CHAPTER-II

SUN WORSHIP IN LITERATURE,
INSCRIPTIONS, COINS,
MONUMENTS
SUN GOD IN LITERATURE

The sun god, the illuminator, the soul of living world and the embodiment of heat and energy has been revered by one and all throughout the universe. Therefore every available source material is replete with references and information’s of the sun god and his worship.

Literature:

The “Vedas”, the store house of all knowledge is perhaps the ancient most literature as far as India is concerned. They throw abundance of light on the Sun god and his worship. In other words with the Vedas, we come to the written records of Sun worship. Vedic India had a vigorous tradition of sun worship which forms an integral part of Nature worship so prominently practiced by the Indo-Āryans. The Āryan concept of god was basically centered on the phenomenon of light whose chief source was the Sun.

The Vedic literature reflects that Sun was worshipped under a number of forms and names. According to yaska there are diversities of names due to differences in functions and spheres. The sun was worshipped in its different positions such as the rising Sun, the Sun at its Zenith or the mid-day sun, the setting sun and the nocturnal sun etc.

There are about 133 separate hymns in the Rigveda alone dealing about different solar deities. There is a group of the Sun gods in the Vedic literature. In the early Vedic age, the Sun and its various aspects were invoked and worshipped.
Many epithets and functions were attributed to the Sun-god. He is worshipped under different names such as Sūrya, Savitri, Pushan, Bhaga, Mitra, Varuna, Vishnu, Aryaman, Vivasvat, Amsa etc.

(i) Sūrya: - Sūrya is the most concrete of the solar deities. He is the representative of the simplest and most direct form i.e. the round red orb of the sun. The Rigveda specifically indicates the identity of the orb and Sūrya. Entire ten hymns of the Rigveda are devoted to Sūrya. Throughout the Rigveda he is praised time and again with other gods. It describes him as the son of Dyaus (Sky) and Aditi. His metronymic Aditeya are symbolic of the fact that he is the son of Aditi. The Uśás (personified dawn) is described as his wife. He sits on an one wheeled car drawn by a single horse or by seven horses or seven mares or an indefinite number of either. We find his marriage with Saranyu. We get the mention of his sons-Yama; by Saranyu and the two Asvina by chāya, her shadow.

Sūrya is described as the divine priest of the Gods. At places sūrya has been depicted as a flying bird or an eagle and a mettled bull. He is the gem of the sky, a brilliant white steed, a brilliant car or a revolving wheel in which all beings abide.

He is the cause of the day and night. He repels the darkness from the lap of the earth. He is the source of light, rising in the presence of mankind and visible in the heaven. He is the preserver and soul of all things stationary and moving, he is the vivifier of men. He beholds the good and bad deeds of all mortal creatures. He is the destroyer of the enemies of his devotees. He prolongs the life of man. It is for him that rain falls on earth. He is the bestower of different kinds of wealth.
and progeny on his devotees. He is described as a bird and a horse because of his swiftness in movement from one end of the earth to the other.

Sūrya is described in the veda as the Bestower of light. At the approach of the illuminating Sun, the constellations depart with the night like thieves. He is the highest light.

The Atharvaveda, the Upaniṣads, the Taittiriya Samhita, the Brahmanas are unanimous on his light giving quality.

Sūrya is designated as a benevolent deity in the early vedic literature. The Rigveda upholds him for his healing power.

He is the curer of Jaundice, eye-sight problem, cough, snake-bite, pains of different types including of heart. He is the remover of evil-dreams and bestower of peace and prosperity.

Even in a few hymns Sūrya is conceived as the one supreme and original god. Sūrya has been praised as the Time also. The one wheel of the sun is considered as the year, the three sixty spokes are the days of the year. The twelve fellies are considered as the twelve months, the three axles as the three double seasons. The Atharva veda also conceive Sūrya as Time and the Upanisads as Saṁvatsara or year. All these prove Sūrya as a benevolent deity.

Savitri:

The vedic literature mentions another name of the sun god as Savitri. He is the representative of the simulative aspect of the sun. He
is the spiritual power of the sun and is intimately connected with the sacrifices.

Savitri is the deity having a lot of anthropomorphism in his personality. He is described as golden eyed, golden handed, golden tongued, and golden haired. He assumes all forms. The word "Savitri" has been used mostly as a proper name and rarely as an epithet in the vedic literature.

In one hymn of the Rigveda Savitri has been called as the solar rayed. He is mentioned as "hīranya hasta" and "hīranya pāni".

Savitri is considered as the Divinity of Light. He has been given the power to disperse darkness from the world. It is said that savitri has illuminated the heaven and shines in sequence to the passage of the dawn. Savitri diffuses light over the spacious earth and the heaven. He rises regularly at the close of the night. He sends the undying light from the east and illumines every corner of three regions. His connection with the year also indicates his solar nature. The Atharva veda and the Brahmanas support his connection with the light. Thus, savitri in the "Divinity of Light."

Throughout the vedic literature, savitri is depicted as the lord of impulsion, vivification, instigation and stimulation. The word "Savitri" itself has been derived from the root "Su-or-Sū" having three main meanings to generate, to pour forth a libation and to impel. In the Taittiriya Samhitā. He is invoked for the impulsion. The Atharva veda describes him as the lord of stimulation. The Srauta sacrifice pray him for instigation. The Brāhmaṇas emphasis on his power of stimulation.
The Aranyakas and the Upanisads give a philosophic turn to his aspect of impulsion. So, it is justified to accept savitri as the personification of the stimulating aspect of the sun.

He is the presiding deity of the sacrifice. So, there is a close connection between savitri and sacrifices in the vedic tradition. Savitri is also connected with wisdom and intelligence. The famous Gayatri hymn is synonymous with Savitri hymn. It contains the belief that the solar light is the symbol of ultimate knowledge and reality. The meaning of the hymn is interpreted by scholars as “We meditate upon the excellent splendour of God Savitri, May he impel our thoughts, who may animate or enlighten our intellects.

Savitri is also associated with the highest metaphysical ideas. He is the ruler of the world, he is the supreme god, the creator and the preserver and the regulator of all moveable and immoveable. He is all god and he is all universe. Thus, pantheistic, monotheistic and monistic ideas are associated with him. The epithet ‘Visvarupa’ and ‘Prajapati’ applied to Savitri show his supremacy. In the Upanisads he is identified with the ultimate reality.

Mitra :-

Another solar deity of the vedic pantheon is Mitra. He is the representative of the beneficent aspect of the sun. There is only one single hymn devoted to Mithra but jointly with varuna he is invoked several times in the hymns.

The Indo-Iranians worship Mithra as their Sud-god, because Avesta describes that Mithra is the spiritual Yazata, who first rises over
the Alburz Mountain before the immortal Sun driver of swift horse. The word Mithra is used for the sun himself. The Zoroa strains worship Mithra as sun \(^{76}\), who gives light.

The descriptions of Mitra in the Rigveda indicate his solar basis. Mitra gives the light like the moon \(^{77}\). He watches men with the unwinking eyes like Surya. Surya has been described as the eye \(^{78}\) of Mitra in the vedic literature \(^{79}\).

In the later vedic literature Mitra is expressed as having solar nature. In the Atharva veda Mitra is described as uncovering the darkness in the morning \(^{80}\). He arranges the seasons and spreads his splendour over the earth \(^{81}\). The Taittariya Samhita \(^{82}\) deals with the solar nature of the Mitra that Mitra united the earth and the ground with light. The Brāhmaṇas \(^{83}\) and the ancient Indian commentators \(^{84}\) are unanimous that Mitra is the presiding deity of the day.

Mitra is the representative of the friendly aspect of the sun god. He is the dearest friend of the people \(^{85}\). The term Mitra has been derived from the root MīT means to love. The name of the divinity itself denotes him a friendly god. The Rigveda \(^{86}\) frequently mentions his friendly nature. The later vedas \(^{87}\) also repeat his friendly quality. They all describe that he is a god of concord and agreement \(^{88}\). He is a benevolent the friend of truth, the protector of truthfulness and the destroyer of untruth \(^{89}\). He is the creator of the world and the sovereign over all \(^{90}\). He is the gives of food and wealth and he is the Sun god in the beneficent aspect of warmth.
The Rigveda describes Visṇu as another solar deity. According to Keith the word Visṇu has been derived from the root ‘vis’ means ‘to be active’ and the one who pervades the whole world. In the past many scholars have traced solar features in his personality. To some he is the personification of the swiftly moving luminary to others he is the representative of the Sun beam as the great generative power in the universe. Both ancient and modern scholars and the vedic references about the god agree to assign an original solar character to this deity. The Rigveda describes that Visṇu takes three strides which symbolize the passage of the swiftly moving luminary through the three divisions of the universe, earth, air and heaven. Rigveda also refers to visnu and his activity like ‘prthvim sataresam vibhutadyumna’ ‘svaradre’ etc. The epithets of Visṇu like “Urugaya” wide stepping, esa or ‘evayavan” (full of motion), ritaśya-garbha, vedah (upholding the ordinances) dhārayam ‘purvyā’ and ‘naya’ (ancient and modern) suggest the characteristics of sun god who is described as traversing the whole atmosphere from horizon to horizon, completing the whole course regularly. Therefore, the solar nature of the god is beyond doubt. According to Dandekar from the very beginning Visṇu was accepted by the Aryan masses as the god of productivity and as the Sun god by the higher classes of Aryan society.

In the early phase of the Rigveda, Visṇu was represented as the spirit of the Sun’s rays. The solar rays move swiftly and within no time traverse the three regions of the universe. Rigveda directly refers to the solar nature of Visnu. When it says that he, like a circular wheel,
causes ninety and four periodical revolutions. Sayana also interprets Viṣṇu as identical with the sun as Time.

It is generally admitted that the three steps of Viṣṇu refers to the course of the sun as to mean the rising, the culminating and the setting of the sun. Again it appears that three steps of Viṣṇu are the three elemental rays of the sun, which give the rain, the heat and the cold.

The aspect of visnu as producer of fertility and generation seems to have been derived from the capacity of the sun as the giver of rain and heat, which are necessary for the growth of vegetation.

The later vedic literature also contain references to the solar nature of Viṣṇu. The Atharva veda identifies Aditya, the sun god as Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is the great source of fertility procreation and vegetation. The Vedas and the later vedic literature vividly highlight this quality of Viṣṇu primarily as the god of fertility. The protector aspect of visnu in the Vedas might have been also derived from the sun god, who is also responsible for the vegetation and life in the universe. The fertility aspect of visnu is attested in the Vedas or in other words visnu is primarily the god of fertility very often he has been invoked to bestow food in the Rigveda. The Brahmaṇas describe him as hidden himself in the root of the plants. Viṣṇu is said to bless his devotees with children, particularly male. In the marriage rituals also visnu plays prominent role proving his connection with the procreation. He is the giver of all riches and maintains the world seed.

Viṣṇu is the protector of the world. It is but natural that, the god who is responsible for the production of children, food and vegetation
will essentially be a beneficent and liberal god. Visnu is the great benefactor of humanity.

