

## An Unprotected Archaeological Site: Bawdi Mukund Pura (Stepwell)

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**Abstract:** Bawdi mukund Pura is a medieval unprotected monument in Narnaul. Narnaul was also closely associated with the Sur-Afghan's and the Mughals. Bawdi is a monument that made a distinct impression in the field of art and architecture during the medieval period in Narnaul city. Narnaul city is located on the Trans-Haryana Expressway (NH-152D). Narnaul city has the highest number of monuments in Haryana, but after all that, many other monuments are there which are not protected by the ASI nor the State Archaeology and Museum department of Haryana. Through this paper, the government has to be informed about the actual condition of the monument. This monument should be protected so that the historicity of this city can be preserved.

**Keywords:** Bawdi, Monument, Narnaul, Unprotected, Mughal, Lala Bal Mukund Rai.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the first battle of Panipat in 1526 A.D., India passed into the hands of the Mughals who introduced new cultural trends (e.g. Parihar 1987). Narnaul was under the control of the Mughal dynasty at that time. Because Narnaul is the centre of trade, that's why the rulers build Sarai and palaces here. Whenever a ruler went from Delhi to Ajmer or any part of Rajasthan, this city used to come in between. The rulers of this dynasty have made significant contributions to the field of art and architecture. Many monuments in the Mughal style, a mixture of the Sur-Afghan and Mughal styles developed during the Mughal period, were built during this reign. The city of Narnaul is situated in the south of Haryana province and there are many ancient buildings inside this city. Bawdi Mukund Pura is a building built by Lala Mukund Rai which is today an unprotected monument. Bawdi means a stepwell. This is the common name for step wells in Rajasthan. Near the Bawdi here is a chhatri, which means palace. That was the palace of Rai Bal Mukund Das, a resident of Narnaul who served as Superintendent of Grants of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in local parlance. Lala Rai Mukund, Narnaul's mansabdar during the reign of Shah Jahan.

But as we have said in the abstract, the main reason for our study of this place is to inform the government about its current condition. At present, the monument is not being maintained by the movement or the gram panchayat. Due to a lack of proper maintenance, these monuments are losing their original beauty. Here, trees, plants, and birds have made their home and due to this, their condition is gradually deteriorating.

Village Mukund Pura is situated in Mahendargarh district. This village is situated 7-8 Km from Narnaul City. There are several routes to reach here. One such route is a small road on the right side (through village Tehla) on Narnaul-Nangal Chaudhary Road. It is the second or third village on this route. The coordinates of the Monument are  $27^{\circ}59'12.31''$  N  $76^{\circ}04'42.88''$  E. This Bawdi is located at one end of the village.

