

**Ravage and Revival ‘Martand’ temple – Kashmir  
(Circa 6th Century A.D.)**

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Located around five miles from Anantnag town the *Martand* Temple in the southern part of Kashmir is one of the oldest ‘Sun’ temples in India, which although holds historical importance yet as a neglected monument it is lying today in utter ruins. Its foundation was laid between circa 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. by King Ranaditya, and in circa 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. it was completed by King Lalitaditya Muktapida of Karkota Dynasty (c. 625 - 885 A.D.). King Lalitaditya’s triumphant military attempts turned him into a powerful emperor who held the highest authority in Kashmir and he ruled along with other regions for over three decades. His soft power endeavor in the religious arena elevated the Hindu beliefs where besides *Shaivism* and *Vaishnavism* the *Vedic* deity ‘Sun’ became a prominent ‘God’ mainly of the warrior royals (*Kshatriyas*) who called themselves the ‘*Suryavamshi*’ (lineage of ‘Sun’). Embellished with unmatched architectural skills and splendors the ‘Temple’ dedicated to ‘Sun God’ termed as *Martand* in the Sanskrit language stayed for centuries as an unmatched architectural and religious glory in Kashmir. However, in circa 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as the region came under the sway of Islamic ruler Sikandar Butshikan, whose monotheistic ideology and intolerance added with iconoclastic hard powers transformed the mighty *Martand* Temple totally into shambles as it is left today in situ. After India’s independence in 1947, *artand* Temple was declared as an archaeological monument and was entrusted to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which to this date is left somewhat aloof. This paper endeavors to draw attention to take adequate steps for the revival of the ravaged architectural and aesthetic grandeur of the magnificent *Martand* Temple which needs to be measured as the oldest historical site and a pilgrimage destination in Kashmir.

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