

Jain Temples and Tourism: A Case Study of Nagarparkar

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Abstract

Nagarparkar is one of the most important potential tourism destinations in Sindh, abundantly having natural and cultural resources to attract thousands of national and international tourists to satisfy their varying needs. The attraction of the area is Jain temples, denoting thousands of years old history of the area and architectural wonders as well. The current study is an attempt to highlight the potential of religious tourism in the area and how sustainable tourism may be introduced in the region to uplift the local economies using qualitative methodology.

- DOI: 10.31703/gssr.2021(VI-II).17
- Vol. VI, No. II (Spring 2021)
- Pages: 167 – 179
- p- ISSN: 2520-0348
- e-ISSN: 2616-793X
- ISSN-L: 2520-0348

Key Words: Nagarparkar, Jain Temples, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Potential

Introduction

Pakistan is well known for its ancient civilizations and rich cultural heritage. Some sites have great popularity due to their significant role in the past. Similarly, the old monuments belonging to different eras reveal episodes of their times. Pakistan possesses forts, mosques, temples and other monuments. Some of them are in quite better condition, but some are just ruined due to improper attention and awareness.

The province of Sindh is rich in historic places and archaeological sites, which include Moenjodaro, Shah Jahani Mosque at Thatta, Rani Kot Fort, Makli Graveyard Chaukandi etc. Tharparkar district has a renowned name in tourism, having a great potential of tourism both natural and cultural. The natural resources consist of a huge variety of flora and fauna, which include many endangered species of herbs and shrubs and valuable animals from which some species are quite rare. The peacock is famous for varieties and colors which always get the attention of the tourist in the area. Similarly, the herbs and shrubs were found enough to attract the attention of industrialists and researchers.

These resources are particularly known at Nagarparkar; the culture of this region has big

value added to the economy of the town, which can increase the potential of tourism if properly highlighted and promoted. Home to an old Jain Temple, Nagarparkar, is one of the four Talukas of Tharparkar district situated in the southeast corner of Sindh under the feet of dramatic Karoonjhar hills.

Nagarparkar possesses 7 Jain temples in which Gori temple is in better condition, whereas the rest of the temples in Virawah, Nagarparkar and Bodhesar are deteriorating day by day. These temples are not in use now as living temples. Other than these temples, there is an old mosque situated in Bodhesar village along with the famous Bodhesar *Taalao (pond)*. The mosque has been constructed in the style of Jain architecture, which represents the art of Jains rather than Muslims.

Literature Review

At Bodhesar, there are the remains of three ancient Jain structures built in AD 1375 and AD 1449, classed under Ancient Monuments Preservation. Also, there is a mosque built of marble can be seen at this place. Two villages are mentioned by the author that is Gori and

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Virawah. Nagarparkar is among the chief town of the similar taluka name, having a population of about 3354 as per the 1911 census report ([Smith, 1920](#)).

Nagarparkar can be accessible from any convenient means of transportation, some Hindus and Jain architect has preserved the remains which have been cleared off somewhere in Sindh. Bodhesar, situated about four miles northwest of Nagarparkar, spread at an area of twenty miles in circumference. There are the remains of three ancient Jain structures, which are supposed to have been built in AD 1375 and AD 1449. Under Ancient Monuments Preservation as classed II, Mr R. Giles of the Sind Civil service was responsible for these occupants. A Bodhesar tank is present, which measured about 200 by 400 feet ([Cousens, 1998](#)).

The Parkar area is situated in the southeast vicinity of the town of Nagarparkar, forming Karoonjhar hills composed of syenite rocks that cover the bit area. The cultivated Parkar area lacks sand dunes, and bhits joins with Runn of Kutch from the south. This is a large town since Sultan Mehmud Ghaznavi crossed Thar in AD 1026. After the 1971 war, most of the Jainism followers migrated to India; that's why a huge portion in the bazaar of Nagarparkar still gives a haunted look that belonged to the Jain community. Tharparkar shows prosperity due to the presence of Jain temples at Gori, Virawah, Nagarparkar and an ancient Masjid at Bodhesar, etc. Parkar area possesses a large variety of flora, including a number of trees, plants, and shrubs. The main trees are classified according to the size that are the large and smaller trees ([Nadiem, 2001](#)).

