

# **Comprehensive study of hemadpanthi temples around pune with special reference to Bhuleshwar.**

## **1. Introduction**

The study of historic temple architecture offers invaluable insights into the socio-cultural, political, and artistic milieu of the regions in which these sacred sites were built. In the case of the Pune district, the Hemadpanthi style of temple construction stands out due to its unique architectural features and its association with the Yadava dynasty. Focusing on these temples provides a window into the dynastic aspirations of the period, the creative expressions of local artisans, and the enduring religious traditions that have shaped the fabric of local communities. This field work report centers on a comprehensive study of Hemadpanthi temples around Pune, with a special reference to Bhuleshwar—a temple known for its stylistic distinctiveness and the legends associated with it.

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## **Background of the Study**

During India's medieval period, temple architecture underwent substantial evolution as regional dynasties patronized artisans, sculptors, and architects to create monuments reflecting their power, devotion, and cultural values. One such prominent style emerging in the Deccan region was the Hemadpanthi tradition. The Hemadpanthi style is often associated with the reign of the 13th-century Yadava dynasty. Hemadri, a prime minister under the Yadava kings, is traditionally credited with popularizing this style—hence the name “Hemadpanthi.”

Characterized by the use of locally available black basalt stone, Hemadpanthi temples display intricate stone masonry without the use of binding mortars or extensive adhesives. This dry masonry technique, coupled with delicate yet robust carvings and distinctly symmetrical layouts, made these temples not only aesthetically impressive but also extraordinarily stable structures that have withstood centuries.

The broad geographical spread of Hemadpanthi architecture ranges across present-day Maharashtra—particularly in regions once under Yadava influence. Examples of such temples can be observed in areas around Ahmednagar, Solapur, and Pune districts, among others. These sites stand as repositories of both artistic heritage and religious devotion, offering scholars, enthusiasts, and devotees an opportunity to appreciate the interplay of dynastic history, architectural innovation, and religious practices.

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## **Significance of Pune and Surrounding Regions**

Pune, historically referred to as Poona, lies in the heart of the Deccan plateau and served as a significant cultural and political center over various periods. During the Yadava rule, the regions around Pune—encompassing Sasvad, Purandar, and the broader Pune city limits—became home to numerous temple-building projects. Several factors made Pune and its environs conducive for such architectural endeavors:

1. Strategic Location and Prosperity: Pune's proximity to trade routes and its agricultural productivity contributed to the wealth necessary for erecting elaborate temples. Local rulers and wealthy patrons invested in religious structures to showcase both piety and prosperity.
2. Availability of Suitable Building Material: The black basalt stone found abundantly in the Deccan plateau provided a perfect medium for carving. Its durability and capacity for detailed sculpture contributed to the longevity and artistic richness of Hemadpanthi temples.
3. Strong Regional Patronage: The local aristocracy—rulers, nobles, and high-ranking officers—patronized temple construction as acts of religious merit and political prestige. Bhuleshwar, located near Sasvad, is an exemplary case where royal and noble support left an enduring architectural legacy.
4. Cultural and Religious Continuity: Even after the decline of the Yadavas, successive rulers and local communities continued to honor these temples, ensuring ongoing maintenance and renovations. Consequently, these sites became focal points for festivals and ritual observances, preserving their significance through centuries.

By examining Hemadpanthi temples in and around Pune, this study aims to highlight how architectural styles, devotional practices, and regional histories intertwine. Special emphasis on Bhuleshwar Temple, an impressive specimen of Hemadpanthi architecture, allows for an in-depth look at the artistic motifs, cultural narratives, and community reverence that exemplify this tradition. This foundational overview will set the stage for a more focused analysis of structural details, iconography, and the socio-historical context in subsequent sections of the report.

Below is a suggested methodology and set of objectives for your field work report. These elements can be adapted to fit the specific scope, resources, and timeline of your study.

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## 2. Methodology and Objectives

### 1. Preliminary Literature Review

- **Historical Context:** Begin by examining secondary sources—books, journal articles, and archival material—to gain background knowledge of the Yadava dynasty, Hemadpanthi style, and its spread across Maharashtra.
- **Iconography and Architectural Theory:** Consult standard reference works on temple iconography and building techniques, focusing on the features that distinguish Hemadpanthi temples (e.g., foundational layout, sculpture motifs, decorative elements).

### 2. Field Visits and Direct Observation

- **Site Identification:** Compile a list of Hemadpanthi temples around Pune, including the Bhuleshwar Temple, using historical documents, local references, and online resources (where feasible).

- **On-Site Examination:** Conduct structured, on-site surveys of each temple, noting architectural layouts, building materials, sculptural details, and signs of renovation.
- **Observation Checklist:** Develop a checklist to systematically record data on temple orientation, size, carvings, inscriptions, and iconographic elements. This ensures consistency across multiple sites.

### 3. Photographic and Sketch Documentation

- **Photography:** Capture high-resolution images of key architectural features, sculptures, inscriptions, and overall temple layouts. This visual record will support later analysis and serve as documentation for conservation considerations.
- **Sketches and Field Notes:** When permissible, sketch floor plans or unique design motifs. Annotate notes on the condition of stone masonry or visible weathering. Sketching encourages close attention to detail that might otherwise go unnoticed.

### 4. Interviews and Local Engagement

- **Conversations with Community Members:** Speak with temple priests, local residents, caretakers, and devotees to gather oral histories, folklore, and anecdotal information about the temples' religious and cultural significance.
- **Expert Consultations:** If available, consult local historians, art historians, or archaeologists for insight into the regional architectural lineage and historical context.

### 5. Comparative Analysis

- **Comparison Across Sites:** Identify common features (e.g., presence of Nandi pavilion, mandapa pillars, shikhara patterns) to establish hallmark Hemadpanthi traits and note any deviations unique to specific temples.
- **Temporal and Spatial Context:** Correlate field observations with historical data—such as the estimated dates of construction—to trace the evolution of Hemadpanthi architecture in the Pune region.

### 6. Data Synthesis and Interpretation

- **Iconographic Evaluation:** Cross-reference your observations with textual resources on iconography to interpret symbolisms and thematic representations in carvings and motifs.
- **Historical Correlation:** Contextualize the findings within the broader narrative of the Yadava dynasty's influence, religious practices, and socio-political background.
- **Report Structuring:** Organize data into cohesive sections, linking architectural evidence, oral histories, and scholarly research to build a well-rounded understanding.

## 7. Peer Review and Finalization

- **Drafting and Feedback:** Compile a draft of the findings and share with peers, mentors, or subject-matter experts for constructive feedback.
  - **Revisions and Final Submission:** Refine the report based on feedback, ensuring clarity, coherence, and accuracy in both the textual and visual elements.
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# Objectives

## 1. Identify Key Characteristics of Hemadpanthi Architecture

- Document and analyze the defining traits of Hemadpanthi temples—including construction techniques, use of basalt stone, dry masonry methods, sculptural styles, and decorative motifs.

## 2. Examine the Geographical and Historical Spread

- Assess how the Hemadpanthi style disseminated throughout the Pune region and understand the socio-political framework under the Yadava dynasty that fostered its growth.

## 3. Focus on Bhuleshwar Temple

- Conduct an in-depth case study of Bhuleshwar Temple: investigate its design, iconography, local legends, and its role in preserving regional religious traditions.

## 4. Explore Community Perspectives and Cultural Significance

- Through interviews and on-site observations, gauge the current perception, ritual practices, and cultural importance of these temples within local communities.

## 5. Evaluate Conservation and Preservation Status

- Observe the condition of the temples, document areas in need of restoration, and consider the balance between active worship and heritage management to ensure their continued longevity.

## 6. Contribute to Scholarly Discourse and Public Awareness

- Synthesize findings that will add to existing research on Hemadpanthi architecture. Highlight best practices for documentation, interpretation, and conservation, ultimately raising public awareness of this significant architectural heritage.
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By combining on-ground investigation, scholarly research, and community engagement, this methodology and set of objectives will help produce a thorough and insightful field work report on Hemadpanthi temples around Pune, with particular emphasis on Bhuleshwar.

