

Shree Kshetra Mahuli, Satara, Maharashtra

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Satara, 240km South East of Mumbai, is a place with very rich Cultural and Historical background, dating back right from Shivaji Maharaj era to end of Peshwai. Satara has number of religious places around. Some of the temples are 500 to 600 years old. One of such old temple complexes devoted to Lord Shiva is "Shree Kshetra Mahuli". This is birth place of the famous Chief Justice in Peshwa regime, Mr. Ramshastri Prabhune. He was known for his straightforwardness in giving justice irrespective of who was the accused. He was known for his unbiased opinions. Ram Shastri held office during later part of 18th Century.



Shree Kshetra Mahuli is situated at confluence of rivers Krishna and Venna. Krishna being major river of the two. This place is also called as "Dakshin Kashi". There are three major temples of Lord Shiva namely, Vishweshwar, Rameshwar and Sangameshwar. There are a few more temples as well but I could not get names and details of these. Vishweshwar side is called "Sangam Mahuli" whereas Rameshwar side is called "Kshtra Mahuli".



Temple on one bank of river is called Vishweshwar Temple. This is built in "Hemadpanthi" style of Architecture. This style of Architecture was developed by one Hemadpant who was minister in Yadav Empire. He developed this specific construction style for temples. Normally, temples have hexagonal or octagonal compound, but this particular temple has

heptagonal compound. This is quite uncommon. Six sides are similar but seventh

side is different. On seventh side there are 2 stairs to enter the temple area separated by “Deepmaal”. Deepmaal is tall structure carved out of one stone with provision for placing oil lamps from top to bottom. In this case, “Deepmaal” is about 55-60 feet tall. Oil Lamps are placed on this at the time of Important occasions like “Shivaratri, Ekadashi”, an auspicious day for Hindu’s. All Shiva temples have a small temple of Nandi, a bull on which Lord Shiva is said to travel. “Nandi” faces always Lord Shiva. Nandi temple here is quite big compared to many other similar temples of Lord Shiva. This temple was being looked after by King of Aundh. So, cremation of the royal people of Aundh used to be done here. That’s what is told by the locals. To enter the main temple, one has to climb 9-10 steps from river bank and then another 5-6 steps to enter main temple. As we enter



“Sabhamandap” we get a very soothing and calm feeling. Stone pillars in the “Sabhamandap” are quite near each other, which gives a feeling that Sabhamandap is very small but in reality it is quite big. From Sabhamandap we enter the main temple core (*Gabhara*, as is called in Marathi). It is very dark there, which is normal in a Shiva Temple. While entering the *Gabhara*, we come across a Huge Bell. It is said that the bell was brought to this place by one of Warriors of Peshwa,



Chimajiappa after defeating the Portugese in Vasai. Vasai is located just north of Mumbai. The bell is very beautiful and robust with impressions in Portugese language. One can enter the Sabhamandap from 3 sides. At junction of these three entrances there a big Tortoise carved in stone, facing the *Gabhara*, on the floor. Inside the main Temple (*Gabhara*) it is very

cold and dark. “Pind” as it is called is very beautiful. The sculptures inside the *Gabhara* are very beautiful and very neatly carved. It gives immense calmness inside the temple, may it be The *Gabhara* or the Sabhamandap.

Just in front of the Temple there are about 2-3 stone pyres (*Samadhi*) of royals from Princely State of Aundh, who maintained the temple at that time. But since nothing is written over there, I could not get the specific names. Actually, these “*Samadhi's*” are seen only when water level in the river is low. This part of the river

is not maintained at all. Lots and lots of litter is seen just outside the Temple complex. It hurts a lot and makes you really sad. Actually, locals themselves should take initiative to keep such premises clean and neat in order to keep the sanctity of the place. No harm in taking some charge/money for the same. Even the temple complex also needs to be very kept clean.

It is said here that presence of Lord Shiva is near the cremation area. That is why there is a very nicely built Hindu crematorium, originally built by one of the royals from Aundh state. All the post-death Kriya-Karma are done here.

As we start coming out of the temple, one finds a real big chain running across Vishweshwar Temple side to the Rameshwar temple side. As per locals, this chain was used for transporting people from one bank to other when water level is very high in the river. On the left hand side one we see a different type of cremation ground. It quite resembles that of Muslim cremation place. After enquiring about the same, it was told that the place is cremation ground for "Lingayat Caste". In Lingayat Caste, though Hindus, body is not burnt but it is buried like Muslims or Christians. The main difference is that the body is put in chair and buried vertically.



for the Rameshwar temple is entirely different. It is also carved out of one stone, as is told to me, but the pattern is totally different. For going to river from the main Rameshwar Temple, one has to climb down about 55-60 steps to reach water. These are very nicely carved out of stone. The Rameshwar Temple is quite small

To go to the Rameshwar temple, one has to come out of the Ishweshwar temple and cross the bridge on Krishna river and go to other side. The bridge is built by the British some 80 plus years ago and is still in absolutely excellent condition.

Actually, both the ishreshwar and the Rameshwar temples are bang opposite to each other. But, we need to skirt around from the bridge, go through the village Kshetra to reach the Rameshwar Temple. That is how we come from "Kshetra Mahuli" to Sangam Mahuli". The temple architecture

compared with the Vishweshwar Temple. Since, this temple is located at a height, it gives very panoramic view of the Vishweshwar Temple which is there on other side of the river. Statue of Nandi here is very beautiful example of craftsmanship. All the details like eyes, ears even the nails of the toes etc are done with absolute precision. Normally, in all shiva temples, Nandi is always facing Shiva. Here the Nandi is not looking at shiva but a bit towards right side. There is story which was told to me by the locals there, very interesting one. The story goes like this, the horns of the Nandi were of pure gold. One day some thieves cut these horns and ran away. Since no one was around when the theft was done, the Nandi changed his head position pointing towards the direction the thieves ran/fled. Eventually, the thieves got caught taking a cue from the head position of Nandi. Isn't it really funny?



The Sabhamandap of the Rameshwaram Temple is also quite small compared to the Vishweshwar Temple. Here the main “Pindi” is more beautiful than that of the Vishweshwar Temple and is surrounded by water. This place is not as clean as the



Vishweshwar Temple. the Rameshwaram temple is carved out of a monolith which gives more robustness to the structure. Some kind of restoration work is being done here. In this temple there are two “Deepmals” which are very short compared with those of the Vishweshwar Temple. One of these is in broken condition. While speaking to locals, it was found that in heavy monsoon the water rises, substantially, and sometimes it covers about 30 odd steps, meaning in heavy monsoon, the water in the river rises by about 40-45 feet than normal level.

There are at least 4-5 more temples, details of which I could not get, even from locals. Out of these 2 or 3 are practically not reachable.

Overall, the entire area of all the temples is very beautiful and it gives immense pleasure after paying visit to such complexes.

If such places are maintained properly, these could attract lots of tourists. If a small amount is taken from them for maintaining and showing them with proper

guides to tell them the stories behind these the temples can survive. In foreign countries, such places create lot of tourism and thus revenue as well.

Kane Dwijendra is Civil Engineer by profession. He has been running a consultancy company for 22 years in the field of Structural Designing. He likes to travel a lot, but to places where very few people visit. He is interested in Nature, Wildlife and Heritage Photography.