[Hassan \(2009\)](#) made some reports for Thardeep (Thar Rural Development Project). Report 1 is in 3 volumes. The first volume is based on existing conditions and future scenarios, having 72 pages were published on 13th February 2009. This document possesses demography, transportation, economy, and tourism of key spots of taluka (Ghori and Churio villages, Virawah, Nagarparkar Town, Kasbo Village and Bodhesar). Nagarparkar Taluka consists of so many historical places, including Jain Temples and mosque; Pari Nagar Temple, Gori Temple, Bodhesar mosque, Jain temples near Bodhesar Masjid and more small temples in other villages. These temples have a unique architectural design showing the art of ancient architecture. The second volume has 57 maps, which show the

complete detail of Nagarparkar Taluka. This volume has 59 pages and was published on 13th February 2009. This report is shown the maps of Tharparkar, Nagarparkar Taluka, Nagarparkar Town, Kasbo, Virawah, Bodhesar and Churio villages, which show the road conditions, traffic routes and land distribution between villages. On the other side, it points out the historical places like Jain temples, mosques and other Hindu temples. In the third volume, there are recommendations and proposals about Nagarparkar Taluka. The report consisted of 94 pages and was published on 30th May 2009.

The Nagarparkar is rich in archaeology, history and architecture, which possess many Jain and Hindu temples most of the landscape is dotted with memorial stones, which are objects of Veneration for Hindus living in the area. Most of the memorial stones belong to Sodha Rajputs and Seendal, who ruled over Nagarparkar ([Kalhor, 2010](#)).

If we look through the historical point of view, it points out the important monuments, like temples and mosques. The important historical monument possesses very interesting and unbelievable stories and myths in it. Hindus also lived here, and Muslims too. After the partition of 1947, most of the Hindus went to India. Muslims and Hindus cast as are living here ([Naseem, 2010](#)).

Temples of Nagarparkar

Temples of Nagarparkar are discussed as under:

Gori Temple

This temple was built with Jodhpuri stone located 22 km before Virawah and 1 km inside the main road to the east. This temple is the biggest and most beautiful structure, present along with all its elegance in the entire taluka that has made an example of all the capabilities of art and craft of Jain architecture (Pl: I).



Image 1: (Gori): Temple's View

According to Sodhas it was constructed in the year 1376 (Harijan, 1988). Consisting of 52 domes, this temple has three large domes, 49 small domes and the Garbhagriha main chamber with tall Shakara. The largest dome is supported by 12 columns located at the north entrance. The column's bases of this temple are quite small as compared to the other temples. The upper portion of the column other than the base has been divided into six parts; the first part is shaped squarely, the second octagonal, third round. After this, the fourth octagonal is further divided into two parts, which are designed florally. The fifth and sixth parts are octagonal and round, respectively. These columns are further supported by curved shaped capital supporting the beams.

Internally the beams and Domes have been designed with beautiful colored pictures which can still be visible properly. The entire domes of the temple are designed in the same way as the interior. On the exterior, the large dome has decorated with the art of petals, flowers and leaves. Merlon shaped battlements series can be seen throughout the corners of the temple roof; geometrical designs have been made in between to fill the gaps.

The temple consists of twelve cells on each side. Each cell door is guarded by the idols. The main hall of the temple is two feet lower from the surface level. On both sides of the main hall, a corridor has been made leading to the open place behind the chamber, the Garbhagriha is almost broken from the top, and the broken parts can be seen inside the temple (Pl: II).



Image 2: (Gori): Temple's Roof Arrangements

Virawah Temple

Virawah is twenty-four kilometers from Nagarparkar, the only temple in Virawah built

with limestone gradually demolishing, surrounding walls of the temple has nearly smashed, and some remains are kept in the temple (Pl: III).



Image 3: (Virawah): Temple's Damaged Boundary Wall

These kept idols have been designed with the elephant, horse riders, carved images, and geometrical designs. These idols have made with marble, red stones, and ordinary stones.