### **3. Hemadpanti Architecture Under the Yadava Dynasty (Circa 12th–13th Century CE): A Comprehensive Study**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Yadava dynasty, which held sway over a significant portion of the Deccan region during the 12th and 13th centuries CE, played a crucial role in shaping the cultural and architectural landscape of what is now Maharashtra, north Karnataka, and parts of Madhya Pradesh. Rising from their initial status as feudatories of the Western Chalukyas, the Yadavas established an independent and powerful kingdom with Devagiri (later Daulatabad) as their capital. This period witnessed the flourishing of a distinctive architectural style known as Hemadpanti, characterized by its unique use of black stone and a construction technique that often minimized or entirely avoided the use of mortar. This report aims to conduct an exhaustive study of Hemadpanti architecture, focusing on its historical development under the Yadava dynasty and its distinctive architectural features. By examining the socio-political environment of the Yadavas, the origins and evolution of the style, the role of Hemadri Pant, the materials and techniques employed, the design elements of the temples, a comparative analysis with contemporary styles, and available archaeological and scholarly evidence, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of this significant architectural tradition.

#### **2. The Yadava Dynasty: Context and Culture (12th–13th Century CE)**

##### **2.1 Socio-Political Environment**

The Yadava kingdom, at its zenith, stretched across a vast territory from the Tungabhadra River in the south to the Narmada River in the north, encompassing a significant portion of the western Deccan. Initially serving as subordinates to the powerful Western Chalukyas of Kalyani, the Yadavas gradually asserted their independence. This pivotal moment arrived in the late 12th century when Bhillama V declared sovereignty, marking the foundation of an independent Yadava dynasty. Key figures such as Bhillama V, who established Devagiri as the Yadava capital around 1190 CE, and his grandson Singhana II, whose reign from 1200 to 1246 AD is considered the dynasty's peak, played instrumental roles in shaping the political landscape. The Yadavas engaged in both alliances and conflicts with neighboring powers, including the Hoysalas to the south, the Kakatiyas to the east, and the Paramaras and Chalukyas to the north, navigating a complex web of regional politics. The dynasty's period of prominence eventually came to an end in the early 14th century when the Delhi Sultanate, under Alauddin Khalji, invaded and annexed the Yadava kingdom.

##### **2.2 Cultural Practices and Religious Affiliations**

The Yadavas of Devagiri proudly traced their lineage back to the ancient Yadu clan, a lineage associated with the revered deity Lord Krishna. This connection to Krishna likely held deep cultural significance for the dynasty. The Yadava rulers were staunch patrons of Hinduism, with a particular devotion to Shaivism. Their reign also saw the rise of new religious movements, notably the Mahanubhava sect, which centered on the worship of Lord Krishna. Despite the general decline of Buddhism in the region, Jainism continued to receive royal support from the Yadava kings. A significant cultural development during this period was the ascendancy of Marathi as the official language of the Yadava kingdom. This marked a crucial step in the formation of a distinct Marathi cultural identity. Alongside Marathi, Sanskrit

literature also flourished under Yadava patronage, indicating a continuation of pan-Indian intellectual traditions.

### **3. The Emergence and Evolution of Hemadpanti Architecture**

#### **3.1 Origins and Early Examples**

The Hemadpanti architectural style predominantly emerged during the 12th and 13th centuries CE, a period that directly aligns with the Yadava dynasty's rule over the Deccan. This unique style, primarily found in Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka, offers a fascinating glimpse into the architectural innovations of the time. One of the earliest and most notable examples of a temple exhibiting Hemadpanti characteristics is the Gondeshwar Temple located in Sinnar. While the exact dating of its construction remains debated, some scholars suggest it might predate the active period of Hemadri Pant himself, indicating a possible gradual evolution of the style's features. Another significant early example is the Vitthal Temple in Pandharpur. While considered a Hemadpanti temple, some historical records suggest it was constructed by King Vishnuvardhana of the Hoysala Empire, pointing to potential cross-influences and a complex developmental history.

#### **3.2 Evolution and Key Monuments**

The Hemadpanti style witnessed a significant spread throughout the Yadava kingdom, encompassing Marathwada and extending into other regions of Maharashtra, with its influence possibly lingering until the 15th century. Several key monuments stand as exemplary representations of the fully developed Hemadpanti architectural idiom during the Yadava era. The Aundha Nagnath Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva and revered as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, showcases the characteristic black stone construction and intricate carvings of the style. The Markanda Mahadev Temple in Gadchiroli district is another prominent example, notable for its Hemadpanti style and its resemblance to the temples of Khajuraho, hinting at potential influences from Central Indian architectural traditions. Other significant Hemadpanti temples include the Khandoba Mandir in Beed, the Bhimashankar Mandir, the Nagra Temple in Gondia, the Tulja Bhavani Temple, the Bhagwant Temple in Barshi, and the Mankeshwar Temple in Zodge. While the core characteristics of the style remained consistent, regional variations in ornamentation and specific design elements likely emerged over time and across different geographical areas.

### **4. Hemadri Pant: The Enigmatic Figure Behind the Style**

#### **4.1 Historical Accounts of Hemadri Pant**

Hemadri Pandita, often respectfully known as Hemadpant, was a highly influential figure in the Yadava kingdom during the latter part of the 13th century. Serving as the Mahapradhana, or prime minister, under the Yadava rulers Mahadeva and Ramachandra, Hemadri Pant held a position of significant power and responsibility. However, his contributions extended far beyond the realm of politics and administration. He was a polymath of remarkable intellect, recognized as a distinguished scholar, a skilled diplomat, an able administrator, a talented poet, and a profound theologian. Among his notable achievements is the encyclopedic work on dharma, the *Chaturvarga Chintamani*, which covers a wide range of subjects including rituals and religious customs. Furthermore, Hemadri Pant is credited with introducing the Modi script, a cursive style of writing, for Marathi in government correspondence, a script that remained in use for centuries.

## **4.2 Scholarly Interpretations and Debates**

The Hemadpanti architectural style is traditionally believed to have been founded or at least significantly popularized by Hemadri Pant, with the style itself bearing his name. This view suggests that his intellectual and administrative influence extended to the realm of architecture, leading to the development of this distinctive style characterized by the use of black stone and mortarless construction. However, an alternative perspective posits that the architectural features associated with the Hemadpanti style might have been gradually evolving prior to Hemadri Pant's time. In this interpretation, Hemadri Pant's role might have been more akin to that of a codifier or a significant patron who helped standardize and popularize existing architectural trends. This is supported by the fact that some temples exhibiting Hemadpanti features, such as the Gondeshwar Temple, are dated by archaeologists to the 11th or 12th century AD, potentially pre-dating Hemadri Pant's active period. This discrepancy in timelines has led to ongoing scholarly debates regarding the precise nature and extent of Hemadri Pant's personal contribution to the design and construction of these temples. Some scholars argue that while the style bears his name, it might represent a broader architectural movement during the Yadava period that he significantly influenced or championed.

## **5. Architectural Features of Hemadpanti Temples**

### **5.1 Materials and Construction Techniques**

The Hemadpanti style is distinguished by its ingenious use of locally available black stone, commonly identified as basalt. This choice of material not only provided structural strength and durability but also gave the temples their characteristic dark appearance. One of the most remarkable features of Hemadpanti construction is the use of a dry masonry technique, wherein the stones were intricately cut and interlocked without the use of mortar. This method, known for its engineering precision, resulted in highly stable and resilient structures. The use of lime in some instances has also been suggested, although the overarching emphasis remains on the mortarless technique. The black stone blocks were often massive, sometimes weighing several tons, and required significant manpower and skill to transport and position. Artisans meticulously chiseled the stones to ensure a snug fit, which allowed the structures to endure for centuries, often withstanding natural calamities and human neglect.

### **5.2 Design Elements**

Hemadpanti temples are known for their relatively austere yet imposing appearance. Unlike the highly ornamented Hoysala temples of Karnataka or the intricate Nagara temples of North India, Hemadpanti temples are more restrained in their external decoration. The architectural layout typically features a mandapa (pillared hall), a garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum), and occasionally a sabhamandapa (assembly hall). The temples often rest on a raised platform (jagati), giving them an elevated and majestic profile. The interiors usually include robust, lathe-turned pillars, intricately carved but not excessively so, emphasizing structural strength over decorative extravagance. Common motifs include floral patterns, mythological figures, and Shaivite iconography such as Nandi, lingams, and depictions of deities like Shiva, Vishnu, and Parvati. Stone lattice windows (jalis), stepped shikharas, and intricately carved doorframes are also prevalent. Despite their simplicity, these features collectively create an atmosphere of spiritual solemnity and architectural grandeur.

