

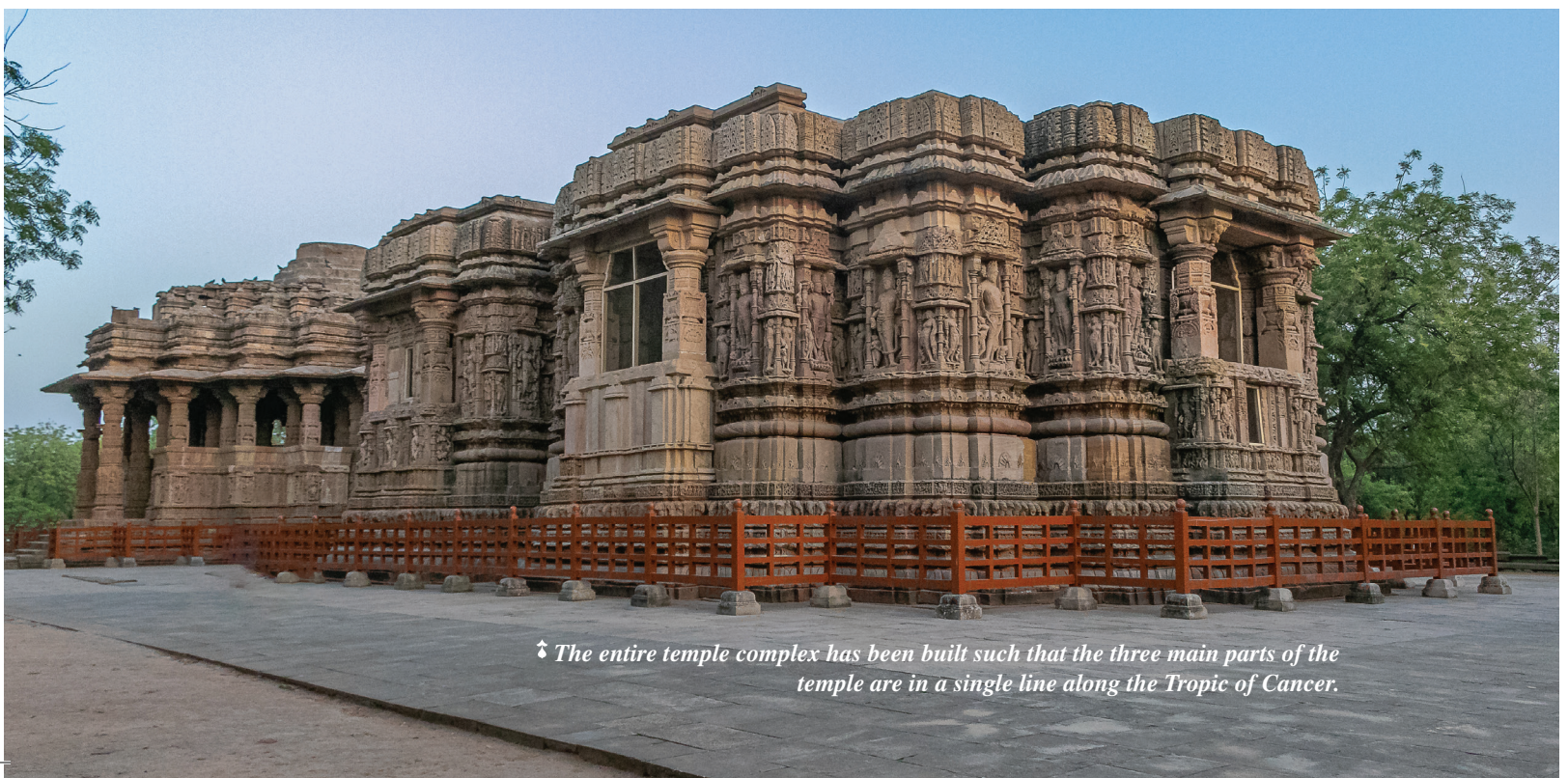
POETRY IN STONE

THE SUN TEMPLE OF MODHERA

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100 kms from Ahmedabad, in a tiny hamlet called Modhera, lies a masterpiece that can only be described as poetry in stone. The Sun temple of Modhera is a 11th century wonder built by King Bhima I of the Solanki dynasty. The temple complex consists of a *Surya Kund* (temple pool), a *Sabha Mandapa* (hall) and a *Gudha Mandapa* (shrine). Each

of these structures is covered with minute stories in the form of intricate carvings and sculptures. The exquisite architecture and astounding facts about this magnificent monument has put the temple on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Here are some of the unique features of the Modhera Sun Temple in Gujarat.



✦ The entire temple complex has been built such that the three main parts of the temple are in a single line along the Tropic of Cancer.



✦ The Surya Kund has 108 shrines or mini temples along its steps. Each of these shrines is dedicated to a different God.



✦ At the entrance of the Sabha Mandapa from the Surya Kund are two Kirti sthamb (pillars). These were a part of the Kirti Toran (victory arch) commemorating the defeat of Mahmud Ghazni by King Bhima I. The horizontal piece of this toran is missing but one can still see the stunning pillars.



🌿 The Sabha Mandapa or the prayer hall has 52 intricately carved pillars that detail scenes from Mahabharat, Ramayan and Krishna Leela.





✦ The Gudha Mandapa used to be home to a unique idol of the Sun God. The deity idol had a gem in its crown and the whole piece was aligned such that when the first ray of light entered the shrine, it fell on the gem and lit up the entire space. The idol went missing many years ago and has not been found yet.



✦ On the outer façade of the Gudha Mandapa, besides the 12 sculptures of Lord Surya (all in different poses) and the other key deities, there are a series of carvings depicting the entire life of a human -from his birth to his death.