Comprises of three parts, this temple has been constructed with red sandstone and ordinary stones, a few centimetres above the ground level. To reach the outer portion of the temple, one has to cross five stairs of 0.2meterser. The outer portion consists of four columns with a dome top. These columns are designed with flowers, petals, sculptures, carved capital, and geometrical designs. These columns are then supported with the designed beams, which separates columns from the dome. Five doors have meant to enter the main hall two are on the right side, and the other two are on the left side wall and one on the front wall. The front

door is the biggest and is guarded by two columns decorated with series of geometrical designs. The widest wall of the main hall is supported by the 12 columns, in which eight columns are also supporting the dome. All columns are fitted inside the wall and designed square-shaped at the bottom side, at center it is octagonal, and on top, it is designed as curved capital to support the beams forming the dome. The shakar is designed with different carved images of flowers, horse riders, elephant riders and soldiers, which are slowly vanishing. In the main hall, four niches have to be meant to keep lamps. The northwest door of the main hall opens in the womb chamber; this door is also guarded with niches from both sides and designed with Jain style like the main door (Pl: IV).



Image 4: (Virawah): Temple's Entrance and above Decoration

Garbhagriha is supported by four columns having niches to keep two lamps and a sculpture. It is designed with different geometrical patterns and rhombus-shaped images and its roof is decorated with a circular design pattern. The outer wall of the Garbhagriha is centrally designed with flower images, and a square-shaped designed from its upper wall corner separates the eaves.

The two Jain temples are in Nagarparkar bazaar,

Jain Temple I (Nagarparkar)

one is on a corner side of the bazar and other is quite simply built-in front of circuit house. Jain temple I, which is opposite to the circuit house, is surrounded by big, long bushes so it is hard to view from further apart. The temple built with red bricks and white limestone possessed a hall and two small cells outside. Both cells have merlon shaped battlements on roof and small shakar (Pl: V).



Image 5: (Nagarparkar): A View of Jain Temple-I

The entrance of both the cells and hall are arched shaped but cells door arch having geometrical design. Two embossed images having

ventilators. An inscription is topped the main hall entrance (Pl: VI).

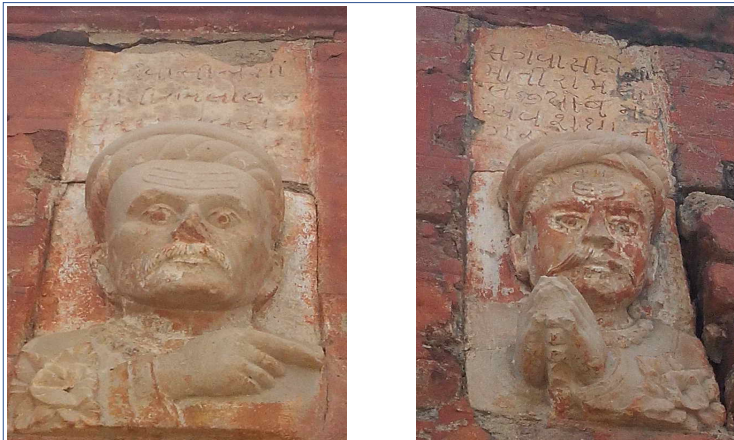


Image 6: (Nagarparkar): Embossed figures with inscription at Jain Temple-I

A flute of five steps is built to the main hall. Inside the main hall, possess temple chamber along with three narrow corridors aside. The ceiling of garbhagriha consisting of four ventilators is quite narrowly high like minaret. The garbhagriha is externally designed stepwise, while it is round shaped from inside having places to keep lamps and idols. The door frame and idol keeping place is kept yellow in color. Main hall also possesses three places to keep the lamp and a cupboard to keep books in a very dilapidated condition. The main faced has designed with merlon shaped battlements, while the rest of the sides are simple. At the front right corner of the roof a

statue of Hanuman (Hindus Lord) holding his ears is sitting, and at the left corner another statue of Hanuman holding his mouth sitting. Same as like the two others can also be seen at the back corners of the temple holding their eyes and head. Thus, this temple is quite simple as compared to the other Jain temples.

