

Monuments of Nabha City

¹Krishan Singh , ²Dr.Harpinder Kaur

Research Scholar

Guru Kashi University of Bathinda

Abstract ; Monuments are structures or buildings that are created to commemorate a person, event, or significant cultural heritage. They often have historical, architectural, or cultural importance and serve as physical reminders of past events, achievements, or people. Here are some key characteristics and types of monuments.

Keywords, Heritage, Events, Temples, Qila, Culture, Architecture, Legacy

Nabha, a city in the Punjab region of India, has a rich historical background deeply intertwined with the broader history of the Punjab region and the Indian subcontinent. Nabha City boasts several historical monuments that reflect its rich heritage and history. Nabha traces its origins to the medieval period when it was established as a princely state by the Phulkian dynasty. The Phulkian rulers were descendants of Chaudhary Phul, a Jat Sikh who founded the Phulkian Misl, one of the twelve Sikh misls (confederacies) formed in the 18th century in the Punjab region. The Phulkian rulers played a significant role in the political landscape of Punjab during the Mughal era and later during the British colonial period. They were prominent figures in Sikh history and were known for their martial prowess as well as their administrative capabilities. Nabha State was one of the three Phulkian states, the other two being Patiala and Jind.: During the British colonial rule in India, Nabha State, like other princely states, entered into treaties with the British East India Company and later the British Crown. The rulers of Nabha, like those of other Phulkian states, made significant contributions to Sikhism. They supported the construction and maintenance of Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) and were patrons of Sikh religious institutions. Nabha State also had a sizable Sikh population, and Sikh traditions and culture were prevalent in the region. After India gained independence from British rule in 1947 AD, the princely states were given the option to accede to India or Pakistan. Nabha State chose to merge with the newly independent India. Following the integration, Nabha became part of the Indian state of Punjab. The early history of Nabha is intertwined with the broader history of the Punjab region, which has been inhabited since ancient times. While specific details about Nabha's early history may be sparse, it is likely that the area was settled by various ancient civilizations, including the Harappan civilization, due to its fertile land and strategic location.

During the medieval period, Nabha would have been part of the territory ruled by various dynasties, including the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire. The region likely witnessed periods of prosperity and turmoil as different rulers vied for control over Punjab. The emergence of Sikhism in the late 15th century and its subsequent growth in Punjab would have had an impact on Nabha as well. Sikh gurus preached in the region, and the faith gained followers among the local populace. Nabha's early history likely involved struggles for power and territory among the various Sikh chiefs and neighboring kingdoms. The region's strategic location and fertile land made it desirable for rulers seeking to expand their domains.

Nabha, like many towns in Punjab, India, has a rich and vibrant culture shaped by its history, traditions, and the diverse communities that inhabit it. Here are some notable ones:

1. Nabha Fort: This is one of the most prominent historical structures in Nabha. The fort served as the royal residence of the rulers of the Nabha State. It showcases traditional architecture and offers insights into the region's history.

2. Hira Mahal: Known for its architectural beauty, Hira Mahal is a significant monument in Nabha. It was built by Raja Hira Singh, a ruler of the Nabha State, and is famous for its intricate design and historical importance.

3. Qila Mubarak: This fort complex includes palaces, audience halls, and other structures that depict the grandeur of the erstwhile Nabha State. It served as a royal residence and administrative center¹.

4. Jandhali Sahib Gurudwara A historical and religious site, this Gurudwara holds importance for the Sikh community. It is associated with the visits of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru.

5. Royal Samadhis: The royal cemetery or samadhis in Nabha is where many members of the royal family were cremated. These structures are important for understanding the royal history of Nabha.

6. Temple of Ganga Sagar: This ancient temple is dedicated to the worship of various Hindu deities and holds historical significance in Nabha.

