

An Iconic “Markanda”, Architectural Heritage from Vidarbha: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Markanda is the pilgrimage centre inviting lacks of population from vidarbha region of Maharashtra on the occasion of Mahashivratri. The importance is because of the Shiva temple complex. Very recently the “Jatra” was held at Markanda on Mahashivratri i.e on 27th February 2014 like every year. Markanda is a small village with population 1000 persons in Chamorshi Tahsil situated on the bank of River Waingangā (Ganga of South) on south of Gadchiroli town and known amongst hindus. Geographically it is located on 19° N, 79° E latitude & longitude respectively. It’s about 60 kms from Chandrapur & 65 kms from Gadchiroli town of Vidarbha region from state of Maharashtra, India.

The Markanda temple complex was constructed on 196 x 168 Sq ft. area with Wainganga river on the east side with total 24 temples. At present, there are only 18 temples existing, out of which only 4 are in good condition. The main temple of Markanda was distracted by striking of lightening 300 years back. Therefore, no one could tell how the main temple formerly was like. Some parts of mythological stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata are said to have been connected with this group of temples. The architecture of these firmly resembles the Khajuraho temples and famous for its "Hemandpanthi" style of construction. The temple complex is known as Khajuraho of vidarbha and also bare the replica of Khajuraho temple. SIR A.CUNNINGHAM had described these temples as the “MOST PICTURESQUE TEMPLE COMPLEX”. It has been declared by Archaeological Survey of India as the site of architectural heritage from vidarbha region.an iconic example of architectural heritage has a huge contribution in architecture.

This paper would be an attempt to exhibit the existing condition of the complex among the concerned and determining the strategy to bring back the original state of the complex.

Keywords: Architectural heritage, temple complex, hemadpanthi style

1. INTRODUCTION

Heritage structures perform vital role in nation's history, culture and signify the richness of it. Heritage buildings and monuments in any country are mute testaments of its glorious past [Meli et. al, 2007]. India has a very rich historic background which is evident from various buildings, forts, temples, landscapes, objects of historic era. Many of these were constructed several hundred years ago when the Indian Civilization was at its peak. Their architecture, design and construction at the time when computers, code of practice, design guidelines, research institutions and modern construction techniques did not exist makes one to realize the wisdom and expertise of our forefathers. These structures have managed to survive for hundreds of years while most of the modern constructions need repair after couple of years of service [Meli et. al, 2007].

2. INTRODUCTION ABOUT MARKANDA

The Iconic Markanda is one such example in any country. The Markanda is located on south-west of Chamorshii Taluka. The nearest railhead is Mul Markanda is connected with Gadchiroli by Road. Markanda is a small village in Chamorshi Tahsil situated on the left bank of the Waingangā river about 50.37 km. south of Gadchiroli district of vidarbha region in Maharashtra state of india and known amongst the Hindus as a place of pilgrimage. Markanda is Famous for its ancients & "Hemandpanthi" style temple of Lord Shiva on the bank of river Vainganga where it changes it's direction of flow to north from south.

The temple complex is known as khajuraho of vidarbha and as the architecture of 24 temples out of all firmly resemble the style of Khajuraho temple architecture. **Sir A.Cunningham** had described these temple as the “**MOST PICTURESQUE TEMPLE COMPLEX**”