Jain Temple II (Nagarparkar)

This temple is located in the west of the bazar which is decaying day by day. The boundary wall of the temple has almost vanished. The entrance is opened from the west with a flight of two steps (Pl: VII).



Image 7: (Nagarparkar): Main Entrance of Jain Temple-II

The top of boundary wall has designed with merlon shaped battlement which has been damaged at few points. These Jain temples of Nagarparkar and Virawah temples are quite similar in term of architecture. This temple consists of outer portion, center hall and Garbhagriha with nice decorative elements. A flight of nine steps approach to the temple is merely carved with different types of painted decoration of sculptures, images, and flowers. Outer portion has supported with four columns are designed with same types of sculptures and carved capitals as earlier. In between outer columns, they are designed with snake images that beautifully exhibit the art and craft of the skilled architects. The sculpted and geometrical designed door opens into the center hall in between the columns. These images are designed with blue colour. The door is guarded by the two janitors sculptures holding sticks. These images are topped by windows block with floral design image for ventilation and having snake images. The dome of the outer portion is quite simple. Three doors are opened in the

center hall, and one opens inside the garbhagriha. The eastern door is quite large as compared to others. The main hall door possesses a small arched shape for an oil lamp. The walls of the main hall are adorned with multiple colors, decorative features, and images. The structure is supported by eight columns with carved capital to receive the beams. The beams are decorated with different types of geometrical designs. Similarly, the garbhagriha is supported by four painted columns. The entrance is also having a small niche for oil lamps and placing the idols. The light could not access in the chamber, and it has also been designed with different colors of images and sculptures. The chamber's soffit is quite simple, but the outside of the shakara is crafted with geometrical and floral design. Both the chamber and the hall have a corridor outside to walk. The shakara of the temple has crafted with different idols and sculpture resembling the sapiens and lions along with a series of merlon shaped battlements holding a lion image increasing the beauty of the temple (PI: VIII).



Image 8: (Nagarparkar): Idols and sculptures at Jain Temple-II

Jain Temple I (Bodhesar)

this temple is located on south side of Bodhesar mosque. If move toward the south of the Bodhesar Mosque, a temple can be seen from far

apart. The temple can be approached through a flight of thirteen steps (Pl: IX).



Image 9: (Bodhesar): A view of Jain Temple-I

Only the garbhagriha of the temple is present and going to decay day by day. The broken, decorated bricks are fallen on the ground. The beams and walls of the temple exhibit the figures

of Jain architecture. The falling building of a temple is supported by two bricks columns which are not enough for the complete support (Pl: X).



Image 10: (Bodhesar): Main Entrance of Jain Temple-I and Extra Support to the Beam

A niche is kept inside the temple to keep idols and lamps. The temple shows the worst condition from inside and the architectural elements are going to disappear. It has been constructed mostly with plain stones, which has

somewhere only geometrical designs. The garbhagriha is going to decay externally due to its falling stones badly damage the outlook of the building.

Jain Temple II (Bodhesar)

At the foot of Karoonjhar hills, this temple is the biggest and well-preserved structure in the series. Consisting of 10 cells and one hall, this temple is north opened possesses a door in the center, flourished by the columns and supported by the beam and on the top designed with idols.

The niche of the door is made up of red sandstone with beautiful geometrical designs and idols. The main hall entrance approach through a flight of ten steps. The main hall is planked by small garbhagriha's for worship. The columns and beams are carved with images and geometrical designs (Pl: XI).



Image 11: (Bodhesar): Tapered Idols on main hall beams of Jain Temple-II

The dome as representing the shakara are constructed simple with stones. The garbhagriha floor level is three steps down from the surface.

Along with the centred soffit of shakara, ten small domed roofs represent the side cells (Pl: XII).



Image 12: (Bodhesar): from the South-West Corner of Jain Temple-II

The domical structure at the entrance is quite bigger than the others. Both east and west sides possess five cells each side, their doors are guarded by idol designed columns. The top of

southern-east side has totally destroyed, and some are partially damaged. The southern wall of the temple has fallen mostly.

