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**REDISCOVERING *DEVĀLAYAMS*: THE ANCHOR OF BHARAT'S CIVILISATION (*RĀṢṬRA*)**

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### Abstract

Temples (*devālayam*) have been centres of Bharat's consciousness for thousands of years. However, since the invasions and colonisation of Bharat, their value has been systematically debilitated as well as undermined by the victors. In fact, hundreds of temples were methodically destroyed to limit their impact on the populace and stop them from becoming anchors of the identity of Bharat.

Today, the *devālaya*'s value to Bharat as a political (*rājya*), or civilisational entity (*rāṣṭra*) as well as its impact Bharat's culture (*saṃskṛti*) and various practices (*sampradāya*) either misplaced, misunderstood or perceived from the lens of the coloniser. This is something that needs to change, if this civilisation is to reclaim its rich and hoary heritage. This rediscovery and understanding can happen only if we step back and stop viewing *devālayam* as a place of worship alone and revisit the concept of the *devālayam* from first principles. If we are to revisit the concept of the temple, we will also need to understand the concept of God as was practised by ancient Bharat as well as how it integrates into the design-basis of the temple as well as its ecosystem and practices.

Lastly, the paper cannot become complete if it ignores the current state of the *devālayam*'s and suggests solutions to the state of affairs of the *devālayams*.

**Keywords:** *devālayam*, decolonisation, *rājya*, *rāṣṭra*, *saṃskṛti*, *sampradāya*, temple architecture, temple functions, temple management, temple ecosystem, temple economics

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### Rediscovering *Devālayam*: the anchor of Bharat's civilisation (*rāṣṭra*)

The questions are addressed in this paper follows the format espoused by *brahma-sūtra*, an ancient South Asian text (written between 400 BCE and 400 AD), which requires that any hypothesis be systematically proven using a structured method of hypothesis analysis, called *ādhikāraṇa* [1], the components being,

1. *Viśaya* – topic of the section,
2. *Vismāyā* – issue at hand/doubts/problem statement,
3. *Pūrva-paksha* – introduction to the solution/background,
4. *Siddhānta* – theory and arguments/solution and concept/doctrine, and
5. *Samgati* – threading of logic to form a cohesive and comprehensive argument/conclusion.

This paper is split into three sections:

*Viśaya 1* – To detail the methods of worship in South Asian cultures (*rāṣṭra*).

*Viśaya 2* – To detail worship in a temple (*devālayam*).

*Viśaya 3* – To detail *devālayam* ecosphere and elucidate its importance to the *rāṣṭra* and *rājya*.

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### *Viśaya 1*

To detail the methods of worship in South Asian cultures.

#### *Vismāyā*

What is a *deva* (deity)? What is its role? How is it worshipped? What are the major forms of worship (*pūjā*)?

#### *Pūrva-paksha*

Abrahamic faiths, which include Judaism, Christianity and Islam posit that God is the creator and controller of man's destiny (Bible - Genesis 1:1, Hebrews 4:12, Isaiah 40:23, James 1:17, John 3:16, John 4:24, Mathew 6:26) [2] (Quran 39.62, 54.49, 21.30, 37.96) [3] and that the individual is expected to keep faith in God.

South Asian culture is not a faith or a belief system, it is a practice which requires that all assumptions be proven by *pramāṇa* (hypothesis testing) [4]. One of the fundamental bases of this system is that all creation emerges from the state of null (*brahman*). *Brahman* is a cognitive and experiential state which is described by Patanjali ṛṣi in Patanjali Yoga Sutra, *samādhi-pāda*, verse 2, as “*citta-vṛddhi-nirodha*” which means cessation of movement of consciousness. When this happens, the practitioner experiences an infinite, unchanging state of tranquillity which is also the state of null (*brahman*). One can see the difference between the South Asian and Abrahamic schools. So, it is important to realise that *Brahman* is not a hypothetical illusion but a state of existence. Consequently, this makes cognition of *Brahman* a visceral personal cognitive experience (*pratyakṣa*), which only a person who has experienced can confirm. Everything else is an approximation or illusion (*māyā*).

So, if *Brahman* is a cognition that is similar to that which is experienced in the state of null, how does materiality emerge from it? This happens when *Brahman* experiences existential angst. This is best simulated with an example. Try to sit quietly, doing nothing. Be aware of how the brain and body refuse to become still. This occurs because we are always worried about losing our identity, our existence becoming irrelevant or null. This is the same state that the *Brahman* experiences, a state of existential anxiety (need to exist/be relevant).

So, just as we act to establish our identity, *Brahman* acts and from it emerges the primordial sense of identity or experience (*puruṣa*). The expression or manifestation of that primordial identity (*puruṣa*) is (*prakṛiti*). The weave of primordial identity (*puruṣa*) and its manifestation (*prakṛiti*) is an action (*karma*) which results in creation. This weave is called *tantra* because *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* need to weave symbiotically to create materiality. They are yoked with each other because they cannot exist without the other. This yoke is yoga.

Importantly, the base of creation is the state of cognition of null and all materiality that emerges from it is deemed an illusion (*māyā*). Also, since all creation arises from this state of nothing [5], by virtue of this reality, all creation is equal.

### ***Siddhānta***

What is a *deva*? How is a *deva* different from God as is known in Abrahamic faiths?

God in the Abrahamic faith is an eternal, omnipresent, omniscient creator and preserver of all creation in the Universe [6]. The worshipper is not allowed to question this foundational paradigm, so it's called a faith.

The *dhārmic* system of the *rāṣṭra* is a practice with no dogma. It only seeks the Truth (*satyameva-jayate*) [7]. Here, the deity (*deva*) is a representative identity of an act (*karma*). Sri Krishna defines this in Srimad Bhagavad-Geeta Chapter 18 where he indicates that every aspect of creation/existence is related to action (*karma*) and all actions will have the following five components in gross (*sthūla*) as well as subtle (*sūkṣma*) states.

Sri Krishna explains in Srimad Bhagavad Geeta Chapter 18 (verses 14 and 15) [8] the five gross (*sthūla*) components of any act as:

- *Adhiṣṭhāna* – place or body – this is any place where action is being performed, within or outside the place/ body or *kṣetra* [9].
- *Kartā* – the doer. The doer is directly responsible for the action and its consequences. In a team, the team is considered as a single entity, separate from its constituent members even though they are individuals as well as impacted entities.
- *Kāraṇa* – causation or reason – reason for the action (mission, strategy and tactics).
- *Prithak-ceṣṭāḥ* – discrete aspect – all actions go from that which is visible or apparent to that which is subtle, such as stages, sub-systems, micro-processes or component level delineation.
- *Devam* - deity – all action is personified by a deity (*deva*), this means that every action gets an identity (*puruṣa*) by its very existence. The *deva* is similar to a brand but more subtle and complex, covering every imaginable aspect of action (*karma*) and its cognition (*prajñā*). For example, a bar of soap is just a product, but when it is wrapped specially and given a name, it gets an identity such as Lifebuoy or Lux.

The *deva* also covers the below mentioned subtle aspects of action by personifying it as an independent manifestation with its own identity (*asmitā*).

Subtle (*sūkṣma*) components of action consist of three aspects (*samgraha*);

- *Karmacodanā* – motivators of action comprising of three sub-elements;

- o *Jñānam* – wisdom – knowledge of the subject, including integration of resources and processes.
- o *Jñeyam* – the unknown aspects of the action such as various assumptions and forecasts.
- o *Parijñānata* – decision-making based on evidence or acquisition of wisdom.
- Action (*karma*) – The action itself must be aligned to the above components. If a person were to recognise all the above factors but act differently, then the outcome would be completely different from plan, resulting in pain, grief as well as disappointment with consequent damage to all the identities involved.

To minimise damage to the identities, Sri Krishna advises that action should be performed as a sacrifice (*yajña*) [10], without expectation and that one should accept any outcome without duality (like-dislike, good-bad, right-wrong etc.).