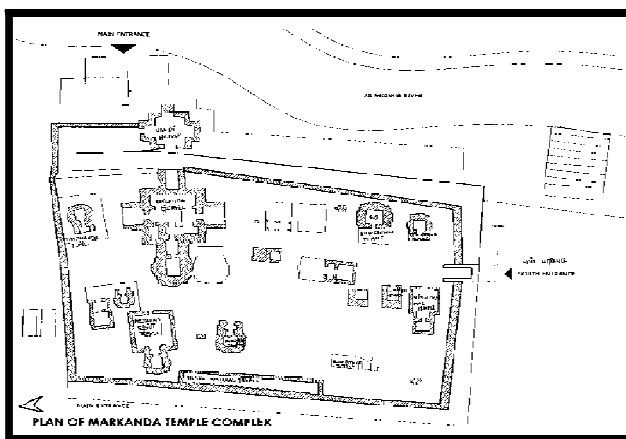


Fig:1 plan of Markanda complex

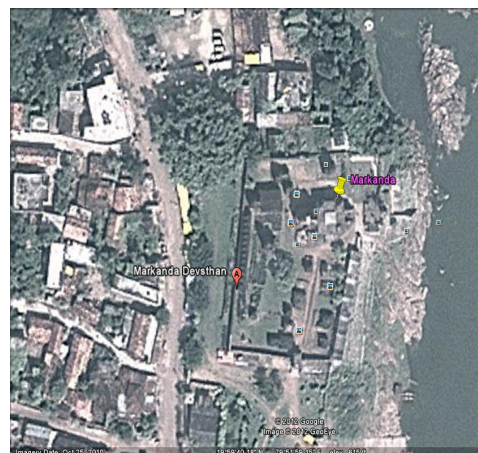


Fig:2 Google image of Markanda complex

Most old cities have some monuments which represent the religious, military, political or economic powers of the past. The value of architectural heritage is not only in its appearance, but also in the integrity of all its components as a unique product of the specific building technology of its time [<http://iscarsah.icomos.org/content/principles>].

The archaeological finds discovered between Markanda and Chamorshi, including broken idols, suggest that at one time Markanda must have been a large and prosperous township extending up to Chamorshi. Markanda is supposed to derive its name as well as fame from sage Markandeya who according to the Hindu holy scriptures worshipped Siva here and obtained immortality and secondly from a beautiful group of temples, including the one housing Sivalinga which Markandeya is believed to have worshipped, built in rich purple colored stone finely situated on a high bluff overlooking the river. The small hillocks, the group of temples and the river flowing below have made Markanda a pleasing spot.



Fig:3,4,5: Views of Markanda complex

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MARKANDA:

There are no inscriptions to tell their age, but their style is so similar to that of the Candel temples of Khajuraho and other places, that there can be little doubt, that they belong to the same period of 10th and 11th centuries. " It is said that when Bibhisan, the brother of Ravan, the prince of the Rakshasha *was* sick, Hemadpant the minister of the Yadavas, cured him and the grateful patient told him to ask for a boon. Hemadpant asked for the aid of Raksasas to build temples wherever he might require them. The boon was granted but on condition that the Raksasas were not to work for more than one night at a time. Hemadpant accordingly built all the temples at Markanda, Bhandak, Neri, etc., in one night. This is a stock story told about the temples of Hemadpanti origin in this district as also the rest of Maharashtra.

Hemadpant has been identified with Hemadri, the Srikarnadhipa or the Head of the Secretariat of the Yadava Kings of Devagiri, Maha-dev and Ramcandra. He was a renowned Sanskrit scholar. But Hemadri's date is 1260-71 A.D. and the archaeologists date the Markanda temples about 10th or 11th century A.D. Temples of the Hemadpanti style are found in about 30 villages in the district

some of which lie in utter ruins to-day. Some of them are of remarkable beauty and display wonderful stone carvings. Modern temples and shrines are still built in imitation of these, but carvings are no longer of the same beauty and finish. Among the Hemadpanti temples in the district the Markanda temples are undoubtedly the most beautiful. By far the largest and the most elaborately sculptured temple of the group is that of sage Markandeya, dedicated to Siva. In general style and finish this temple bears great resemblance to the Khajuraho temples.

About 260 years ago the temple was struck by a lightning, and the upper part of the massive spire was hurled down on the roof of the mahamandap which was broken in. Another small temple was also utterly destroyed. The roof was repaired later by one of the Gond Rajas, whose architect introduced huge piers with radiating arches inside the principal room. The upper part of the temple now seems to topple over at any minute, but the stones are said to have hung in their apparently precarious position for a long time.

4. ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

There are nearly twenty four temples in the group and are enclosed in a quadrangle measuring 59.74x35.96 metres (196'x 118'), with three entrances on the river side, in front and in two side walls. Some of these are in complete ruins, and others are very small, but the general effect is very impressive. " The whole taken together," wrote Sir Cunningham, " forms perhaps the most picturesque group of temples.

The whole surface is literally covered with statues and ornaments, human figures, geese and monkeys. Sir A. Cunningham counted over 400 such figures, and there are about half as many sculptures of lions and elephants forming divisions between the human figures. About half of the panels are devoted to representations of Siva and Parvati in various forms.