## **6. Comparative Analysis with Other Styles**

When compared with contemporary architectural styles of the period, the Hemadpanti style

presents a distinctive contrast. For instance, the Hoysala temples, built during the same time in Karnataka, are renowned for their star-shaped platforms, soapstone construction, and extremely intricate carvings covering almost every surface. In contrast, Hemadpanti temples emphasize solidity, simplicity, and functionality. The Nagara style of North India, characterized by its curvilinear shikhara and intricate carvings, differs markedly from the stepped or pyramidal shikharas of Hemadpanti temples. Similarly, the Dravidian style of South India, with its towering gopurams and elaborate pillared halls, is more expansive and ornate than the comparatively compact Hemadpanti temples. However, all these styles share some common Indic architectural traditions, such as alignment with cardinal directions, symbolic use of geometry, and integration of cosmological principles. The Hemadpanti style, thus, represents a regional adaptation of pan-Indian temple architecture, tailored to local resources, religious practices, and political priorities.

## 7. Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence

Archaeological evidence of Hemadpanti architecture is spread across various regions of Maharashtra, particularly in areas once under Yadava control. Structures such as the Aundha Nagnath Temple and the Markanda Mahadev Temple stand as key examples, offering valuable insight into the materials, techniques, and layouts used by Hemadpanti architects. Inscriptions found in and around these temples often mention Yadava kings and local patrons, although few directly reference Hemadri Pant himself. The scarcity of detailed construction records has posed challenges for historians attempting to precisely date or attribute specific buildings. Epigraphic records in Sanskrit and Old Marathi occasionally mention grants or temple constructions, providing clues about patronage patterns and the religious landscape of the time. However, the lack of uniformity in terminology and dating has led to debates regarding the classification of certain temples as "Hemadpanti"—a label that, while useful, may sometimes conflate regional variations under one umbrella.

## 8. Influence and Legacy

The Hemadpanti architectural tradition left a lasting imprint on the Deccan's architectural landscape. Even after the fall of the Yadava dynasty in the early 14th century, the style continued to influence temple architecture in the region. Later constructions, particularly in the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions, display Hemadpanti features such as black stone masonry, stepped shikharas, and minimal ornamentation. During the Maratha period and even under the Bhonsles of Nagpur, temples inspired by the Hemadpanti idiom continued to be built or renovated. The style also inspired regional variations, with local artisans adapting its core elements to suit changing aesthetic and functional needs. In modern times, the Hemadpanti style has gained renewed interest among historians, architects, and heritage conservationists. Efforts are being made to preserve these temples, many of which have suffered damage from neglect, environmental exposure, and urban development. The legacy of Hemadpanti architecture thus endures not only in stone but also in scholarly and cultural memory.

## 9. Conclusion

Hemadpanti architecture, developed and popularized during the rule of the Yadava dynasty in the 12th and 13th centuries CE, represents a distinctive chapter in the architectural history of the Deccan. Characterized by its use of locally available black stone, mortarless construction techniques, and a restrained aesthetic, this style offers valuable insights into the socio-political, religious, and technological milieu of the time. While the role of Hemadri Pant

remains partially shrouded in historical ambiguity, his legacy as a scholar, administrator, and potential architectural patron adds depth to our understanding of this tradition. The architectural features of Hemadpanti temples—marked by solidity, functionality, and symbolic design—set them apart from their more ornate contemporaries in other regions of India. As a product of the Yadava state's cultural and religious aspirations, Hemadpanti architecture continues to inspire admiration and scholarly inquiry. Its enduring legacy lies not only in the temples that have survived the ravages of time but also in its embodiment of a uniquely Maharashtrian architectural ethos.

## **4. Bhuleshwar Temple: A Detailed Study**

### **Introduction**

The Bhuleshwar Temple is situated on the top of the Daulatmangal or Mangalgad fort hill near Yawat in the Pune district of Maharashtra, stands as a remarkable testament to evolution of Hemandpanthi or Bhumij temple architecture in the Deccan. This temple has its own historical importance, architectural grace and sculptural beauty. Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and believed to have been originally built during the Yadava period in the 13th century. Then it was enhanced by Marathas in their rule. The temple exhibits a unique blend of **classical Hindu iconography and Islamic architectural motifs** which is a reflection of the socio-political conditions of its time. Bhuleshwar Temple is known for its mysterious carvings and the rare depiction of traditionally male deities like Shiva, Ganesha, and Kartikeya in female forms, the temple is not just a site of religious significance but also of esoteric philosophical value.

The Bhuleshwar temple has been destroyed and reconstructed many times it is hard to find additions from different centuries and rulers here. This makes it a complex piece of architecture to understand. During the rule of the Marathas, this temple was often targeted by the Mughals. As it is located on a hilltop, it was a clear and easy target visible from long distances. To prevent these attacks **Brahmendraswami Dhawadshikar, spiritual guru of Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur** and the Peshwas of Pune, suggested a clever idea of disguising it as a mosque. Thus, several minarets were constructed around the shikhara of this temple. And even today Bhuleshwar temple resembles a mosque from long distances Nevertheless, the temple has faced several attacks from outsiders, which is evident from the mutilated or broken carvings inside the temple.

### **Bhuleshwar temple's story in Hindu mythology**

In Hindu mythology, there is a beautiful story behind the formation of Bhuleshwar temple. The name Bhuleshwar translates to the one who forgot. Once God Shiva was angry with Mata Parvati and went far away from Mount Kailash le, their home. He came and sat in deep meditation at this hill of Bhuleshwar temple. To make God Shiva forget his anger and bring him back to Mount Kailash, Mata Parvati took the form of a beautiful maiden and danced at this place. Seeing her in this form God Shiva came out of his meditation, forgot all his anger, and went back to Mount Kailash with Mata Parvati.

### **Story of the tilted head of Nandi**

In the above story, when Mata Parvati comes to take God Shiva home, Nandi who was guarding Shiva tilts his head towards the right. He keeps one eye on Mata Parvati and another eye on God Shiva and waits in anticipation of what might happen next. This is exactly how we will find the Nandi statue inside the Bhuleshwar temple.

This style of Nandi with his head tilted towards the right direction is found in several temples of western Maharashtra and south India. The large Nandi is placed inside an elaborate Nandi mandap, surrounded by 4 pillars. On the panels above the Nandi, there are several gods like Ashta Dikpal (guardians of eight directions), the Nava Grahas (nine planets), and more.

### **The description of Bhuleshwar temple**

This is a two storey temple finely constructed in black basalt stone with dry masonry without keeping any mortar. The temple facing east is well secured in a strong stone wall around three sides except east. The uppermost edge of the wall has stucco stripe with design running all around. The whole temple structure is on strong high foundation also known as adhiṣṭhāna. Approximately 15 steps lead us to the adhiṣṭhāna. There are two delicately craved dvārapāla facing each other, on both sides of the steps, attached to the wall. On adhiṣṭhāna, a small structure with four pillars, Vidyādhara on each pillar, back wall and roof called catuskī. It is the stone structure separately placed at the entrance near nagārkhānā. The nagārkhānā is the place to play music for God which is built by Brahmendraswami. The entrance staircase on adhiṣṭhāna takes us to the first storey of nagārkhānā, in open gallery, facing east through a shallow domed roof maṇḍapa. We can see kirtimukhas carved on the entrance.



**Chatuski and Nagarkhana on adhiṣṭhāna**

Temple has three shikharas for garbhagṛha, maṇḍapa and Nandīmaṇḍapa. The śikhara of garbhagṛha is big, tall and broad. The śikhara of Nandīmaṇḍapa is comparatively very small. All three śikhara were built according to the order by Brahmendraswami. which show later medieval architectural style. Next to nagārkhānā, a rectangular maṇḍapa with semicircular roof is with plain simple walls. The door, taking inside is with decorative dvāraśākhā a doorjamb with Gaṇapati carved on it.

After a small old wooden door with aśvanāla - horse shoes opens into the small dwarf square passage with Hanumāna with śendur (orange color) in a frontal square panel. The roof of this passage and backside of Nandimaṇḍapa are same. Its construction is with rectangular heavy stone slabs. Two staircases both sides are in right angle to the door. Each staircase is with high stone steps and reaches on the first storey with stone floor.

If we took stairs on left hand side we can see the The Nandimaṇḍapa on our right. This Nandimaṇḍapa have four entrances from four sides. Above the Nandimaṇḍapa we can see gods like Ashta Dikpal (guardians of eight directions), the Nava Grahas (nine planets), and scenes of Indra sabhā with musicians, holding instruments like mṛdaṅga, pāvā, tāl carved on the rectangular panels. A huge finely carved Nandī facing shivlinga, sitting on prastara pīṭha with one leg folded, is placed in the middle of the small structure of Nandimaṇḍapa, Fine ornamentation on neck and stabdha bhaava enhance its beauty.



