

## Exploring Bhopal - Past, Present and Fascinating Trivia

Hey aspirants! We're back with another blog on the blog series '**Know Your City**'. The city you're going to learn about is '**Bhopal**'. So, without a further delay, let's start exploring the city.

**Bhopal**, the enchanting **capital city** of the Indian state of **Madhya Pradesh**, is a true gem nestled in the heart of India. Known as the "**City of Lakes**," Bhopal boasts a stunning landscape adorned with both natural and artificial lakes, making it a tranquil haven for its residents and visitors alike. This vibrant city is not only a feast for the eyes but also an economic powerhouse, with a remarkable GDP of INR 44,175 crores in 2020–21. Bhopal is often regarded as one of Madhya Pradesh's financial hubs, alongside Indore.

Beyond its economic prowess, Bhopal is a hub of education and innovation, housing prestigious institutions such as ISRO's Master Control Facility, BHEL, and AMPRI. It's a city that fosters knowledge and culture, home to institutions of National Importance like IISER, MANIT, and AIIMS. Moreover, Bhopal's journey to becoming a smart city is a testament to its vision and growth.

Before looking at the different aspects, one must know the city symbols of the particular city. The city symbols of Bhopal are:

Bhopal	
<b>State</b>	Madhya Pradesh
<b>Official Language</b>	Hindi
<b>City Bird</b>	Indian paradise flycatcher
<b>City Animal</b>	Barasingha
<b>City Tree</b>	Banyan Tree
<b>City Fish</b>	Mahseer
<b>City Flower</b>	Madonna lily
<b>Mayor</b>	Malti Rai
<b>MP</b>	Pragya Singh Thakur
<b>MLA</b>	Arif Masood



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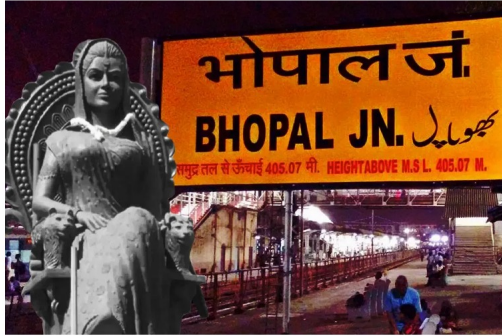


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[Source: swarajyamag.com]

So now, let's move on to the first aspect of the blog i.e., **History of Bhopal.**

## History of Bhopal

The history of Bhopal, a city teeming with rich culture and intriguing tales, spans centuries, offering a captivating narrative filled with valour, transitions, and a blend of rulers. From its mythical origins to the tragic industrial disaster, Bhopal's story is an amalgamation of legends and historical events, defining its path to becoming a vibrant city in the heart of India.

- **Early History:** According to folklore, it was founded by the Paramara king Bhoja, lending its name to "Bhopal." Another theory suggests it may have been named after King Bhupala. Yet, an intriguing version narrates Raja Bhoj's quest to cure leprosy, resulting in the creation of Bhoj Tal, eventually leading to the city's name transformation into Bhopal.
- **The Birth of Modern Bhopal:** In the early 17th century, this bustling city was a humble village within the Gond kingdom. It was Dost Mohammad Khan, a Pashtun soldier in the Mughal army, who established the foundation of modern Bhopal. Khan ventured into the politically unstable Malwa region and annexed territories, forming the Bhopal State. He even obtained Bhopal from the Gond queen Kamlapati, further solidifying his rule.
- **The Era of Begum Rule:** Bhopal entered the princely state era after a treaty with the British East India Company in 1818. The unique feature of Bhopal's history was the rule of four women, Begums, during the 19th century. Their reign brought significant progress to the city, including waterworks, railways, a postal system, and the establishment of a municipality.
- **Post-Independence Transformation:** After India gained independence in 1947, Bhopal merged with the Union of India in 1949, becoming a part of the Indian democratic landscape.
- **The Bhopal Gas Tragedy:** In December 1984, Bhopal was thrust into international consciousness due to the catastrophic Union Carbide gas leak, leading to one of the worst industrial disasters in history. The aftermath of this tragedy, including health issues and environmental damage, remains a significant socio-political issue.

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[Source: onlinesafetytrainer.com]

Bhopal's history is a tapestry of legends, royal rule, and resilience, making it a city with a rich and intricate past.

## Timeline for the major events that occurred in the History of Bhopal:

- **11th Century:** Legendary foundation by King Bhoja or Bhupala.
- **17th Century:** Dost Mohammad Khan establishes modern Bhopal.
- **1818:** Bhopal became a princely state, leading to the era of the Begums' rule.
- **1947:** Post-independence, Bhopal merged with the Union of India.
- **1984:** The catastrophic Bhopal Gas Tragedy strikes, impacting the city's socio-political landscape profoundly.

This timeline showcases Bhopal's rich and diverse history in a simple way. Let's move on to the next aspect of this blog i.e., **Geographical aspects**.

## Geographical Aspects of Bhopal

Bhopal is a city adorned with captivating geographical features, from serene lakes to small hills, creating a tapestry of natural beauty.