Four richly ornamented pillars support the roof of the hall of this temple, and over the shrine rises a lofty spire, which is nearly perfect, and is a very graceful specimen of its kind. Markandeya mandir is installed a marble statue of Sant Gadge Maharaj, a noted saint of Vidarbha. The only other building requiring detailed notice is the temple of the Das Avtara or ten carnations of Visnu.

This is an open cloister 75 feet long by 7 feet wide within, which runs along the western wall of the enclosure. It is divided by pilasters into twelve compartments,

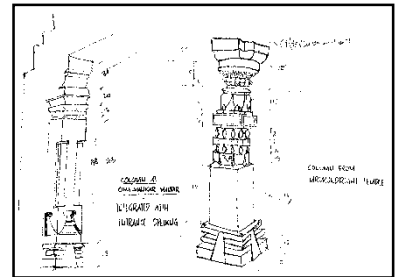


Fig:6 details of richly ornamented pillars

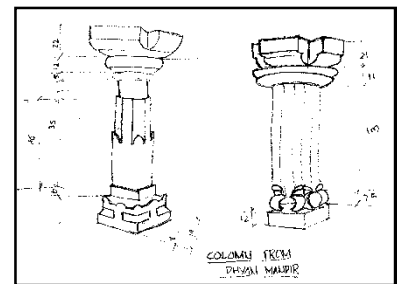


Fig:7 details of richly ornamented pillars

two of the divisions being probably intended for statues of Vishnu, and the remaining ten for the Avatars. In each division there is a pedestal.