The entrance of maṇḍapa is with highly decorated dvāraśākhā with Gaṇapati on lalāṭabimba and five finely carved laghumandir on the upper part. Pillars of maṇḍapa have sculptures of Vidyādhara i.e wisdom holders. Entrance figures of antarāla are of quite interesting pattern. The entrance of antarāla is supported with two tall round pillars (plate 48). Two round pillars have standing round sculptures of females, one on each, above the eye level of viewer. Four steps going downward reach into the area of narrow antarāla. Here the tall finely carved dvārasākhā of garbhagṛha is with Gaṇapati on lalāṭabimba. Garbhagṛha is smaller than maṇḍapa with simple walls. The Shivaliṅga of Bhuleshvara Mahadeva is of stone and placed in the centre of garbhagṛha.

There are numerous sculptures on the pradakshina patha and jaṅghā of Bhuleshwar temple. Many sursundaris like Darpana are also been carved on the jaṅghā. Most of them are broken so they are not easy to understand. Bhuleshwar temple has many story panels depicts stories from Mahabharata and Ramayana. Now we will take a look of some of the important sculptures on the Bhuleshwar Temple.

## **1. Female figurines of female forms of Ganesh, Mahadev and Kartikeya**



This is most significant sculpture of Bhuleshwar temple. On the pradakshina patha we can see 10 triad panel among them 9 are depicting female figurines. They are sitting in ardhaparyāñkāsana or sahajāsana with vāhana at its base. In the we can see The vāhana of deity form of Elephant headed God is mūṣaka, vahana of middle deity is bull and right deity has mayur or peacock as her vahana. With this clue we can interpret that these are the shakti forms of Ganesh, Mahadev and Kartikeya. This is very unique sculpture in Bhuleshwar temple making it important temple for shiv-shakt worshippers. Apart from these three shakti forms this sculpture also has two makaratoraṇa at both ends of semicircular ornamentation and kirtimukha is in centre on upper side.

## **2. Chamunda or Mahakali**

This is standing sculpture in tribhāṅga on preta, with prabhāvalaya at back of head. She has ferocious face with large eyes and sharp canines coming out of mouth. Her body is with cuboid finishing. She has kucabandha around her breasts, serpent around neck. Her four hands are broken. The scorpion is in cavity of her stomach which is rare feature.

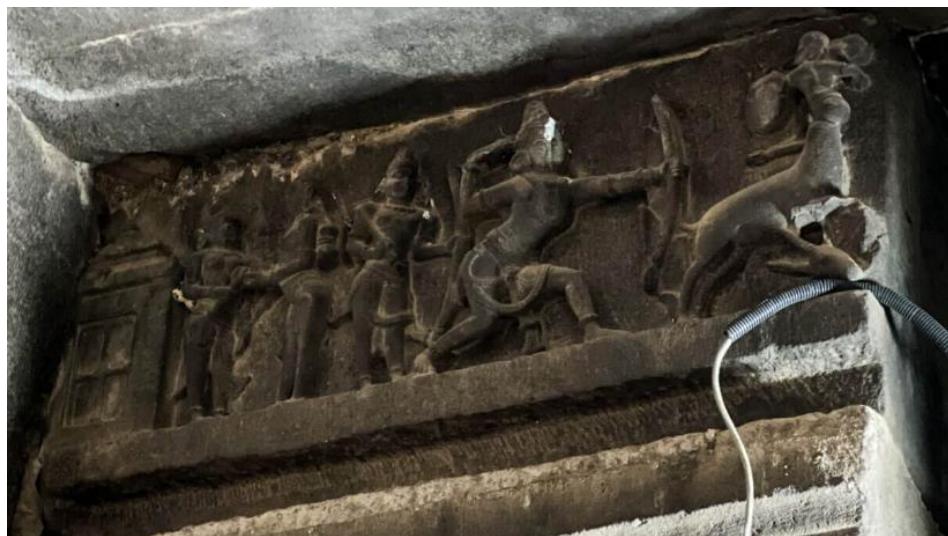
## **3. Ramyana Panel**

This is the largest Ramayana Panel in Bhuleshwar temple and it depicts several important scenes from Ramayana. The story starts at the bottom right corner where Kausalya is worshipping to Bijdevta for a son.



At the centre, you can see two large figures - Ram and Laxman. The ancient sculptors used to carve important events in larger sizes than the other normal scenes. This is a scene where Laxman tries to convince Ram to stay in Ayodhya. He explains that Ram has a duty as a Prince of Ayodhya and he should not leave for the forest. We can see that Ram disagrees. Towards the bottom left, you can see many monkey-like figures, which depict the Khiskinda Nagari and one of the monkeys is Hanumana. Camels and Elephants are also carved into this panel. We can also see Sita Swayamvara in this panel.

#### 4. Mārichavadha and abduction of Sita



This panel is placed high on the wall touching the roof of the temple. It is easily missed due to poor lighting and visibility, it is a simple panel, showing the famous scene of Ramayana where Ravana abducts Sita. On the left you can see a small door, Sita is outside meeting Ravana who comes in the disguise of a Brahman. On the left of the panel, you can see Ram and Laxman chasing the false golden deer as requested by Sita.

## 5. Draupadi svayamvara



In this panel very important event in the mahabharata is shown which is Draupadi svayamvara in detail. This starts with the scene when Arjuna gets up to try his hand at winning Draupadi. Then Arjuna taking aim with the stringed bow, eyes on the reflection in the basin at his feet and his success in hitting the target. This is also the central sculpture in this panel. Beside that we can see Drupadi with varmālā, Drupada and Dhrushdyumn by her side. This panel also shows scene of Drupada, Dhrshdyumn and Kunti, engage in discussion (with Draupadi in the background) after Kunti's inadvertent remark and marriage rites, groom seated at the vedī, bride being led by her attendants.

## 6. Bhishma episodes



These three images shows three episodes. In the first, Bhīṣma and Arjuna are shown fighting each other on 9th day of war.

In the second episode, Bhīṣma -Arjuna are shown on the 10th day of war with Śikhandi between them.

The third episode shows Bhīṣma on a bed of arrows surrounded by Pandavas and Kauravas. According to the story, at the end of the ninth day of a fierce but well-matched battle between Bhīṣma and Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa requested Bhīṣma to reveal how to defeat him. Based on this knowledge, Arjuna fought from behind Śikhandi and felled Bhīṣma on the tenth day. The tenth day episode has three chariots; two opposite Bhīṣma's chariot. Second chariot is identified as Arjun's because of his Kapidhvaja and Krishana as its sārthi.

## 7. Drona vadham



This is the fight of Dronacharya and Dhrshdyumn in which Drona eventually got killed when Bhima, in consultation with Krsna, told Droṇa that Aśvatthämä was dead. Believing that it was Aśvatthämä, his son. Droṇa put down his weapon in grief. Dhrṣṭadyumna then jumped from his chariot with a sword, cut off Drona's head and threw it down. Drona is identified by a Kamandalu on his flag.

## 8. Ghatotkach vadham

Adjacent episode depicts Ghatotkaca fighting elephant brigade and causing havoc in general. Based on the wild hairstyle and sheer size, it is Ghatotkaca and not Bhima. Duryodhana requested Karṇa to kill Ghatotkaca with the weapon which Karna had been saving to kill Arjuna



## 9. Salya and Yudhisthira



The last is the fight between Salya and Yudhisthira. Once again, the details carved help in identification of the episodes. Šalya can be clearly identified based on the standard on his chariot, the ploughshare". Yudhisthira's flag standard (dhvaja) consisted of two huge divine mrdugas, "Nanda" and 'Upananda' with a 'yantra' that broadcast the music they made/ words they uttered. The depiction has the two mydungas atop flag-mast with the "singing yantra' symbolized by a head.

Šalya sympathized with Pandavas and even helped them indirectly as a sarathi for Karna. It was only his impulsive decision that had led him to join Duryodhana's side in the first place. Yet as befits a Kṣatriya's dharma, both Yudhishtira and Shalya fought tooth and nail till Yudhishtira won.

## **5. Other Hemadpanthi Temples Around Pune**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Sangameshwar Temple in Saswad, Pune district,

Maharashtra, is a revered Hindu shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva. Situated approximately 35 kilometers from Pune, the temple is uniquely positioned at the confluence of the Karha and Chambali (Bhogwati) rivers, a feature that gives the temple its name—'Sangameshwar' meaning 'Lord of the Confluence'.