- **Elevation:** Averaging 500 metres (1401 feet) above sea level.
- **Terrain:** Situated in the Malwa plateau, rising toward the Vindhya Range.
- **Lakes:** Boasts 17 lakes and 5 reservoirs, including the expansive Upper Lake (36 km<sup>2</sup>) and Lower Lake (1.29 km<sup>2</sup>).
- **Hills:** Idgah, Arera, Shyamala, and Katara hills embellish the city's landscape.

## Physiographic Aspects:

Bhopal's climate is an intriguing blend, characterised by cool, dry winters and hot, humid summers.

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- **Climate:** Bhopal's climate showcases intriguing contrasts. Summers, commencing in late March, witness scorching temperatures, with highs exceeding 40°C (104°F) in May. Monsoons, from late June to September, bring about 40 inches (1020 mm) of rainfall. Winters, from November to March, are relatively cool, with average daily temperatures around 16°C (61°F).
- **Rainfall:** Bhopal enjoys an annual rainfall of approximately 1146 mm (46 inches).
- **Temperature:** The city experiences a wide temperature range, from scorching summer highs to chilly winter nights. The highest recorded temperature was 46.7°C in May, and the lowest was 0.3°C during winter.

Bhopal's physiographic diversity, from lush hills to serene lakes, combined with its climate nuances, creates a captivating tapestry for both residents and visitors to appreciate.

## Demographic Snapshot:

Bhopal, a vibrant city, shelters a diverse population with intriguing statistics.

- **Population:** In 2011, Bhopal city's population stood at 1,798,218, with 936,168 males and 862,050 females.
- **Population Density:** Bhopal is a vibrant hub with a population density that reflects its dynamism of about 1,051/km<sup>2</sup>.
- **Literacy Rate:** The city shines in education with an impressive literacy rate of 85.24% for those aged 7 and above, with male and female literacy rates at 89.2% and 80.1%, respectively.
- **Sex Ratio:** Bhopal embraces gender balance, with a significant sex ratio reflecting equality i.e., 918 females per 1000 males.

## Soil and Vegetation:

Bhopal's geographic allure extends to its soil and vegetation.

- The city's soil composition ranges from alluvial soil in low-lying areas to black soil in uplands.
- This diversity nurtures lush vegetation, including teak, neem, and other native trees.
- Bhopal's ecosystem thrives with varied flora, from flowering plants to shrubs, creating an enchanting blend of nature's bounty.

It's this harmonious coexistence of terrain and greenery that adds to the city's unique charm, inviting both residents and visitors to immerse themselves in its natural beauty.

Bhopal boasts several famous landmarks that encapsulate its rich heritage and contemporary allure. The breathtaking Taj-ul-Masjid, one of Asia's largest mosques, is a symbol of architectural magnificence. The captivating Upper Lake, with its serene beauty, and the historic Shaukat Mahal and Gohar Mahal, exuding Indo-Islamic elegance, are cherished landmarks. Bhopal also houses the Van Vihar National Park, an oasis of wildlife in the heart of the city, offering a unique urban experience.

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[Source: indiano.travel]

Now let's move on to the **political aspects of Bhopal**.

## Political Aspects of Bhopal

Bhopal is a city with a rich political history. It was once the seat of a princely state, and it has been a major centre of power in India since independence.

- Bhopal City is governed by a three-tier system of government: municipal, state, and central. The municipal government is headed by the Mayor of Bhopal, who is elected by the members of the Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC).
- The BMC is responsible for the civic administration of the city, including water supply, sanitation, waste disposal, and public transportation.
- The state government is headed by the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, who is elected by the members of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly.
- The state government is responsible for a wide range of issues, including education, healthcare, law and order, and infrastructure development.
- The political landscape of Bhopal City is dominated by the two major national parties, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The BJP is currently in power at both the state and central levels, while the INC is the main opposition party.
- In addition to the BJP and INC, there are a number of smaller political parties that are active in Bhopal City. These include the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Samajwadi Party (SP), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)].
- The political participation of citizens in Bhopal City is relatively high. In the 2022 Bhopal Municipal Corporation elections, the voter turnout was 65.5%. This is higher than the national average voter turnout for municipal elections, which is around 50%.
- The political process in Bhopal City is generally peaceful and orderly. However, there have been instances of political violence in the past, particularly during election campaigns.



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Overall, the political system in Bhopal City is relatively stable and democratic. Citizens have a number of opportunities to participate in the political process, and their voices are generally heard by elected officials.



[Source: Naidunia]

Now let's discuss the **culture of Bhopal**.

## Culture of Bhopal

Bhopal, a vibrant city in central India, boasts a rich and diverse culture that reflects the tapestry of its people and their traditions.