Thus, in the vedic literature, Visnu is worshipped as the spirit of the sun's rays in its capacity of creation, preservation and maintenance. The solar motion and its regularity also came to be worshipped under the name of Visnu.

Pusan:

The vedic literature include another name i.e. Pusan in the group of solar gods. The word 'Pusan' is derived from the root "Pus" means to nourish. So, he is also known as the cherisher of the world. Two epithets, such as "aghri nam" (adharn) means 'glowing' and "agohya" means 'not to be concealed' suggest his solar connection. He cannot be anything but a sun god. He is also described as lord of all things that stand or move. He is the bringer of six seasons successively a description which is befitting to the Sun only. In ancient mythology the sun is associated with the goat, the surefooted animal and may be helpful in long journeys, which the sun god takes every day. The sun god travels from one corner of the universe to the other looking everyone. He travels the chariot drawn by goats. He is distinctly a shepherd God. He knows the road ways, protects his devotees from dangers like wolves and robbers, guards the cattle and in general restores lost things.

Pusan possessed the usual attributes of strength, glory, wisdoms and generosity. He is described as sagacious and handsome.
In the post-vedic literature, Pusan is accepted as a name of the sun. The meaning of his name is prosperer from the root 'pus' means to cause to thrive connects him with the marriage. Which also suggest his prosperity aspect. In the Upanisads he has been spiritualized, and he is regarded as the remover of the veil of ignorance and revealer of the ultimate reality. The Upanisads say that as the Sun is veiled by his rays similarly the ultimate reality is concealed in ignorance. We can reach the sun only after crossing the boundary of ignorance. The Sutras prescribe the invocation of Pusan in connection with journeys. In this period Pusan came to be the god of safe journey and roads. He is described with the epithets like source of felicity, liberal of gifts destroyer of enemies, benefactor of all and the source of enjoyments. He is the generator of heaven and earth and the guardian of the whole world. He is invoked as the supreme god.

**Vivasvat:**

Vivasvat was also included in the panel of solar gods. Macdonell and many others identify many solar features in his personality. The term "Vivasvat" means "shining forth" leads to the solar theory. In the Satapatha Brahmana, it is said that Aditya Vivasvat illumines night and day. Vivasvat like Surya is mentioned as married to Saranyu, the daughter of Tvastri and was the father of Yama and Manu.

In the later Vedic literature Vivasvat is regarded as an "Aditya", which is the common name for the sun god, in the post-vedic literature. He is worshipped for his quality of preservations.
The Adityas:-

The Adityas form a group of divinities who are regarded as solar gods, Scholars describe them as invisible, imperishable, eternal beings. Who dwell in the celestial light. The Adityas as the name suggest, are the sons of Aditi. In the Rigveda many epithets like Sucayah, hiranyah, animisah, dirghadiya and bhuryaksah have been applied which show the connection of Adityas with light. At one place the name of Aditya has been used for the rising sun in the Rig veda.

It shows that the original basis of the Adityas have been the sun or Surya. The solar nature of the Adityas became more specific and prevalent during the later vedic period. The name of Aditya has been used for the sun god in many occasions. The twelve Adityas are identified with the twelve months. The Adityas and surya became synonymous and the one in many vedic rituals.

The names and numbers of the Adityas are uncertain in the Rig veda initially they seem to be six in number. They are Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksha and Arsha. Its number increased to eight with the inclusion of Surya and Martanda. It remained the same throughout the Rigveda. The number increased to twelve in the Satapatha Brahmana, Mitra is also one of the Adityas.

(i) Aryaman:-

Aryaman has been taken as a god of solar origin. He is considered as the personification of the membership of the Aryan community or the milky way. He gets his mentions several times in the Rigveda. He is said to preside over twilight. He is the animator of mankind. His
friendly nature resembles him with Mitra. He is associated with the marriage rituals or is called a god of marriage.

ii. Bhaga:

Bhaga is another Aditya, having solar features. He has been the sun god in his aspect of prosperity. It is said that his eyes are adorned with rays. He is connected with Savitri in a specific way and hymns reach up to Visnu on Bhagas path.

iii. Amsa

Amsa is synonymous with Bhaga. The name suggests the concrete sense of share, portion and that of apportioner. His name is mentioned very rarely in the Rigveda.

iv. Daksa

Daksa is regarded with Aditi as the universal parent representing the luminous sky. He is described as Prajapati.

v. Varuna

Varuna was a solar god during the early Vedic age. He is described as a very wise son of Aditi and is counted as one of the Adityas. The term varuna is derived from the root ‘Vri’ means to surround. It is said that he is the only self radiant Aditya. At the same time he is regarded as the god of darkness or night in the text Varunaratri. In the Rigvedic mythology, Varuna occupies a very conspicuous position. However, only one hymn is given to him in the whole Rigveda. Most of the times he is designated as a king with the titles like svaraja, samarraja and sovereign."
The Solar divinities Sūrya, Savitṛi, Puṣan, Viṣṇu, Mitra, Varuṇa, Bhaga, Ārayaman, Aṃsa, Vivasvata are thus jointly invoked under the name of Adityas, Six whole hymns are dedicated to them.

The rigveda gives a family to the sun god. Dyaus as his father, Aditi as his mother, Goddess Uṣa as his wife and Aświni Kumar as his sons.

During the later vedic period also Sūrya, Savitṛī continued rather more vigorously. The Atharva veda and the Yajur veda contain many hymns in praise of these divinities. A new name of the Sun came into popularity diving then phase is “Rohita” the ‘Ruddy Sun’. The whole thirteenth book of Atharva veda is devoted in his praise. In this period the worship of the Adityas, both jointly and separately continued. Their number increased to twelve and they are identified with twelve months of the solar year. They are Dhatri, Mitra, Āryaman, Rudra, Varuṇa, Sūrya, Bhaga, Vivasvat, Puṣan, Savitṛī, Tvastr and Viṣṇu.

The Worship of Aditi uṣās, and the Aśvins continued However, the symbolic worship of sun god was more prevalent. The horse, the bird, the wheel, the golden disc, girdle were treated as earthly representatives of the sun god.

One important development of the period is marked in highlighting the sun god as the supreme god. The contemplation of the various forms of sun god led to the rise of a sense of mono-theism. The Rigveda declared the sun god as the supreme god at many places and identifies him with the supreme spirit or Brahma. He is given the epithet “eko vayunavid” means only one-knowing knowledge.”

In other Vedas also identify him with the Supreme Being he is described as the final goal and the only source of immortality.
However, the physical solar orb is not the Supreme Being or Brahma. It is the creative power responsible for the creation, preservation and the destruction of the movable and immovable world. He is the purusa, who has become all the Gods. All the other Gods derive their existence from him that is why they are said to follow his lead. He is the goal, the ultimate end to reach. As he is the supreme creator, all creation turns to him. Thus a sort of monotheism began and prevailed in this period.

In the post Vedic period some of the solar gods lost their solar nature and become independent divinities of Aryan pantheon.

We do not find any direct reference to sun worship in the Astādhyāyī of Panini. Very casually, it mentions some solar gods like Sūrya, Puṣan, Divākara, Usās etc. To him the term “sūrya” is derived for the root ‘sr’ or from ‘su’. Thus in the opinion of Panini, Sūrya was the instigator of all and inspirer of the world to action.

The kalpa Sūtras maintained the names and nature of Sūrya and savitri. They were invoked in the sacrifices and rites. Sun was invoked in different sāṃskāras and ceremonies. The rite of Āditya dārṣana i.e. showing of sun to the child by his father is prescribed in the Manava Griha Sūtra and the Kathā Griha sutra. A stālīkā was prepared in the fourth month of the Child’s birth and was offered to the sun. Sun is invoked in the Upanayana ceremony and upakraman ceremony.

The Buddhist literature like Mahaṃ-samaya Sutta mentions the name of Sūriya or Sūrya. The Āṅguttara Nikāya, Digha Nikāya, mention the name of sūrya and Āditya(Adicco) Āditya is explained as the Dhammapada mentions the term Aditi’s son(Aditya-putta). Āditya putta at one place. Sūrya is described as invoking the power of
Buddha and praying to protect him from Rahu in a Sūriya Sutta of the Samyutta Nikāya.

The Jatakas also contain many references to sun worship. For example the Mayura Jataka described Bodhisattva borned as a peacock was worshipping the morning and the setting sun.

Sun is depicted as a king all seeing a glorious being making all things bright with golden light. A wizard is described as worshipping the sun to get rid of the sin incurred as a result of his misconducting with the chief queen of Varanasi in the Dhajavīhetta jataka.

The name of Rahu, Aruṇa and other grahas found references in different jataka. The existence of a group of sun worshipping priests or Brahmāṇas is found from the Brahmajala sūṭta of Dīgha Nikāya.

The Arthasastra of Kautilya does not throw any light on sun worship. But it mentions the erection of temple for Āśvins, but not the sun.

The classical accounts of the Greek travelers who visited India in the 4th century B.C. Referred to Sun worship. Noar chus, an admiral of Alexander mentions a place sacred to the sun. Megasthenes has also referred to a tribe known as ‘surae’, which can be equated with Sanskrit ‘Saura’ or the ‘Sun worshippers.’

Coming to the age of the two Epics i.e the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, we came across the references of sun god and his worship many a times.

The vedic gods of solar pantheon continued during the epic phase. The gods like Sūrya, Savitṛi, Mītra, Pūṣan, Āśvins, Viśṇu, Vivasvat, Bhaga and Tvasta etc received veneration of the people. But they have lost
their prestone splendour\textsuperscript{190}. They are regarded as the different names of the one and only sun\textsuperscript{191}. The Mahābhārata refers to the Ādityas as the sons of Aditi, Though they are mentioned as eleven or thirteen in numbers, finally they are taken as twelve Ādityas identified with the twelve months. They are Dhata, Mitra, Āryama, Indra, Varuṇa, Āmsa, Bhaga, Vivasavan, Puṣa, Savitri, Tvāṣṭa, Viṣṇu.

Puṣan is referred to as a god who shone in the wars of gods and demons of the old\textsuperscript{192}. He has thousand rays and after warming the earth goes to the western mountains at the close of day\textsuperscript{193}. Savitri is described as taking away glory of the stars on rising\textsuperscript{194}. Ādityas like Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, viṣṇu etc got merged in the name of sūrya or Āditya was accepted as the supreme and original Sun god. It is regarded as the epic innovation\textsuperscript{195}. In this phase the first and foremost function of the Sun god is to drive away darkness and demons\textsuperscript{196}. He is the Lord of light\textsuperscript{197} and he illumines the whole earth\textsuperscript{198}. The names like Divakara, Dinakrita, Prabhıkara, Bhāskara, Tamīghna, Tamobhedi\textsuperscript{199} etc express his light giving aspect.

The epics describe that he draws water for eight months during his northern course and in the remaining four months he pours them down in the form of rain during his southern course. The plants and corns are produced due to the combination of water and heat.