Jain Temple III (Bodhesar)

This temple is bad damaged and some of portions are fallen. It has three domed shakaras. The entrance is provided from the east side. The entrance is featured by niches one each side for

oil lamps. Having columns on both northwest and southwest corners and broken ceiling of side cells. Three entrance equal sizes but different designs have been made to enter the three chambers separately (Pl: XIII).



Image 13: (Bodhesar): Entrance to the Jain Temple-III

The main entrance to the center is guarded by the two idols. To the top left of the idol six more

small idols are there with floral designs whereas the top right idols have vanished (Pl: XIV).



Image 14: (Bodhesar): Main Entrance of Jain Temple-III, Shown Idols

The top surface of the main entrance has also designed with seven idols. The supporting beam of this entrance and a right column has already fallen. Similarly, the beam and the decoration on the right-side door have disappeared. Whereas left side door decoration and idols can still be seen. Inside the cell a place on both right and left corner has been kept for the lamps which has

crafted with floral and geometrical designs, the cell ceiling is supported with beams designed with floral designs and carved images. All the three ceilings have become hollow and central one is partially damaged.

Tourism Potential

Nagarparkar is known as Open Air Museum

because of beautiful landscape, unique flora and fauna, cultural and traditional heritage, and biodiversity. Nagarparkar is surrounded by a series of mafic basement pink and grey granite rocks which form a small peninsula surrounded by great Runn of Kutch near Indo-Pak Border which covers around 480 km². Runn of Kutch with the hilly topography of Karoonjhar Mountains which is rich in biodiversity, including significant wild plant and animal species. Karoonjhar hills rich in various herbs and medicinal plants, many of them still not explored from the scientific community which is attractive for business purpose too.

Nagarparkar gives a beautiful look in August and September because of monsoon which increases the beauty of the taluka, which increases the number of tourists. Despite these, many festivals of Hindus are held in which pilgrims paid visit from other part of the province. Nagarparkar is still being considered the safe place because of its green pastures, healthy animals and availability of food stuff, herds of cows, sheep, goats, horses, camels and donkeys wandering in the surrounding can also be seen.

Karoonjhar hills are rich in variety of natural minerals, like granite stone, China clay, trees, and honey. It was declared a wildlife sanctuary under the provincial law. It is the only natural habitat for some wildlife species, like vulture, chameleon, and Neel Gai.

Visitors in Nagarparkar Talukas have increased enormously since the road links have been built. About 35000 people visited by 2009 in the long weekend of August, these figures are much larger in other villages like Kasbo, Virawah, Bodhesar and Gori, whereas in Sadhoro, 15 to 20 thousand pay visit for religious purpose ([Hassan, 2009](#)). In the last monsoon of 2013, about 7000 of vehicles entered in Nagarparkar with a number of 28000 people including men, women and children, but due to the unavailability of hotels, guest houses and restaurants they used to return back or either do camping which resulted in land pollution and spoiling rural environment. It was estimated that due to the potential of tourism in Nagarparkar this figure will increase up to 400,000 by 2020 which will increase the economy of Nagarparkar too. But it may cause severe damage to the religious spots, scenic beauty and temples of Nagarparkar if not planned properly, so both the physical and social impact of tourism need to be studied identified

and protected of heritage sites and its surroundings from environmental degradation and vandalism.

Tourism Facilities

Some facilities are very important for the tourism development in the region for instance information center, rest houses or hotels, motels, restaurants, ATM facility, telecommunication service, gasoline, mechanics and medical facilities etc. Detail is as under:

Information Center

At Nagarparkar town an information center is opened under TRDP but is not proper functional. Only information center is available in Mithi from where tourists take proper information and precede the journey further.

Accommodation Facility

Nagarparkar town has two good rest houses and only a local hotel where bachelors used to stay. At Islamkot and Mithi are some and good accommodations. The less accommodation and specially the families' accommodations at Nagarparkar did not encourage the tourists to stay at night.

Restaurants

Nagarparkar has two restaurants locally called *Dhaaba* which is totally non-family restaurant. Only local curry and *daal sabzi* is available. Proper restaurants are needed for the tourists who can proceed after relaxing.