Dedicated to lord Shiva, the temple holds a commanding position and must be quite an impressive sight during the monsoons when the rivers are filled with fresh new rains. As it's located right on the edge of Saswad, it has the feel of being more isolated than it is in actual. The temple's origins trace back to the Yadava dynasty, dating between the 10th and 13th centuries. It is constructed in the Hemadpanthi architectural style, characterized by the use of black stone and lime without mortar, employing mortise and tenon joints. The temple holds historical importance from the Maratha period as well, with contributions from the family of Bajirao I in the 1720s during the rule of Ambajipant Purandare.

### **ANCIENT STORY:**

This ancient Sangameshwar temple is thought to have originated during the Pandavas' reign. Historical and religious evidence strongly suggests that the Pandavas lived in this location during their exile. During their stay, they discovered that the region was experiencing a severe water crisis. Lord Krishna, who had accompanied the

Pandavas, noticed Lord Brahma sitting nearby, deep in meditation, with a kamandalu full of water.

Lord Krishna quickly asked Bheema to bring that kamandalu and suggested that a river be formed from the water that flowed out of it. Bheema enthusiastically approached Lord Brahma and asked him to part with the water in the kamandalu, but Lord Brahma was blissfully unaware of his surroundings. In an attempt get his attention, Bheema poured cold water over his head. Lord Brahma, enraged by Bheema's impertinence, pursued him, and it was during this flight that the Shiva Lingas were created in five locations to appease Lord Brahma and seek Lord Shiva's blessings, as well as the birth of the river Karha, named after Lord Brahma's kamandalu, Kara.

### **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Sangameshwar Temple is a combination of Maratha temples with a revivalist stone wall structure and an indigenous Maratha Shikhara. This set a trend for the temples to follow. The combination type has a certain Maratha character added by the flights of steps leading to the temple, and the ghats (steps leading down to the river). Features like the deepstambha and the Maratha type indigenous shikharas pronounce the Maharashtrian character of these monuments.

The Temple is built in a Neo-Yadava style on an elevation rising from the surrounding topography. It is east-orienting and constructed chiefly of Deccan Basalt stones and flatter

bricks known colloquially as pustaki vita (book bricks). It is reached from a flight of steps impressively built and guarded by a stone parapet. Through the dilapidated arched gateway is the entrance to the temple complex. There is no evidence of what must have originally been an enclosing wall with cells on the inner side. The wall structure is built in stone with a moulded plinth. The Garbagriha (Sanctum Sanctorum) is square shaped with an external stellate plan.

### **SHIKHARA:**

The temple showcases intricate carvings and sculptures, particularly on its shikhara (spire), which is adorned with numerous small deity figures arranged consecutive layers

The architecture of the Sangameshwar Temple is an ideal blend of Maratha and Hemadpanhi styles. Its stone carvings, intricately carved pillars, and beautifully sculpted idols demonstrate the craftsmanship of the past. The temple complex includes a magnificent entrance gate, a large courtyard, and a main shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple's imposing Shikhara (spire) stands tall, inspiring awe and reverence.

### **MANDAPAM AND SABHAMANDAPAM:**

The entrance mandapam features beautifully weathered stone pillars with two deepamalas (rows of lamps) on either side, a colourfully painted Nandi, and a detailed carving of a tortoise with a lotus on its back on the floor. Tulasi Vrindavan also has an interesting design with a Shiva Linga in the centre and a solid base below, so that when water falls on the sacred Tulasi, it falls on the Linga's pindi or shakti peetham.

The entrance mandapam leads to the maha mandapam, where Lord Ganesha, Lord Hanuman, and other deities are worshipped in niches cut into the thick walls. The garbha griha (sanctum sanctorum) exudes tranquillity, serenity, and peace. There is a lone old lamp over the Shiva Linga, and in the dim light, you can see Goddess Parvati and Lord Ganesha in the background, along with a picture of Saint Sopandev painted on the side.

The temple has a spacious sabhamandapa (assembly hall). This hall is supported by:10 pilasters (attached columns).4 purna-stambhas (full pillars), richly carved with floral and mythological designs.The roof of mandapa features stone beams and brackets decorated with sculptural pattern.

### **Nandi Mandap:**

In front of the sanctum lies the Nandi Mandap, housing a beautifully sculpted statue of Nandi (Shiva's bull). The Nandi is decorated with:Chains, bells, and Nāga (serpent) carvings. Highly detailed ornamentation, reflecting fine craftsmanship.

## **Changavateshwar Temple**

The Changavateshwar Temple, situated close to Saswad is a wonderful example of medieval Maharashtra's architectural heritage. The temple is strongly connected with the legendary yogi-Saint Changdev Maharaj, a Shaiva mystic and 12th–13th century Shaiva saint, and contemporary of Sant Dnyaneshwar. Traditions imply that the temple is a place where Changdev Maharaj meditated. Although detailed records of its initial construction are limited, art-historical documentation and stylistic analysis attribute the temple's origins to the 13th century CE under the patronage of the Yadava dynasty of Devagiri, when temple construction in basalt stone thrived throughout the Deccan.

Architecturally, the temple attributed to Hemadpanti style. The style is defined by the employment of black basalt stone, dry masonry (stones set in without mortar), and an emphasis on structural simplicity at the expense of ornamentation. Changavateshwar's pillars, featuring square shafts, rhythmic moldings, illustrate these virtues to a high degree. The temple plan is based on the conventional tripartite Shaiva scheme — consisting of a mandapa, antarala , and garbhagriha — and its surface is covered with symbolic motifs such as vyālas (mythical lions), lotus medallions, and miniature war scenes, bespeaking devotional and didactic purposes.

In spite of subsequent neglect, the temple has received intermittent restoration, notably in the Maratha period by Sardar Abasaheb Purandare.

The naming of the Changavateshwar Temple as Hemadpanti is not derived from the use of material alone, but from a concentration of architectural elements: interlocking basalt blocks, lack of excessive ornamentation, solidity of fortress-like architecture, and stylistic restraint in preference for symbolic over sculptural elaboration. These hallmarks place the temple firmly in a local regional idiom but also in a larger religious and political topography of late Yadava times, when Shaiva devotion, and Deccan temple architecture developed in mutually influencing dynamic interaction.

### **The Layout of the temple follows a Hindu temple plan.**

There is a large pillared hallway [Sabhamandapa] which houses a large Nandi idol which is common feature of all the Shiva temple. TheTemple is east facing. At the entrance to another hallway small idols of Ganesha and Hanuman can be seen on the left and right respectively, along with elaborately carved pillars.

Then comes a transitional hallway that leads toward the temple's main garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum). At the entrance, there is a decorated lintel featuring Ganesha—typically placed above the doorway leading into the inner sanctum. This element is known as the Ganeshapatti and is commonly found in most temples.

Next is the antarala, the vestibule between the hall and the sanctum. It contains intricately carved pillars with various motifs, and on the floor, a depiction tortoise—a common feature in traditional temples.

Finally, there is the garbhagriha, the innermost sanctum that houses the main deity: the Shiva Linga. This particular Shiva Linga is said to be svayambhu (self-manifested).

## Architecture-

As mentioned earlier, the temple is built in the Hemadpanti style. The material used throughout is dark basalt stone, which gives the structure a visually cohesive appearance. Strong evidence points toward a dry masonry style of construction, characterized by tightly fitted joints, massive stone blocks, and an absence of visible mortar in the available images.

The pillars are robust and multi-sectioned, with square bases. They feature intricate carvings that include a wide variety of motifs—ranging from mythological scenes and royal figures to depictions of everyday life during that period.

The ceiling is supported by heavy stone beams and adorned with carved ceiling panels. Another notable feature is the presence of two deep malas (lamp towers) in the temple complex—one on the left and one on the right. These deep malas are not typical of the Hemadpanti style and may have been added during a later reconstruction phase, likely in the Maratha period. Such lamp towers are a common architectural feature in Maharashtra temples from the Maratha era.



The stone is clearly visible and appears to be the characteristic grey to black basalt commonly found in the Deccan region. It shows slight feathering, with a grainy texture, which aligns well with materials used in Hemadpanti temples.

If we closely examine the joints between the stone blocks—particularly where the pillar base meets the lower platform—the fit is remarkably precise, with no visible mortar. This strongly suggests the use of dry masonry and interlocking stone construction, a hallmark of Hemadpanti architecture.