Thus, Sūrya began to be known as rain giver and the corn producer. That is the cause, why yudhīśthira prayed specifically for food and the sun gave it to him for twelve years\textsuperscript{200}. So, he is considered as the creator and sustainer of the universe.
He is the personification of time. The names like Samvatsarakara, Kalachakra, Pravartaka, Kśana\textsuperscript{201} etc suggest the fact. The twelve Adityas are also identified with the twelve months of the year\textsuperscript{202}.

The names like Teja, Tejasampati\textsuperscript{203} suggest his power or energy of Generation. His names like sañītri, Karta etc\textsuperscript{204} points to his power of stimulation. His epithets Anānta, Sarvasyādi, Sanātana etc show his ancient and eternal nature\textsuperscript{205}. Thus the sun god is a great moral and ethical source\textsuperscript{206}.

The Rāmāyaṇa describes that the parents of Śravana Kumara are performers of Śandyopāsaṇa i.e. invocation of the Sāvitrī god in the morning and evening\textsuperscript{207}. Rāma, Laksmanā and Sītā\textsuperscript{208} are depicted as worshipping the rising sun after offering water to gods and ancestors. We also get reference that along with some Riṣes they invoked sañītri facing the rising sun\textsuperscript{209}. References are there that Rama asked Aditya, the sun god about Sītā as he considered him as the witness of all that take place in the earth and of every good or bad act\textsuperscript{210}. Sundarākāṇḍa contains the evidence that Hanuman paid homage to the Sun-god along with other gods with joined palms, before he leaves for Lanka\textsuperscript{211}. The same Kāṇḍa informs that Sūrya is worshipped along with other gods namely Varuṇa, Indra, Chandra, Vāyu and the twin Asvins\textsuperscript{212}. The Yuddhakāṇḍa contains a whole canto in praise of the sun-god\textsuperscript{213}, popularly known as the Aditya-Hridaya Stotra. In this portion sage Agastya advises Rāma to worship Aditya before going to fight with Rāvana and tells him “this is the old mystery (guhyam sanātanam) by
which thou will conquer all the foes in the battle. Having daily repeated
the Aditya-hridaya (the holy prayer which destroys all enemies gives
victory, removes all sins, sorrows and distress, increases life and is the
blessing of all blessings.) worship the rising sun and the splendid sun,
who is respected by both gods and demons, who gives light to all bodies,
and is the rich lord of all the worlds. It extols the sun god to supreme
height and identifies him with all the great gods in a typical sectarian

The Ramayana informs us that sun god was more revered on a
mountain named Cakrawaka situated in the part, where Surastra
(Saurastra) and Bahlkamet. It is believed that on that mountain Viśva
Karma made the Čakra which had one thousand spokes i.e. the sun having
thousands of rays. The hill was blessed by sun god and vasus
worshipped the Sun god on that hill. This region must be situated
near Mulasthāna. The name Saurastra seems to derive from the word
“Saura” (worshipper of the Sūrya) and means the land of the sun
worshippers.

The Mahābhārata is replete with much more data and references
regarding Sun worship. Sūrya is described as Devesvāra, Lord of gods.
He is praised as the centre of all movable and the immovable on the
earth. The divine Sūrya is the refuge or home of innumerable wonders.
All the creatures that inhabit the three worlds have flowed from Sūrya,
innumerable Munis, crowned with ascetic success, together with all the
deities, reside in the rays of the Sūrya like birds perching on the branches
of trees. What again can be more wonderful than this that the mighty
wind, emanating from Sūrya, takes refuge in his rays and thence yawns
over the universe). Sūrya, dividing the wind into many portions from desire of doing good to all creatures, creates rain that falls in rainy season. The supreme soul, from within the solar disc, himself hatched in blazing effulgence, looked upon the universe. In certain rays of Surya, the soul of the universe is said to reside. From him is the seed of all things.219

The Mahābhārata contains a hymn220 in praise of the sun god having one hundred eight names. It was communicated by Brahmā to Sakra, by Sakra to Narada, by Nārada to Dhaumya and by Dhaumya to yudhīṣṭhira221.

One new development is found in the epic period that along with invocations, the hymns, or the Mantras, sun god was also worshipped with offerings of arghya, flower, garlands and scents, with vows, fastings etc. Example is found that a mighty king named Sarñvarana, worshipped Surya with all these articles and is said to have got the daughter of Surya named Tapati\(^{223}\) as the reward of his devotion. Yudñisthira is also described as worshipping the Sun god with offerings of flowers and other articles.

The most important development of the epic stream is the rise of sun cult or sect known as the “Sauras” In the Mahabharata, many sects like the Vaishnavas, the Saivas, the Saktas, the Sauras and the Gane\(\text{s}\)as etc got recognition. The R\(\text{\u0915}\)m\(\text{\u0915}\)yana\(^{224}\) also has many references to the worship of sectarian gods.

**The Sun Sect:**

In the epic period we find revolutionary changes in the concept of the sun god and in the method of his worship\(^{225}\). For the first time we came across specific mention of a sun sect known as the ‘Sauras’. However the exact date for its origin is not fixed. According to Hopkins out of the five sects, the Sauras, the Saivas and the Vaishnavas are recognized in the Mahabharata. It testifies that the sect of the Sun worshippers is as old as the Vaishnavas and the Saivas.

The Mahabharata specified the sectarian leaning of sun worship through the legends of yudhñisthira’s worship of the sun god and that of
Karna. In the legend of Yudhishthira’s worship of the Sun god, all characteristic features of a sectarian god are traceable. The Sun god is invoked as the soul of all corporal existence226 and the origin of all existence, the goal227 of all Sankhyas and yogins, the goal of emancipator the beginning and the end of the day of Brahma228. All the characteristics show that the sun god was a sectarian god. In the legend of Karna, the bhaktas of the Sun god are mentioned229 Karna is described as an ardent worshipper of the sun230.

The Aditya-Hridaya stotra of the Ramayana extols him as the Lord of even Brahma, Visnu and Mahesha231. Some of his names such as Sarvabhavodbhava Visvabhavana, Devadevam, Jagatpati etc suggest that he is the creator the sustainer and the destroyer of all creatures232.

One essential characteristic of a sect is the development of a sectarian literature. The Mahabharata speaks that there was a “secret veda of the Sun” taught of Arvavasu233. It clearly clarifies that the sun worshippers out of competition with the visnavas and the saivas, had developed a Veda or sectarian literature of their own.

The names of some historical personages in the Mahabharata like Suryodhavaja, Rocamana, Amsumana234 etc suggest a sectarian following of the Sun god. In the Ramayana235, we find one reference to the ascetic Sun-Worshipers, who adore the Sun-God with arms upstretched beside the river Mandakini. Samvara also worshipped the Sun-God as “Urdhva-Mukhah. All these references point out that there had been a class of worshippers in the Epics. So, around 5th-4th BC, the Sun sect might have evolved which is the upper limit of the Epics236.
The Sun sect which started its walk in the Epic period was ideologically connected with the Vedic tradition. Many names such as Surya, Aryama, Tvasta, Savita etc in the list of one hundred eight names of the Sungod are Vedic survivals in the Epic Pantheon. Humanisation in his personality is marked in this phase.

Familiarity with the Magas:

The most important characteristic of Sun cult in India has been its relation and association with a foreign priesthood known as the Magas. They were the Fire-Worshipping priests from the Śakadvipa. They came to India and their advent marked the beginning of new tradition in solar cult.

The Mahābhārata appears to be familiar with them. It is said that in the Śakadvipa, there are four respected Janapadas; Manga, Maraka, Manasa and Mandaga. The Manga Janapada is inhabited by mostly Brāhmaṇas. The Brāhmaṇas came to India in three different phases and became popular as the Magas or the Magi Brāhmaṇas. It seems that the first wave of the Magas entered into India around 5th Century BC in the wake of the Achemenid invasions. But, they could not penetrate deep into India. The orthodox Hindus could not allow them to influence their tradition. That is why the orthodox literature ignore even their existence up to 5th century AD.

We find some impact of the Magas on the epic Sun Cult. The reference to the Magas, Mihira and other Iranian terms in the epics prove it. The legend of Jamadagni which mention the offer of umbrella
and boots by Sūrya to him. This may be regarded as a nationalized version of the Magian tradition of providing boot to the Sun images.

However, it is a fact that the Sun-Sect of India was quite Indigenous in its origin and during the epic age, Sun God received an independent status. Sun worship became popular among all sections of the Epic society.

The worship of this period centers round the concept of bhakti. It is a revolutionary change from the Vedic tradition and thus heralds the Era of Renaissance which achieve it's culmination in the Puranas.

With the coming of Puranic phase, we find a picture of composite religious synthesization of the Vedic tradition of the sacrificial religion, the semi-Vedic stream of Vaishnlavism, Saivism and other unorthodox cults and non-vedic thoughts of šaktism and Tāntricism.

The pūrāṇas symbolize the fulfillment of the efforts of the brahmanas to synthesize different tradition of religions and social customs into one organic whole and there by provide stability to the social and religious order. This apogee of the composite religion has been achieved by various stages of development, which may be traced in the pūrāṇic records. Mainly there are two stages. Firstly in the early pūrāṇic works, the vedic and the śaṅkta traditions are prominent. However, some semi-vedic thoughts of bhakti vrata, pūjā, tirtha are also mentioned. Secondly, in the later pūrāṇas, belonging to the 5th-6th century AD, we find increased emphasis on the glorification of the semi-vedic and even non-vedic gods in a sectarian fashion. The worship of
Thus, in the puranic world, Sun worship displays all these general trends to the fullest extent. The early puranas like the Vishnu (3rd-4th Century AD) 246, the Vayu (3rd Century) 247, the Markandeya (3rd-4th Century AD) 248, the Brahmânda (3rd-5th Century AD) 249 and the Matsyâ (3rd-5th Century AD) 250 etc. deal with the Sun Cult. The later puranas like the Bhavishya (500 AD-1200 AD) 251, the Skanda (700 AD and later) 252 and the Samba (500 AD-1500 AD) 253 are mainly concerned with the Sun worship.

The puranas throw flood of light on the concept of Sun God. The Markandeya purana praises the Sun God as “abode of knowledge”, cleanser of darkness, stainless and supreme soul and universal cause. He is also referred as the highest and the lowest material and non-material, minute and yet existing in massive shape 254.

He is prayed by the Bramhâs and is described as the cause of all255, as primeval power, as existing in the forms of water, earth, wind and fire256, as the protector of the world in five ways257. Even, Aditi258, his mother, prayed to him.

The Agni Purâna describes Sun God as another manifestation of God Vishnu who is the source of all good and evil259. The Matsya purâna describes Brahmâ, Vishnu, Sûrya and Śiva as non-different from each other260.