This means that one should focus on the input factors as well as quality of action, without application of will (*saṅkalpa*) and accept the outcome with equanimity.

- *Kartā* – action of a doer as an individual or a team member. In case a team is acting, then this covers the team as a unit also.

This quality of relativity and subtlety of action makes *karma* difficult to measure or track and is the reason why Sri Krishna terms the concept of *karma* as elusive [11].

Also, it can be seen that the *deva* is not a static but a dynamic entity that gets created whenever action is performed, becoming its personification, hence having infinite identities.

Major classifications of *devas*.

- As can be seen from Sri Krishna's clarification above, there can be multiple *deities*, in fact each act has one.
- In fact, Guru Adi Shankara has classified six major schools of worship (*ṣan-mata-bodam*) [12], these being *śaivism* (worship of Śiva), *śāktyam* (worship of Śakti), *vaiṣṇavam* (worship of Vishnu), *sauryam* (worship of Soorya or Sun), *gāṇapatyam* (worship of Gaṇeśa) and *kaumāram* (worship of Kumāra or Karthik).
- Furthermore, in addition to the above major schools, there are multiple smaller deities. For example, embedded in *śauryam* [13] is worship of *nava-graha* (nine planets), in the form or

Sun (*sūrya*), Moon (*soma*), Mars (*maṅgala*), Mercury (*budha*), Jupiter (*guru/ brhaspati*), Venus (*śukra*), Saturn (*śani*), Solar-node (*rāhu*) and Lunar-node (*ketu*). Actually, *rāhu* and *ketu* have no real Western equivalence, the above expression is for convenience only.

- When a *devata* is associated with a clan or family, this *deity* is called *kula-devata* (deity that looks after the well-being of the clan) [14]. Here, the deity becomes a family member and participates in all major family events.
- Next, the *devata* that looks after the village is called a *grāma-devatā*. Often, for a family, the *kula-devatā* (family-deity) and *grāma-devatā* (village-deity) are the same, but they can be different also. It is also possible for a village to have multiple *grāma-devatās* also. The *grāma-devatā* represents the identity of the village.
- A personal deity, which is supposed to stay with the individual, is called *ishta-devatā* (preferred-deity) [15]. This is a deity with whom the person has a sublime and personal relationship. This *devata* can be any of the above, or even a deity that is crafted personally by the individual.

For instance, the followers of *Ayyavazhi* worship their own image in a mirror. This form of worship is also performed during the celebration of *Vishukani* in Kerala and the image in the mirror signifies that *Brahman* resides in the Self “*aham brahmāsmi*” [16].

Where do *devas* get worshipped?

*Devas* can be worshipped in a temple or at home.

For home worship, there are specific methodologies for worshipping *devas*, known as *pūjā-vidhi* or methodology of conducting a *pūjā* [17]. One of the preferred *pūjā-vidhi* is called *pañcāyatana-pūjā* [18].

Individuals are also expected to perform daily sacrifices as a part of their daily routine to ensure harmony with nature. This is called *pañca-mahā-yajñas* or five major sacrifices [19].

Lastly, people of specific *varnas* such as *brāhmaṇas* or those in *sanyasi-ashrama* are required by initiation, to perform specific daily *pūjā* (*nitya-karma*).

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### ***Samgati***

The worshipper extols the *deva* (deity) as a personification of personal identity and action, so the deity becomes a role model. This infuses an awareness of qualities of the deity into the individual who uses the values to manage life and change better.

There are multiple ways of worship and the individual can tailor his or her worship (*pūjā*) to suit the circumstances and personality (*svabhāva*).

The places where a person may perform worship are home, common place / group (*satsang*) or a temple (*devālayam*).

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### ***Viśaya 2***

To detail worship in a temple (*devālayam*).

### ***Vismāyā***

The temple (*devālayam*) is a living entity with its own identity, and hence, it must be treated like any living organism.

Since the temple is a living organism, it has a *kṣetra* (field of activity) and an awareness of identity that defines it (*kṣetrajñā*). Its presence in the locality is called *prāsāda* (castle) and the temple represents the primordial experiencer or identity (*puruṣa*) [20] [21]. However, the temple also mirrors the identity of all that come to it and develops a unique identity over time due to its association as well as symbiotic integration with its worshippers.

Temple worship has two components, congregation worship and individual worship, each form of worship is very different from the other. Since worshippers (*pūjaka*) come with varying maturity levels as well as emotional and cognitive aspirations, this requires that the temple have the ability to accommodate various requirements and needs, both collectively and individually.



How are the major schools of worship linked to the individual's sense of Identity, the rites of passage (*saṃskāra*) and local practices (*sampradāya*)? How are the schools of worship related to each other? What are the components of a temple?

### ***Pūrva-paksha***

The major schools of worship are inextricably and symbiotically linked with *saṃskāra* (rites of passage) and *sampradāya* (local practice).

For example, *nava-grahas* represent electromagnetic forces of various planets on the body. Additionally, their impact depends on the position of the planets in relation to the position of the person on Earth. Consequently, this electromagnetic force impacts the various primordial elements (*pancabhūtas* = earth (*prithvī*), water (*ap*), fire (*agni*), air (*vāyu*), space (*ākāśa*)). For instance, electromagnetic forces of the moon change the way electrolytes move in the body, because the body is over 70% water and this action is similar to the manner in which the moon affects tides.

In yoga, the individual is an extension of the Self, which is the experiencer or *puruṣa/śiva*. However, *śiva* cannot exist without *śakti* which represents manifestation of the Self or *śiva*. The two are intertwined with each other and cannot exist without the other, as explained by Adi Shankara in Soundarya Lahari Shloka 1[22].

Temple to Shri Hanuman at Sethukarai, Tamil Nadu, the starting point of Shri Rama-setu



But no worship is possible without *ganeśa*, who got a boon from his mother *śakti* for protecting her when she was bathing, that no worship of any *devata* can be conducted without paying obeisance to him (*ganeśa*) first.

An *itihāsa* (historical narrative) example – when Shri Ram was trying to build a bridge over the sea, the sea kept destroying it. Shri Ram, in frustration, sought advice from *Ulaganayaki*, a form of *Mahiṣsuramardīnī* or *śakti* in *samādhi* state (complete absorption in the *Brahman*). She advised him to build a temple for the nine planets (*nava-graha*) in the sea to pacify the sea.

So, Shri Ram built the only *nava-graha* temple that exists in the sea at Devipattinam, Tamil Nadu. But, *nava-grahas* cannot be built without *śiva* (Identity) and since Shri Ram could not find any stone to fashion the *lingam* (*vigraha* or idol), he made a *lingam* out of *til* (sesame). Next, *śiva* (the deity is called *tilakeshwar* or *easwar* who is made from *til*/sesame) cannot be placed without *śakti*, so Shri Ram placed *śakti* (in the name of *śoundaryanāyaki*) alongside, with *gaṇeśa* and *kumāra* in the temple precinct.

All these temples can be visited in the town of Devipattinam (the name translates to “town of the *devī/śakti*”) near Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu. The *navagraha* temple is called *nava-bhāṣāṇam* [23], the *Śiva* temple, which is 1 km away is called *Tilakeswarar* temple and *Ulaganayaki-amman* temple is a kilometre further away.

Similarly, there are three Sri Vishnu temples on river Kaveri, all are located on islands in the river, which means that these locations are places where Kaveri splits and rejoins, this is called *saṅgamam* (union). The upstream temple is called Srirangapatna (*ādiraṅgam*), at the confluence of Kaveri, Lokapavani and Hemavati rivers [24]. The middle temple is called Shivanasamudra Ranganathaswami (*madhyaraṅgam*) [25] and the last major *divya-kṣetram* in *Srirangam* (which is at the confluence of Kaveri and Kolroon) [26]. In all the temples Sri Vishnu is in *sayanam* (reclining pose in the state of *yoga-nidrā*).

