

Keshava temple at Somanathapura

July 23, 2022

In news— The 13th century Keshava temple at Somanathapura is getting a makeover ahead of the proposed visit of the UNESCO team to inspect the Hoysala monument nominated for inscription as a World Heritage Site.

About the temple-

- **Described as “poetry in stone”,** Keshava temple is a **Vaishnava Hindu temple on the banks of River Cauvery** at Somanathapura, Karnataka.
- The temple was **built in 1258 CE by Somanatha Dandanayaka**, a general of the Hoysala King Narasimha III.
- **The Keshava is clubbed with two other Hoysala classics — Chennakeshava temple at Belur and Hoysaleshwara temple at Halebid** and are together India’s official nomination seeking UNESCO World Heritage status for 2022.
- The ornate temple is a model illustration of the **Hoysala architecture**.
- The temple is **enclosed in a courtyard with a pillared corridor of small shrines** (damaged).
- The main temple **in the center is on a high star-shaped platform(jagati)** with three symmetrical sanctums (*garbha-griha*), set in a square matrix oriented along the east–west and north–south axes.
- **The western sanctum was for a statue of Kesava** (missing), **the northern sanctum of Janardhana** and the southern sanctum of Venugopala, all forms of Vishnu.
- The sanctums share a common community hall (*sabha-mandapa*) with many pillars.

- **The outer walls, the inner walls, the pillars and the ceiling of the temple are intricately carved with theological iconography of Hinduism** and display extensive friezes of Hindu texts such as the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata Purana*.
- The temple was destroyed during Muslim attacks in the Hoysala kingdoms.
- **The first attack was by Malik Kafur, Alauddin Khilji's general in 1311 and in 1326 Muhammad Bin Tughlaq destroyed the remaining structures. Some parts of the temples were restored by Vijayanagara Kings and later by Wodeyars of Mysuru.**

What is World Heritage Site(WHS) status?

- A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area which is selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance.
- What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application.
- World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.
- The WHS Status aims at protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world that are considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.

Further

reading:

<https://journalsofindia.com/sacred-ensembles-of-the-hoysalas-temples/>