



## [Glory of Bharath](#) » Bharath Darshan

Dear Sai brothers and sisters,

This month our sojourn will be to two of the architectural marvels of India.

### Konark Temple

"Konark is the place where the language of the stone defeats the language of man."

-- Rabindranath Tagore



The magnificent Sun Temple at Konark is the culmination of Orissan temple architecture, and one of the most stunning monuments of religious architecture in the world. Built by the King Narasimhadeva in the thirteenth century the entire temple was designed in the shape of a colossal chariot with seven horses and twenty four wheels, carrying the sun god, Surya, across the heavens. Surya has been a popular deity in India since the Vedic period.

Konark is situated at comfortable distance from the famous religious and tourist centre of Puri (35 K.M.) and the capital city of Bhubaneswar (65 K.M). "Konarka", the place bears a name composed of two World elements : Kona meaning corner and ARKA meaning the Sun.

The Sun god worshipped in Ark Kshetra is also called Konark. In 'Brahma Purana' the Sun God in Ark-kshetra has been described as Konaditya. So it is evident that the place where the Kona aditya (or Konark, the Sun god) was worshipped was also popularly called Konark. It is described in Purushottam Mahatmya that Lord Vishnu after killing the demon Gayasur, to commemorate the glory of his victory, placed his Sankha (conch) in Puri, Chakra (disc) in Bhubaneswar, Gada (mace) in Jajapur and Padma (lotus) in Konark and they were later known as Sankha Kshetra, Chakra Kshetra, Gada Kshetra and Padma Kshetra respectively. This corner on the east sea coast houses the ruins of a temple, exquisitely built to resemble a gigantic chariot with impeccably carved wheels, columns and panels. It stands as a mute reminder of the times when Orissan architecture has reached its pinnacle.



The Sun Temple, built in the thirteenth century, was conceived as a gigantic chariot of Sun God, with twelve pairs of exquisitely ornamented wheels pulled by seven pairs of horses. Majestic in conception, this temple is one of the most sublime monuments of India, famous as much for its imposing dimensions and faultless proportions as for the harmonious integration of architectural grandeur with plastic allegiance. Every inch of the temple is covered with sculpture of an unsurpassed beauty and grace, in tableaux and freestanding pieces ranging from the monumental to the miniature. The temple symbolizes the majestic stride

of the Sun god. At the entrance of the temple is a Nata Mandir. This is where the temple dancers used to perform dances in homage to the Sun god.

### Legend

It was dedicated to the Sun-God (Arka) popularly called Biranchi-Narayan, and the tract in which it is situated was known as Arka-Kshetra as well as padma-kshetra. Among the five great religious zones or Kshetra which were located in Orissa, Konark was considered to be one, the other four being Puri, Bhubaneswar, Mahavinayak, and Jajpur.

According to mythology, Samba, son of Lord Krishna was smitten with leprosy due to a curse. Samba for twelve years underwent severe penance at Mitravana near the confluence of Chandrabhaga river with the sea at Konark and ultimately succeeded in pleasing the God Surya, the healer of all skin diseases and was cured of his illness. In gratitude, he decided to erect a temple in the honour of Surya. The day following his cure, while Samba was bathing in the Chandrabhaga he discovered an image of the God, which had been fashioned out of Surya's body by Viswakarma. Samba installed this image in a temple built by him in Mitravana, where he propitiated the God. Since then throughout the ages this place has been regarded as sacred".

A shallow pool of water is known as the Chandrabhaga, where even now crowds of pilgrims take a purificatory bath before sun rise on the seventh day of the bright half of the month of Magha (January-February). A fair also takes place on this occasion. Once in the year the deserted holy place of Surya thus throbs with religious emotion. This is likely a survival of an ancient practice following the construction of the temple. Magha-Saptami is mentioned in the Madala Panji as one of the festival of this holy centre. It is also referred to the Brahma Purnima in connection with the description of Konark.

