Prominent Religious Monuments and Sites in Bundelkhand Region

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The beginning of the Art activity in the Bundelkhand region can be traced from 2nd Century B.C onwards. The famous Buddhist stupa at Bharhut and Sanchi had been a work of research in the past. Brahmanical faith in the region did not lag behind. The followers of that faith constructed their temples as well. The Dasavatara temple at Devgarh and the Parvati temple at Nachna kuthara belonging to the Gupta period are landmarks in the history of Indian art and architecture. The art history of later period has to be gathered from the extant temples of Barwasagar(Jhansi), Madkhera(Tikamgarh), Devgah(Lalitpur), Tehri and Mahua(Shivpuri) and many other built in Gujjar-Pratihar style.(Trivedi 1985).1 The world famous khajuraho(Chhatarpur) group of temples are the best example of Chandela art-style with their erotic symbolism. The remains at Devgarh, Dudhai, Chandpur, Banpur, Kalinjar, Mahoba, Ajaygarh, Gairaha etc also belonging to Chandela period throw light on the vigorous temple building activities of the period. In Bundelkhand the principal medieval dynasties like Chandellas, kachchapghatas, and parmaras holding sway respectively over the eastern, Central, northern and western parts of central India, Built temples which have many common elements of plan, design and decorative scheme.

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The major archaeological sites in Bundelkhand region are Erich(Jhansi), Eran (sagar), & Gujjara, Chhoti Badoni(Datia), Pawaya (Gwalior) etc.

Sanchi near Vidisha was a flourishing Buddhist settlement teeming with temples, monasteries and stupas dating from the mauryan to the mediaeval ages. This structure built of large bricks, was much damaged when excavated. Presumably it was hemispherical in shape with a raised terrace at the base, enclosed by a wooden raling, and a stone umbrella at the summit of which pieces are recovered from the site.2

Among The earliest surviving temples mention may be made of Bhadona group of temples.3 Originally it has twelve stone temples but only few survive the ravages of time. These are small temples with a small portico in front of the main temple. The roof is covered by a single stone slab.

Small flat roofed shrines consisting of a cella with almost plain walls, generally with a shallow verandah and often surrounded by a pillared hall and without any kind of Shikhara are typical to the early Gupta Period.6 (Cunningham & Coomarswamy 1965). The earliest known Monuments of Gupta period in Bundelkhand region is Dasavatara temple at Devgarh(Lalitpur) which is having a short shikhar and first known brick temple at Bhitargaon (Kanpur). The platform of the Devgarh temple was decorated with friezes representing scenes from the stories of rama and Krishna while the three plain walls of its triratha sanctum are relieved with superb figure compositions depicting Vishnu as Sheshshayi, Gajendra Moksha and the penance of Nara and Narayana.
A small but well-proposed Surya temple at Madkhera and Umri (Tikamgarh district) each comprising a sanctum with pancha ratha shikhara and a porch are gems of the contemporary style, distinguished by fine sculpture, particularly of Sun God. The above temples are the most representative specimens of the early mediaeval style of North India in general and Bundelkhand particular. The Chandellas who ruled over this region for quite a long time were known as great builders. They decorated their realm with tanks, forts, palaces and temples. All the temples of Khajuraho pertain to the typical Chandella style and share certain particularities of plan and elevation. They are compact and well-knit structure, some combining all the developed constituents of the temple plan, comprising an entrance porch, a mandapa, a maha-mandapa and lateral transepts, a vestibule and a sanctum enclosed by an ambulatory with lateral and rear transepts. The developed Khajuraho style begins with the Lakshman temple which was followed by Parsavnath, Vishvanath. The peak reached in the Kandariya Mahadeva which represents the grand finale of the architectural and sculptural movement.

Gairaha village at Mauranipur is about 35 miles from the district head quarters is important as it has yielded a chandella period temple which is a well preserved monument. It has a commanding position on a small hill. It is made of grey granite. The architectural plan is simple but logically projected. There being three sections each with its own roof, rising in regular graduation, the lowest and somewhat rounded one being over the porch, the next pyramidal and the last(also pyramidal) forming a still higher tower. The Neelkantha temple in Kalinjar fort(Banda) is also said to have been renovated by a chandella king.

It was originally a cave temple in which Shiva in his raudra form is available. This temple has many inscriptions engraved on the walls, pillars and stairs. Tow water resources are also available which are of historical importance. The maniya devi temple of the tutelary deity of the chandellas stands on the shores of Madan Sagar lake near the Mahoba fort. Another temple, the well preserved granite temple dedicated to lord shiva is located at the Madan Sagar. Its base plan is similar to that of khajuraho. The famous Sun temple of Rahila Sagar was built by Chandella ruler Rahila. It is made up of granite stone and though in a ruined state today, it still stands as the finest example of early Pratihara architecture in the area. It has a circular mandapa and dedicated to Sun –God. Located 15kms north west of Mahoba the Makrabai village is notable for its temple having three sanctum round a common mandapa. Bundelkhand is historically very rich if we turn towards Lalitpur. Places like Banpur, Chandpur, Dudhai, Dhorra, deogarh, Madanpur, Siron Khurd are famous for their ancient and mediaeval temples. Many sculptures both Brahmanical and Jain from these places are well preserved in the government Museum Jhansi and state Archaeological Museum Lalitpur. Historians agree on the point that Devgarh was a rich trade centre during ancient to mediaeval period. A large quantity of Jain sculptures are found scattered at this site and they are now fixed in the walls of the surrounding temples. Devgarh is also famous for its Nahar valley and narsimha temple. This place still has many well preserved Jain temples. Chandpur is rich in archaeological remains which are of Chandella and Jain origin and comprise five groups of ruined temples and many pieces of sculpture, some of exquisite craftsmanship.

The Bundelas were also builders. Bir Singh Dev built temples at Orchha and Dhumeshwar(near Dabra Gwalior). The Chaturbhuj temple(Orchha) is dedicated to Vishnu and Dhumeswar temple is dedicated to Shiva. The ancient Shiva temple inside the fort of Jhansi also belonged to the same period. Hindu Monasteries of shaiva religion are also found in the Bundelkhand region especially at Surwaya and
Rannod. These places have shown us the well preserved monasteries of 9th-10th century A.D. celebrated in ballads and the scriptures for its natural beauty nd closely associated with the epic Ramayana, Chitrakoot is a hallowed centre of pilgrimage.

The abode of shiva the neelkantha temple is still visited by hundreds of people every day. The huge image of kalbhairav(originally called madhuk Bhairav) is note worthy here.

This is a holy temple where Raja Ram is still worshipped as a king. It is generally believed that the rule of ram is still going on in this place. Every episode of lord Rama’s life is celebrated here with great vigour.

both these places are visited by thousands of worshippers. They are religiously as well as historically important places.

Established by swamiji Maharaj of Datia. Originally it was a small temple with a very ancient shivlinga inside it. Now a big museum and a meditation hall is made for the visitors and worshippers. It has a beautiful artificially made Haridra Sarovar.

Thus many a historical places of Bundelkhand region are still unknown to the public . it require a lot of attention from the government agencies. Some of the monuments are still in need of conservation and protection as many places bear paintings of 19th Century, a great deal of interest is required for future conservation process. Some of the temples and forts are difficult to enter because of the wild vegetation around them and the access is not very easy towards these areas. Bundelkhand need a lot of attention regarding the historical monuments. Few pictures as shown below can throw a light on the status of the monuments in this region.

REFERENCES

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