Nabha Fort was established in the mid-18th century. The city of Nabha itself was founded in 1755 by Raja Hamir Singh, a member of the Phulkian dynasty, which was an influential family in Punjab. The Phulkian dynasty, to which the rulers of Nabha belonged, was one of the prominent royal families in Punjab. The dynasty also included the states of Patiala and Jind².

The fort is an example of traditional Indian military architecture, featuring robust walls, bastions, and gates designed to withstand attacks. It served as both a defensive structure and a royal residence.

Palatial Complex- Within the fort's premises, there are several palaces and buildings that were used by the royal family for administrative and residential purposes³. Nabha Fort played a significant role during the period of the Anglo-Sikh Wars in the mid-19th century. The rulers of Nabha were allies of the British and supported them in their military campaigns against the Sikh Empire⁴. As a reward for their loyalty, the British provided protection to the Nabha State and recognized the autonomy of its rulers.

Integration into India- After India gained independence in 1947, the princely state of Nabha, along with other princely states, was integrated into the Indian Union. **Cultural Heritage:** Nabha Fort remains an important cultural and historical landmark, symbolizing the legacy of the Phulkian dynasty and the history of the region⁵.

Efforts have been made to preserve the fort and its structures, although like many historical monuments, it faces challenges related to maintenance and conservation. Nabha Fort attracts tourists and history enthusiasts who are interested in exploring the architectural beauty and historical significance of the site.

Notable Structures within Nabha Fort

Darbar Hall: This audience hall was used for official meetings and royal gatherings. It is known for its grandeur and ornate decorations.

Residential Quarters: The private quarters of the royal family are located within the fort, showcasing luxurious living spaces and intricate designs⁶.

Gardens and Courtyards: The fort complex includes beautifully landscaped gardens and courtyards, which were used for leisure and ceremonial purposes⁷. Nabha Fort remains an enduring symbol of the region's historical and cultural heritage. It offers valuable insights into the architectural styles, political history, and cultural practices of the time. Nabha Fort stands as a testament to the rich history of the region, reflecting the architectural grandeur and political significance of the Phulkian rulers. It offers a glimpse into the past and serves as a symbol of the cultural heritage of Punjab⁸. Nabha Fort, located in the city of Nabha in Punjab, India, is an architectural

¹Maclagan, *Census 1891*, p.112

²F.S.Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral*, Chatto and Windus Press, London, 1969, p.52

³*Ibid*, p.53

⁴*Ibid*, p.55

⁵Pritam Singh, *Sikh History*, Dasham Press, Jalandhar, 1999, p.46

⁶*Ibid*, p.48

⁷*Ibid*, p.49

⁸ John Clark, *The Sikhs*, The University Press, London, 1946, p.57

and historical landmark that offers a deep insight into the region's rich cultural and political history. Here's a more detailed exploration of its significance, architecture, and history

Architectural Features

Nabha Fort is characterized by its robust fortifications, which include thick walls, bastions, and massive gates. These features were designed to provide defense against potential invaders and attacks. Within the fort, there are numerous palatial structures, residential quarters, and administrative buildings. The design reflects a blend of Mughal and Rajput architectural styles, common in many royal residences of the time. The interiors of the fort feature intricate carvings, frescoes, and ornamental designs. These elements highlight the artistic and cultural sophistication of the period⁹. The fort housed several palaces used by the royal family, including audience halls, private quarters, and courtyards. These areas were often elaborately decorated and furnished to reflect the status and wealth of the rulers¹⁰.

Anglo-Sikh Wars: During the Anglo-Sikh Wars in the mid-19th century, the rulers of Nabha allied with the British against the Sikh Empire. Their loyalty was rewarded with political autonomy and protection under British rule.

British Period: Under British protection, Nabha Fort continued to be a center of administration and royal residence. The alliance with the British helped the Phulkian rulers maintain their influence and control over the region¹¹.