This position is significant because Sri Vishnu is responsible for maintenance of balance (*sattva-guṇa*) in the Universe and *yoga-nidrā* is a state of awareness of *saṃsāra* (cycle of birth and death) which Sri Vishnu controls. This becomes doubly significant when one realises that all three temples are also close to important sites for immersion of ashes (*asthi-visarjana*) after cremation, this being an important transient state for the soul in *saṃsāra* cycle [27].

The above two examples show how well temples synergise with *itihāsa*, schools of worship, rites of passage (*saṃskāra*) and practice (*sampradāya*) to build a resilient civilisation (*rāṣṭra*).

So, what constitutes a temple?

### ***Siddhānta***

There are many types of temples, varying in size, school and worship. While each village would have at least one traditional temple (*grāma-devatā*), it would not be uncommon for large,

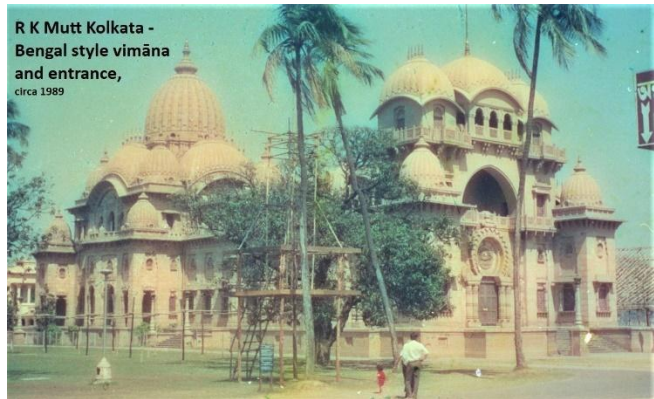
medium, small, micro and unconventional temples to exist cheek-by-jowl within a village. Each of these temples would have a central deity which would define its identity and existence as well as that of the devotees worshipping it.

In fact, since temples represent the *puruṣa*, they are considered to be living entities with their own motility (*prāṇa*) and are looked after like people with normal needs such as sleep, ablutions, food etc.

This principle of *puruṣa*, *prāṇa* and *pañcabhūta* defines the structure as well as operation of any temple.

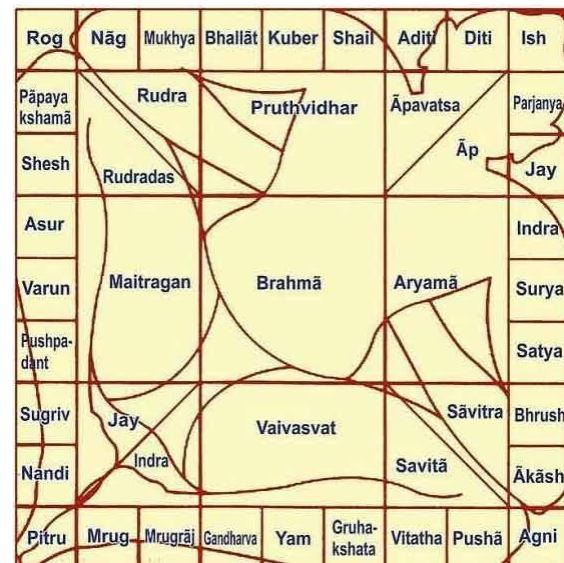
Temple location [28] (*vāstu-vinyāsa*):

*Bharatiya* temples are constructed according to *vāstuśāstra* and conform to *āgama* principles. To begin, a specific type of land is chosen for the temple and this area is cleared of debris, refuse, animal parts and so forth.



Temple layout (*vāstu-puruṣa-maṇḍala*) – The temple layout is then decided depending on the identity of the main deity. Generally, square or rectangular are considered best. This area is then marked according to the *vāstu-puruṣa-maṇḍala*.

The *vāstu-puruṣa-maṇḍala* can be an 8x8 (the squares will be evenly distributed) or 9x9 (the distribution of squares is not uniform) matrix. Shown here is a 9x9 matrix [27].



The mandala shows the figure of a man, face down in a particular pose. A total of 45 deities are represented at various points in the mandala. For example, Brahma is in the centre, depicting creation while Sun or Surya is in the East, depicting sunrise and the ancestors or *pitr* are in the south-west corner. How did this figure come into existence?

### The *itihāsa* of the *maṇḍala*

According to *Matsya-purāṇa*, when Lord Siva was fighting an asura named *Andhakasura* [29], during the heat of battle, a few drops of sweat fell from Lord Shiva's body to the ground. From this sweat, another asura emerged who began tormenting the Devas. Lord Brahma threw the asura headlong to the floor and advised forty-five devas to hold him. Since this was a part of Lord Siva, Lord Brahma decreed that this asura would be the layout of all buildings and the devas holding him would be present in those locations that they held.

So, in all buildings, private, public and temples, Lord Siva holds the locational identity. Brahma represents the creative identity of the location and finally Vishnu ensures harmony and balance. However, the root of all these identities is the primordial identity, *puruṣa*, who represents the identity of the building itself.

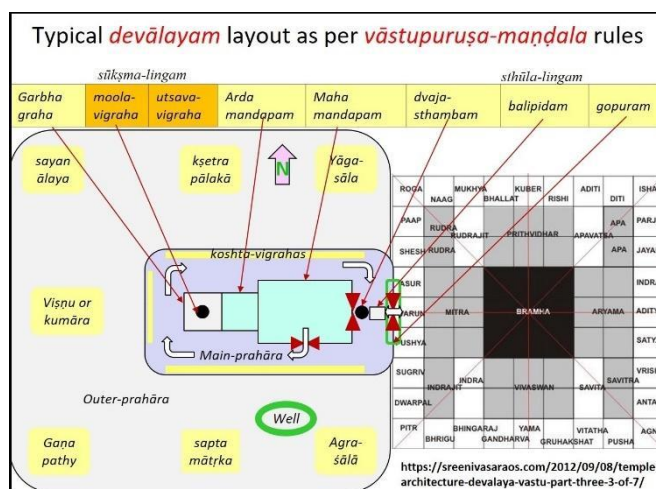
Therefore, all temples conform to *vāstu-puruṣa-maṇḍala* and this means that each aspect of the temple has a designated location as shown in the figure alongside.

### Parts of a temple

*Garbhagraha* – *garbha* means uterus or womb. *Graha* is a cognate of grab or hold [30]. So, it can be interpreted that *garbhagraha* means “that which holds creation”. This is the *Brahman* or source. The *garbhagraha* also represents *kevala kumbhaka* in yoga. Creation emerges from *Brahman* in the material form (*saguṇa-brahman*). Materiality is a

combination of the primordial elements (*pañcabhūta*) with motility (*prāṇa*) [31]. To signify this, the *garbhagraha* is always kept enclosed space (earth or *prithvī* + space or *ākāśa*, damp (*ap* or water), with a lit lamp all the time (*agni* or fire + air or *vāyu*) in the *garbhagraha* [32].

The deity (*pratimā* = image) is a *saguṇa* (material) manifestation or copy of the *Brahman* and worshipping it is meant to assist a person in merging with the deity and attaining





*brahma-vidya* (cognition of the *Brahman* or state of null). This is why the deity in the *garbhagraha* is called *sūkṣma-līṅgam* (subtle idol).

The deity is called *pratimā* for two reasons. First, it is a manifestation of primordial consciousness (*Brahman*) which is the consciousness experienced in the state of null. The second reason is that the deity mirrors the image that the worshipper (*pūjaka*) wishes to confer on it. This permits the deity to mirror the consciousness of the worshipper, thus allowing the *pūjak* to set his or her own pace in transcending materiality (*saguṇa brahman* and *māyā* are the same). The *garbhagraha* is the core or *bindu* of the temple with the *devata* (deity) represented by an idol (*vigraha*), which is an image of the *Brahman* and hence called *pratimā*.

