

Konark Sun Temple

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Context:

The Union government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved a new 32 kilometre railway line connecting the temple towns of Puri and Konark that are famous for the Shree Jagannath Temple and Sun Temple, respectively.

Background:

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the new railway stretch will be developed into a spiritual and heritage tourism corridor.

About Konark Sun Temple:

1. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is also known as Black Pagoda, Arka Kshetra, and Padma Kshetra.
2. The Sun Temple and Konark Wheel were built during the 13th century under the reign of Eastern Ganga King Narasimhadeva-I.
3. It represents the most evolved period in Kalinga Architecture.
4. Sun temples are temples dedicated to the worship of the Sun God and these are designed to highlight the celestial movement of the Sun.
5. Materials used for building the temple include Chlorite, Laterite, and Khondalite rocks.
6. Konark Sun Temple was once described by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore as the place where the language of stone surpasses the language of man.

Structure of the Konark Sun Temple:

1. The main entrance of the Sun Temple, the Gajasimha - gaja meaning elephant and Simha referring to lions. According to mythology, lions resemble pride, elephants resemble wealth and both of them kill the human.
2. Gajasimha leads to the Sun Temple's finely carved Natya Mandapa, the hall for dance and theatre. The sculptures here depict different types of dance styles.
3. It is the assembly hall of the temple and the steps that rise to Jagamohan are flanked by stone horses.
4. The Jagamohan is followed by the deul which is the sanctum where the idol is placed.
5. Bhoga-mandira (kitchen) to make bhoga for the deity and devotees.

Architectural features of the Konark Sun Temple:

1. It was designed in such a way that the rising sun's first rays would illuminate the sanctum and the presiding deity.
2. It has been designed like the chariot of Surya, the Sun God. The temple stands on a base of a total of 24 intricately carved wheels, 12 on each side. The chariot seems to be drawn

eastwards towards the dawn by a team of seven spirited horses.

3. The thicker wheels are all carved with circular medallions at their centers on the widest part of the face. The rims are carved with designs of foliage with various birds and animals, whereas the medallions in the spokes are carved with the figures of women in various luxurious poses, mostly of a sensual nature.
4. These seven horses have been named in Bhagawat Gita, as 'Gyatri', 'Usnika', 'Anustuv', 'Vrihati', 'Pangti', 'Tristup', and 'Jagati' which possibly stand for the rhythmic representation of the sacred verses of the Vedas. The seven horses are also named after the seven colours of the rainbow - Sahasrara (Violet), Indra-nila (Indigo), Nila (Blue), Haritaha (Green), Pita (Yellow), Kausumbhaha (Orange), and Rakta (Red).
5. There are two carved war horses in front of the southern side of the Konark Temple. The sculpture depicts each of them with its massive strength and energy crushing down the warrior. This figure of the war horse of Konark has been accepted as the symbol of the state Government of Odisha.
6. It has three impressive carvings of the Sun God at three strategic locations, to catch the sun at dawn, at noon, and sunset. The carvings at the base of the temple and on its walls chronicle everyday activities.
7. Some carvings depict sensuous details while others exhibit mythical creatures and animals like elephants and birds.



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