- **Language:** The predominant language spoken is Hindi, but Urdu and English are also widely used.
- **Attire:** In terms of attire, Bhopali men can be seen in traditional kurtas and pyjamas, while women often wear colourful sarees or salwar kameez.
- **Cuisine:** The city's cuisine is a delectable blend of flavours, with dishes like Bhopali kebabs, poha, and spicy biryanis being local favourites. Don't miss the iconic Bhopali paan for a unique culinary experience.
- **Temples:** Bhopal is home to several temples, with the grand Bhojpur Temple and the serene Birla Mandir standing out.
- **Literature:** Literature and art thrive in the city, with Bharat Bhavan hosting cultural events, and the works of renowned artists on display.
- **Festivals:** Festivals hold a special place in Bhopal's heart. Diwali, marked by grand celebrations and the worship of Goddess Lakshmi, is a highlight. Eid is also observed with great fervour.
- **Music and Dance:** Music and dance are integral to Bhopal's culture, with traditional folk music and vibrant dances like the Lezim and Matki dance lighting up festivities.
- **Handicrafts:** The city's rich heritage also extends to handicrafts and architecture, with the stunning Taj-ul-Masjid and Taj Mahal Palace showcasing Indo-Islamic and European influences.



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[Source: makeheritagefun.com]

Bhopal's culture is a captivating blend of tradition and modernity, making it a truly captivating destination.

Now let's talk about the next aspect i.e., **Environment in Bhopal**.

## Environment in Bhopal

Bhopal, nestled in central India, grapples with urbanisation while preserving its biodiversity.

- **Urban Biodiversity and Green Cover:** The city embraces an urban biodiversity with around 34% green cover.
- **Flora:** Its diverse flora includes trees like Neem, Peepal, and Gulmohar that line the streets and parks, fostering a vibrant ecosystem.
- **Fauna:** Fauna thrives with species like squirrels, birds such as parakeets, and occasional sightings of jackals and monitor lizards.
- **Environmental Challenge:** Challenges abound as the city navigates environmental concerns. The Upper Lake, a lifeline for Bhopal, faces pollution issues due to urban runoff and encroachment. Efforts to protect and restore this vital water body are ongoing. The city's push for sustainable development encounters waste management and air pollution hurdles.



[Source: democraticaccent.com]

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Despite challenges, initiatives like tree plantation drives and waste management programs are shaping a greener future. Bhopal's journey to balance urban development with biodiversity preservation is an ongoing narrative of harmony between nature and city life.

Let's talk about the **economic aspects of the city Bhopal**.

## Economy of Bhopal

Bhopal's economy is a dynamic blend of traditional industries and a growing IT sector. The city's district reported a nominal GDP of ₹44,175 crores, with a per-capita GDP of ₹1,40,729. This economic growth is driven by diverse sectors.

- The city is a hub for industries such as pharmaceuticals, automobiles, textiles, electrical goods, and jewellery.
- Notable companies like Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), HEG Limited, Procter & Gamble, and Lupin Limited have a significant presence.
- Bhopal's industrial zones, including Govindpura and Mandideep, have attracted investments and employment opportunities.
- The media giant DB Corp, known for Dainik Bhaskar, is headquartered in Bhopal. The city is also making strides in the IT sector, with companies like WIPRO expanding their presence.
- Several upcoming projects, including the Global Skills Park and the Delhi-Nagpur industrial corridor, promise to further boost the city's economy.

Bhopal's economic diversity and ongoing developments make it a promising destination for business and innovation.

Now let's delve into a few **Interesting Facts about Bhopal**.

## Some Interesting Facts about Bhopal

Bhopal is not only rich in history and cultural heritage but also houses intriguing and unique aspects that set it apart. Here are some interesting facts about Bhopal:

- **India's only functional Turkish bath:** Bhopal hosts a 300-year-old Qadimi hammam which is in the Kamala Park area. The women of the city use the hammam in the day while the men use it at night. Oil massages and steam bath options are available; however, the recipes of the scrubs are secret.
- **The oldest man-made lake in India:** The Upper Lake is said to be the oldest man-made lake in India. It is a perfect place to relax and enjoy the city.
- **Smart City:** Bhopal was selected as one of the first twenty Indian cities to be developed as a smart city under PM Narendra Modi's flagship Smart Cities Mission.
- **BRTS:** The city has the third largest bus rapid system corridor in the country, known as the BRTS.





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[Source: Holidify]

In conclusion, Bhopal, the "City of Lakes," is a fascinating blend of history, culture, and economic vitality. With a rich history spanning centuries, from its mythical origins to the era of Begum rule, the city has evolved into a vibrant metropolis. Its geographical beauty, featuring serene lakes and lush hills, provides a breathtaking backdrop for its diverse population of 1.8 million. Bhopal's culture is a colourful tapestry of language, cuisine, and traditions, while its environment grapples with urbanisation and conservation.

The city's dynamic economy, driven by industries like pharmaceuticals and IT, promises a prosperous future. Bhopal's journey, as a smart city and a hub of innovation, is a testament to its vision and growth. With unique landmarks, India's only Turkish bath, and the oldest man-made lake, Bhopal's charm is undeniable. This city is more than just facts and figures; it's a captivating destination that invites exploration and appreciation.