Foundation of the *vigraha/pratimā* (*ṣaḍ-ādhāra-pratiṣṭhā*).

The *vigraha*, which represents Brahman is set-up on a specific underground foundation in a manner that signifies evolution of materiality or *sa-guṇa-brahman* and *prāṇa*.

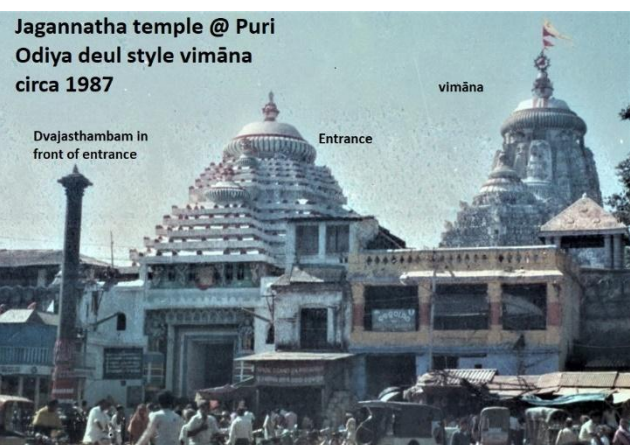
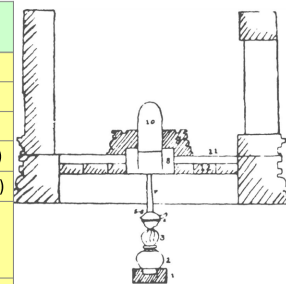
The *ṣaḍ-ādhāra-pratiṣṭhā* components [33] are:

1. *ādhāraśilā* - this is the root or base stone of the *vigraha*.
2. On top of the *ādhāraśilā* a pot of gold or jewels is placed.
3. Over this, a granite lotus or tortoise, representing.
4. This is covered by a silver lotus or tortoise.
5. Above this comes a gold lotus or tortoise.
6. This assembly is then connected by a copper funnel to the foundation stone (*pīṭham*).

Over this comes the *brahmaśilā* or seat of Brahman, on which the deity (*vigraha*) is placed.

*ṣaḍ-ādhāra-pratiṣṭhā* = ceremony of six bases

Name	Position below the moola-vigraha
<i>brahmaśilā</i>	stone of <i>brahma</i>
<i>yoganālā</i>	Copper funnel
	Tortoise and lotus (gold)
	Tortoise and lotus (silver)
	Tortoise and lotus (stone)
<i>nidhi kumbha</i>	Pot of 5 metals (pañca-kalāśa) filled with gold and jewels
<i>ādhāraśilā</i>	Base stone



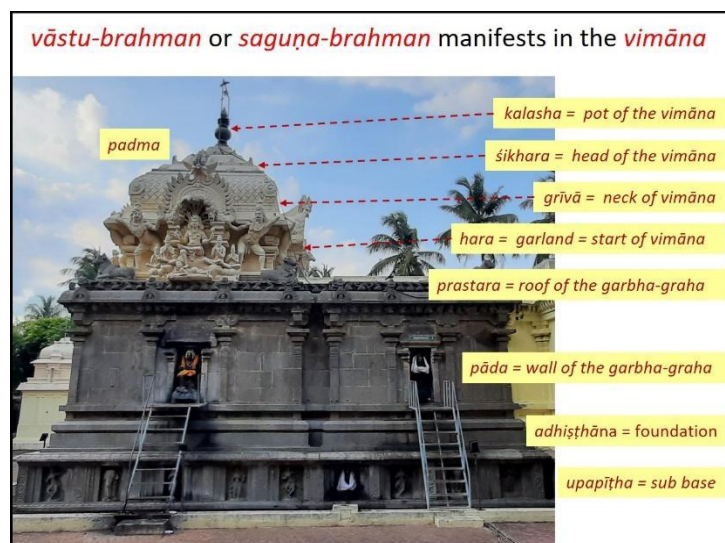
The *vigraha* is secured above this seat using *aṣṭabandham* paste [34]. This *vigraha* never moves and represents the root or seat or centre of the temple. Hence, it is called the *mūlā-vigraha*.

Superstructure over the *garbhagraha*. The deity is placed in the *garbhagraha* and above this location, a distinctive ornate spire is constructed.

This is called *śikhāra* in nagara-style of temples which are found in North India and *vimāna* in Dravidian style temples of South India, *vesara* style in Central India and is a mix of *śikhāra/vimāna*, and *deul* in Odisha [35] [36].

To ensure that they are visible to everyone, they are generally the biggest structures in the locality. The *garbhagraha* is topped by a colonnaded tower that spires into the air to give the *devālayam* an aura of grandeur and distinctiveness.

Parts of a *vimāna* are shown alongside.



The *śikhāra/vimāna/deul* towers are topped by a *kalash/kumbh* or pot which represents the state of *kumbaka* in *prāṇāyāma* or the state of null. Significantly, *śikhāra/vimāna/deul* spires are built along the same proportion of a *yajñā-vedi/yajñā-kunda*, or a sacrificial fire.

Why is this important? Of all the primordial elements, fire is the only element that transforms everything, like changing iron ore to steel. Here, the *garbhagraha* represents *jāṭharagni* or digestive fires and sacrifice (*yajñā*). Fire symbolises transformation of the individual through introspection (*ātma vicāra*) and this is called *yajñā* because one needs to sacrifice current state of values and beliefs (*svadharma*) to achieve internal harmony (*śānti*).

Another important aspect of the *śikhāra/vimāna/deul* spires is that the *kumbha* is always filled with various dried grains and sealed during *kumbabhiṣekam* ceremonies. This is to ensure that in the case of natural calamities, seeds are available in the *kumbha* for replanting, since the

*kumbha* is the highest point in the vicinity, it is least likely to be affected by floods and so on. These seeds are renewed during every *kumbabhiṣekam* ceremony which is celebrated every 12 years.

### Classification of deities

Deities manifest as idols or *vigrahas* and are classified into three types according to *vāstushilpi* (science of idol sculpture);

- *Achalam* (immovable), also known as *moola-vigraha*. The *moola-vigraha* that remains rooted in the *garbhagraha* and does not leave the *garbhagraha* for any reason other than *kumbabhiṣekam* renewal activities, so it is *achalam* (immobile).
- *Chalam-chalam* (mobile) or *utsava-vigraha*. This is a manifestation of the *moola-vigraha*. Conversely, the *utsava-vigraha* is *chalam* or mobile and represents the *moola-vigraha* during festivals (*utsava*). The logic is, during festivals, celebrations, fairs and common events, the *garbhagraha* would not be able to manage the crowd of people. So, the *utsava-vigraha* is taken out of the temple, where everyone is able to view the deity without causing a stampede.



Another role of the *utsava-vigraha* is to go out of the temple regularly into the surrounding areas to give *darśana* (a viewing) to people who cannot visit the temple on account of infirmity or old age. So, the deity regularly goes to people when people are unable to visit it.





This also ensures that the streets around the temple are cleaned regularly and that the environment around the temple is kept in pristine condition.

- *chalam-achalam* where the deity does both functions of being immobile as well as mobile. There is only one known deity that functions in this manner and it is *śiva* in the form of space at the temple town of Chidambaram (*cit* = consciousness + *ambaram* = space). Here, the deity is immobile inside the *garbhagraha* but also becomes mobile when it moves out.

### Supporting structures of a *garbhagraha*

Surrounding the *garbhagraha* are structures that support it for functionality. Given below are the structures that one would generally find in all traditional temples going outward from the *garbhagraha*.

*Pitha* – This is the plinth on which the entire temple is built.