The Garuḍa purâna prescribes the recitation of the Gayatri mantra and to adore and salute the Sun, the God of Gods. He is known as the
cause of the three fold world, the embodiment of knowledge. He is identified with Brahma, water, fire, earth, heaven, sky and eternal Rudra. The Bramha-Vaivarta purana calls the Sun God as the eye of the three world, as the harborur of mercy, as the germ and symbol of action. He is the supreme lord, the image of everything and the witness of all. The Brahmāṇḍa purāṇa speaks of the Sun God as the cause of all activities of the world. He is the creator of days, nights, month, seasons and year. He is the producer of vegetables and medicines. He is the controller of all the grahas and nakṣatras. He is the sustainer of all the movable and immovable world. It connects the twelve months with the twelve aspects of the Sūrya. It states that Sūrya is known as Varuṇa in the month of Maṅga, Puṣan in the month of Phālguna, as Arīṣu in the month of Chaitra, Dhatū in the month of Baisākha, Indra in the month of Jyeṣṭha, Sabita in the month of Aṣāḍha, Vivasvan in the month of Śrāvaṇa, Bhaga in the month of Bhādrapada, Parjanya in the month of Āświna, Tvaṣṭa in the month of Kaṛṭika, Mitra in the month of Mārgasīra and Viṣṇu in the month of Pauśa.

In the Linga Purāṇa, Sūrya is described as the maker of rain. He is the universal order (Ṛta), truth, wind, sky, atma etc. and the “Paramah Sivah”.

In the Padma Purana, he is identified with Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Mahēśvara in whose forms, He is manifested. It connects the twelve months with the twelve Adityas. This purāṇa gives a mahāmantra in which he is called SahasraBāhu, Padma Hasta, Varuṇa, Timira Nāsaka and Sahasra Jīva.
The Brahma Purana reflects Brahma as praying to Sūrya to wash away darkness and defeat the asuras. It provides the twelve names of the twelve Adityas. At the same time it gives twenty one holy names of the Bhāskara\textsuperscript{268}. They are Vikartana, Vivasvan, Mārtanda, Vāskara, Rabi, Śrīman, Lokapraķashaka, Loka Cakṣhu, Mahēśvara, Loka Śaṅkhi, Trilokesha, Karta, Harta, Tanunpata, Tapanā, Tamisratha, Suci, Saptāśva Vāhana, Gabhastihasta and Brahmadeva. It also describes the hundred and eight names of Sun god\textsuperscript{269}. These names, however, identifies the Sun god with the Navagrahas, the three forms of the supreme sprits, the pañcha mahāvutas, and the yugas etc. It refers the twelve Adityas representing different aspects of life. It also praises him as a source of Prajñā, Śvarga, Mokṣa, in fact everything a man might desire.

The Skanda purana describes the importance of Gāyatri Mantra and gives seventy names of Sūrya\textsuperscript{270}. It extols Sun god as Trideva i.e. Brahma, Viṣṇu and Maheśa in one form. It states that Āryaman comprises these three gods in himself\textsuperscript{271}. The Skanda purana also states that Sun god represented himself in five forms namely, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Sakti(goddess), Ganesha and Sūrya\textsuperscript{272} like a sūtradhara in drama. It shows that he is all in one and other gods and goddesses are his manifestation.

In the puranas complete humanization or anthropomorphisation of the personality of the sun god is marked. With that a family also developed around him. Sun was the son of Aditi \textsuperscript{273}. They mention Sanjana and Chaya as his two wives. Nāsatya Daśra (Aśvini kumaras), Revanta, Yama, Savarṇī(Saturn) and Yamuna\textsuperscript{274} as his sons and daughters. The Vamana purana mentions Tapati as another daughter of
the Sun god\textsuperscript{275} and describes her union with Samvaraṇa. The purāṇas speak that Manu, Yama and Yami got their birth from Saṅjana while Sanaśchara, Manu and Tapati were born from Chāya\textsuperscript{276}.

The Viṣṇudharmottara purāṇa names Savarṇa and Sanaśchara as the sons of Chāya\textsuperscript{277}. The Padma purāṇa\textsuperscript{278} names Sanjanā, Rajni, Pravā, Tvāṣtrī as the wives of Śūrya. The Brahma purāṇa states Sanjanā is the same as Uṣā also called Tvāṣtrī and Chāya as Savarṇa\textsuperscript{279}. The Viṣṇudharmottara names them as Rajni, Rikshubhā, Niksubha, Dau, Chāya, Bhū, Prabha and Suvarcasa\textsuperscript{280}.

The purāṇas describe the legend of Śūrya and Sanjna\textsuperscript{281}. According to the story, Sanjanā, the daughter of Tvāṣṭra (Viśvakarma) was married to sun god and gave birth to Manu, Yama and Yamunā. But after wards, being unable to bear the luster and heat of Śūrya, she left her exact replica ‘Chāya’ and went to practice austerities. When Śūrya knew it he went to his father-in-law to diminish his luster. Accordingly Viśvakarma pared him upto the knees. Then sun god went to his wife sanjanā, who was performing penance in the form of a mare. So he took the form of a horse and from their union, the two Asvini Kumārs and Revaṇṭa were born. This legend finds mention repeatedly in different purāṇa. All the purāṇas except the Skanda and the Brahma mention the place of his paring as Śakadvipa. But the skanda\textsuperscript{282} and the Brahma purāṇas\textsuperscript{283} point out Prabhaśa Khaṇḍa identified with modern Saurāstra as the place of paring. The paring of the body of Śūrya by Viśvakarma is an indication of the beginning of inconography of the sun god.
The purāṇas like the Matsya, Agni, Viṣṇu Dharmottara, Padma etc give the description of the iconography of the sun. They are replete with the descriptions of different modes of sun worship, sun festivals, sun temples, sun images etc all around India.

The later purāṇas and the Upa-purāṇas throw flood of light on the sun cult. Due to the popularity and prevalence of the sun worship and sun cult, some sectarian Saura literature came into being. We find references to some Upa-purāṇas or minor purāṇas exclusively devoted to sun god. A work named ‘Martanda Purāṇa’ dealing with ‘Sauravrata’ is mentioned in the Bhaviṣyottara purāṇa. We have informations about the Aditya purāṇa, which is one of the earliest and most popular Upa-purāṇa. Because we get the mention of this Aditya purāṇa by Alberuni and also in the skanda purāṇa and Matsya Purāṇa. The Devi Bhagavata purāṇa the Vindhya Mahātmya and the Brhaddharma purāṇa also refer to the Aditya purāṇa in their list of the eighteen upa-purāṇas.

Many extracts from the Aditya purāṇa are quoted in many early Nibandhs and a few Śrītī Nibandhas. According to Hazra, the quotations of the Aditya purāṇa reveal that it was non section work dealing with the praise and worship of Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Siva, Durga and other deities.

The Bhāskarahaṁva upapurāṇa, Saura Purāṇa, Uttara saura, Saura Dharma, Saura Dharmottara etc are the literature which exclusively deal with sun worship. But none of them is now available. All of them have lost to oblivion. However, their names and few passages from them are found quoted by other literary works for example Bhāskarahaṁva, Upa-purāṇa is mentioned by Raghunandana, Sūrya
Purāṇa by Bhisyottara Purāṇa and Uttara saura is referred to in the works like kālaNīrāṇaya, kāla Sāra etc. Saura Dharma, one of the earliest work dealing with the duties of the sauras. The Tithī Nīrṇaya, Hari Bhakti, Vilāsa etc. mention the name of Saura Dharmottara dealing with Saura vratas.

Besides these saura Upa-purāṇas, some sectarian Saura literature came into being. They are the Sāmba Purāṇa and the Bhavisya Purāṇa. They are the most comprehensive and complete documents of the sun cult. The Sāmba Purāṇa was the earlier one in comparison to the Bhavisya Purāṇa. Because many verses of the Sāmba purāṇa are found to occur in the Bhavisya Purāṇa.

The Sāmba purāṇa is the only extant saura literature. It calls itself Bhāskarasya purāṇam.

A fully fledged sun sect came into being during the later puranic phase. The sectarian features such as the unquestionable supremacy of the deity, the exclusiveness of devotion, the fixed procedure of worship, the sectarian literature, the iconography, the temple etc. are found in the later purāṇas.

The Sāmba purāṇa in its very outset extols the sun god as the cause of creation, protection and destruction of the universe as the soul of Brahma, Nārāyaṇa and Saṅkara. He is the only god deserving devotion and worship.

The Bhāviṣya purāṇa another solar literature extols the sun god as the supreme deity, and as the greatest among the gods. All movable and immovable, animate and inanimate things of the world are
originated from him. He is the creator as well as the destroyer of the world. He is the Soul of all. He has many forms, so he is called "Visvarupa". He is the cause of the gods like Rudra, Vāsava, Ashvina, Vayu, Anala and Prajāpati. He is the maker of the three worlds. He is the creator of rain, which in turn causes the food and vegetation. It refer to the twelve Adityas; the member of the solar family and his attendants and he iconography of the sun god and his associates.

The sectarian nature of the terms like 'Parama Saura' and "Parama Āditya bhaktah" applied to the sun worshippers. The development of sectarian literature like the samba purana. Sūrya-siddhānta etc, the use of flag and flag staffs of the sun god, evolution of a code of conduct for the sun worshippers, the use of the sectarian mantra the specific rules and regulations for making sun-images and temples and other constituents of the ritual of the sun cult, all these directly indicate to the sectarian 'sun-cult'.

Some secular literature also attest to the sectarian tendency of the sun cult. The Sūrya sataka of Mayura describes the glory of sun god as surpassing "Viṣṇu pāda" and he is identified with the Rg, the śama, and the Yajur Vedas, Baraha Mihira refers to sectarian sun worship, Anandagiri in his Samkara digvijay gives information about the existence of a sun sect in south india.

The most important and interesting feature of sun worship in the later puranas was the formal association with the foreign priest hood known as Maga. Many purāṇa contain a legend concerning the advent of the Magas and their association with the sun cult. According to it, Samba, the son of Lord Krīṣṇa by Jarhavati was cursed by his
father to suffer leprosy for his undesirable relations with the wives of Vasudeva Krishna. Narada advised Samba to worship the sun god by constructing a sun temple at Chadrabha modern Chenab in the Punjab) to get cured of this disease. Since no Brahmana was ready to accept the office of a regular priest of this temple, he asked the help of Gauramukha, the priest of Ugrasena. He advised him to get the Maga, who were supposed to be special sun worshipping priests of the Sakadvipa. Accordingly Samba went to Sakadvipa and brought eighteen families of the Magas and installed them into the office of the priest of the temple he constructed®. The Bhavishya purana gives a legend about the origin of the Magas. According to it a sage named Sujhva of Mihira Gotra had a beautiful daughter named Nikshubha. Sun god fell in love with her when she was sporting with the fire. The sun god entered into the fire and get a son from her known as Jarasabda. The Magas originated from him, who are also known as Agnijata, being fire born. They were staunch worshipper of the sun god. It seems that they came to India and found a much more developed form of sun worship. They adopted it as the means of their livelihood and started working as priests in the sun temples. They tried to popularize sun worship.