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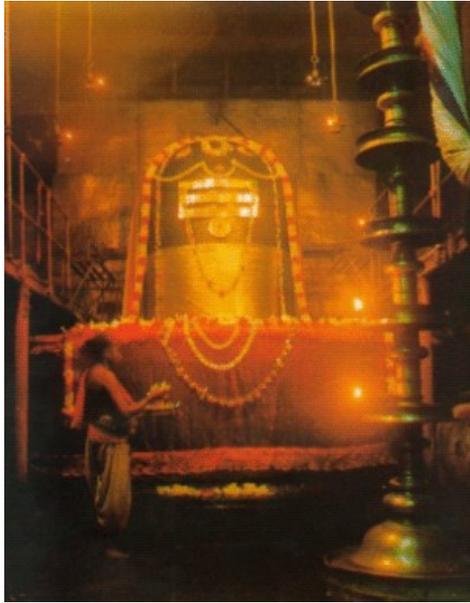
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As the legend says that, King Narasimha Deva-I of the Ganga Dynasty had ordered this temple to be built as a royal proclamation of the political supremacy of his dynasty. A workforce of 12 hundred artisans and architects invested their creative talent, energy and artistic commitment for an exhausting period of 12 years. The king had already spent an amount equivalent to the state's revenue receipts of 12 years. However the completion of the construction was nowhere near sight. Then the king issued a final command that the work be completed by a stipulated date. The team of architects headed by Bisu Maharana was at its wit's end.

It was then that Dharmapada the 12 year old son of the chief architect Bisu Maharana arrived there as a visiting onlooker. He became aware of the anxiety looming large among the architects. Although he did not have any practical experience of temple construction, he was thorough in his study of the theories of temple architecture. He offered to solve the confounding problem of fixing the last copping stone at the top of the temple. He surprised everyone by doing that himself. But soon after this achievement the dead body of this adolescent prodigy was found on the sea beach at the foot of the temple. Legend says that Dharmapada laid down his life to save his community.

### Brihadeeswara Temple



Lord Brihadeeshwara

Thanjavur Brihadeeswara is one of the most ancient temple located in the city of Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, India and is the world's first complete granite temple. Brihadeeswara temple contains a gigantic Mahalingam, the symbol of Lord Shiva, and a massive Nandi, the sacred bull of the Lord. The Nandi is the second largest monolithic sculpture of its kind in the country. It stretches 6 m in length with a breadth of 2.6 m and rises almost 4 m. Niches on the walls and inner passages are adorned with representations of Goddess Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati and different forms of Shiva (Bhikshatana, Virabhadra, Kalantaka, Natesa, Ardhanareeswara and Alingana).

The 'Vimana' of the temple is 70 meters, which is the only one of its kind in the world. The 'Shikharam' of Brihadeswara temple has been carved out of a single stone weighing around 81.25 tons. Just imagine they placed 80 ton rock atop this temple and that too without the crane.



"Rajarajesvaram in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu has often been called 'the temple of temples'. Built round the turn of the first millennium A. D. during the heyday of Chola rule, it is perhaps one of the best expressions of artistic excellence that could be conceived of. Built by the greatest of Chola rulers, Rajaraja, the temple was named after him as Rajarajesvaram, meaning 'the temple of the Isvara (God) of Rajaraja'. Later on, it became known as the Brihadisvara temple meaning the temple of the 'Great Isvara'.

It is perhaps the only temple in the world which carries on its walls the engraved evidence, in beautiful calligraphy, of its entire history and the story of the contemporary society. According to tradition, the temple was built by the Chola king RajaRajeshwar in compliance of a command given to him in his dream. Although there were later modifications by the Chalukyan and Pallavas, the scale and grandeur is in the Chola tradition.

The inscriptions give, apart from a comprehensive history of the times, a full enumeration of all the metallic images set up in the temple. Numbering about sixty-six, these icons are referred to with a description of the minutest details of size, shape and composition. The temple also sports a depiction in stone, of eighty one of

the one hundred and eight karanas of Bharata Muni's Natya Sastra - the first of its kind - setting the pace for many others to follow in succeeding centuries. The inscriptional data also abound in mention of the jewellery of the period; about sixty-six different types of ornaments and jewellery are listed with all the details.

The Gopurams display some of the finest examples of Dravidian art. The Gopuram tower of the temple is 216 feet high and is topped by a block of granite 25 feet square and 80 tons in weight. This stone was hauled four miles over an inclined plane and put on top of the tower. The dome carved from a single stone weighing 80 tons, is surrounded by 250 arcades, each containing a lingam. It is rightly said of the Cholas that they conceived like giants and finished like jewellers.



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