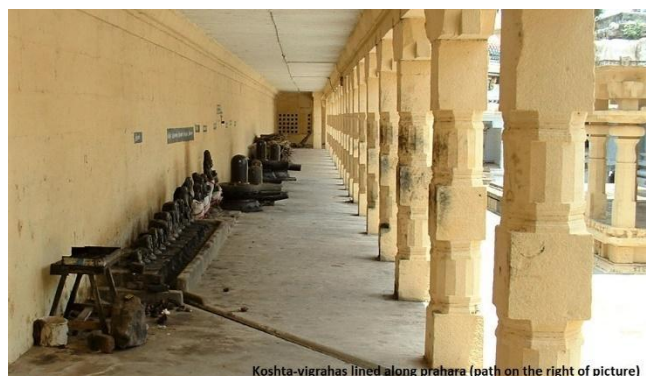
*Antarāla* – this is the entry/ exit to the *garbhagraha*, often a vestibule



to depict a uterus. It may be long or short, depending on the temple design.

*Ardhamandapam* – this is a small inner chamber where prayer material is collated and *pūjā* preparation is done. Since this place can be busy, worshippers (*pūjak*) are often not allowed in this area.

*Mahāmandapam* – this is the area from where laity are expected to worship the deity.



Koshta-vigrahas lined along prahara (path on the right of picture)



*Prahāra* or *pradakshina-patha* (circumambulation or walkway) is the area surrounding the main *garbhagraha*, *ardhamandapam* and *mahāmandapam*. This open walkway allows *pūjak* to circumnavigate the *garbhagraha* clockwise and move towards the exit. There can be multiple *prahāras* depending on the size of the temple.

alongside the sides of the *prahāra* walkways, corridors and walls are *koshta-vigrahas* (alcove-idols). These can be in separate *mandala* or pedestals or even in a balcony or corridor, such as those of the “63 *nāyanmārs*” or 63 saints in Saivite temples of Tamil Nadu. There can also be paintings from various *itihāsa* or life stories of the deities to inspire the *pūjak*.



*Koshta-vigrahās* [37] are classified as *dakshina-koshtā* (southern window), *uttara-koshtā* (northern window) and *paschima-koshtā* (western window). There is no eastern window because that is the location of the entrance and exit.

*Koshta-vigrahas* allow the *pūjak* to gather intimate details of the *deva* and slowly develop exalted qualities in himself or herself.

*Dvajasthambam* [38] - The *dvajasthambam* or flagstaff is available in all temples and is placed at the top of the *prahāra* between the *mahāmandapam* and the entrance (*gopuram*). The flagstaff is the banner of the deity. Sitting on top of the *dvajasthambam* is the vehicle (*vāhana*) of the deity. Since the *dvajasthambam* is a tall flag-staff, it is used to signify various functions and occasions in the temple for everyone in the vicinity. Often, flags and banners are



raised to inform residents that functions and ceremonies are taking place.

*Balipīṭham* [39] – this is a raised pedestal, mainly found in *dravida* (South Indian) temples. This point has enormous significance. Bali means sacrifice. It also represents Bali Cakravarti, the *asura* king who was subdued by Vishnu in Vamana *avatāra*. In this *avatāra*, Vishnu as *Vāmana* tricks Bali into offering his own Self as sacrifice [40]. So, when a person enters the temple, he or she is supposed to set aside all sense of Self (*asmitā*) and enter the temple precinct. This area is also called *paśācika-pāda* (demonical quarter).

Also, from this point of *balipīṭham*, the rules of *soucham* or purity where a person may not touch another are reduced as it is impossible not to brush against another in the crowded environment of the temple. Also, people in distress come for relief. Thus, from the point of *balipīṭham*, people are equal, regardless of their background. Only, they are supposed to ensure personal hygiene (*soucham*) so as not to affect one another adversely.

Lastly, this is the place where the offering is kept to assuage the deities that afflict the Self. These afflictions or *arishadvargas* are desire (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), delusion (*moha*), stubbornness (*madha*) and envy (*mātsarya*).

So, a person who comes into the temple, is expected to relinquish identification with the Self (*asmitā*), leaving *arishadvargas* (six impediments) behind at the *balipīṭham*. To assuage the deities that have relieved the worshippers of their *arishadvarga*, the temple offers a sacrifice to them at the *balipīṭham*. Hence, this offering is not consumed by the worshippers. This is why *balipīṭham* is called the *sthūla-lingam* or gross idol while the main deity is called *sūkṣma-lingam* or subtle deity.

*Gopuram/toraṇa* – Dravidian style temples have an ornate spired entrance which is called a gopuram (as shown here). North Indian temple gates are called *toraṇa*.



*Jagati* – the enclosure within the temple walls is called *jagati*. This is the overall confines of the temple compound and represents the *saguṇa* form of the *puruṣa*.

(Note: All photos belong to the author)

### Ancillary facilities

Ancillary to the above facilities are some important facilities:

*Kund/tīrtha* (pond) is an enclosed water body adjoining the main precinct where worshippers (*pūjak*) clean themselves before entering the temple. This is critical for preservation of *soucham* (cleanliness) [41].

*Agrasālā* (temple kitchen) is also called *madapalli* in Dravida temples. The *neivedyam* (food for the deity) is prepared here. In many large temples, *prasādam* and *annadānam* (food for the laity) is also prepared here.

*Yāga-sāla* (place of sacrifice) – this is generally found in larger temples and is a place where sacrifice is performed.

*Sayanālaya* (sleeping place) is a specific place where the deity is taken every night and ceremoniously put to sleep. This place may be separate for large temples. In small temples, this ceremony is performed in the *garbhagraha* itself before the doors are shut at the end of the day.

*Sthāpa mandapam* – In order to perform *abhiṣekam*, the ceremonial bathing, the deity needs water that is consecrated. Big temples have a separate location and small temples perform this ceremony before the *vāhana* (the personal vehicle, often an animal) where this is done.

*Gośālā* (Cowshed) – this is the place where cows are kept for morning *go-pūjā* and for milk for temple rituals.

*Ratha* (chariot) – this is the shed where the temple chariot is placed and maintained.

Additionally, large temples may have the following *mandapams* (pavilions).

*Nāṭya mandapam* (dance pavilion) – where dances extolling the deity are arranged.

*Vādya mandapam* (music pavilion) – where music performances extolling the deity are arranged.

*Upanyāsa mandapam* (lecture pavilion) – where lectures on philosophy and culture as well as life-story of the deity are arranged.

*Alankāra mandapa* (ornament pavilion) – this is where the ornaments, mostly of the impermanent, semi-precious or non-precious variety are displayed for worshippers (*pūjak*).

*Natarāja mandapam* – this is specific to Śiva temples. This is the pavilion of *Natarāja*, Śiva as a dancer. However, dance performances are not allowed here. Importantly, a *nāṭya mandapam* may have a *Natarāja mandapam* but a *Natarāja mandapam* cannot be used as a *nāṭya mandapam*.

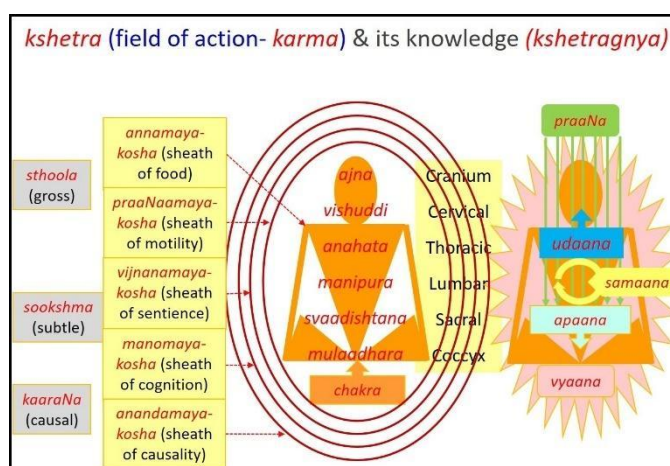
*Kṣetrapālakā* – every *kṣetra* has a person who is supposed to look after that field of activity. Since the *devālayam* is a field of activity, it has a location manager.

Significance of the temple with respect to various aspects of yoga.

