light on regional administrative structures, land-grant traditions, and royal patronage of religious institutions.

8. Pataini Devi

Pataini Devi is an ancient religious and devotional complex within the former Nagod territory. Archaeological surveys at the site have documented structural temple remains, stone icons, and epigraphic records, primarily dating to the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. The site reflects the unbroken continuity of local Hindu worship and remains an active destination for regional pilgrimage.

9. Lal Pahar

Lal Pahar contains significant archaeological deposits affiliated with the Gupta era. Field documentation carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has reported temple bases, iconographic sculptures, and architectural fragments, indicating that the hill formed part of a flourishing sacred landscape during antiquity.



10. Shankargarh

Explored during the early twentieth century, Shankargarh stands as another noteworthy archaeological site. The discovery of temple fragments and religious iconography highlights its role as an important sanctuary during the Gupta period, furthering our understanding of the diffusion of early structural temple design across Central India.

Historical Significance Across Epochs The historical monuments of Nagod State collectively encapsulate successive epochs of Indian civilization:

- **Ancient Period:** Bharhut illustrates the artistic, doctrinal, and social evolution of early Indian Buddhism and monumental stone sculpture.
- **Gupta Period:** Bhumara, Khoh, Patani Devi, Lal Pahar, and Shankargarh preserve world-class examples of Gupta art, classical architecture, and official royal epigraphy.
- **Medieval Period:** Naro Fort, Unchehara, Kotara, and Nagod Fort demonstrate the emergence, territorial expansion, and political consolidation of the Parihar Rajput dynasty.
- **Colonial & Modern Periods:** Nagod Fort functioned as the center of regional governance under British paramountcy and served as the political seat until the state's integration into independent India.

III. HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND CHALLENGES

Many historical structures across the former Nagod State require enhanced conservation strategies, systematic field documentation, and regional heritage promotion. While major sites like Bharhut and Bhumara are designated protected monuments, several secondary complexes remain vulnerable to natural weathering and neglect. Comprehensive conservation initiatives must incorporate scientific structural restoration, high-resolution digital documentation, sustainable heritage tourism, and local community engagement. Preserving these cultural assets is vital for maintaining the historic identity of Baghelkhand.

IV. CONCLUSION

The historical sites of Nagod State constitute an extraordinary cultural and spatial landscape spanning over two thousand years. From the ancient Buddhist art of Bharhut to the structural elegance of the Gupta temples at Bhumara and Khoh, and from medieval fortified centers like Naro to the modern administrative capital at Nagod, these locations trace the evolving intersection of religion, art, state formation, and governance in Central India. The academic and historical value of these sites extends far beyond regional borders, necessitating sustained research, structural conservation, and public awareness to ensure their preservation for future generations.

REFERENCES

1. Singh, Ramlakhan. Pratihara Rajputon ka Itihas. Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar, pp. 7–19.
2. Singh, Dr. Anupama. Vindhya Kshetra ke Pratihara Vansh ka Itihas. Jodhpur: Navbharat Prakashan, pp. 8–10.
3. Singh, Dr. Anupama. Op. cit., pp. 11–15.
4. Singh, Ramlakhan. Op. cit.
5. Education Department, Nagod State. (1945). Rajya Nagod. Nagod: Education Department Office.
6. Law, B. C. (1972). Prachin Bharat ka Aitihasik Bhoogol. Lucknow.
7. Sharma, Dr. Rajkumar. (2014). Madhya Pradesh ka Itihas. Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Academy.
8. Sharma, Dr. Rajkumar. Op. cit.

