



Martand Sun Temple Glows in Tricolor

[Source: ET](#)

Why in News?

The [Martand Sun Temple](#) in Anantnag district, J&K has been illuminated with the **tricolors** of the Indian flag as part of the Independence Day celebrations.

- The illumination has filled local residents and tourists with a deep sense of **pride and joy**, drawing large crowds to witness this historic moment.

What are Key Facts About Martand Sun Temple?

- **Construction:** The Martand Temple was constructed around 1200 years ago by King [Lalitaditya Muktapida](#) of the **Karkota dynasty**, who ruled Kashmir from 725 AD to 753 AD.
 - It was dedicated to Martand, the **Sun god**, and featured grand architecture with influences from **Egyptian, Greek, and Gandharan styles**.
 - The temple had massive **grey stone walls** and a courtyard filled with river water, symbolising its grandeur and significance in [Kashmiri architecture](#).
- **Historical Reference:** The temple's history is documented in the **Rajatarangini**, written by Kalhana in the 12th century.
- **Architectural Features:** The temple had three distinct chambers i.e., the **mandapa, garbhagriha, and antralaya**, making it unique among Kashmiri temples.
 - The ruins suggest the temple was surrounded by a **peristyle of 84 pillars**, a characteristic of Kashmiri temple architecture.
 - The use of **lime mortar** in the construction, unusual for its time, suggests the involvement of immigrant **Byzantine architects**.
- **Cultural Assimilation:** The Martand Temple's architecture shows a confluence of styles, including Classical **Greco-Roman, Buddhist-Gandhara, and North Indian**, reflecting Kashmir's historical connections with various cultures and empires.
- **Association with Harsha:** **King Harsha** (1089 AD to 1101 AD) of the first **Lohara dynasty** who looted temples for treasure, is noted for **sparing the Martand Temple**, unlike other temples which he desecrated for wealth.
- **Destruction:** The temple is believed to have been partially demolished by **Sultan Sikandar Shah Miri**, who ruled Kashmir from 1389 to 1413, though this is disputed by some historians.
 - Today, the temple stands partially intact with its impressive **grey walls** and carved deities still visible.
- **Current State:** The ruins of the temple have been protected by the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#), including during the decade of militancy in the 1990s, as a **“monument of national importance”**.

Kashmiri Temple Architecture

- The **Kashmiri temple architecture** has its unique features suited to local geography and are renowned for its exquisite stone carvings.
- **Due to its location on the important trade routes, the architectural style is inspired by many foreign sources.**

- Temple making **reached a great height under the rulers of Karakota dynasty and Utpala dynasty.**
- The **main features of Kashmir style of architecture are:**
 - Trefoil arches (Gandhara influence)
 - Cellular layout and Enclosed courtyard
 - Straight-edged Pyramidal roof
 - Column walls (Greek influence)
 - Triangular pediments (Greek influence)
 - Relatively more number of steps.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. Which of the following is/are famous for Sun temples? (2017)

1. Arasavalli
2. Amarakantak
3. Omkareshwar

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a)** 1 only
- (b)** 2 and 3 only
- (c)** 1 and 3 only
- (d)** 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)