It can be seen that the *devālayam* is not just a physical structure, it is an entity with its own identity (*puruṣa*). This identity (*puruṣa*) is the static aspect of the temple. Everything else forms part of the dynamic aspect and is called *prakṛiti*. *Prakṛiti* manifests as the combination of motility (*prāṇa*) which drives the primordial elements or *pañchabhūtas*, which are earth (*prithvi*), water (*āp*), fire (*agni*), air (*vāyu*), space (*ākāśa*) to form creation. This can be seen in the design intent as well as design of the *garbhagṛaha*.

1. *Prāṇa* is motility and when it causes movement, it's called *vāyu* (stream of air).

- The incoming motility or *prāṇa* is *prāṇa-vāyu* and this manifests as the deity in *sūkṣma* state. In action, this manifests as the prayers offered by the priests and worshippers. This energises the deity.
- When the worshippers enter the *devālayam*, they are supposed to release their negativity at the *balipīṭham*, which is the *sthūla-vigraha*. This outgoing of



wasteful and negative motility is called *apāna-vāyu*.

- The *devālayam* itself is an entity which presents a physical form and aura. This presence is called *vyāna-vāyu*.
  - The way the *devālayam* interacts with society, its message to its laity is called *udāna-vāyu*.
  - All movements within the *devālayam*, those of the priests, supporting staff, laity, animals such as cows and elephants or even birds cause circulation of motility (*prāṇa*). This is called *samāna-vāyu*.
2. *Devālayam* and *chakra*: The *jagati* represents the body of the *puruṣa* in metaphysical terms and the human in material terms. The *gopuram/toraṇa* or entrance represent the feet.
- The *balipīṭham* represents the *mūlādhāra-cakra*. This is the base of the spine of the *puruṣa*.
  - Next, the *dvajasthambam* represents the *svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra*. *Svādhiṣṭhāna* means that which represents oneself, and this is aptly represented by the *dvajasthambam*.
  - The *mahāmandapam* where laity worship the deity is that point where there is maximum movement resonates with *samāna-vāyu* and is the seat of the *maṇipūra-cakra*.
  - Following this comes the *ardhamandapam* which corresponds to the *anāhata-cakra*.
  - The *chalam-igraha* or *utsava-igraha* corresponds with *viśuddhi-cakra*.
  - Finally, the *moola-igraha* in the *garbhagraha* represents the *ājñā-cakra* or *prāṇa* of the *puruṣa*.
  - The *garbhagraha* itself is the *sahasrāra* or merger with the *Brahman*.
3. *Devālayam* and sheath (*kośa*).
- The *jagati* or perimeter wall is considered as a physical sheath *annamayakośa* or *puruṣa*.
  - The circumambulatory path or *prahāra* is considered to be a sheath created by motility (*prāṇamayakośa*). It is the cognition of motility (*prāṇa*).
  - The *mahāmandapam* is where the *pūjak* tries to control the senses or *manas*. This is called the sheath created by cognition (*manomayakośa*).
  - The *igraha* or deity is the aspirational target of the worshipper (*pūjak*) where the *pūjak* acquires awareness of the movement of consciousness (*citta*). This is *vijñānamayakośa*.
  - The *brahman* which is the *garbhagraha* is *ānandamayakośa* or state of merger.

### ***Samgati***

It can be seen that the *devālayam* (temple) is not just another structure, it is a living entity. Its design, which has evolved over centuries, is meant to support and harmonise the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of everyone in the *rājya*.

There is no other structure in the world that provides such intricate and subtle existential support anywhere in the world. Hence, it would not be out of place to say that the *devālayam* is the backbone of material, cultural, artistic and well as philosophical ecosphere of a *rāṣṭra*.

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### ***Viśaya 3***

To detail the *devālayam* ecosphere and elucidate the importance of the *devālayam* to the *rāṣṭra*.

### ***Vismāyā***

We have seen that the temple (*devālayam*) is a living organism, and that it has a *kṣetra* (field of activity) as well as an identity (*kṣetrajñā*). Also, we have seen the various components that go into making a temple and its conceptual as well as philosophical underpinnings.

Additionally, since the temple, by its very nature of existence, is incapable of looking after itself, it creates an ecosphere which makes it central to the civilisation and culture (*rāṣṭra*).

### ***Pūrva-paksha***

Temple worship has two components, congregation worship and individual worship. Both hinge around the *deva* in the *garbhagraha*.

Therefore, the primary locus is the deity (*deva*) and everything that has to be done to ensure flow of *prāṇa* in the *deva*. That is why, when the temple is consecrated and during each *kumbabhīṣekam* every 12 years, the deity is infused with fresh *prāṇa*, a ceremony known as *prāṇa-pratiṣṭa* or infusion of motility (*prāṇa*).

Practices (*sampradāya*) for each *devālayam* are often unique to the temple because of the *dharma* (conditioning) of the people it serves.

Since the deity is treated like a person with normal needs, most temples follow a routine which closely resembles those of humans and follows the movements of the Sun.

Given below is a sample routine of a temple in Tamil Nadu. Since the practice (*sampradāya*) is local, the names of the practice are also in Tamil. However, these basic practices are likely to be common across the *rāṣṭra*.

- Around 5AM - Morning begins with *go-puja*, where a cow is venerated before the temple is opened.
- *Usha-kalam* (5.30AM to 6AM) – Next, the deity is woken up. In big temples, the *utsava-vigraha* is ceremoniously taken out of the bedchamber (*sayanālaya*) to the *garbhagraha*. Then, the doors of the *garbhagraha* are opened and the formal awakening of the deity is performed with an *abhiṣekam* whereby the *prāṇa* moves from the *utsava-vigraha* to the *mūla-vigraha*. In smaller temples, the *garbhagraha* is opened and *abhiṣekam* is performed directly on the *mūla-vigraha*. The deity is offered *naivedyam* (food).
- *Kala-sandhi* (7AM to 9AM) – This is prime time for the deity, when worshippers arrive. An *abhiṣekam* (in many temples, this is an elaborate *pañcasnānam*) is performed and *naivedya* is offered.
- *Ucchi-kalam* (11AM to 12 noon) – *Ucchi* in Tamil means that point in when the Sun is overhead. Some temples perform *abhiṣekam* and after this the *garbhagraha* is closed so that the deity may rest.
- *Sai-raksha* (5PM to 6PM) – *Sai* comes from *saayum*, denoting the moment when shadows lengthen in Tamil. The *garbhagraha* is opened, the deity is prepared for peak hour visitation.
- *Rendaam-kalam* (continues from *sai-rakshai* until 7PM) – This is when the deity has maximum worshippers and is offered *naivedya* for dinner.
- *Arda-jamam* (9PM) – After *naivedyam*, the deity is put to bed. In the case of large temples with separate *sayanālaya*, the *prana* is moved from the *mūla-vigraha* to the *utsava-vigraha*, which is taken to the *sayanālaya*.



This forms the temple routine. It can be seen that the deity is treated like a normal person that is integrated with its worshippers and is not separate or different from them. Only, it is a model of perfection so that people may live inspired and harmonious lives.