There has been controversy among scholars regarding the time of the coming of the Magas to India and from where they really came. It was accepted by almost all the scholars that they entered into India with the sakas and they came from Sakadvipa identified with Iran. But a deep study of the several circumstantial evidences reveal a much earlier time for their advent. Because first of all the Sakas and the Magas have no genetic relationship in the literature. Secondly figures of Mithra (the sun god of the Magas) in the coins of kaniska and micro
inscription according to some scholars suggest the advent of the Magas with the Kushanas. But the fact is that it does not indicate the antiquity of the Magas in India rather it suggests the officials recognition and royal patronage to this cult. Thirdly, the absence of sun icons of Iranian tradition before the Kuśāṇa period does not indicate that the Magas came with the Sakas rather it shows that the Magas were already there in India but due to the orthodox traditions of India, they could not gain popularity during the Kuśāṇa period, they received royal patronage or recognition to popularize solar iconography. More ever, Indians had their own tradition of solar cult and iconography. Therefore the adoption of foreign traditions of solar cult must have taken place after sufficient thinking and time lag. The absence of references to the Magas in the orthodox literature till 5th A.D. shows that due to the attitude of contempt which the Hindus adopted towards the foreigners in general, the Magas could not find a place in the orthodox Brahmanic literature. It is justified to believe that the Brahmanic literature mentioned them only when they are fully absorbed in the Hindu Society. Any religious fact or institution might exist much earlier than the period at which it finds expression in literature.

We find the references of the existence of the Magas as a sun worshipping people in the inscriptions and secular literature of much earlier time. The geography of Ptolemy refers to the Bramanas Magoi in the south. The Brahmajala sūta of 4th century B.C. refers to the Magic priests. The Ārṣeya Upanisad also refers to a few sun worshipping tribes. All these indicate their presence in India as early as the 5th & 4th century B.C. Recent excavation from Achaemenian levels at Balambat in west Pakistan brought to light actual
specimens of fire alter in association with sun disc. This proves the existence of Mithraic religion as a living faith in this part of undivided India during the Achaemenian period. It shows that the Magas entered into India for the first time in the wake of Achaemenid invasion of the 6th-5th century B.C. They entered into India in different waves in course of time they got absorbed in the ever expanding liberal heart of India.

Another vital aspect is to know the amount of impact of the Maga priests on the indigenous sun worship in ancient India. According to the opinion of Weber, the native sun worship was quite replaced by magian form of sun worship. But we cannot agree with him. Because there are many Purānas, which do not mention the role of magian priests at all. They continue to maintain the indigenous and national tradition of sun worship as found in the Vedas, the Brahmanaš, the Upaniṣads the sutras, and the epics. The vedic tradition of sun worship actually developed in the Satpatha Brahmaṇa. Prescription of golden disc to represent the solar orb, and the Upanisadic doctrine of the golden purusa in the sun identified with the ultimate being continued in the purāṇas like the viṣṇu, the vāyu, the Brahmaṇa, and the Matsya. Even the Sambha purāṇa which marks the culmination of the impact of Magian tradition, does not forget the vedic tradition. Above all the name of the sect of which the Magas became the priests is called“Saura” a sanskritised form is indicative of the fact that the Indian Saura cult was never magianised rather the magian cult was thoroughly indianised. It is only after that it became acceptable by the orthodox Indians.
All these testify that the amount of Maga influence was quite negligible so far as the mythology, theology and philosophy of the sun cult are concerned.

We find powerful impact of the Magas on the field of image making and temple building. South India remained almost untouched and uninfluenced but in North India, we find some influence of the Magas with the use of northern dress, girdle and high boots.

However, though in a superficial way, their influence helped a lot in the propagation and diffusion of sectarian form of sun worship. Previously the vedic, Epic and puranic tradition did not feel the necessity of image worship as the atmospheric and symbolic tradition was in vogue. But that imaginary and atmospheric conception of the sun, got concrete and lithic form by the Magas.

The technical literature like the Brihad sanhita, the Agamas, Silpa Ratna, Viśkarma Vatāra sāstra, Viśvakarma silpa, Rupa maṇḍana etc. give the ideas, instructions and formulae of image making and temple building.

The later purānic world shows the epitomes of religious syncretism, which is reflected in the pāncāyatana puja. The Sāmba purāṇa achieves the apogee of the spirit of relationship and rapprochement among different sectarian deities, when it states that the sun was worshipped as viṣṇu in Śvetādvipa, as Maheśvara in Kuśādvipa as Brahma in Puṣkara dvipa and as Bhāskara in ‘Sakadvipa.”

Thus, the puranas throw valuable light on the study of the sun and the solar cult.
Some secular literature very often deal with the tradition of sun
god and his worship. The *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya* of Pañcatālā of the
time of Puṣyamitra Śunga refer to the god Sūrya several times. He is
invoked along with the Vedic deities like Indra, Tvaṣṭr, Varuṇa, Vāyu
etc. It also mentions that worship of the sun and the moon.

In the KumāraSaṃbhavaṁ, Kalidasa deals with the yogic pose of
concentrating on the sun. While describing the penance of Pārvati it is
described that the face of Pārvati got hot as she undertook penance
amidst the five fires including sun.

In the Rāghuvaṁśa, Kalidasa refers to the peeling off the sun
into human form by Viśvakarma. Aruṇa is described as destroying the
darkness. Sūrya is also mentioned as the destroyer of sin and
darkness. At the same time he compares one ray of Sun as Amṛta,
impregnated water and gave it power to sustain the life of the Beings.
Vikramovarṣiyaṁ is also replete with the praise of surya. Thus,
Kalidasa has admitted Sūrya as the destroyer of darkness, giver of rain
and sustainer of the living world.

The Harṣa Charita of Bāna mentions that Prabhākara Vardhana
of Puṣyabhuti dynasty was a sun worshipper. Every day after taking bath
in early morning and wearing a white silken garment, he knelt towards
the east on the ground within a circle made with saffron paste. He was
offering red lotus to the sun and was muttering the Āditya ṇrīdaya
mantra thrice a day, morning, noon and evening while worshipping the
sun.
Mayura composed the ‘Sūrya Sātaka’ containing hundred verses in the praise of the sun god. He describes the beauty of the radiant rays of the sun. He is regarded as the stimulator and maintainer of the universe. He is described as able to bring heat and light. Bhavabhuti in the Nandi verse of the Malati Madhava offers his salute to the sun god.

In the veni-Sambhara Bhattanarayana refers to the worship of the rising sun with offering of water, sandal paste, lovely flowers and with salutation.

Kathā sarit Sagara of Somadeva gives reference to the solar gods like Tvaṣṭa, Bhaga, Ṛṣya, and Pusān. In a simili, sun god is described as having seven horses in his chariot.

Naisadhiya charitam written by Śrī Harsha informs us about sun worship. It mentions Aruna as the charioteer of the sun god and also an island named Plaksha, situated adjacent to Śakadīpa and contained large number of the adherents of sun god.

Different foreign travelers who visited India at different times have left their accounts. Those accounts throw floods of light on the general condition of sun god and his worship.

Hiuen-T-sang gives information about the worship of sun god and the temples dedicated to him. He refers to the quinquennial assembly called by Harsa, the king of Kanauj. His accounts mention the sun temple of Multan, Kanya kubja and Hiranaya Parvata, probably Mongyr in Bihar. He suggests that sun god was worshipped with offering of flowers and perfumes.
The Accounts of some Arab travellers like Abuzaid, Almasudi, Al istakhri, Al Idrisi, Alberuni and Abdur Rehman-chisti give elaborate information on the sun worship in India. They refer to some sun temples, sun images, their installation and the worship. Almost all of them refer to the idol and temple of Multan. Alberuni\textsuperscript{368} refers to the sun temple of Multan, its destruction by the Mohammadan invaders and also about the existence of the Magas, the sun worshipping priests\textsuperscript{369}.

The Brahma Purana\textsuperscript{370} refers to a "Sūrya Kṣetra" a region of sungod. Where sun god known as Koṇāḍitya lived. This place of the God was situated on the holy coast of the Lavana ocean in odra country or Utkala. i.e. modern Orissa\textsuperscript{371}. It describes about the Brahmanas expert in vedic knowledge were there in the service of the temple. This temple has been identified with the Koṇārka temple of Orissa.

The Samba puraṇa also states that, Samba constructed a sun temple at Muṇḍira, Sutiram, Koṇāḍitya or Koṇārka.

It is important to note that the later puraṇas testify the importance of Orissa as a seat and centre of sun worship.

Kapila Samhita\textsuperscript{372} an unpublished palmleaf manuscript describes the sanctity and importance of "Maitrayavana" or Koṇārka. It also refers to Chaṇḍrabhāga. Which is flowing near the sun temple.

The Arka-Kṣetra Mahātmya and Saura Samuchaya\textsuperscript{373} two unpublished works describe the glory and sanctity of Maitreyavana and its temple of Koṇārka, Sūrya ganga, the Chaṇḍrabhāga and Arkavata existing within the limits of this sacred Tīrtha. Different fairs, festival,
Rath yatras etc. performed at this place are discussed. Rath yatras were performed with much pomp and ado in the bygone days. One manuscript deals with the worship of the sun and contains authentic description of the festivals performed in Konarka. Dharma Puranam contain Surya Stakam by Sankaracharya. The Tirth chintamani of Vachaspati Mishra of 14th century, a Sanskrit work and oriya Mahabharata composed by Sarala Das belonging to 14th-15th century A.D describe the worship of the presiding deity of the Konark Temple and the mode of his worship, the importance of Magha saptami etc.

Thus all the literary evidences starting from the Rigveda upto the works of 14th-15th century A.D. and even later testify in astounding voice the prevalence and popularity of sun worship through the nook and corner of India, Orissa being not an exception to it.

SUN GOD AND SUN WORSHIP IN THE INSCRIPTIONS:-

Epigraphy plays always important role in providing authentic information. So far as epigraphic evidence is concerned, the Asokan Inscriptions are perhaps the ancient most in India. The Asokan inscription do not contain any reference to Sun worship. However, the Sun symbols like Svastika is found in some of his inscriptions. Even we do not find any reference to the sun cult in the inscriptions of the Indo-Greeks, Kushanas and Ksatraps. In the Nānaghat Incription of the Satavahana queen Nayanika for the first time we find a reference to the salutation to the Moon and the Sun.

However, with the coming of the Guptas to power, both materialistic and spiritualistic prosperity was marked. From this period
onwards, We find references to the Sungod and his worship reflected in their inscriptions. The indoor copper plate inscription of Skanda Gupta of 465-66 AD is the earliest epigraphic evidence of Sun worship, which has been taken as “an inscription of solar worship” 380. In this inscription Sun god has been invoked under the name of Bhaskara as the rich source of ray and the piercer of darkness. In this inscription Sun god is prayed to protect mankind from physical and mental ailments. We find explicit mention of a Sun temple at Indore. It was established by Acalavarman and Bhrukuntha Sinha, two Kshatriya merchants of Indrapura381. It is also said that the Brähmanas of enghiltened mind worship him. Devavishnu382, a brahmana of orthodox vedic tradition gave an endowment for the purpose of maintaining a lamp in this Sun temple. This shows that the orthodox indigenous Brähmanas (not the Maga priests), the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas, all were worshippers of the ‘Sun-god’. The temple was dedicated to Bhagavata Savitri(God Savitri).

