

KONARKA (SUN) TEMPLE – A SYMBOL OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE, PRESERVATION ISSUES AND MODERNITY

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ABSTRACT

The State of Orissa in India is known for its series of monuments illustrating the history of the region from its inception to decline. The Sun temple of Konarka depicts the highest stage of development of tangible and intangible Heritage in the 12th century AD. Even in its present state of ruin it stands in a majestic dignity in the midst of vast stretch of sand by a roaring sea, in a lonely and desolate environment.

Once the centre of religious and spiritual activities, socio-cultural festivity revelations and a source of healing it is located in a small village of the Puri district three km away from the sea shore.

According to traditional historical records the sanctity goes back to the mythical times. The belief is that once a handsome person, proud of his appearance, ridiculed the divine sage who took revenge by cursing the handsome with the curse of the Lord, with leprosy that would naturally effect his beauty.

The handsome man proved his innocence, but the curse once pronounced could not be withdrawn. To heal he was directed to a river known as Chanderbhaga where he was to worship Surya (the Sun-God), the healer of all skin diseases. After 12 years of penance he succeeded in pleasing the God was cured of his illness. In gratitude he decided to construct a temple in honour of the God, which has preserved its meaning in 1000 years of history. Tangible values and rituals, customs and beliefs now are threatened by the modernity, though its intangible aspect is more vibrant than the tangible.

***Ramesh Chandra AGRAWAL**

Ramesh Chandra Agrawal joined the Archaeological Survey of India as an Assistant Archaeologist in the year 1972 and worked in different capacities. During the course of service he acquired the higher qualifications in Archaeology and Journalism of propagation and creating awareness for heritage and culture.

This process involved active participation in the archaeological work and the museum movement activities. To take museum activities to the grass-root level he organized exhibitions on the life of historical figures, arranged and created the museums amidst the monuments.

Furthermore, he conducted the primary research leading to preparation of inventory of antiquities of the monuments and documents. Mr Agrawal gained more than thirty years experience in archaeology and museum work and administered the administration of the archaeological institutions, muSetU11S for more than 21 years.

He has knowledge in Indian antiquities, excavation practice, site museums and in publication. Besides he carried out the structural conservation work on 39 monuments in different parts of India.