

Visual perception on the architectural elements of the built heritage of a historic temple: A case study of Nachna, India.

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Abstract: *Heritage architectural and sculptural expressions are self-explanatory documents, which carry its legacy along with the wheel of time. The Nachna temple of Madhya Pradesh is one among such precious monuments, where the socio-culture knowledge and ideological hemispheres had taken its materialistic identity, through precisely crafted sculptural panoramic expressions. Material wise this temple-structure could be categorized as an example of stone architecture; and is located in the Old Town area of Madhya Pradesh, India. Goddess Shiva, Parvati, Durga, Vishu are being worshipped in this temple- as major deity . The stone-based architecture and artwork at the temple have survived, while the brick temples have not. But as observed, now a day this heritage monument is detracting due to multifold issues. This paper critically investigates the present overall scenario of this temple.*

Key words: *Nachna, panoramic, mutifold, sculptural expressions, etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

This paper is an outcome of observation based field study. This study encompasses the existing general condition of the Nachna temple and includes its Geographic Location of Nachna temple, Historical background, Socio-cultural importance, Stone as primary constructional raw material, Temple structure, Sculptural and structural damage studies, Temple revival Initiatives and Significance of Nachna temple in contemporary era etc. The area was visited several times for the collection of architectural information during the year of 2018-2019. Literature concerning architecture of this area has been consulted. The study area occupies unique importance in the village and the major development of architectural elements has been observed during the study period.

Over the years, the history of the towns has become a symbol of their image, which generally reflects the elements of imperial architecture. Historical towns have confronted new challenges and changes over the last few decades. Their monuments, sacred precincts, processional streets, and public squares are all endowed with moonstones and have remained in obscurity.

Nachna holds a very important place in early Indian architecture. This village has some exemplary building of the Gupta period. There is not much written about Nachna in historical records, so we do not know who and for what this small village known in ancient times. Recently Nachna's name has been changed to Chaumukhnath, because of Chaturmukha Mahadeva temple of the town. Nachna is 40 km from Panna. 110 km from Satna and 100 km from Khajuraho. Khajuraho and Satna are the nearest railheads. Khajuraho is the nearest airport. Nachna can be reached by a taxi from the main towns. If you plan by public transport, then take a bus from Panna going to Satna and get down at Devendranagar, which is 15 km from Panna. From Devendranagar take a bus to Saleha, which is 15 km from there. From Saleha, Nachna is about 12 km. However there is no public transport available to reach this village. You can either try a taxi from Saleha or try some hitchhiking. Public transport frequency is not very good, so plan accordingly.

1.1. TEMPLE STRUCTURE OBSERVATIONS:

The temples are near the Panna forest national park and are now a pilgrimage site referred to as Chaturmukha. As observed, the architectural structure of Nachna temples as of the prototypical style of the temple complex. Structurally Nachna has two different shrines, Parvati Temple (5th century) and Chaturmukha Temple (9th century). The Parvati temple (5th century) is constructed on a terrace as observed mainly 35 feet inside and a small square sanctum of 15 feet side. As observed the sanctum is ruined now. The face of the temple is towards the west contrary to most Hindu temples with face facing towards east. As observed, the sanctum doorway is surrounded by finely carved guardians with Ganga, Yamuna river Goddesses. The stonework flanking the entrance has concentric panels of reliefs. The outer panel shows the Hindu river Goddesses at the bottom, then amorous complexes in court shift and love scenes. North and south walls of the temple are pierced with stone windows. The style of sanctum door has stylistic similarities with houses found in the Lakshman temple in the Sirpur Groupe of monuments in Chhattisgarh. The Chaturmukha Mahadeva temple (9th century) dates from the praithara period. As observed the walls of the temple are plane except for central place. It has

been seen that the temple walls are built by carved panels, doorways dating from the Gupta era. This temple is a house of 8th-century four-faced Shiva Linga carved with remarkable vitality especially the fierce open-mouthed face of the god on its south side. It has been also observed that Shiva Lingam having four faces with the elaborate hairstyle. The stone windows are known as a trellis.

2. PRIMARY CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL: STONE:

Stone was the basic construction material used in the construction of Nachna temple- foundation area, door panels, wall panels; boundary walls, etc. all built using stone. Two different types of stone had been found in constructed structures, i.e., sandstone and laterite. Intricate Stone carvings were majorly available over sandstone panels.

2.1 SAND STONES:

Sandstones are nature made common sedimentary rocks, composed of sand particles, minerals and other locally available other variants. Most of the Nachna sandstones are broken particles of the Deccan Plateau, and are available in red, orange-reddish yellow and pink etc. Like colors variations. These stones are suitable for handcraft and creative sculptural expression purposes through chiseling and other related craft processes. Probably that's why, sandstone had been used as the primary construction material for building Nachna temples.

Fig. 1



Raw sandstone block, (B) A carved sandstone block available in *Nachna Temple* premise, (C.) Sculpted sandstone wall of *Nancha Temple*

2.2 LATERITE STONES:

Laterite stones are being used for building contemporary houses as well used for other diversified daily life uses by the local residents. Since long back, Laterite stone bricks had been used as a construction material in many states of India and so found used in constructions of the studied temples. Laterite decompositions are usually available near the earth crust, and are easy to be extracted, and further cutting into symmetric cuboidal bricks. There is a vast decomposition of laterite stone in different nearby locations within the Madhya Pradesh state.



Fig. 1.1

Parvati Temple (5th century A.D.)



Fig.1.2

Chaturmukha Mahadeva Temple (9th century A.D.)

3. CONCLUSION:

As understood, the central philosophy behind the Nachna temples is to worship Shiva, Parvati, Durga, Vishnu, and others by the local people of the region and other devotees who visited there. As per the local believers, the God and Goddesses of the Nachna temples bless their followers with intellectual growth and encourages them to "beautify their overall family life" using their constructive aptitude and attitude. Nachna temples date back from the Gupta period and had a great architecture present in the Nachna village. This temple occupies the supreme place as for the worship of Gods and Goddesses is concerned. By our observations during the study period, a number of devotees visited the Nachna temples on a daily basis period to get the blessings of deities. But, these temples in Nachna village are in ruins now due to the lack of attention and care by the local authorities of the region. More concrete steps to be taken for the preservation and betterment of this monumental heritage site in Nachna village is the need of the hour.

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