

प्रथम दिवस आवरण FIRST DAY COVER



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In the early Indian society, religion was an inclusive phenomenon where rites were beyond faith and worship - it was in itself a way of life. Temples in ancient and contemporary India were not just abodes of God, but living forms of social activity as well. It is no surprise then, that temples represent parts of the broad canvas of architectural heritage from the era. Two such examples are the Arundhathi and Chennakesava Temples in Andhra Pradesh.

Arundhathi Temple: This Sun temple from 7th century CE takes its name from the Arundhathi village near Srisaikuntla in Andhra Pradesh, where it is situated. It is believed to have been built by Devavarman, the ruler of Kalinga. The unique design employed in the temple ensures that twice a year - in March and September, the sun rays reach the base of the deity, the Sun God.

The temple is a testimony to the architectural skills of the Mahabharata, the Mahastarvata scriptures of Orissa. As a Prastharvata temple with Aditya in the centre and Ganesh, Jnana, Prana and Vidya in the corners of the quadrangle. The five feet image of Surya towering 100 feet, carved out of a red sandal stone called Amravathi, flanked by the consort in a seated form, attract devotees to the temple all year long.

It is believed that the Sun God is the God of health. Prayers conducted here to ward off diseases. It is also believed that a dip in the holy waters of the Pushpaga pond in front of the temple yields all the wishes of the devotees. Surasimhasaivara Karpasimhasa, an important festival without event, is celebrated at this place during March/April.

Srisaikuntla Temple: Situated in Srisaikuntla village near Srisaikuntla, it is the only temple believed to have taken on the posture of Srisaikuntla, or, Srisaik. The temple is believed to have been built before 7th century CE, and re-constructed in 7th century CE. History of the Orissa and the Kalinga dynasties have contributed to its construction and development.

This is the only temple in ancient Prastharvata architecture in the region. The temple is noted for its imposing five shikhara gopurats. The ten beautiful granite pillars in the temple premises have inscriptions in Mahabharata script (dated) set over the period from 11th to 12th century CE. The 4th portion of mural paintings on the walls of the temple depicting mythological events including the Ramayana of Ayaz, scenes in Mahabharata (the unique feature) of the temple is that it has (Shravanastambha) (Sag stambha) on front and back of the temple on the deity faces the back of the temple on the west side.

Chennakesava is the most important festival celebrated here, falling on the month of March every year, when around 20,000 pilgrims thronged.

Department of Posts is happy to release a set of Commemorative Postal Stamps featuring the Arundhathi and Srisaikuntla Temples in the series of Architectural Heritage of India.

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