## HISTORY OF THE AREA

Narnaul is very rich in its cultural and monumental things. History starts with Maharishi Bhrigu, Maharishi Bhrigu was the son of Supreme Father Brahma, and Maharishi Chyavan was the son of Bhrigu (e.g. Kumar 2018). Bhrigu left his son on Dhoshi Hill in Narnaul and migrated to Bharuch (GJ). Maharishi Chyavan established an Ashram on Dhoshi Hill. Narnaul is referred to in the Mahabharata as Nara Rastra, where it is narrated that a route of Chambal valley from Hastinapur, the youngest brother Sahadev, gained control over this town. Over time this place has an important center of Jainism, Adinatha, Parsvanatha, and Tirthankarnath sculptures found in this area (e.g. Dangi 2017, Mahendargarh district Gazetteer 1988-38). After that, Anangapal Tomara and his cousin established Narnaul town to rule this area, and the Raja Laun Karan seat near the Dhoshi hill in the thick forest named Kurujangala. The name of the town has been derived differently – Nahar-Naul or the ‘Forest of controls’ or Narnaul or ‘beautiful women’ perhaps it contained beautiful women and, Nag-Naul after a Snake and mongoose who were seen fighting when the city was founded (e.g. Mahendargarh district Gazetteer 1988:37). The town later in the fall of Rathor Rajput’s, and after that, in 1137, a Muslim saint warrior Hazrat Turkman, popularly known as Shah Wilayat, is said to have come to Narnaul with jewels in one hand and a sword in the other. He fought many battles with the native Rathor Rajputs but was killed during one such fight. A tomb and a mosque, later built, still stand in the town (e.g. Rahar:2001). After the death of Shihab-ud-din Guri, Qutb-ud-din Aibak Guri’s new general of his area and this area came under Turkish rule. After Aibak, they paid attention to this area and divided this area into Iqtas. Each Iqta is direct control by the Sultan. The Tughlaqs, Sayyides, and Lodis tried to direct control of this area, Bahlol Lodi gave this jagir to Ibrahim Khan Sur, the great-grandfather of Sher Shah Suri. Ibrahim established his capital in a small village called Shimla (Shimla). After that Babar and Humayun (Mughal) ruled control under the Sarkar of Mewat. When the second Afghan kingdom came Sher Shah Suri built a very magnificent mausoleum at Narnaul on the grave of his grandfather Ibrahim Khan Suri. Sher Shah divided his kingdom into sixty-six Sarkar, and Mahendargarh comes under the Narnaul Sarkar. Sher Shah also established a mint in Narnaul for coppercoins (e.g. Jain 2016:16). But at the time of Akbar the Narnaul Sarkar comprised of four parganas: Kanod, Kanti, Khudana and Narnaul (e.g. Phadke 1990:148). In 1672 this time when Aurangzeb was the ruler of India, a petty quarrel near Narnaul between a Satnami cultivator and a Mughal foot-soldier of the local revenue collector led to a rebellion. Gradually, this matter has increased. When Aurangzeb came to know about this, he sent a large force under Radanaz Khan. They endangered the very state structure to the extent that the mighty Mughal ruler Aurangzeb had to tackle them personally (e.g. Singh 2001). In 1750 the Rao’s of Rewari, Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur seized a sizeable territory in the district around Narnaul and Kanaud. The battle of Narnaul was undoubtedly one of the most decisive battles of the Uprising of 1857. After the battle, Tula Ram moved to Rajasthan and then joined Tantya Tope’s forces for one year. After India achieved Independence, the Mahendargarh district along with the other districts of the Patiala State formed part of the Patiala and East Punjab State Union in 1948, which merged with Punjab in 1956. Haryana was carved out of Punjab in 1966 and Mahendargarh became the district of the new state (Mahendargarh District Gazetteer 1988:51-55, e.g. Kumar 2018).

## GEOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

There are many types of geographical locations in Haryana province, in which the present study area, Mahendargarh, which is located in the southern region of Haryana, has a desert climate. Similarly, Aravalli hills are also situated in Southern Haryana, and Bawdi Mukund Pura is also built on top of Aravalli by cutting a hill, which means the base of Bawdi is a hill, from these hills many rivers flow from south-east to north-west. These rivers include Sahibi, Dohan, Krishnawati, and Indori. It is believed that all these were once the tributaries of the Saraswati River. The district is a plain area with perennial Krishnawati/Kasaunti or Dohan River in its middle and north area, which has formed its flood plain area in the north (e.g. Mehra 2013:145). The river Flows in the Mahendargarh district, named Dohan. In the Mahabharata, it is described as Vadhusara, It is said to have originated from the tears of Divya Pauloma, the wife of the great sage Bhargu and the mother of the famous Sage Chyavana (e.g. Rahar 2001:09). The Bangar region in the south-west and the last parts of the Aravalli ranges in the south, which extend horizontally from Rajasthan to Delhi.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Observation, survey methods.

## ABOUT BAWDI MUKUND PURA

A Bawdi (Baori) is deep well with a broad flight of steps leading down to the water; in the old days it served many functions. It was not merely a source of water of domestic and agricultural use but also a cool resort (e.g. Singh 1994). Most of the Baoli's described above were built during the Mughal period. But in every period, water is a necessity for everyone. Baoli or Step walls are examples of the many types of storage and irrigation tanks that were developed in Haryana. So every Baoli is special for human history (e.g. Harvansh 2018).

**Base& well of the Bawdi (stepwell)-** As mentioned earlier, Bawdi Mukund Pura was built on the base of a hill in the Aravalli mountain ranges. Due to the strong foundation, this Bawdi has remained safe to date. After going to the base during the survey by the researchers, it is known that the builders dug a well inside the mountain and extracted water from it, and this stepwell was constructed on top of that hill. A very beautiful five-story stepwell was constructed. Because that water was supplied in this area.

But at present, its condition has worsened because the local people have started using this well to dump their household waste. Many clothes and other things have fallen inside the well, due to which the water of the well has become completely spoiled. (Figure 1 to Figure 2).

