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Hoysala Temple architecture

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Why is in news? The sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas, which includes **three temples in Karnataka**, has been inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage List.

About the heritage list:

The three temples include

The **Chennakeshava temple**, the main temple in the complex at Belur (Hassan district), located at the centre of the traditional settlement which is surrounded by the remnants of a mud fort and a moat;

The **Hoysaleswara Temple** on the banks of Dwarasamudra tank in Halebidu (Hassan district), a town which has many protected and unprotected temples, archaeological ruins and mounds; and

The **Keshava Temple** at the centre of Somanathapura village (Mysore district).

The Hoysala Temples, as they are also known, will be **India's 42nd UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

Hoysaleswara Temple (Halebid):

It is located on the **banks of Dwarasamudra tank in Halebid**, Karnataka.

In the 12th century, the temple was **built by Ketamalla**, during the **rule of King Vishnuvardhana** of the Hoysala Empire.

One of the largest temples **dedicated to Lord Shiva** in South India

Garuda Pillars: Another interesting object in the temple complex is the rare Garuda Sthamba.

Chennakeshava temple:

It is located in the main temple in the complex at Belur (Hassan district),

It was constructed **by King Vishnuvardhana** in the 12th century to **commemorate his victory over the Cholas**.

There are more than 80 Madanika sculptures in the temple, dancing, hunting, and standing under canopies of trees.

The **Garbhagriha is stellar in shape** and its **zigzag walls** make the figures of 24 forms of Vishnu look different at different times of the day due to light.

Keshava Temple:

It is located in the Somanathapura village of Mysore district.

It was built in A.D 1268, **by Somanatha a Dandanayaka under the Hoysala king Narashima III**.

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Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833**

It has **3 sanctums on the West, South and North** to Keshava, Venugopala and Janardhana, all connected.

The temple itself occupies the middle of the rectangular courtyard surrounded by 64 cells each with pillars in front, forming an appropriate cloistered setting.

Hoysala Architecture:

Hoysala architecture is the building style developed under the rule of the Hoysala Empire between the 11th and 14th centuries, **mostly concentrated in southern Karnataka**.

Hoysala temples are sometimes called **hybrid or vesara** as their unique style seems **between Dravida and Nagara styles**.

There is a **influence of Chola and Chalukya art**.

The **decoration** of the Western Chalukyas (Kalyani) influenced the Hoysala decoration. The **pillar image** called “Sthambha buttalikas” seen in Hoysala art bears evidence of Chola and Chalukya art.

The Hoysala temples contain multiple shrines grouped around a **central pillared hall** and laid out in the shape of an **intricately-designed star**.

They are **made out of soapstone** which is a relatively soft stone.

They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their **highly original star-like ground-plans** and a **profusion of decorative carvings**.

Other important features of this style includes the **jagati** around the temple is the open pradakshinapatha, **Polished pillar** with variety of designs, elaborate carvings and beautifully carved **madanika figures**, Vimana (shikara) in pyramidal shape.

Most of their temples in **Bhumija style**. In this style **miniature shikara** is carved on the outerwall of the temple.

Some of the famous temples are: Hoysaleswara temple at Halebid, Chennakeshava temple in Somnathpura, Kesava temple at Belur.

They also constructed **Jain Basadis**. Eg. Savathi Gandhavarana Basadi at Shravanabelagola.

There are **several other examples** of Hoysala craftsmanship such as the temples at Hosaholalu, Belavadi, Amruthapura, Basaralu, Mosale, Arasikere, Nuggehalli and Kikkeri.

The Hoysala architectural style reveals **a negligible Indo-Aryan influence** and a **more distinct impact of Southern Indian style**.

The Hoysala temples are protected monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Their conservation and maintenance is done by ASI but the Karnataka state government will ensure the conservation of state-protected monuments around these three monuments.

About Hoysalas:

Hoysalas were **feudatories of chalukyas of Kalyana**.

Dwarasamudra (Halebeedu) was their capital.

Sala was the founder of this dynasty.

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He was succeeded by **Vinayaditya and Balalla 1.**

Vishnuvardhana (Bittideva) was greatest in Hoysala dynasty.

He completely routed Cholas from Gangavadi in **battle of Talakadu**, for this he got the title Talkadugonda.

In commemoration of this victory he built **kirtinarayana temple** at Talakadu and **Chennakesavar temple** at Beluru.

Hoysalas patronized **Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Jainism.**

Vishnuvardhana followed Jainism.

He was influenced by Sri Ramanujacharya and converted into srivaishnavism.

Kannada and Sanskrit literature developed during this period.

Important literary works in Kannada are - **Harishchandracharite** by Raghavanka, **Leelavati Prabhand** by Nemichandra.

World Heritage site:

A World Heritage Site is an **area or object listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List**, recognized for its “outstanding universal value” under the **Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972.**

These sites, categorized into **three types – Cultural, Natural, and Mixed**, are internationally acknowledged for their cultural, natural, or combined significance.

As of 2023, there are 42 World Heritage Sites located in India.

Out of these, 34 are cultural, 7 are natural, and one, the Khangchendzonga National Park, is of mixed type. **India has the sixth-largest number of sites in the world.**