ATM Facility

There is no facility of ATM available in the Nagarparkar area. Mithi is the last point to transact cash through ATM.

Telecommunication Service

All the network boosters of telecommunication companies are available in the particular town but on the way to town no network is available. If proceed to further surrounding areas of Nagarparkar only few networks are available.

Fuel and Mechanical Services

Both petrol and diesel are easily available in Nagarparkar, but gasoline is only available in Mirpur Khas and Gharo town. Mostly diesel-

based vehicles move around the area, that's why no petrol vehicle mechanic is available, if tourist faced any problem regarding vehicle, he has to move back to Mirpur Khas. For use of daily life use no LPG is available.

Medical Facilities

Nagarparkar town has a basic health unit but for better facility people have to move to Mithi. The surrounding town are facilitating by the local practitioners.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Nagarparkar, a deserted area, blessed with rich diversity, pleasant weather, abundantly possesses number of heritage sites and monuments. Variety of flora benefiting the chemical industry and pharmaceutical companies economically, it's a food provider to the locals of the area as well. Fauna is a great value added to the local's economy as it provides food and being a mode of transportation to them, including many noble endangered species. Nagarparkar is serving the economy of the country by its geographical importance, having a vast range of Karoonjhar hills possessing multiple types of granite stones, China clay and coal mines. Most importantly, Nagarparkar has importance due to its cultural traits that represent the Thar region with their multiple handmade varieties. Thus, Nagarparkar could be a point of focus to the entire country in terms of potential of tourism if attention paid to all the resources properly.

Jain religion is about to an end in Pakistan. Their remains are vanishing rapidly. There are some Jain Temples remains in Nagarparkar which are deplorably bad in condition, which need repair and maintenance. Jain temples have unique architecture and reminds us of the era of Jain religion. Architecturally, these temples are so beautiful that these may attract thousands of national and international tourists, uplifting the local economy as well. The need is to make immediate tourism management plan for these temples and promote it accordingly.

Recommendations

Nagarparkar town can be the best Tourist spot to pay a visit for its unique culture, heritage sites, Karoonjhar hills and abundant beauty and

elegance, to make it complete tourist spot following recommendations are suggested:

- Proper infrastructure is needed to develop sustainable tourism. This will increase the number of tourists, which definitely increase the economy of the Nagarparkar.
- There may be an information centre at Virawah Rangers Check-post because to reach Virawah, Churio, Bodhesar, Kasbo and Nagarparkar tourist has to cross this check post, the information center should keep the brochures having complete information regarding the particular area facilities, maps etc. which will make their visit easy.
- Most tourists bring their own camping accessories for accommodation in the monsoon season and other religious events, or they just pay a visit for a day, which is not beneficial for the local community economically. Having more restaurants and rest houses not only make the local community employed but also develop the area towards prosperity and growth.
- There is no proper management for the safety and maintenance of valuable heritage sites. The wall chalking and destruction of cultural sites by the unaware tourists and locals too badly damage the same.
- Proper health care units and centres may be established. The public Health Department may work for soft drinking water supply.
- Karoonjhar range has been declared as a National Park, but still, it lacks the facilities of National Park. Firstly, the ban may impose on hunting of endangered species, ban on plucking of different herbs and shrubs which are valuable to our ecosystem.
- Higher authorities need to focus on the promotion of culture and development of basic infrastructure for tourists and open new ways of earning because the town

possesses many heritage sites, scenic beauty and unique culture which separate it from other parts of the Thar district.

- Nagar Parker attracts hundreds of visitors because of old Jain temples, Karoonjhar hills, lush green valleys and artisan villages. It needs further development to promote ecotourism in order to facilitate tourists.
- As there are no hotels or guest houses present in the town, it's highly needed for the development of ecotourism. People are staying at private and government guest houses in Mithi.
- Various religious and attractive heritage sites in the town are in dire need of maintenance, as some of them are deteriorating due to carelessness on the part of concerned authorities. Different NGO's and Govt. departments should launch projects to preserve the heritage and natural beauty and promote culture.
- Local community should be trained and aware of tourism and should be involved in tourism-related businesses so that maximum benefits should go to the locals

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