### Temple operations

The people involved directly with the deity are:

1. Temple's priest (*pūjāri*) – this is the person who takes care of the deity and converts the pleas of the worshipper (*pūjak*) into a formal prayer or *archana*. The temple priest also conducts all the ablutions of the deity such as waking (*suprabhātam*), bathing (*abhiṣekam/pañcasnānam*), dressing, anointing (*alankāram*), feeding (*naivedya*), performing adoration (*archana*) and putting the deity to sleep before closing the *garbhagraha* for the day.
2. Priest assistant – there are two types of priest attendants;
  - a. Physical assistant – this person brings water, milk, oil and other items for the *garbhagraha* into the *ardhamandapam*, but does not enter the *garbhagriha* on account of *shoucham* (cleanliness) requirements.
  - b. *Alankāra* assistant – this person removes all old flowers (*nirmālyam*), clothes and so on, cleans all the adornments of the *deva*, the lamps, prepares the *dīpārādhana* (light adoration) and so on.
3. Temple's musician (*vādak*) – This is generally a team of musicians that include a piper, percussionist, a timer and a person who maintains the tonal base of the ensemble.
4. Folk musician – Most of the *pūjā* of the deity is performed by the temple priest in Vedic Sanskrit, using Vedic or āgama rituals. After the deity is woken up and also at various intervals during the day, a folk musician extols the *deva* in local language. In Tamil Nadu temples, this person is called *othuvar* [42].
5. *Go-pūjā* – a cow and calf are brought to the entrance of the temple from the *goshala* (cow shed) by the *goshala* attendant.
6. *Madapalli*, *roshaghara* or *pākashāla* – After each *pūjā*, the *deva* is offered food which is prepared at the *madapalli* as *neivedyam*. This is then distributed to the *pūjak's* as *prasāda*.



Note: An opinion arose that if the primordial identity (*puruṣa*) represented all creation, then this *puruṣa* should follow all aspects of *puruṣārtha*. There, to fulfil the deity's material and sensual desires, women were married to the deity and these women looked after the various aspects of the deity directly. They were called *devadasis* [43].

These are the major roles directly connected with the *deva*.

Roles directly connected with the worshipper (*pūjak*).

1. Footwear collection – The *pūjak* enters the precinct from the outside and has to divest his or her footwear. This can be manned or unmanned, free or paid.
2. *Pūjā-sāmagrī* – Next the *pūjak* buys offerings such as fruits, flowers, coconut, incense and other articles to offer the *deva*. These are sold in shops inside or outside the temple complex.
3. *Hundi* – After worshipping, the *pūjak* deposits offerings of money in the *hundi* or collection box.
4. *Annadāna-śālā* – After worshipping the *deva*, the *pūjak* perambulates clockwise around the sanctum complex in the *prahāra*. Post this, the worshipper is expected to sit down and reflect of the true nature of reality (*jñāna*), action (*karma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*). As an expression of happiness (*santosham*) the deity symbolically rewards the *pūjak* with *prasāda* (benediction) which the *pūjak* collects before exiting.

One can also realise that by offering *prasāda* to the *pūjak*, the deity balances its own *karma*. The *pūjak* visiting the deity is a guest with a plea. The deity, as a sign of respect to the guest/*pūjak* offers the *pūjak* refreshments/*prasāda*. thus balancing its debt (*ṛṇa*) to the *pūjak*.

Ancillary roles in the temple.

All activities in the temple are centred around the *deva* (deity) and the *pūjak* (worshipper). These are:

1. First of all, a temple is required and this needs to be built to strict architectural rules so that *prāna* flows unimpeded. The architect is called *sthāpathi* and often follows Manasara Shilpa Shastra [44].

2. *Prasanvedak* – these are maintenance contractors who repair and maintain the temples and its precinct.
3. *Shilpin* – Sculptor, one who carves out the various aspects of the temple, including the various idols (*vigraha*) in the temple.
4. *Kāryālayam* – the temple office.

Ancillary roles outside the temple, in the vicinity.

1. *Veda/Agama pātasāla* – almost all major temples have a school (*pātasāla*) attached. Here priests are trained in vedic and worldly (*laukika*) ceremonies.
2. Almanac (*panchānga*) & horoscope (*jātaka*) analysts – Since temple functions are determined by the *panchānga* or almanac, many of the services associated with the *almanac* such as horoscope preparation and analysis are available close to temples.
3. Food and beverages – Temples attract worshippers who visit from afar. Many, after a visit seek refreshments and all temples that are over medium in size can be found to have some refreshment centres and sweet shops close to the entrance and exit.
4. Lodging – temples which are famous for specific reasons attract outstation visitors who require boarding and lodging.
5. Hygiene – such as hairdressers, public baths and so on.
6. Ceremony halls – temples also attract pilgrims who wish to conduct various ceremonies of well-being as well as rites of passage such as marriages (*vīvāha-saṃskāra*) and one can find halls around all major temples.
7. Catering services – Since ceremonies are almost always followed by food, catering businesses are always available close to temples.
8. Dry and wet groceries – All F&B initiatives require wholesale and retail sale of groceries.
9. Apparel services – ceremonies need apparel and generally close to temples, one can find traditional clothing, footwear and other stores selling local arts and crafts such as bangles, silverware and other miscellaneous items.
10. Transportation – intra-city, intercity, public, private, taxi and so on all are available at temple centres.

11. Entertainment services of all kinds can be found close to temples, especially for outstation worshippers.
12. Public services such as police, fire, postal, hospital and ambulance services are generally available close to temples.

The list is extensive and only the major ones have been listed above.

### ***Siddhānta***

One can see that the temple is an enormous engine that drives personal experience and cognitive harmony as well as economic development where it is situated.

In the past many decades, the temple ecosystem has experienced decay due to neglect arising from lack of knowledge and degradation in practice, poverty, impact of counter-narratives, indifferent patronage as well as government control and interference.

It is important to understand the impact of this degeneration and atrophy on worshipper experience as well as personal development and their ability to manage normal stages and stresses of life. At a macro level, one must cognise the significance, impact and influence that temples have on the civilisation as well as culture of the people, society and *Bharat*. Since temples are entities that emerge from the people as their extension, one must not underestimate but use this influence to enable harmonious change as well as use this to build a resilient civilisation (*rāṣṭra*) and state (*rājya*) called *Bharat*?

Cognitive dissonance: It is important to recognise that the temple is designed to generate an atmosphere that inspires aspirational behaviour in the worshippers (*pūjak*) and minimise cognitive dissonance or turbulence. This means that a *pūjak* might enter the precinct troubled and weighed down by reality, but should be able to leave more relaxed and balanced with greater clarity of reason. This is the design basis of the temple ecosystem. In today's fast paced life that results in change, anxiety and stresses, this contribution of the deity cannot be understated.

Projection of grandeur: To ensure projection of inspiration, the temple is constructed on consecrated land with beauty and cleanliness as primary visual generators. Not only are the spires and figurines on the *vimāna* designed to maximise *vāstu* requirements and optimise flow

of *prāṇa*, they are also meant to elevate the worshippers feeling of security and sense of self by their solidity and permanence.

*Soucham* (cleanliness): This is one of the most important practices that the temple is expected to teach the worshipper. The temple is an existential entity, it has resources coming in and waste being generated. The waste is created in the form of prayer outcomes, food waste, discards by worshippers as well as human and animal ablutionary waste. Additionally, the temple needs to be washed down to ensure that it retains its pristine look to be the most attractive structure in the vicinity. Management of waste is also related to integration of the temple to the *rājya*'s civic system and this makes maintenance of the temple as well as its management of waste a specialised subject. Temple lighting is another important aspect of cleanliness, because availability can result in temples being safe and clean, or lack thereof make it unsafe and dangerous as well as impede flow of *prāṇa*. Furthermore, good repair and maintenance of the temple is critical for image, safety, security and quality of experience of the worshipper.

Lastly, cleanliness is the reason why worshippers are expected to bathe before coming to a temple. The act of bathing acts like a psychosomatic reset, washing away accumulated stresses and turbulence. A visit to the temple after a bath magnifies harmony and positivity in the person. It goes without saying that after seeing a pristine temple, a *pūjak* is more likely to keep his or her house and environment clean.

*Anubhava* (experience): the *dhārmic* system is a practice, so a visit to the *devālayam* is expected to cover every aspect of the worshipper's overall experience of existential reality (*māyā*), ranging from physical to the metaphysical and cognitive aspects of consciousness (*citta*). The physical aspect of the experience covers all the senses and is driven by harmony of experience so that there is an elevation in the worshipper's consciousness (*citta*):

- Sight is driven by visuals of grandeur of the temple, precinct, the *deva*, *ārathi*, floral and *rangoli* or *kolam* as well as the presence of other worshippers.
- Sounds are the subdued sounds of prayer, *mantrās* and *bhajans* resulting in reduction of turbulence.