The Mandasore stone inscription of Kumara Gupta and Badhuvarman(437-38) and (473-74 A.D.) throws light on solar worship383. Here the Sun god was invoked as Savitri and Bhāskara and is worshipped in sectarian way as the cause of the creation and destruction of the Universe384. It also refers that the Silk cloth-weaver guild of Lata of South Gujarat constructed a temple in 473-474 A.D385. The collective effort of the guild proves the existence of a group of followers of Sun god or Sun cult.

The Khoh copper plate inscription386 of Maharaja Sarvanatha(512-13 A.D.) refers to the grant by the king for the shrine of two Gods, i.e. Viṣṇu and Sūrya. It also refers to the maintenance of the temples by the
public, which indicates the existence of Saura-cult and popularity of Sun worship in Central India by 6th C.A.D.

The Gwalior stone inscription of Mihirakula\(^{387}\) is another solar inscription dealing with Solar worship. The Sungod is invoked as the day maker and dispeller of darkness. This inscription also refers to the construction of a stone temple of Bhanu, the Sungod by Maitriceta on the mountain of Gop, on which stands the fortress of Gwalior. This inscription is also a proof of indigenous tradition of Sun worship.

The Shahpur stone image inscription of Adityasena (672-73) \(^{388}\) A.D. is found on the pedestal of a standing image of Sun, holding two water lilies in his hands. It was installed by Baladhikrita Salapaksa in the Agarāhāra of Nalanda (Bihar). The name of the king as Adityasena' itself is a suggestive of the leaning towards Aditya', the Sun god. It also indicates the provision of royal patronage to the Sun cult and the popularity of Sun worship in Bihar by 7th Cent. A.D.

The popularity of Sun worship of indigenous type in Bihar is found in the Deo-Baranark inscription of Jivitagupta-II\(^{389}\). It records the grant of a village either Varunika or Kiśorvātaka for the Sungod.

The Nirmand copper plate inscription of Mahasamanta and Maharaja Samudrasena\(^{390}\) shows the uncompromisation of Saivism and Sun cult which is indicated by the name ‘Mihireśvara’ Siva.

The Maliya copper plate inscription of Maharaja Dharmasena II (571-72 A.D.)\(^{391}\) mentions that Maharaja Dharapatta of the Maitraka dynasty of Vallabhi was an earnest worshipper of the Sun “Paramāditya bhaktah” \(^{392}\). The term “Maitraka” itself shows its derivation from
'Mitra', the Sun god. The Sonepur copper seal inscription of Harsavadhana gives the epithet 'Paramaditya Bhaktah' to Rajya-vardhana, Aditya-vardhana and Prabhakara vardhana. This proves that the puya-bhuti dynasty of Thaneswar were the patrons of Solar cult.

The Gupta period shows that the public man like officers, merchants, scholars, fighters, cloth-weavers, etc, not kings were the Sun worshippers. But, in northern India the royal families were great patrons of Sun cult, rather it became the family cult of many royal dynasties. The Kaira plates of Dadda II (629 A.D.) refers the devotion of Dadda I (570-590 A.D.) to the Sungod from his very birth. It also depicts Dadda II as a devotee of Sungod. The Kaira plates of Dadda II (684 A.D.) repeats the same thing. The Sankedha plate of 641 A.D. refers to Ranagraha as a devotee of Sun god. Dadda III, made a grant to the Sun god on the Ratha saptami tithi. All these testify that the Sun cult was the family cult of the Gurjaras. Balavarman and Avantivarman II of the Chalukya dynasty offered gifts to a Sun temple named “Tarunaditya” in 893 and 899 A.D. respectively. The Kalachuris of Ratanpur were the patrons of Sun worship. Many Chauhans rulers of Rajasthan also patronized the Sun cult. Indraraja Chahaman, a feudatory of Mahendra Pala II is described as a patron of Sun cult in the Pratapgarh inscription of Mahendra Pala II. He is said to have constructed a Sun temple named after him as Indradityadeva. The Thamvala inscription of Simharaja describe Simharaja of Jangaladesa as a patron of the Sun god.
According to an epigraphical proof the Paramāna king Vikrama Simha renovated a Sun temple at Varman in 1299 A.D.404. Some inscriptions405 mention that the Gahadavala rulers were sympathetic towards the Sun cult. King Jayachanda donated many villages to the Lollārka, the Sun god406. The use of the title “Paramaditya Bhaktah” by the Pratihāra kings Ramabhadra and Vīnāyakapala prove that they were Sun worshippers407.

In Eastern India we find that the Sena dynasty show solar leanings. The copper plates of Viśvarupasena and Keśavasena (12th Cent. A.D.) call themselves as ‘Parama Saura’408. The inscription of Yaksapala, a local king of Gayā begins with an invocation to the Sungod409, which indicates that he was a patron of the Sun cult. The Rajput families of India had sincere leanings to the Sun cult. Many Rajput families owe their origin to the Sun410. It seems that as Sun god represented Kingship or Royalty, the royal families inclined to patronize the Sun cult.

The inscriptions of the arly mediaval age also provide ample informations about the sociological status of the Sun cult in North India. Besides the royal people, we find members of other races also worshipped the Sun. The Kaira plate of Dadda II of 684 A.D. refers that the donee was a Brāhmaṇa named Aditya ravi of the Bharadvaj gotra411. The name Aditya Sarman in the Sankheda plate of Ranaグラha412, the donee belonging to the Bharadvaj gotra and of the Vaja Saneyi Madhyadina Sākhā mentioned in the Sāṃkheda plates of Dadda II413 suggest the Solar connection of these people. Some inscriptions contain the references Itunda inscription (774 A.D.)414 refers to the Sūryadvijaha.
The Ghatiyal inscription of Kakkarka of 861 A.D. \(^{415}\), the inscription of Govindpur\(^{416}\) of Gaya district of 1137-38 A.D. refer to the Maγa Brāhmaṇa. Different solar names like Sūryadevabhatta, Sūrya, Ādityarama, Ādityadeva, Matriravi, Ādityasarman etc in different inscription\(^{417}\) suggest the sectarian character of the Sun worship. The Dhaboi stone inscription\(^{418}\) of Viṣāladeva, the Cambay stone inscription\(^{419}\) and epigraph\(^{420}\) of Silāditya (606-612 A.D.) mention about some Sun temples and their restoration.

Thus, the inscriptions discovered from different parts of India testify the prevalence and popularity of Sungod and his worship. The inscriptions also throw light on the mode of worship and the geographical extension of the Sun cult.

The epigraphs of Orissa play a great role in proving the popularity of Sun worship. They are replete with the evidences of Solar worship in every part of the state.

One copper plate inscription found from Kapalesvara\(^{421}\) on the north bank of Mahanadi opposite Cuttack refers to the invocation of Aditya, the Sun god along with other gods like Brahma, Varuna, Soma etc.

The Vigrahas were most probably Sun worshippers as is revealed by a copper plate charter found from Belgaon near Sambalpur, where Prithvi Vigraha is described as ‘Parama-Saura’. The Sumanḍala copper plate charter\(^{422}\) dated in the Gupta year 20\(^{th}\) December 569 A.D. reveal that, Dharmarāja, a feudatory of Lokavigraha, was a great devotee of the Sun god. In this charter belonging to Ganjam district, he declares himself as ‘Sahasrarasmi Padabhaktah’. The Ganjam copper plate grant
of Sailodbhava king Madhavaraja II was issued in 620 A.D. The copper plate was issued on Solar eclipse day to a Brahmin of Angirasa Bharadvaja gotra. The second Chicacole grant was issued by Indravarman III in the year 138 (Cir 636 A.D.) on the occasion of Ratha-Saptami in the month of Magha. Ratha-Saptami and Bharadvaja gotra are connected with with Sun god. The Dharma section of the Teresingha copper plate grant of King Tustikaradeva belonging to 5th – 6th century A.D. refers to gods like Aditya, Sūrya, Hutasana and Sulapani, who are prayed “Aditya Hutasana purog-amah/ Sulapanisca . Bhagavāna bhinandati.Bhumidam. All these show the popularity of Sun worship. The Sonepur charter of Soma-vamsi king Mahābhaṭṭa-gupta II Jaimejaya records that “Kamalāvana”. Vanīkaṣṭhāna, a merchant’s association of Kamalāvana transferred the gift of a village named Gotaikela included in the Luputtara Khanka in Kosala to two temples, one of which is dedicated to Sri Aditya-bhāṭṭeraka-devakula . This testifies the existence of Sun temple and the popularity of Sun worship in Sonepur (Suvarnapur) region.

The stone inscription of the Niladri temple in Narayananapuram shows that an image of Aditya or Sun was enshrined there in the reign of Ganga king Rajaraja I. Most probably this is the earliest instance to show that Sun worship was practiced during the Gāngas. One inscription is depicted on the back side of a stone image of Sun found from Gandībeda near Soro. The inscription belongs to the Somavamśi king Karnadeva (1100-1110 A.D.). It contains an eulogy of Karnadeva. The inscription on a Sun image proves the prevalence of Sun worship during the Somavamśi rule. The Sūryanārāyana temple at Arsavalli dated 1148 A.D. refers to the grant of Modapoto Nayaka for installation of a
perpetual lamp before Lord Sūryanārāyaṇa. The Pherova grant of Samantavarman\textsuperscript{430} of Svetaka Mandala was made to Brāhmins bearing Solar names, such as Ravi Sharma and Divākara Sharma.

The connection of Bharadvaja gotra, Kāśyapa gotra, Aṅgira\textsuperscript{a} pravara, Vājasāneśa, Śākha, Vaśistha, Maitra, Varuṇa, Pravara, Kanva Sākthā etc. with Sun worship is very ancient. The adoption of Solar names by the people also testify the popularity of Sun worship and the respect they had in their heart for the Sun god. The month of Māga, Ratha saptami, Māgha saptami, Makara samkranti, Mahā viśuva saṅkranti, Karkata Saṅkranti, Sūrya Parāg, Rayivarā-Kumbha Samkranti etc. are very auspicious to Sun god and are considered sacred in Sun worship. We find numerous references of kings, officers, ministers, donees and doners having solar names and gotra in a number of epigraphs, starting from the Mātharas, the Nalas, the Vīgrahas, the Dattas, the Sailodbhas, the Bhaṇjas, the early Gaṅgas, the Bhaumakaras, the Kalachuris, the Somavānśis, the imperial Gaṅgas and the Sūryavaṃsi Gajapatis of Orissa.

