



## Konark Temple

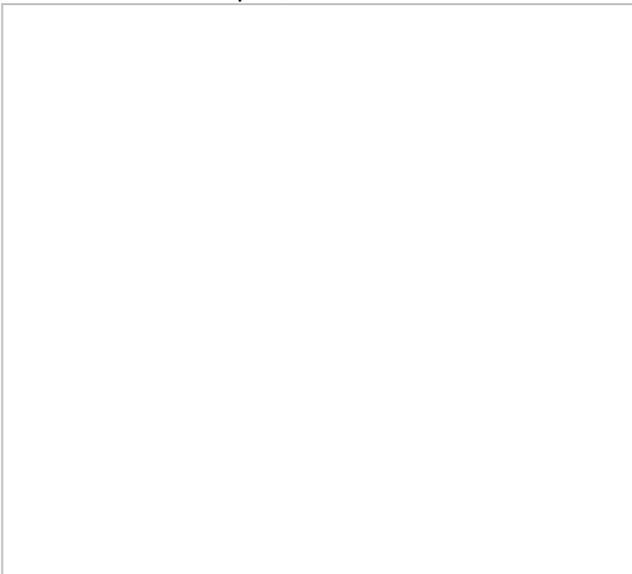
---

 [drishtiias.com/printpdf/konark-temple](https://drishtiias.com/printpdf/konark-temple)

### Why in News

---

- The 13<sup>th</sup> century Sun Temple at Konark (Odisha), the world heritage monument, has entered into controversy over allegations that the stone carvings on the outer surface are being replaced with plain blocks of stones causing irreplaceable loss to the uniqueness of the temple.
- It is alleged that the stones used in restoration do not match the quality of the original stone blocks, which are still available nearby.
- ASI has denied the allegations of replacement of artistic stone works at the world heritage monument.
- This issue highlights the need for preservation of cultural heritage.
- Konark Sun Temple, located in the East Odisha near the sacred city of Puri.



- Built in 13<sup>th</sup> century by **King Narasimhadeva I** (AD 1238-1264). Its scale, refinement and conception represent the strength and stability of the **Ganga Empire** as well as the value systems of the historic milieu.
- The temple is designed in the shape of a colossal chariot. It is dedicated to the sun

God. In this sense, it is directly and materially **linked to Brahmanism and tantric belief systems**.

- The Konark temple is widely known not only for its architectural grandeur but also for the intricacy and profusion of sculptural work.
- It marks the highest point of achievement of **Kalinga architecture** depicting the grace, the joy and the rhythm of life all its wondrous variety.
- It was declared a **UNESCO world heritage site in 1984**.
- There are two rows of 12 wheels on each side of the Konark sun temple. Some say the wheels represent the 24 hours in a day and others say the 12 months.
- The seven horses are said to symbolize the seven days of the week.
- Sailors once called this Sun Temple of Konark, the Black Pagoda because it was supposed to draw ships into the shore and cause shipwrecks.
- Konârak is the invaluable link in the history of the diffusion of the cult of Surya, which originating in Kashmir during the 8th century, finally reached the shores of Eastern India.

## Significance of Preservation of Cultural Heritage

---

- The cultural industries are key components of modern economies. The prevalence of cultural sites, services and art forms tend to boost tourism, sustain livelihoods, and attract investment.
- The non-economic benefits of culture include the preservation of history, the generation of knowledge, and the nurturing of creativity.
- Status of UNESCO world heritage site brings international recognition and potential tourism opportunities, thus necessitating stringent measures for the protection and preservation of historical monuments.

## Gaps in Ensuring Safety of Heritage Structures in India

---

- **Limited trained manpower** in structural safety and limited infrastructure, particularly of experimental and numerical facilities are possible reasons for not undertaking the necessary research and development in structural safety by govt agencies.
- Heritage conservation efforts in the private sector in India largely **address only the aesthetic aspect** with architects typically steering these projects and structural safety is not in focus.
- Formal systems are absent in India, which recognise the need for use of scientific tools for diagnosis and quantitative assessment of residual capacity before choosing repair or strengthening strategy.
- There is **lack of convergence between modern-day engineering education and traditional knowledge** of construction materials and practices; this is a serious hindrance to preservation of heritage.

- The current practices of post-disaster interventions in heritage structures can at best be termed as repair, which often are unscientific, ad hoc, and semi- or non-engineered. Retrofit or pre-disaster intervention is desirable, but requires a comprehensive programme.
- Important facets of conservation, like reversibility of the chosen intervention and documentation of the intervention undertaken, are accepted as part of process in international practice; such an approach is yet to be internalised in the national and state agencies undertaking post-disaster interventions.
- India has a **large stock of heritage structures, which has to be addressed through a formal platform** focussing on their structural safety. But, lack of adequate quality and quantity of manpower is a serious bottleneck in India to address the gigantic task of understanding and protecting the large number of heritage structures from natural hazards.

## Challenges of Safeguarding Tangible Cultural Heritage

---

- **Lack of funding:** Finances continue to be crucial challenges for preservation of cultural heritage. The conservation and preservation of heritage has not received due attention from public authorities.
- **Lack of trained manpower:** Few people are conscious about cultural heritage preservation and its being a viable occupation. At institutional level lack of efforts in mainstreaming heritage preservation as career and providing skills remains a formidable challenge.
- **Lack of awareness and publicity for the need for protection:** There is widespread lack of civic sense among domestic visitors who tend to deface historical monuments e.g. by inscribing their names on historical monuments.
- **Illegal Encroachments:** In the surroundings of historical monuments several types of encroachment develops by local shopkeepers, souvenir sellers, local residents.
- **Environmental Pollution:** There are several types of environmental pollutions which are killing the heritage properties e.g. Taj Mahal was badly affected by Sulphur dioxide etc. emitted by oil refinery at Mathura.

## Way Forward

---

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention need to be stringently followed by the authorities involved in protection of cultural and natural heritage.

### **The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention**

It aims to facilitate the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, by setting forth the procedure for:

- The inscription of properties on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger.
  - The protection and conservation of World Heritage properties.
  - The granting of International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund.
  - The mobilization of national and international support in favour of the Convention.
- International community must do more to address the issue of protecting cultural heritage during conflicts e.g. destruction of heritage in conflict areas like Afghanistan and Syria.
  - The issues of funding, raising awareness among tourists can be dealt through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Holistic preservation of Indian heritage would require recourse to pedagogical changes in school and higher education intended to rediscover the ancient Indian wisdom in arts, sciences and philosophies, which hinges on mainstream fundamental research and R&D in the area. Economic viability of heritage will be a by-product of the process due to a revival of traditional arts and crafts, known popularly as intangible heritage, and initiation of new disciplines.



<https://youtu.be/GqYAggbOh9I>