HiraMahal, an integral part of Nabha's historical and architectural landscape, is a remarkable palace that reflects the grandeur of the erstwhile Nabha State. Here's a detailed exploration of HiraMahal was built by Raja Hira Singh, a prominent ruler of the Nabha State, during his reign in the 19th century. The palace was constructed as a royal residence and a symbol of the ruler's power and sophistication¹².

Raja Hira Singh: Under his rule, Nabha experienced significant development and growth. Raja Hira Singh's contributions to architecture and infrastructure were notable, and HiraMahal stands as a testament to his vision. HiraMahal is an example of the Indo-Saracenic style, which blends traditional Indian architecture with elements of Islamic and European design. This style is characterized by domes, arches, and intricate decorative patterns. The palace is adorned with elaborate frescoes, carvings, and ornamental details. The interiors reflect the opulence and artistic sensibilities of the period, with richly decorated ceilings, walls, and floors¹³. The palace complex includes numerous rooms, halls, and courtyards, each designed for specific functions such as administrative meetings, royal gatherings, and private living spaces. The spatial organization of HiraMahal exemplifies the efficient and luxurious living arrangements of the royal family. HiraMahal served as the main residence for Raja Hira Singh and his successors. It was a center of royal life, where important decisions were made, and grand events were held¹⁴.

The construction of such a magnificent palace was a statement of the ruler's power and wealth. It was designed to impress and showcase the strength of the Nabha State. Over the years, HiraMahal witnessed numerous historical events and changes. It played a role in the administrative and political life of Nabha, particularly during the colonial period when the Phulkian states had alliances with the British¹⁵. Like many historical

⁹ Ibid,p.58

¹⁰Satbir Singh, *Our History*, New Book Company, Jalandhar, 2018, p. 32

¹¹DrRajpal Singh, *The Sikhs, their journey of five Hundred years*, publisher Bhavana books & prints, New Delhi, 2003,p.40

¹² Ibid,p.42

¹³Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *Short History of the Sikhs*,Himmat Press, Jalandhar, 1969,p.35

¹⁴ Ibid,p.38

¹⁵ Ibid,p.39

buildings, HiraMahal faces challenges related to preservation and maintenance. Efforts have been made to conserve its architectural integrity and historical significance, though these efforts require continuous support and resources.

Today, HiraMahal is a notable tourist attraction in Nabha. Visitors come to admire its architectural beauty, learn about its historical significance, and experience a glimpse of the royal lifestyle of the past.

Cultural Heritage- The palace is part of the collective cultural heritage of Punjab and India. It serves as a reminder of the region's rich history and the legacy of its rulers¹⁶. The audience halls and reception rooms are notable for their size and decorative elements. These spaces were used for formal gatherings and official functions.

The living areas of the royal family provide insight into the luxurious lifestyle of the rulers, with lavish furnishings and intricate designs. The palace grounds include beautifully landscaped gardens and courtyards, which were used for leisure and ceremonial activities.

HiraMahal stands as a testament to the rich architectural and cultural heritage of Nabha. Its preservation is crucial for understanding the history and legacy of the region, offering future generations a window into the grandeur of the past¹⁷. HiraMahal, a significant historical and architectural landmark in Nabha, Punjab, holds substantial cultural, historical, and architectural importance. Here are some key points that highlight its significance:
Strategic Importance: As a royal residence, it played a crucial role in the administrative and political life of the Nabha State, especially during interactions with the British colonial administration.
Indo-Saracenic Design- HiraMahal is an example of the Indo-Saracenic architectural style, which combines elements of traditional Indian, Islamic, and European architecture. This style is characterized by features such as domes, arches, and intricate decorative work.

-Aesthetic Beauty: The palace's design, with its elaborate frescoes, carvings, and ornamental details, exemplifies the artistic and architectural sensibilities of the period¹⁸.

The palace complex includes a variety of rooms, halls, and courtyards, each designed for specific functions. This reflects the efficient and luxurious living arrangements typical of royal residences. The interiors of HiraMahal are richly decorated with intricate designs, showcasing the craftsmanship and artistic skills of the time.