The Sarangarh plates\textsuperscript{431} of SudevaśaJa mention the names of the donees as Bhāskara swāmi and Prabhākara swāmi. This proves the prevalence and leanings towards sun cult during the Sarbhapūrṣiṣyas. The Rajim plates of Tīvra-deva (7th R-4)\textsuperscript{432} mentions the name of the donees as Bhatta Bhavadatta and Bhatta Haradatta of Bharadvaja gotra. The Bonda plates of Mahāśīvagupta (R.Y.22)\textsuperscript{433} was issued on Saṅkranti tithi. The donee was Bhatta Trivikrama swāmi of Bharadvaja Gotra. The Patna plates of Janmejaya Mahābhāravagupta(6th r.y.) states the donees name as Sriśankhapāṇi, son of Dinākara of Bharadvaja gotra, Aṅgira-
varhaşpatya Bhāṛadvāja pravara. Nimbina charter of Mahāsivagupta yayati(R.Y.-15) reveals Sri Puñḍarika Sarmā Dikṣhita, son of Nārāyaṇa and grandson of Vilāsa Sarman of Bhāṛadvāja gotra and Aṅgirasa Vārhaśpata Bhāṛadvāja pravara was the donee.

Three copper plate grants of the Bhaṅjas of Khinjali Maṇḍala are found. They were issued by Mahārāja Ranabhdānja and his son Satrubhānja. All these sets of copper plates begin with words “Om Namo Aditya” which suggest the adoration to the Sun god.

Dr. Snigdha Tripathy has referred to many Bhaṅja charters having solar connection. They are as follows:-

a. The Kumurkela charter of Ranaka Satrubhāṅjadeva mention the donee belonging to the Kaśyap gotra, Garga-Apany-Aṅgirasa Pravara and Bahvrja Charana

b. The Tasapaikera Charter of Ranaka Rana Bhaṅjadeva refers to donee belonging to the Bhāṛadvāja gotra of Aṅgirasa – Bhaṛhaśpatya pravara.

c. In the Dasapalla plate of Ranabhāṅja donee was Bhatta Padmakara, Son of Bhatta Śri Prabhākara

d. In the Baud grant of Rana Bhaṅja deva (16th year) the donee belonged to vājasaneya charaṇa, the Maudgalaya gotra, and the Aṅgirasa Anupravaṇa –

e. The Baud plate of Rana Bhaṅja Deva (yr.58) refers the donee belonging to Bhāṛadvāja gotra, Kānva sākhā of Yajurveda charaṇa, Aṅgirasa – Bhāṛadvāja pravara.
f. In the Orissa museum plate of Silabhaṅja alias Tribhubana Kalasa the donee belonged to the Kaundinya gotra and the Kaundinya, Vaśīṣṭha and Maitra Varuna pravaras as well as to the Vajasaneya charaṇa and Kāṇva Sakhā of the Yajurveda.

g. The Tekkala or Gurandi plates of Satrubhaṅja alias Maṅgala Raja refers to the name of an officer as ‘Silāditya’

h. Komanda copper plates of Netta Bhāṅja refers to donee of Vajasaneya charaṇa, Kāṇva Sakhā, Gautama Gotra, Autathya pravara and Āṅgirasa anuparavara

i. In the Orissa museum plates of Netta Bhāṅja alias Tribhuvana Kalaṣa mentions the officers name as Bhatta “Arkadeva” and as the donee belonged to Bhāradvāja gotra, Āṅgirasa pravara.

j. The Antririgam plates of Yasabhaṅja, the Antirigam plates of Jayabhaṅja deva refer to the donees belonging to Bhāradvāja gotra and Āṅgirasa pravara. The Bānatumva plates of Netta Bhāṅja deva refer to the donee Ādityadeva of Kauśika gotra and Vājaśaneya charaṇa.

The copper plate grant of Tribhuvana Mahadevi reveals that village Kontaṣpara was donated to a Brahmin donee of the Bhāradvāja gotra with Āṅgirasa, Barhaspatya and Bhāradvāja pravara of Kāṇva Sakhā. It was done to bring rain. The Sulki rules also donated lands to the donees having names land gotra of Solar connection. In the Talcher grant of Kulastambha⁴³⁷, lines 11-14 shows the donation of the village by taking vow in the name of the Sun, the Moon and the Earth. Another grant of Kulastambha⁴³⁸ records the grant of the village Jharbada to Bhatta.
Brihaspati, the son of Bhatta Ravi of Kasyapa gotra on the occasion of one Vişuvasamkrānti.

The Kalachuris of Ratanpur were also patrons of Surya worship as revealed from their inscriptions like Amod plates of Prithvi-I, Sarkho plates of Ratna-II, Daikoni plates, Ghota plates, Amod plates (1st and 2nd set) and Bilaigarh plates of Prithvi-II, Amod plates of Jajalla-II, Pendrabandha and Bilaigarh plates of Pratap Malla and Paragaon plates of Prithvi-II and Ratna-II. All of them praise the Sun as the foremost luminary of the sky and the primeval being.

The Govindapur stone inscription of the Maga poet Gangādhara (1137-1138 A.D.) records that Manoratha went to “the sacred purusottama” which suggests that there were Sun worshipping priests in Orissa.

In the Narasipatam (Narasinha Patna) copper plate grant of Vajra hasta deva, the donee was Aditya Chotta, Son of Bedumbaditya belonging to Kasyapa gotra. The Śrikakulam copper plate grant of Vajrahasta deva was issued on one Sunday (Aditya bare) in the month of Karkata. The Nadagam plates of Vajrahastadeva was issued on Sunday (Aditya Basare). The Chikkalavalasa Copper plate grant of the same king shows the emblem of a lying bull, the moon, the Sun on the seal. The Madras museum plates of Vajrahashthadeva reveals that the grant was made on the occasion of a Solar eclipse (Suryagraho Parāge).

The Chicalole plates of Rajarañadeva alias Devendra Varman is one of the six sets of C.P. Inscriptions found from a spot in Sirīkakulam. In royal seal the images of the Sun and the Moon are found. The Galavalli
copper plate grant of Devendra varman Rajaraja was issued on the occasion of Visvesvaramkanti in favour of three hundred Brahmins of Atreya gotra sakha.442

The Vizagapatnam copper plate inscription443 of Chodagangadeva was issued on Adityavara(Sunday). The Murupaka grant444 of Aantavarman chodagangadeva was issued on the occasion Sankranti. The number of plates is 5. They are held on a ring with a seal which contains the image of the Sun. There are many other such copper plate grants which contain references of names having connection with the Sun god and occasions like Surya parag, Makara Sankranti, Uttaraayana Sankranti, Daksinayana Sankranti, Visvesvaramkanti etc.

The Mahadaplates445 of Somesvara devavarman-III (1155-1180 A.D.), who was ruling in Southern Kosala with head quarters at Suvarnapura describes the king as “Satya Martanda deva Sri Vaidyanatha-padamanka bhramara”. This indicates his devotion for the Sun god and the God Vaidyanatha Siva. The grant was issued on a Sunday and on the Magha Saptami or Ratha Saptami the day considered sacred to the Sun god.

The Nagari plates of Anangabhimadeva II446 (1211-38 A.D.) contain interesting information regarding the Aditya Purana, the text in Sun worship. Anangabhima III had granted five yatis of land in accordance with recommendation of the Aditya Purana (Aditya Puranoktani)

One copper plate447 grant is found from a house of a Santala of “Asankhali” pargana of Mayurbhanja which was issued on the 25th
regnal year of Narsimhadeva –II. It contains the information regarding the construction of Konarka temple (Koṇakone Kuṭirakam).

**Sun-God in the Coins**

Numismatics play equal important role in providing data about the Sun god and his worship. The representation of the Sun god in human form was preceded by symbolical representation on coins and seals. In the initial stage, Sun was worshipped in his atmospheric form and subsequently in symbolic form. These symbolic representation are found on early coins and seals.

Some symbols and designs are specially associated with Surya as per the descriptions of the Sun and his attributes in the vedic, the Epic and the Purānic literature. They are the wheel, the lotus, the rayed disc, the Śvastika, the six armed device, the taurine etc. The Śvastika, the wheel, the rayed disc symbolize the primitive concept of solar motions.

The rayed disc is the most direct and most frequent representation of the Sun. There are four varieties of rayed discs as depicted in the punch marked coins. This symbol is found in the Magadha series of punch marked coins. During the Maurya-Sunga period, it lost its popularity. The symbol found its appearance on the silver punch marked coins of the Pandyas of South India also. The symbol of a large flamed disc is found depicted in a few round copper caste coins of Kada of 3rd century B.C. The Coins of the western Kshatrapas contain the symbol of the sun in his natural form. The Toramana coins also contain Sun symbols. The rayed disc is also found depicted on the tribal coins of the Pāṇcāla Mitra series (200 B.C – 100 B.C.) The coins of Sūryamitra and
Bhanumitra\textsuperscript{457} contain the depiction of the radiate ball or the symbol of Sun, the direct and visible depiction of Solar disc.

The coins and the names of the issuers of the coins prove the popularity of the Sun cult\textsuperscript{458}. The wheel and its variants are usually found depicted on the early single type silver coins\textsuperscript{459} and the early punched marked coins\textsuperscript{460}. The wheel has either six or eight spokes, a rim and a hub. It represents the time, the seasons, the movement or the motion.

The right turned Svastika symbolizes the Solar power of creation and preservation of the world. According to E.B. Havell "it apparently symbolizes the movement of the Sun round the Earth." \textsuperscript{461}

The lotus is found on the early and the later punch-marked coins\textsuperscript{462}. It is depicted on the reverse side of the copper punch marked coins\textsuperscript{463} found from the southern part of Uttar Pradesh.

The coins found from Avanti depicts a human figure and a Sūrya dhvaja. They are the earliest indigenous specimen of Solar symbols in association with a human figure.

During the Indo-Greeks, Saka and Kusāṇa period the Sun worship received more encouragement. The Sun god in human form are depicted in the coins of Indo-Greeks such as the coins of Appollodotus\textsuperscript{464}, a bronze coin of Philoxenus\textsuperscript{465}, the silver coin of Telephus\textsuperscript{466}. On the coins of Huviska and Kaniška also Sun god is depicted in human form. A coin of Huviska found from Lauriya-Nandangarh\textsuperscript{467} depicts the Sun god on the reverse. A copper coin of Kaniška\textsuperscript{468} found from the same place shows the figure of Sun god on the
reverse. Some coins of Kaniska found from Kasia, Kusinagar U.P. contain the image of Sun god.

Some tribal coins also bear Sun symbols like Lotus, the wheel, a circle etc. The wheel symbol is found on the reverse of the coin of "Vrsni Rajanyagana", the coins of Kuluta chief virayas (1st Century A.D.) and on the coins of Audumbaras. In the indigenous coins of Taxila, a spoked wheel is found. A large rayed disc is found on one side of the coins of "Kada".

The symbol of a blooming lotus flower is found on some of the coins found at Erana (3rd Century B.C.)

Orissa is very much rich in such punched marked coins bearing Sun symbols. They are found scattered in every part of her lap. The punch marked coins having the symbol of disc radiating rays are found from the districts of Cuttack, Puri and Mayurbhanj. They are all datable to approximately 4th century B.C., which testify the popularity of Sun worship in Orissa.

