

CSB IAS ACADEMY

TOPIC OF THE DAY (DATE: 21.09.2023)

HOYSALA AND SANTINIKETAN - NEW UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

WHY IN NEWS?

Recently, *Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas* and *Santiniketan*, which is a town located in Birbhum district of West Bengal was included in the UNESCO's World Heritage List.

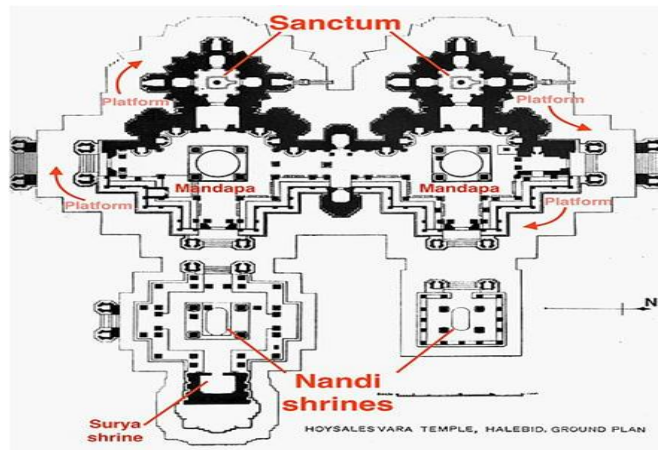
Historical Background

- **The Hoysala dynasty**, founded by **King Nripa Kama II**, rose to prominence in the 10th century in the southern Deccan region of India.
- They ruled from their capital, **Dwarasamudra (modern-day Halebidu)**, and later shifted it to **Belur**.
- The **Hoysalas were devout followers of Vaishnavism and Shaivism**, two major sects of Hinduism, and their patronage of temples and art reflected their religious fervor.

Architecture of Hoysala Sacred Ensembles

The Hoysala sacred ensembles are renowned for their **unique architectural style, which combines elements of North Indian Nagara and South Indian Dravidian styles** with distinctive Hoysala features. Here are key architectural aspects:

- **Star-Shaped Temples:** Hoysala temples typically have a **star-shaped ground plan, called "stellate,"** which is characterized by multiple protruding points. The most famous examples of this design can be seen in the **Chennakesava Temple in Belur and the Hoysaleswara Temple in Halebidu**.
- **Intricate Sculptures:** One of the most striking features of Hoysala temples is their intricate and detailed sculptures. These sculptures adorn the outer walls and depict **various scenes from Hindu mythology, daily life, and the court of the Hoysala kings**. The level of craftsmanship is remarkable, with delicate **filigree work** and lifelike expressions.
- **Lathe-Turned Pillars:** Hoysala temples are known for their lathe-turned pillars, which are **highly polished and display a variety of designs**. Each pillar is unique and contributes to the overall aesthetic of the temple's interior.
- **Deity Depictions:** The main sanctum of Hoysala temples often houses a deity, and **the vimana (tower)** above it is intricately carved with depictions of the presiding deity or related mythological scenes. These **vimanas are pyramid-like in shape** and have miniature shrines on their surfaces.
- **Ornate Doorways:** The entranceways of Hoysala temples feature elaborately decorated door frames, with intricate carvings of deities, celestial beings, and floral motifs. These doorways are considered masterpieces of Hoysala art.



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About Santiniketan

- **Historical Significance:** In 1862, Rabindranath Tagore's father, Debendranath Tagore, spotted this scenic landscape and decided to establish an ashram, building a house called Santiniketan, meaning "abode of peace".
- **Name Change:** The area, originally called **Bhubadanga**, was renamed Santiniketan by Debendranath Tagore due to its conducive environment for meditation.
- **Educational Legacy:** In 1901, Rabindranath Tagore chose a significant portion of land and established a school based on the Brahmachary Ashram model. This school later evolved into Visva Bharati University. It has been declared a central university and an institution of national importance by an Act of Parliament in 1951, with the Prime Minister serving as its chancellor. Santiniketan world's first "living heritage university".
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site:** The Ministry of Culture proposed Santiniketan for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List, emphasising its importance in human values, architecture, arts, town planning, and landscape design.
- **Archaeological Preservation:** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has been involved in the restoration of several structures in Santiniketan, preserving its historical and cultural heritage.

What is a World Heritage Site?

- Any of various areas or objects inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List.
- The sites are designated as having "outstanding universal value" under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the **World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972**.
- The **World Heritage Centre** is the Secretariat to the 1972 Convention. It provides a framework for international cooperation in preserving and protecting cultural treasures and natural areas throughout the world.
There are three types of sites: Cultural, Natural, and Mixed.
- **Cultural heritage** sites include hundreds of historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting. Example: Dholavira: a Harappan City.
- **Natural heritage sites** are restricted to those natural areas that have excellent ecological and evolutionary processes, unique natural phenomena, habitats of rare or endangered species etc. Example: **Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area**.
- **Mixed heritage sites** contain elements of both natural and cultural significance. Example: **Khangchendzonga National Park**.

International Commission on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS):

- It is a professional association that works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places around the world.
- Headquartered in **Charenton-le-Pont, France**, ICOMOS was founded in **1965 in Warsaw** as a result of the Venice Charter of 1964, and **offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites**.
- Objectives: Restoration of historic buildings and protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters under "Blue Shield"; of which ICOMOS is a partner and founding member