**The Stair's condition** –The staircase is the most beautiful part of the stepwell, which reflects the beauty of its design. There is a straight staircase from north to south and to go from the second floor to the first floor, there is an oblique e.g. east to west staircase. (Figure 3 to Figure 5). Due to the lack of water in this stepwell, we got a chance to go down, from which we came to know about this pattern of stairs. There is also a staircase to go from the first floor to the second floor, from the second floor to the third floor. Along with this, a staircase has also been made to go from the floor to the well. The speciality of all these stairs is that it is very big and high and the stairs on the ground floor are made of cutting stone. Currently, the condition of the stairs of this monument has deteriorated. Somewhere in the middle of the stairs, big trees have been planted and the roots of the trees have uprooted the stairs. As we have said through the picture. Along with this, the stones above the stairs have also been broken and, due to the breaking of the stone in the middle, the soil there has come up. Due to the coming of

mud, the way to go inside is slowly getting destroyed. Along with this, people have ruined its beauty by throwing garbage on the stairs. (Figure 6 to Figure 7).

**First floor** - The first floor is an underground well, below the base of the stepwell. This floor is made by cutting the stone considering it as the base, stairs have been made to reach here.(Figure-8 to Figure-10)

**Second floor**- This is the actual base floor. To reach the second floor, the straight stairs coming from the top are turned east to west. It is known from the second floor itself that this stepwell has been built on top of a hill by cutting it. Above, we get to see different types of designs and two small corridors have been made in front, which is to know the amount of water in the well from the second floor. (Figure 11 to Figure 13).

**Third floor**- The real beauty of the stepwell can be seen at this level. The base of the main gate of Bawdi is on the third floor only. As soon as we enter the Bawdi, we reach the third floor. Corridors are made on both sides and 6 arches are made ( Figure 11). There are 3 arches in front, inside these arches there are flower-shaped designs on the wall. The ceiling of the corridor has been completely removed. There are small rooms on either side of the gateway. A special method has been used to make the ceiling of the gateway room, the stone on the stone has been placed diagonally so that the room can bear the weight of the main gate. There are stairs to go to the 4th floor from the side of that room. The main disturbance on the third floor is a water tank outside and the water from the water tank leaks into the stepwell ( Figure16). Due to water leakage inside the stepwell, the entire third and fourth floors are on the verge of getting damaged. And some of the former areas have been completely damaged (Figure 14 to Figure 17).

**Fourth floor** - The fourth floor of the Bawdi is not in very good condition because it is just in front of the Bawdi, due to the flatness of the ground, there is more movement of people there. People have dumped garbage there. The lime plaster has been removed from the ceiling of the 4th floor. Their roofing stones have come out. They are in dilapidated condition. The other main reason which has been mentioned earlier is that there is a water tank outside which leaks water. Due to excess water, there has become mud. Due to mud, the eastern area of this stepwell is on the verge of destruction. (Figure 18).

A specialty of the fourth floor is that a staircase has been taken out from the right side of the well, which takes us to the fifth floor. This staircase is very narrow and short, about 18 inches wide, and the walls on either side of the stairs are four inches wide. The stairs are built along such a small wall and are located facing each other on both the east and west sides (Figure-19).

**Fifth floor** – The fifth floor is mainly a terrace (Figure 20). If the condition of the roof is seen, then it is quite good. People are currently using it to dry animal dung (Figure 23). Along with this, roof plants, and grass have grown and soil has accumulated around the roots of trees and plants. Because of this, the rainwater is not able to drain out, hence the water seeps through the roofs, and cracks are formed in the monument. There is a chhatri in each of the four directions on the terrace area of the monument (Figure 19). The pillars of the chhatri are made of stone and the other upper part is made of lime plaster. The stone pillars have been cut into an octagonal shape, and the pillar base is made of square stone. The stone is local sandstone, which is easily found in this area. The position of these pillars is still the same as it was before. Apart from this, leaf-shaped designs have also been made on the railings all around, which are made by cutting stone. Normally, we rarely get to see such rock-cut monuments in this area.