The Kusana coins belonging to the time of Kaniska having Solar image are found from Orissa. On one side of the coin we find a standing male person having radiating circle (holo), on the back part of his head and wearing boots. He may be identified with either the Sun god himself or the issuer of the coin having Solar leanings. Such coins are discovered from Singhbhum, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Keonjhar, Ganjam and Puri. Such coins are first found in Orissa in 1058 A.D. from Jagarh of Ganjam district. They are known as “Puri Kusana” coins. In the year 1893, a hoard of 548 such coins are found from “Gurubæe Salt Godown” of
Manika patna of Puri district. These coins are the replica of the Kusana coins, most probably issued locally in Orissa. Such Puri-Kusana coins having solar images are prevalent in Ganjam, Puri, Mayurbhanj(Khiching), Keonjhar etc.

A hoard of punched-marked coins belonging to the 1st century B.C. are discovered from the fort of Asurgarh of Kalahandi district. The symbol of Sixteen rays round a circle with a conspicuous dot in the centre is found in almost all the coins. The symbol is identified as “Sun”.

376 silver punched-marked coins are discovered from Salipur. Sun symbols are very common in all these coins.

A hoard of 54 gold coins are discovered recently from Saintala of Balangir district. Only five of these coins have been deciphered by researcher Dr. S. Agrawal. He is of the opinion that, these coins belong to the Sarabha Puriya period. On one side of the coins, we find the punch marks of Garuda, Samkha and Cakra. The name “Sri Mahendraditya” is also inscribed in Box-headed script. Mahendraditya was the ruler of that time and these coins are issued in 5th – 6th century A.D. The name of the king is indicative of the leaning of Sarabhapuriyas for Sun cult.

Some gold coins and gold images of ancient period are found from the village Samianpada near Sindheikela of Titilagarh subdivision of Balangir district. Dr. Sasanka Sekhar Panda had identified these gold coins as belonging to the Kalachuri king Gangeyadeva Vikramaditya of (1015-1040 A.D.) On one side of the coins Goddess Lakshmi is depicted along with the Sun and the Moon.
The Solar symbols are found on the potteries discovered from different sites of Megalithic period. In Kunnamattur a megalithic site in the south, some black ware are discovered. They contain the symbol of circle with radiating rays\textsuperscript{481}. Another Solar symbol, the figure of Svastika is painted on a black and red were found from one megalithic site situated in Coorg district. The same symbol is found on a red ware found from Coimbatore\textsuperscript{482}.

In Orissa, Potsherds having Solar symbology i.e. circle with radiant rays from all sides are discovered from the archaeological excavation conducted at Manamunda\textsuperscript{483} in Baud district. The joint venture of two researchers, Sri P.K.Chhotroy and Sri Kamala Kanta Khuntia of Sonepur college have discovered some grey ware and red-glazed ware having Solar symbology like radidant circle and Svastika. These potteries are ascribed to 800 B.C\textsuperscript{484}.

The huge amount of the coins and potsherd found from almost every important districts like Puri, Ganjam, Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Baud, Sonepur, Kalahandi and Balangir, speak aloud that the Sun worship was very popular and widely prevalent in the soil of Orissa from a very ancient time.

**Sun God in Monuments:**

Monuments are the reflection of the conscious will of the community or the general public. They stand as the symbol of the religious consciousness and interest of the then society. The existence of Sun temples from very ancient times, either instant or ruined, in
different parts of India suggest the enthusiasm of the people for the worship of Sun god.

**Antiquity of Sun Temples:**

The vedic literature is quite silent about any temple of the Sun god. Because, vedic tradition show the worship of the Sun god in his atmospheric form by means of oblation and libations. So there was no need of any temple. It is the Griha Sutras that for the first time give some signal for the temples. It indicates that by the 5th – 4th century B.C., the tradition of temple was evolved due to the impact of Bhakti. But, upto 5th – 6th cent A.D., we do not find any temple of the Sun god. The later puranas such as the Samba, the Bhaviśya etc. for the first time refer to the temple of the Sun god established by Samba at Mulasthanā (Modern Multan). The later puranas refer that the Magas built a city known as Mulasthanā on the bank of river chandrabhaga in Punjab and constructed a Sun temple containing an image of the deity. Many Gupta inscriptions also refer to Sun temples.

Most probably, the temple of Multan was constructed in the Saka Kusāna period (2nd Cent. B.C. – 2nd Cent. A.D.). The Lala Bhagat pillar of 2nd century A.D. having solar depictions appears to have been a part of a vanished temple. Philostratos and Plutarch refer to the Sun temples in the Kingdom of Porus on the eve of Alexander’s invasion (4th Century B.C.). All these show the temple traditions of the Sun cult may be as ancient as the 4th century B.C. But being made up of perishable materials in the Maurya-Sunga period, many of them were buried to oblivion. It is only after the Gupta rule that bricks and stones came into use in temple construction. So, we get archaeological evidences of Sun temples from...
the Gupta period onwards. The Gupta epigraphs are the testimony of the existence of many Sun temples. The Mandasore inscription of Kumaragupta-I mentions the construction of a Sun temple at Dasapur (Malwa M.P.). The Indor copper plate refers to a Sun temple at Indor (Buland Sahar, U.P.). The Gwalior inscription of Mihirakūla refers to the erection of a Sun temple at Gopādri in Gwalior state. The Deobarnarka inscription of the time of Jivita Gupta-II speaks about the existence of a Sun temple in Shahabad district of Bihar. Unfortunately none of them is found now.

In the mediaval times (7th – 12th century A.D.) numerous Sun temples are constructed in western India such as at Visavada, Modhera, Somanatha-Pattana, Than, Sutrapada, Bhimanātha and the like. Sun temples are also referred to in Rajasthan, Kashmir, Orissa, the Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh. For instance, the Sun temples are found at Dholpur (9th Century A.D.) in Rajasthan at Osia (10th Century A.D.), at Sirohi and Bharatpur in old Jodhpur. Two famous Sun temples of the early mediaval period are found at Mankhera in Tikamgarh district built by the Pratiharas and the other is Chitragupta temple at Khajuraho built by the Chandelas. They belong to the Central Indian region. In Eastern India, Orissa was famous for Sun worship. The ruins of the Sun temples are discovered at Khiching, Salebhata, Konarka. But South India represents exclusively only one temple dedicated to the Sun and his attendants. It was situated at Suryanarkoil in Tanjore belonging to the time of Kulottunga Choladeva (1080-1118 A.D.). It was known as “Kulottunga cola Martandalaya.”
Among the extant temples of India, the temple of the Sun as Martanda in Kashmir, the temple at Gop (Kathi awar), the Sun temple at Modhera, the Sun temple at Osia (Jodhpur), the Sun temple at Konarka, Orissa are mention worthy.

The Sun temple of Martanda in Kashmir was built about the middle of 8th Century A.D. by Lalitaditya (724-760 A.D.), one of the most powerful rulers of Kashmir. It exhibited the first and most typical example of the Kashmiri style. It is situated near Anantanaga. According to Percy Brown, the design of the temple consisted of a comprehensive central structure including the sanctuary. There was a high imposing gate way. The central structure stands on a rectangle 62 feet long and 35 feet wide. The interior of the main sanctum is long of 18 ½ feet by 14 feet. The height of the structure is almost 70 feet. The length of the quadrangle is 220 feet and the width is 142 feet. There are 84 pillars, each of 9 ½ feet high. Though the structure was very small in dimension, the appearance is dignified and massive. Even now, though almost in ruins, still the temple is very impressive and the most imposing in size and situation. Percy brown has aptly called it as “Lalitaditya’s gray stone master piece”.

The temple at Gop (Kathi-awar) is datable to 5th – 6th century A.D. Architecturally, it consists of a square shrine surrounded by a double court yard and roofed by a peculiar sikhara. The main temple is 10-9” square inside about 23 feet high with walls 2 ft thick. The roof of the temple was constructed on the corbel principle. The temple seems to be influenced by the Gandhara style and Gupta tradition of temple architecture.
The Sun temple of Modhera is datable to 14th century A.D. It consists of the shrine proper (Garbha griha), a hall (Gudha mandapa) and an out hall (Sabha mandapa) and a Surya kunda. The tower is almost ruined leaving nothing. Despite the decayed surroundings and the damaged pillared hall, the Modhera temple is a monument of incomparable beauty. The unique feature of the temple is the Surya kunda or the Sun pool for ablution. It is a very ornamental tank. The building was elevated on a broad terrace built of solid bricks. The roof was in the shape of a stepped pyramid. In the external plan, the temple is 80 feet long and 50 feet wide. The single entrance faces to the east. It has a pillared portico. The pillars are 13 feet high. The temple is very impressive and attracts the people for its treatment and its proportion as a whole.

The Sun temples on the Hiranya river, the Suryanarayana at Somanatha and the Sun temple of Than follow the Modhera style. Ujjain also has a Sun temple to its credit.

The Sun temple of Osia in Jodhpur stands very elegantly and gracefully. It belongs to 10th Century A.D. This temple is of Pancayatana type. It is excellent in the shape of its sikharas. In its proportion and style also the temple is dignified. It is very much praise worthy for its architecture and artistic representation.

Orissa, known in the past as “Utkala” in the ancient and mediaval period for her excellence and perfection in the field of plastic art, has the prized possession of the world famous Sun temple at Konarak.
The temple of Konārka has been considered as a miracle on stone. It symbolizes the epitome of the Nāgara variety of temples. The Nāgara style along with the indigenous Kalinga order of Orissa received their perfection in the hammers of the artist. The temple was designed as the Chariot of the celestial body, as if ready to fly. Though in ruins, it is considered as one of the wonders of India. It was constructed by King Narasimhadeva-II of the Imperial Gaṅga dynasty. It speaks high about the Sun worship in Orissa.

We also find references to the sun temples at Soro, Salebhata, Suvarṇapura, Kaupur etc. But we do not find their existence at the present state.

One temple dedicated to the Sun god is found at Paliā near Bhadrak. A Surya Kūṇḍa is also found here. The original temple was very ancient and belonged to 8th – 9th century A.D. But during the muslim attack, it was damaged. The Marāthās repaired the temple and consecrated a new idol in the temple. The temple again got repaired by the Jamindār Bhuyān Bhāskar Chandra Mahāpatra in 1935. This temple exhibits the Kalingān style of temple architecture. The speciality of the temple lies in the four doors on the four sides and the unique Sun image have four faces.

One temple dedicated to Sun is there in Bugudā in Khalikot region of Ganjam district. The temple is popular as “Wooden Koṇārka” as it is a wooden structure with exquisite paintings and carvings. When all Sun temple faces to the east, this temple of Bugudā faces to the west. Though this temple belong to a later period, the stone image found from Malatigarh suggests its antiquity to an early period.
The monuments found in different parts of Orissa suggest the prevalence and popularity of Sun worship.

Literature, epigraphs, coins and monuments, all are the mirrors of the society and religious faiths. All of them reflect a great amount of evidences on the popularity of sun god and his worship in Orissa. They all certify the prevalence of the sun worship in an astounding way.
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