The pillar features a square base with relief carvings of stylized lions, a common motif in Hindu temple architecture. These lions symbolize strength and royalty and often serve as guardians of the temple. Above the lions are complex moldings, followed by human figures carved in dynamic poses. One of the figures appears to be holding a sword, possibly indicating a battle scene.

The upper section of the pillar includes additional geometric and floral moldings. The capital structure, partially visible at the top, contains bracket figures or decorative elements that transition into the ceiling beam. The carvings throughout are deep and detailed.

Motifs such as lions, human figures, geometric patterns, and floral designs are consistent with the decorative vocabulary of medieval Deccan temple architecture.



In this panel, starting from the left, the figure can be seen holding a shield in one hand and a sword in the other, indicating a warrior stance. The next figure holds a head in her hand, though it is not severed, it remains attached to the body, possibly suggesting dominance or symbolic control. The third figure also holds a head in a similar manner, again not severed. They seem to be female figurine.

This iconographic pattern strongly suggests a depiction of a deity in its Ugra (fierce) aspect. Deities such as Chamunda or Mahakali are often portrayed holding heads or weapons, symbolizing the destruction of evil and the triumph of divine power. Almost all figures in the panel appear to be wielding swords, and at their feet, smaller subdued figures are present—likely representing defeated enemies or demonic forces.

Taken together, the composition seems to illustrate a mythological battle scene, where fierce warrior-like deities are engaged in combat, accompanied by visual elements that reinforce themes of conquest and divine wrath.



The joints visible between the large stone blocks of the pillar and the courses of the wall structure appear exceptionally fine and precise, indicating a tight fit between the stones. There is no sign of mortar, which is characteristic of the dry masonry technique.

This pillar—similar to the one in the first image—is robust and multi-sectioned. Its main decorative band features deeply carved geometric and floral patterns, including interlocking petals, borders, leaves, and other organic motifs. While this contrasts with the more figurative carvings of the previous pillar, it remains equally representative of Hemadpanthi decoration, which often alternates or combines geometric, floral, and figurative elements.

Above and below the central decorative band, various intricate moldings are present, adding depth and rhythm to the composition.

A glimpse of the ceiling area reveals massive stone beams. Notably, the underside of the ceiling panel, visible in the background, is adorned with carved floral designs, further enhancing the decorative richness of the temple's architecture.



The figures visible in this image may be interpreted as part of a wrestling scene. At first glance, they could be taken for Vanaras, who are often associated with strength and combat in temple depictions—particularly referencing the famous Ramayana episode of Vali and Sugriva. However, several details challenge this interpretation.

The most distinctive feature of Vanaras in Indian art is the presence of a tail, which is clearly absent in this depiction. Additionally, the facial structures lack the characteristic protruding snout or muzzle typically used to signify monkey-like features.

The overall body proportions—muscular and stocky—appear more in line with powerfully built humans, possibly mallas (wrestlers). The presence of conical caps also supports this interpretation, as such headgear is more commonly associated with human figures rather than mythological creatures.



In this image, the central figure is prominently positioned and appears to be crowned. The headgear could be identified as a mukuta, though it does not definitively resemble a Sheshnaga mukuta. The figure is seated in a posture that conveys authority or divinity.

While identification as Vishnu is possible based on the crown and seated pose the iconography visible in this image alone is not sufficient to confirm it with certainty.

To the left of the central figure, an attendant may be female, inferred tentatively from the hairstyle.

The figure on the right is less clearly identifiable due to limited detail or possible erosion.



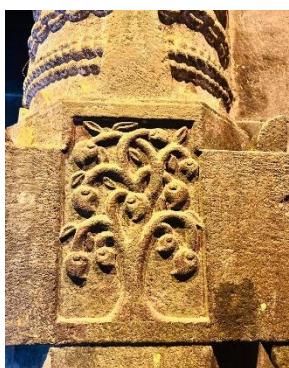
This image appears to depict dynamic, possibly dancing figures, accentuated by large, stylized leaves or surrounding foliage. The figure on the left raises one hand while extending the other toward the center. The figure on the right also holds one hand aloft and seems to be holding an object, while the other hand extends toward the left figure. These figures could be interpreted as dancers, musicians, or mythological characters. The surrounding foliage may suggest a forest setting, or it could simply serve as decorative framing, enhancing the visual rhythm and movement of the scene.



This panel features a high-relief carving technique, which allows the rosette to stand out prominently. The edges of the petals and the central disc are sharply defined, highlighting the precision and skill of the stoneworking.

The motif is a classic lotus rosette (Padma), a fundamental symbol in Indian art representing purity, auspiciousness, and creation. The design consists of eight clearly articulated petals radiating

symmetrically from a central hub. The entire rosette is enclosed within a circular border, which is itself embedded within a larger rectangular panel or band.



This panel depicts a stylized tree, likely representing the Kalpvriksha which is the mythical wish fulfilling tree or more broadly, a symbol of life, abundance, and fertility. The carving features a sturdy trunk with branching limbs, adorned with dense foliage and prominent round fruits or flowers distributed throughout the canopy. The stylized tree depicted in the panel could be interpreted as a mango tree.

The depiction does not strive for botanical realism but instead emphasizes symbolic richness and decorative rhythm. Within the context of Hemadpanti architecture, such vegetal motifs carry significant meaning. They represent nature, fertility, and prosperity, and are a common element in temple ornamentation.



These two images depict peacocks (Mayuras), birds frequently featured in Hindu temple art as symbols of beauty, auspiciousness, and divine association. Their presence aligns well with common Hemadpanti decorative themes.

In the second image, the identification as a stylized peacock is particularly compelling. The prominent head crest and the elaborate, decorative plumage strongly suggest this interpretation, making it look more like a peacock



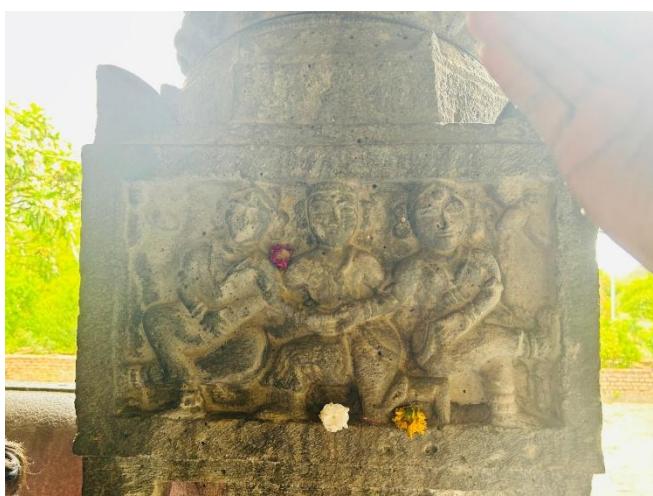
This image consists of three figures, with the central one appearing most prominent. Upon closer examination, the central figure can likely be identified as a Rishi or sage. This is suggested by several elements: a mala or ornament is visible around the neck, the hairstyle resembles the traditional topknot (jata) commonly associated with ascetics, and the figure holds what appears to be a kamandalu—a water pot typically associated with sages.

To the left of the Rishi, a female figure is seated on his thigh. The Rishi's right arm appears to be wrapped around her waist, suggesting a close or intimate association. On the right side of the central figure, there is another female figure. She also appears to be holding an object—possibly a kamandalu or another ritual item.



In this image, a female figure is depicted in a seated posture. She holds two ropes in her hands, and a pot is placed in front of her. The overall composition clearly suggests the churning of curd—a traditional activity for making tak or loni (buttermilk or butter).

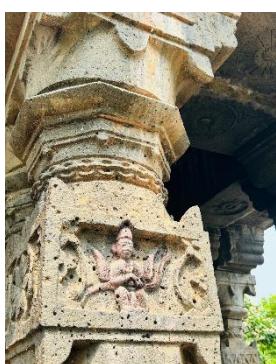
often shown churning butter. Alternatively, it may simply depict a scene from everyday rural life, reflecting the lived experiences of ordinary people during the period—an example of how temple art often blends the mythological with the mundane.



In this image, three figures are depicted, with the central figure appearing to be male, flanked on both sides by what seem to be female figures. All three figures are engaged in a distinctive hand gesture or pose, which appears coordinated and possibly symbolic.

The positioning and interaction of their hands suggest a deliberate and possibly ritualistic or performative act—potentially a dance sequence, a ceremonial scene, or an allegorical

representation. The symmetrical arrangement and the clear differentiation of gender among the figures may point to a narrative or devotional context, though the exact identification remains open to interpretation.