**Major Disturbance on the outer side** – At present, the condition of the stepwell is responsible for the external activities. There is a public building with a wall around it like an Aanganwadi with a





**Fig. 1: Internal rock-cut structure**



**Fig. 2: steps towards the well**



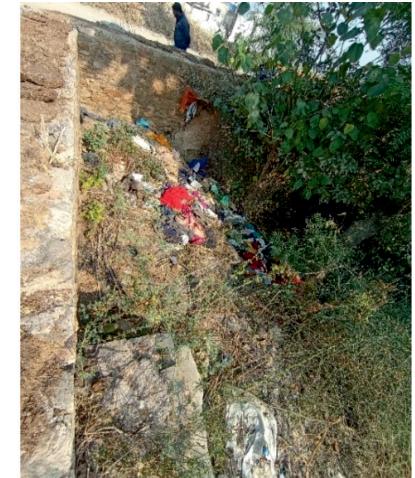
**Fig 3: Present condition of steps**



**Fig. 4: Vegetation in the middle of steps**



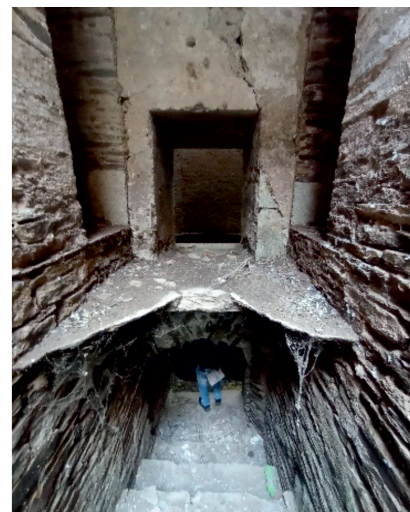
**Fig. 5: Mutilated steps**



**Fig. 6: Garbage thrown by local people**



**Fig. 7: Garbage on steps and growing tree**



**Fig. 8: Steps towards first-floor**



**Fig. 9: rock cut well**





**Fig. 10: vertical view of well**



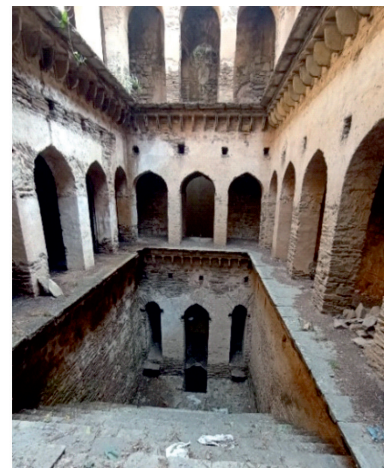
**Fig. 11: steps towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**



**Fig. 12: A well and parapet 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**



**Fig. 13: corridors of both the sides**



**Fig. 14: Third floor of Bawdi**



**Fig. 15: Ceiling condition of side room**



**Fig. 16: condition after water leakage**



**Fig. 17: flower designs**





Fig. 17: Damaged corridor of 4<sup>th</sup>-floor



Fig. 18: stairs besides the well



Fig. 19: vertical view of Chatri  
at 5<sup>th</sup> floor



Fig. 20: A Horizontal view of Bawdi



**Major disturbance from outside**



**Fig. 21 and 22: Water tank and public toilets at the Eastern side of Bawdi**



**Fig 23: drying cow dunk at the floor of Bawdi**



**Fig. 24 and 25: Water tank for animals at the South side and Aanganwadi at the West side of Bawdi**

wall in the west and a public toilet or water tank for animals in the east and a water supply house in the south or another tank for feeding animals (Kheli) etc. have been made. Due to this, the external design of Bawdi has been destroyed. Along with this, all the lime plaster has also come off. (Figure 21 to 25)

## DISCUSSION

At present the condition of the monument is not so bad. If the Government of Haryana or ASI secures this monument in time, then its historicity can be saved. The main problem is the disturbance caused by the environment and people due to its malfunction in which he has tried to tell us that like this paper. To preserve the historicity of any area, we have to preserve the monuments of that area. If we want to know the history of any area, then we have to see which period the monuments are present in that area and we can also reconstruct the history with the help of monuments. Just as today, we reconstruct the Indus civilization from its cultural remains, in the same way, these medieval monuments describe the social, political, religious, and economic condition of this area at that time. There are many monuments inside the city of Narnaul, which many monuments have been protected, but today there are many other monuments that need the maintenance of the government so that the historicity and cultural importance of this city can be maintained. Through this research article, we want to present that the government should give historical recognition to pieces of art like these. Which will leave an identity for new generations in the coming times.

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