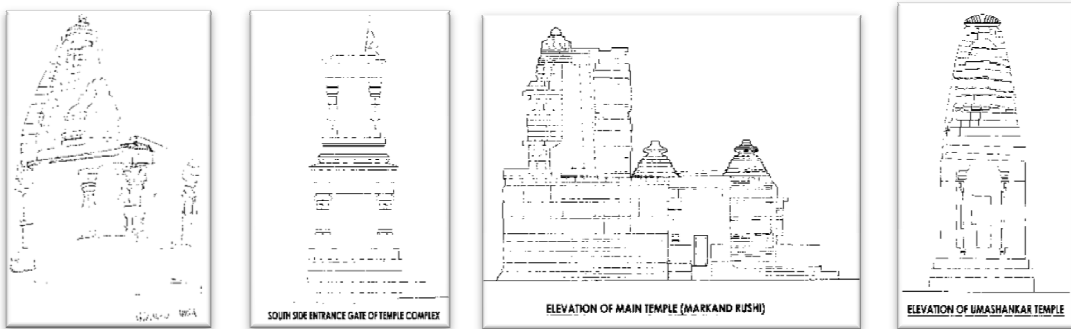


Fig 8,9,10,11: Details of various temples in Markanda complex



Fig 12,13,14 : View of various temples in Markanda complex



Fig 15 : view of A Vainganga River From Markanda temple complex

Fig 16,17 : Details of carving done in of Markanda temple complex



Fig 18 : View of Markanda temple complex

5. ARCHITECTURAL DOCUMENTATION OF MARKANDA



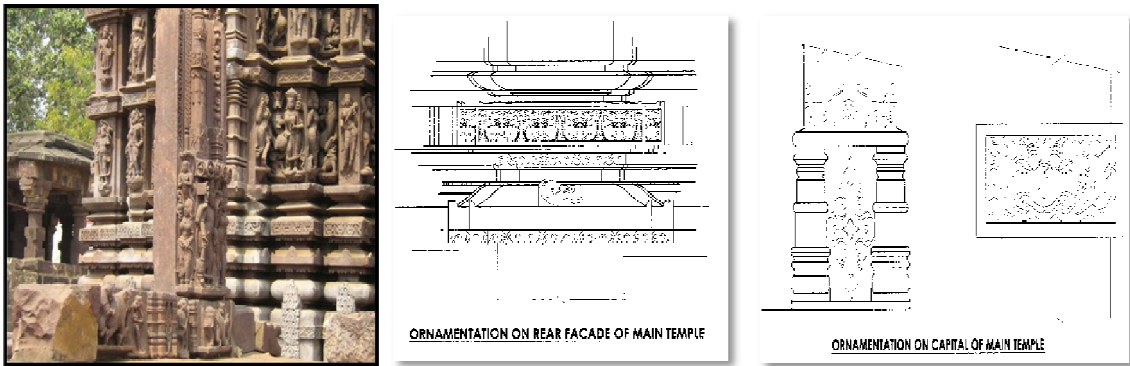


Fig 19,20,21,22,23,24 : details of carving done in of Markanda temple complex

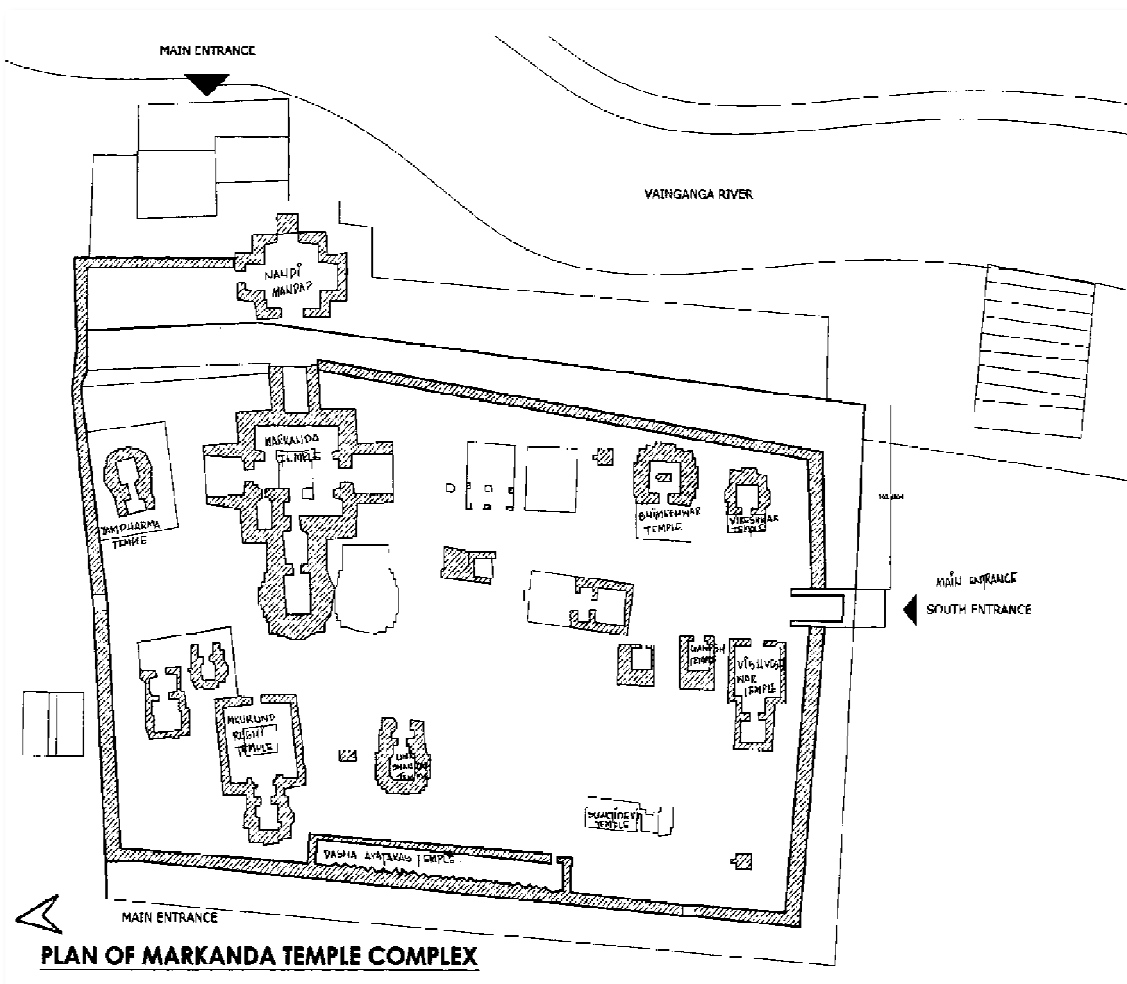


Fig 25 : plan of Markanda temple complex

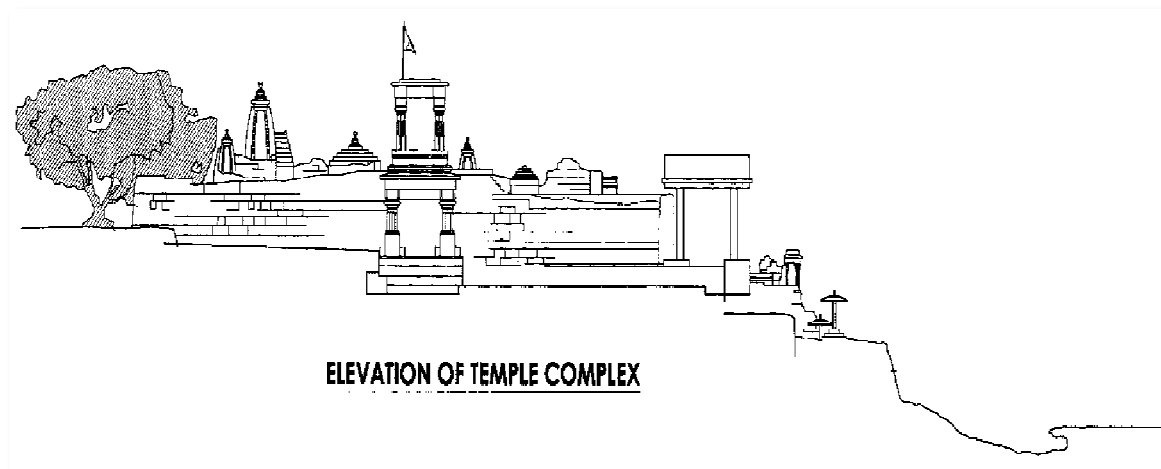


Fig 26 : elevation of Markanda temple complex

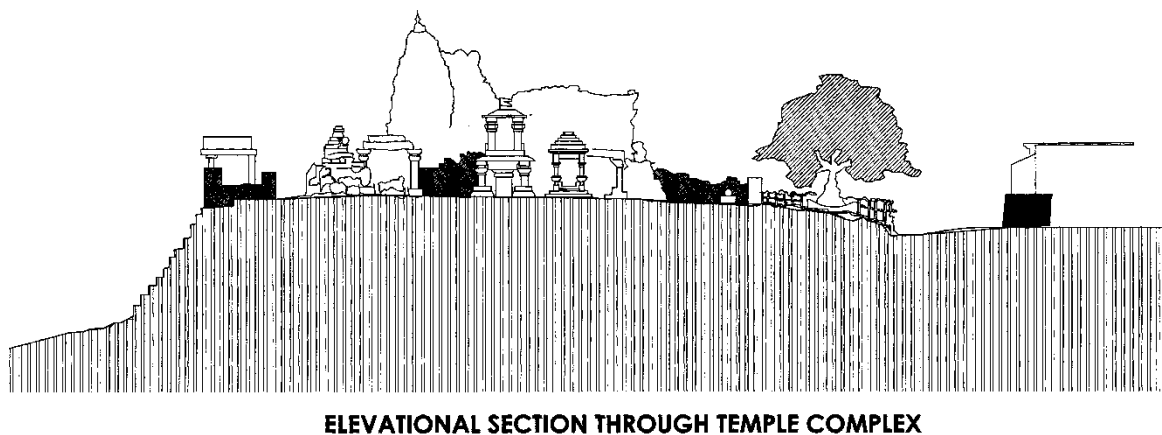


Fig 27 :elevational section of Markanda temple complex

6. CONCLUSION

India is one of the countries possessing very ancient and rich heritage value at global level. The heritage which consist social, cultural and technological aspects helps in understanding the past of the country. Various states of India which has very important heritage structures include Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat,Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar etc. Ancient civilization, the temples as well as public utility buildings built by those people are included under heritage. In Maharashtra there are several examples which needs attention to glorify & one of them is an iconic Markanda.Markanda is a full of richness in terms of architectural value which should be identify and recognize with its roots so we can able to represent An Iconic “Markanda”, Architectural Heritage From Vidarbha to global level.

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