In this image, we see a pillar that matches the structural style of other pillars visible throughout the temple. Like the rest, it follows the consistent architectural vocabulary typical of the temple's design. One notable feature is the presence of iron chains, these can be observed in many temples of similar style and are shown on almost each pillar of this temple. While the exact reason for their inclusion remains unclear, their repeated use suggests a symbolic or ritual significance rather than a purely structural function.

There is a rectangular motif on the pillar that appears to depict a figure—possibly with tentacle-like extensions or multiple arms. However, the interpretation of

this form remains ambiguous. It may represent a symbolic, decorative, or mythological figure, but without clearer iconographic indicators, its precise meaning is open to interpretation.



This image clearly depicts a pillared hall, a fundamental element of any Hemadpanti temple. The layout is structured around rows of substantial stone pillars that support the roof. The consistent use of dark basalt for the pillars, floor slabs, and massive ceiling beams and panels is clearly visible.

The sheer scale and precision of the stonework strongly suggest the use of dry masonry construction with tenon and mortise joints which is a traditional technique used to securely interlock stone without mortar. The multi-sectioned, robust, and ornately carved pillars similar to those seen in previous close-ups define the space architecturally and aesthetically.

The stone ceiling, supported by heavy beams and adorned with carved panels, is another key feature. This hall conveys a strong sense of solidity, strength, and intricate craftsmanship. The heavy pillars and finely detailed carvings in dark basalt are highly characteristic of Hemadpanti temple aesthetics.

Additionally, a large Nandi idol is prominently placed between the central four pillars—a typical and significant element in any Shiva temple, symbolically facing the sanctum and embodying devotion and guardianship.



#### Analysis of the Base (Lower Structure):

The lower part of the temple—including the platform and main walls—appears to be constructed from dark basalt stone. The construction is solid, with well-fitted blocks consistent with the Hemadpanti dry masonry technique. The multifaceted, angular ground plan is very evident. Projections and recesses create a complex, almost star-like outline, especially visible in the platform layers. This is a defining characteristic of Hemadpanti architecture, likely derived from later Chalukyan influences.

The temple stands on a distinctive high platform that mirrors its intricate layout. The walls feature prominent horizontal mouldings, recesses, and likely niches or pilasters, which create a dynamic play of light and shadow. Up to the level of the eaves, the entire lower structure exhibits classic features of the Hemadpanti style.

#### Analysis of the Shikhara (Upper Tower):

There is a stark contrast between the lower structure and the shikhara. The latter is noticeably lighter in colour—whitish or yellowish—and appears to be made from a different material, most likely brick covered with lime plaster or stucco. This suggests a different phase of construction.

The shikhara follows a multi-tiered Nagara style, tapering toward the top. It is densely ornamented with rows of miniature figures. The decorative work, likely executed in stucco, appears dense but somewhat less sharp compared to stone carvings. While the overall form draws from traditional Nagara typologies, it lacks the typical robust stone vertical bands and crisp articulation seen in original Hemadpanti shikharas.

#### Conclusion:

The shikhara seems to be a later addition or reconstruction. Its stylistic and material qualities align with temple towers constructed or renovated during the Maratha period (roughly 17th–19th centuries). During this era, widespread temple renovation took place across Maharashtra, and brick with lime plaster became a common material, particularly for shikharas, due to its affordability and faster construction process.

The heavy projecting cornice or eave just below the lighter shikhara appears to be part of the original stone structure, clearly marking the transition between the older Hemadpanti base and the later Maratha-period shikhara.

To the right of the temple, a brick structure with arched openings is visible. This seems to be part of an enclosure or an associated building, which may also date to the Maratha period or later.

#### **Assessment of Changwateshwar as Hemadpanti:**

Based on the photographs and available information, the Changwateshwar Temple strongly aligns with the defining characteristics of Hemadpanti architecture. Key architectural elements such as the use of locally sourced dark basalt stone, a probable tri-partite layout featuring a Sabhamandapa, Antarala, and Garbhagriha, along with robustly carved pillars bearing typical motifs and stone beam-supported ceilings—clearly reflect hallmarks of the Hemadpanti style.

The iconographic and decorative motifs observed throughout the temple are entirely consistent with temples of this period and style, approximately dating from the 12th to 14th centuries in the Deccan region. While later additions, such as the Deepamalas, may belong to a subsequent era, likely the Maratha period they do not detract from the assessment of the original Hemadpanti structure.

Changwateshwar shares essential architectural and stylistic elements with other notable Hemadpanti temples in Maharashtra, such as Bhuleshwar and Aundha Nagnath.

In conclusion, Changwateshwar stands as a significant and representative example of Hemadpanti architecture in Maharashtra, clearly showcasing its typical features, construction techniques, and enduring cultural relevance.

## **The Narayneshwar Mahadev Temple**

### **Unraveling the Temple's Origins**

Initial investigations, based on available evidence, suggest that the Narayneshwar Mahadev Temple likely dates back to the 13th or 14th century CE, a period encompassing the Yadava dynasty and its immediate successors. This dating is strongly supported by the discovery of an inscription from 1285 CE in Narayanpur. The term post-Yadava mentioned sometimes suggests the possibility that the temple's construction or patronage might have extended into the period immediately following the decline of the Yadava dynasty, perhaps under the auspices of local chieftains who continued the artistic and religious traditions of their predecessors.

The temple's likely construction period falls squarely within Yadava era, making the Yadavas the most probable patrons. While the term post-Yadava leaves room for the possibility of later influences, the primary impetus for the temple's creation likely stemmed from the Yadava rulers or their close associates.

### **II. Dating and Historical Context: Placing the Temple in Time**

The recovery of an inscription dated to the 13th century (specifically 1285 CE) from Narayanpur provides critical evidence for establishing the timeline of the Narayneshwar Mahadev

Temple. This inscription firmly places the temple's existence, and likely its original construction, within the late 13th century, during the reign of the Yadava dynasty. The exact content of this inscription, which could potentially reveal details about the temple's dedication, the patrons who commissioned it, or significant historical events of that time, warrants further

scholarly investigation. In addition to this primary inscription, the engravings of 'Cāṅgā Vateśwarāce' and 'Acyanta Dhaja' found on the *ardhastambhas* flanking the entrance to the *sabhāmaṇḍapa* also offer potential clues about the temple's history. Understanding the significance and dating of these engraved names could shed further light on individuals or deities associated with the temple's establishment or later patronage.

### III. Architectural Analysis: Deciphering the Temple's Form

The architectural plan of the Narayneshwar Mahadev Temple, follows a typical layout found in many Hindu temples of the Deccan region. This plan includes a *nandīmaṇḍapa*, a *sabhāmaṇḍapa* (an assembly hall), an *antarāla*, and the *garbhagrha*.

Examining the key architectural components further reveals distinct features. The *shikhara*, the towering spire above the *garbhagrha*, is noted to be partially restored. The *sabhāmaṇḍapa* is entered through a grand entrance featuring seven *sākhās* (door jambs) adorned with intricate carvings. Moving towards the sanctum, the *antarāla* is guarded by two impressive *dwārapālas* (door guardians) standing at a height of five to six feet. The entrance to the *garbhagrha* itself features a sculpture of Gaṇeśa on its Ganeshpatti. Interestingly, one descends a few steps to enter the *garbhagrha*, which houses a magnificent Shivalinga at its center. Behind the Shivalinga a sculpture of Pārvatī is placed .

The main entrance to the temple complex is from the west, an orientation that is described as unusual, as most temples typically face east. This westward orientation may hold specific religious or symbolic significance. The upper *paṭṭa* likely featured a Sarasvatī sculpture, flanked by seven additional laghushikharas with various sculptures. The base of the entrance displays sculptures Shiva's door guardians ,ganga and Yamuna ,chauri bearers), and other attendants. The doors entrance are decorated by .The inscription Changa Vateshwar is engraved on the half pillar on the left side of the entrance, while Acyanta Dhaja is engraved on the right side, mirroring the main entrance's design.Two *devakos̄thas* flanking the main entrance currently house sculptures of Ganesha.The presence of *Venugopāla* alongside Shiva in the sculptural program might suggest syncretic religious practices or influences prevalent during the temple's construction period. The descending steps to the *garbhagrha* could symbolize a descent into the sacred realm or serve a practical purpose such as maintaining a cooler temperature within the sanctum.