HiraMahal holds significant historical records and artifacts that provide insights into the history and culture of the Nabha State. It serves as a physical reminder of the region's royal heritage. The palace helps preserve the cultural traditions and historical narratives of the Nabha region, contributing to a sense of identity and continuity.

Economic Impact: Tourism associated with HiraMahal contributes to the local economy, providing jobs and supporting businesses in the area. Raja Hira Singh's decision to build HiraMahal reflects his vision and commitment to enhancing the architectural landscape of Nabha. His contributions to infrastructure and architecture left a lasting impact on the region. Beyond architecture, Raja Hira Singh's reign was marked by cultural and social contributions that helped shape the identity and heritage of Nabha.¹⁹

¹⁶ Resolutions of Sikh League, Amritsar, Resolution No. 14

¹⁷Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *Short History of the Sikhs*, Himmat Press, Jalandhar, 1969, p.55

¹⁸Amrik Singh, *Punjab in India Politics: Issues & Trends*, Oxford Press, New Delhi, 1988, p.53

¹⁹www.panjabdigilib.org

Role in Regional Politics: Raja Hira Singh played a significant role in the political dynamics of the region, including alliances with the British during the colonial period. HiraMahal stands as a testament to his leadership and influence. HiraMahal's significance lies in its embodiment of the cultural, historical, and architectural legacy of the Nabha State. Its preservation and continued appreciation help keep alive the rich history and traditions of the region.

QILA MUBARAK

Qila Mubarak, an iconic fort located in Nabha, Punjab, stands as a testament to the rich history, cultural heritage, and architectural brilliance of the region. Here's an elaborate exploration of its significance, history, and architectural features: Qila Mubarak was built during the reign of the Phulkian dynasty, particularly under the leadership of Raja Hira Singh, who played a pivotal role in its construction and enhancement. The fort became the heart of the Nabha State. Positioned strategically, Qila Mubarak served as a defensive stronghold, protecting the city from invasions and conflicts. It was the primary residence of the Nabha rulers and the center of administrative and military operations. During the mid-19th century, the fort was a crucial player in the Anglo-Sikh Wars. The rulers of Nabha allied with the British against the Sikh Empire, offering strategic support and resources. The alliance with the British ensured that Nabha retained a degree of autonomy and influence. Qila Mubarak continued to serve as an administrative center during the British colonial period, symbolizing the power and prestige of the Nabha State.

Fortifications; Qila Mubarak is characterized by its massive defensive structures, including thick walls, bastions, and large gates. These features were designed to withstand sieges and attacks, ensuring the fort's security²⁰. Architectural Style: The fort exhibits a blend of Mughal, Rajput, and Sikh architectural styles, reflecting the diverse influences that shaped its construction. Key elements include domes, arches, intricate carvings, and ornamental details.

Palatial Complex: Inside the fort, there are several palaces, audience halls, and residential quarters. These buildings were used for various purposes, including administration, royal ceremonies, and private living spaces.

Decorative Elements- The interiors of Qila Mubarak are adorned with elaborate frescoes, carvings, and ornamental designs. The use of vibrant colors and detailed patterns showcases the artistic skills of the craftsmen of the time. Qila Mubarak houses numerous artifacts, documents, and relics that provide valuable insights into the history and culture of the Nabha State. It serves as a repository of the region's rich heritage. The fort plays a crucial role in preserving the cultural traditions and historical narratives of Nabha, contributing to the collective identity and continuity of the region's heritage²¹. Tourist Attraction: Qila Mubarak is a significant tourist attraction, drawing visitors interested in exploring its historical and architectural significance. It offers educational opportunities for visitors to learn about the history and culture of Punjab²². The fort's status as a tourist destination contributes to the local economy, supporting tourism-related businesses and providing employment opportunities. This grand audience hall was used for official meetings, royal gatherings, and ceremonial functions. It is known for its impressive size and ornate decorations. The hall features intricate frescoes and carvings, showcasing the craftsmanship and artistic sensibilities of the period.

