



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

Our sacred journey this month takes us to the famous Martand Temple dedicated to Sun God at Kashmir.

### Martand Temple



The Martand Sun temple is situated on top of a plateau, near the town of Anantnag in Kashmir. It is a medieval temple dedicated to Bhaskar, the Sun God. King Lalitaditya, a Kshatriya of Surya (Solar) dynasty, got the Martand Sun temple constructed to commemorate Surya. This beautiful Martand temple has a colonnaded courtyard, with the shrine in its center. Built with 84 columns, the temple offers a magnificent view of the Kashmir valley. Martand temple of Kashmir counts amongst the best and most memorable works of King Lalitaditya.

The architecture and style of the Martand Sun temple count amongst the rare ones in the world. Built up of hard and square limestone, the Martand temple serves as a living proof of the skill and talent of the Hindu Kashmiris of the bygone era. Apart from the exquisite architecture, another attraction of the Martand temple is its picturesque surroundings. The temple, standing in a square field with the beautiful snow covered mountains serving as its backdrop, presents an awe-inspiring sight.

### Legend

According to local legend, Surya, the Sun God of Hindu Mythology was born of Aditi from a lifeless egg called Martand. Aditi was the wife of Kashyap, the saint from whom Kashmir probably takes its name. Surya was her 13th child, the spring of Mattan is attributed to this legend. Lord Vishnu Surya has been worshipped in his Martand manifestation. The modern name of the village Mattan seems to have evolved from the Sanskrit Martand (mart = dead / and < - anda = egg) with the passage of time.



This temple was Martand, though Kalhana, Kashmir Historian, has given contradictory references regarding the founder of Martand. For example at one place, he has mentioned that King Randitya founded Martand. And in another book he has mentioned the name of famous warrior King Lalita Ditya Mukta Pida. The construction of the world famous Martand is usually ascribed to Lalita Ditya Mukta Pida. The king appeared to be a worshiper of Sun as an all pervading phenomenon. He also offered to the Diety "the territory of Kanyakubja (Kanauj) together with the villages." The fact was that Kanauj King Yasho Varman had suffered defeat at his hands and this had made his task easier to march on to the Bay of Bengal on turning back, he passed through Mysore and Konkan territory where he met with little or no resistance. So his power and valour naturally would have made him 'Lalita Ditya Mukta Pida' (swelled with pride). And he paid homage to

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the fierce luminary by founding Martand (Sun Temple). It is now in ruins. Only some parts have survived but its pictures have been preserved in most of the books written on Kashmir.

However, one can judge the magnificence and grandeur of the temple by just casting a glance on the site, and surrounding view. It was constructed on the highest part of a plateau. It has been recorded that it had eighty four columns, a number which is sacred to Hindus. Its interior must have been extremely beautiful with the Sun entering a decorated chamber with a door way on each side covered by a pediment, with a trefoil headed niche having a bust of the Hindu Trinity. It over looked the finest view in Kashmir. Little wonder that early foreign visitors described it as the wonder of Kashmir.



There was an interesting reference that King Kalasha (11th Century A.D.) went to pray and find peace at martand a little before his death. It may be noted that Kalasha was a follower of Shaivism. The sun worship did not vanish after the 11th century A.D. because Mirza Haidar Dughlat, cousin of Babar, recorded in his famous book Tarikh-i-Rashidi that an important section of the population still worshipped the Sun. This group or sect called themselves Shamsuddin. They said that they had received the title (Sun of Religion) from the heavens. In the Kashmiri language they were called Shammasi. The Ain-i-Akbari has a reference about Sun worship in Kashmir.

#### **Guru Nanak in the Kashmir valley**

During the historical visit of Guru Nanak in the Kashmir valley, Guru Sahib stayed at the village of Mattan near Anantnag (meaning infinite natural springs) and had a discourse with Pandit Brahm Das at Martand Temple. Gurudwara Mattan (Srinagar) is situated near the Martand Temple to mark Guru Sahib's visit.