The Narayneshwar Mahadev Temple is constructed using black basalt stone, a material commonly employed in temple architecture across the Deccan region. While the temple might share some characteristics with the Hemadpanthi style, such as the use of black stone, it may also exhibit distinct features that set it apart. The Hemadpanthi style typically involves the interlocking of stone slabs without the use of mortar , a technique common in Yadava-era.

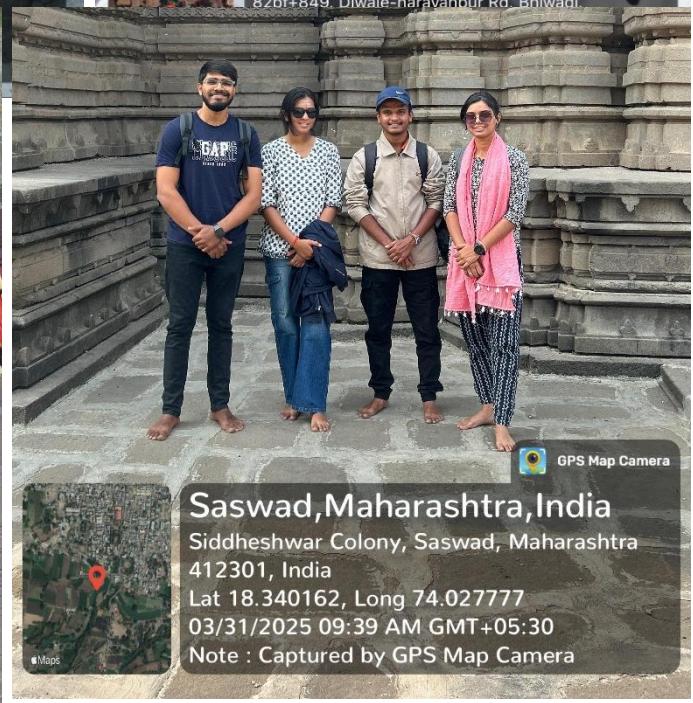
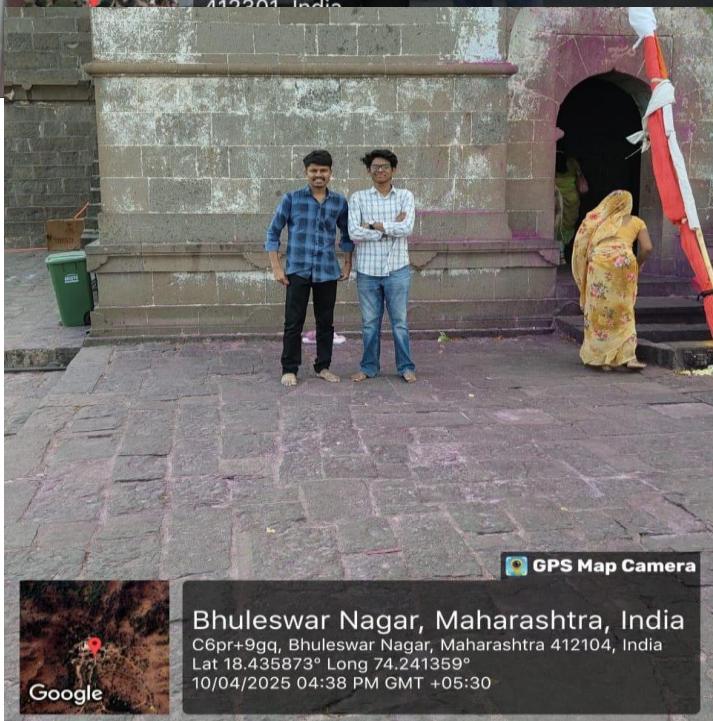
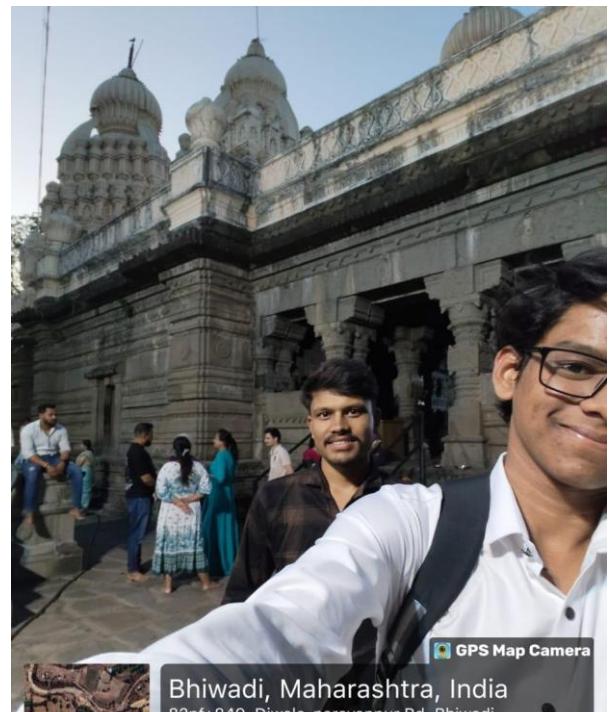
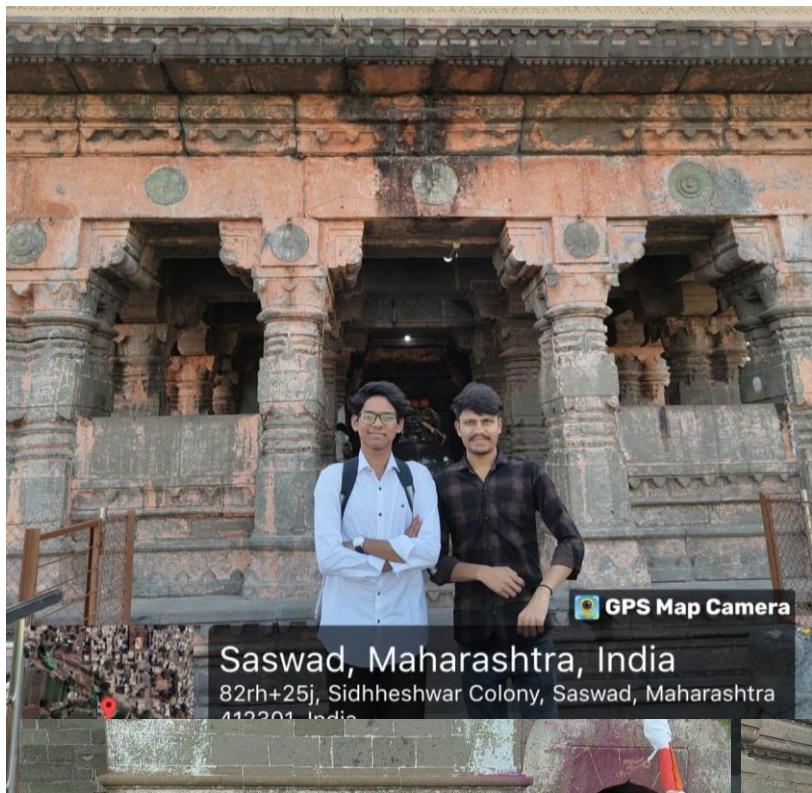
Comparing the Narayneshwar Temple's *shikhara* with known examples of *Bhūmija* architecture would help to confirm this attribution and understand its regional variations. While the Yadava dynasty is strongly associated with the Hemadpanthi style, which utilizes black stone and dry masonry , the aforementioned note about the temple's unique style suggests that it may not strictly adhere to all the conventions of Hemadpanthi architecture. Comparing the temple's features, such as its plan, the design of its *mandapa* and *garbhagrha*, and its construction techniques with known Hemadpanthi temples in Maharashtra would be crucial for a more precise classification. Further detailed architectural analysis is required to fully

understand the Narayneshwar Temple's place within the evolution of Deccan temple architecture and to identify the specific characteristics that contribute to its unique style. VI. Religious Significance and Local Traditions: The Temple as a Sacred Space

the fact that the village of Narayanpur derived its name from this ancient Narayneshwar temple underscores its foundational importance to the community's identity and collective memory. Investigating these local stories and myths could provide a deeper understanding of the temple's place in the cultural and spiritual life of the region.

One of the most distinctive features of the Narayneshwar Temple is its westward orientation , a departure from the more common eastward-facing temples. This unique orientation likely carries specific religious or symbolic meaning that would be understood within the local tradition or the broader Shaiva practices of the time. Exploring the reasons behind this westward orientation could reveal unique aspects of the temple's religious beliefs or historical circumstances.





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