The private quarters of the royal family within the fort provide a glimpse into their luxurious lifestyle. These areas are richly decorated and furnished to reflect the opulence of the time.

The fort complex includes beautifully landscaped gardens and courtyards, which were used for leisure and relaxation by the royal family. These spaces also hosted various social and cultural events²³. The construction of Qila Mubarak reflects the vision and craftsmanship of the Phulkian rulers. It stands as a testament to their

²⁰Sohan Singh Josh, *AkaliMorchian Da Itehas*, Daman Publishers, Ferozpur, 1986,p.72

²¹Sohan Singh Josh, *AkaliMorchian Da Itehas*, Daman Publishers, Ferozpur, 1986,p.79

²²*Ibid*,p.80

²³Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *Short History of the Sikhs*, Himmat Press, Jalandhar, 1969,p.70

commitment to architecture and cultural preservation. The architectural features of Qila Mubarak have influenced the design and construction of other buildings in the region, contributing to the architectural heritage of Punjab.

Throughout its history, Qila Mubarak played a vital role in the political and military affairs of the Nabha State. It was a center of power and strategic planning, impacting the region's history. The fort remains a symbol of the rich cultural and historical legacy of Nabha, representing the region's heritage and its contributions to the broader historical narrative of Punjab and India. Qila Mubarak remains a monumental structure, embodying the historical, cultural, and architectural legacy of the Nabha State. Its preservation is essential for understanding the rich heritage of the region and appreciating the artistic and historical achievements of the past. **Jandhali Sahib**, also known as Gurdwara Jandhali Sahib, is a significant religious and historical site located in Nabha, Punjab. This gurdwara holds immense spiritual importance for Sikhs and is associated with the visits of the Sikh Gurus. Here's an elaborate exploration of Jandhali Sahib:

Guru Tegh Bahadur; Jandhali Sahib is particularly significant because it is believed that Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, visited this site. His visit adds to the spiritual and historical importance of the Gurdwara. Guru Gobind Singh: It is also believed that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, visited this site during his travels. His presence further sanctified the location, making it a revered place for the Sikh community²⁴.

The Gurdwara was established to commemorate the visits of the Sikh Gurus and to serve as a place of worship and reflection for the Sikh community. Over the years, Jandhali Sahib has undergone several renovations and expansions to accommodate the growing number of devotees and to preserve its historical and religious significance.

The architecture of Jandhali Sahib reflects traditional Sikh design elements, including domes, arches, and a central hall (Darbar Sahib) where the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of Sikhism, is enshrined. The Gurdwara is adorned with intricate carvings, frescoes, and other decorative elements that highlight the artistic heritage of Sikh architecture. The main prayer hall where the Guru Granth Sahib is kept and where congregational prayers (Kirtan and Gurbani recitations) take place. A communal kitchen and dining area where free meals (langar) are served to all visitors, irrespective of their religion, caste, or social status, embodying the Sikh principle of equality and selfless service²⁵.

Nabha City, located in the heart of Punjab, is a treasure trove of historical, cultural, and architectural heritage. Its monuments stand as enduring symbols of the city's rich past, reflecting the legacy of the Phulkian dynasty and the region's vibrant history. In conclusion, the monuments of Nabha City are not merely historical relics but vibrant centers of cultural and social life. They embody the rich legacy of the Nabha State, offering a window into the past while continuing to play a vital role in the present and future of the community. Their preservation is essential for safeguarding the heritage and identity of Nabha for generations to come.

²⁴ Punjab Legislative Council, Proceedings, March 1921.

²⁵ Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, *Punjab Under the Great Mughals*, Thacker Press, Calcutta, 1968, p.82