- Touch and smells are driven primarily by the lack of it. Even the *prasāda* is without any strong olfactory or touch stimulation.
- The only taste that one gets is from the *prasāda* that is offered to the worshipper.

All of the above bring down anxiety levels and increase feelings of well-being as well as grace, contentment and security, leading to a drop in internal turbulence. At a civilisational level, this contribution of the temple cannot be estimated, it can only be appreciated.

*Vivekam* (discrimination): the most important cognition (*jñāna*) that the temple is meant to inculcate is the ability to discriminate real from unreal, inspire seeking of the Truth (*Brahman*) and reduce duality such as like-dislike, good-bad, right-wrong etc. How is this achieved?

The *deva* in the *garbhagraha* is an aspirational role model. The *pūjak* is expected to emulate the qualities of the deity and transcend materiality (*māyā*) to achieve liberation (*moksha*). The worshipper (*pūjak*) achieves this by discarding *ashtadvargas* (six delusions such as desire, anger, greed, self-love, stubbornness, jealousy) and achieving discrimination through self-examination (*svadyayam*) at the *balipīṭham*. When this happens, the *pūjak* transcends materiality and merges with *Brahman*, represented by the *garbhagraha* itself and becomes perfect (*siddhi*).

Unfortunately, today, very few understand the value that the temple brings to harmony and clarity of reason and the role their deity can play in overcoming real life and identity related turbulence. Most go to a temple with the attitude of “praying to God”, a transactional frame of mind. This may result in partial relief, but does not inculcate structural reinvention or provide a framework for resolution of identity conflict. What most worshippers don't realise is that the “God” does not solve problems, nor is it meant to. That's the job of the individual. All that the temple ecosystem does is to provide an enabling environment.

The problem of duality is more serious. Good-bad, right-wrong and so on are dualities, which often result in intolerance and strife. Sri Krishna constantly refers to these afflictions which must be avoided in *Srimad-Bhagavad-Geeta* 4.22 [45]. This concept of duality can be traced to the Abrahamic concept of sin or haram, which have today become embedded in phraseology and thought the world over. Due to invasions and colonisation, South Asian *rāṣṭra* has not escaped this ideological infiltration into its society and consciousness. A fallout of the

Abrahamic concept of sin is heaven and hell, which translated to *svarga-naraka*. What worshippers forget is that *svarga-naraka* are duality states of existence that arise out of action (*karma*).

Action, when compared with conditioning (*dharma*) by individuals, results in *āshirvada* (benediction) or *abhishāpa* (malediction). When the same action is compared with societal norms (*dharma* again), this results in *pāpa* (societal immorality) and *punya* (ethical behaviour). All these actions (*karma*) result in debt (*ṛṇa*) that needs to be repaid or expiated in the case of societal *karma*. So, the person goes to *svarga* or *naraka* states of existence, for reconciliation as well as partial expiation of *karma* (action). Once the expiation has been completed, the entity (the soul or *ātma*, which is genderless returns as an appropriate entity to repay the rest of its debt.

Hence, redemption is inbuilt in the *dharmic* system unlike the Abrahamic heaven or hell where judgement occurs after death and the Soul is assigned to heaven or hell with redemption undefined [46]. Additionally, since action (*karma*) is an outcome of individual actions and reconciliation is bilateral between entities, these cannot be absolved by any God, which also renders existence of the Abrahamic concept of God [47] [48] superfluous in *dharmic* existentiality. Hence, *karma* renders duality such as right-wrong/good-bad and so on as an affliction (*doṣa*), the only existential and verifiable existential reality being action and consequence. However, invasions and subsequent subjugation have made worshippers think that *pāpa* is sin and a visit to the temple can result in absolution. This is the extent of existential colonialism that worshippers harbour and also the challenge faced by people seeking to restore *dharma*!

The temple teaches accommodation of multiple methods of worship as acceptable, with the goal being transcending all materiality (*māyā*), this means that two people standing side-by-side may use different methods of worship, yet both can be considered acceptable methods of worship. So, there is no wrong or incorrect method of worship, only learning, accommodation and tolerance.

*Vairagyam* (dispassion): change is a constant and deity (*devata*) can often play a non-judgemental, low-risk anchor in a person's life. The temple allows the individual to

manage change with minimum turbulence and acquire experience (*anubhava*) rather than become psychologically damaged. The deity accelerates acceptance of reality and reduces anxiety generated by expectation, hope and belief, all of which are considered as *swapna-avastha* (dream state affliction). This is why the worshipper is expected to release afflictions or *arishadvargas* [49] namely desire (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), delusion (*moha*), stubbornness (*madha*) and envy (*mātsarya*) at the *balipīdam* before entering the *garbhagraha*.

Charity (*dāna*) [50]: the temple is a place where people practice various forms of charity (*dāna*). Charity, by definition is action that is without any expectations. Consequently, charity is a sacrifice (*yajñā*) which assists in moderation of the sense of doer-ship (*ahankāra*). There are different types of charity (*dāna*). Some donate money (*lakshmi-dāna*), others donate food (*anna-dāna*). One may also donate time and effort (*śrama-dāna*), clothes (*vastra dāna*) or knowledge in the form of music, arts, science and so on, or donate books for education (*vidya-dāna*) at temples. All of these result in greater dialogue within people, generosity of effort and harmony in communities. The only requirement is that all charity must be done without expectation of return and with the attitude that all creation is one (*vasudeva-kutumbakam*) [51].

These are just some of the effects that temples (*devālayam*) have on communities and the civilisation or *rāṣṭra*. It can be seen that the temple acts like an intuitive and existential gyroscope of the *rāṣṭra*, developing cognitive equilibrium in individuals, bringing people together, balancing various requirements and fostering harmony.

### ***Samgati***

The relationship that the state (*rājya*) has with its people (*praja*) is driven by its cultural (*saṃskṛti*) and civilisational (*rāṣṭra*) ethos. Only when each entity within the *rājya* maintains its individuality (*svatantra*) and exists symbiotically (in *dharma*), can the *rājya* (the state) ensure well-being of the *rāṣṭra* and the people (*praja*).

This means that while people (*praja*) make up the *rājya* and *rāṣṭra*, the converse is also true. The *rājya* and *rāṣṭra* are entities that reflect the identities of their people (*praja*) and any power imbalance between the three will lead to turbulence. This balance is provided by *dharma*.

Consequently, *Bharat* can only realise complete independence (*svatantra*) when the *rājya*, *rāṣṭra* and *praja* weave cohesively and remain symbiotically in *dharma*, this integration coming through practice of *yoga*. The role of integrating *rāṣṭra* and *praja* is done by the temple and when this is seamless, the *rājya* automatically reflects harmony in its actions.

Today's temples are not fulfilling their intended design for multiple reasons.

- Firstly, temples are controlled by the government through bureaucrats. These bureaucrats are administrators who come to do a job and be transferred after their tenure is up. Consequently, their relationship with the temple is rule-bound and impersonal [52].
- Another aspect of Government control is that all the money collected is never ploughed back into the temple. This hits the temples with a double-whammy of bureaucratic indifference and poverty. With declining income, temples are forced to cut expenses. First, they do away with the discretionary expenses, then begin paring essential costs and finally reach a stage where the temple is run on a single light bulb and starts falling apart. This further dissuades worshippers from regularly visiting the temple.
- Secondly, as a corollary to the above government control and as a result of centuries of cultural genocide, appropriation, denigration and destruction, worshippers do not understand the reason why temples exist and how they contribute to a resilient *rāṣṭra*. This contributes to, not only the decline of the temples and civilisation (*rāṣṭra*) but also the state (*rājya*).
- Lastly, since people often come to temples on account of belief and superstition, thinking that the deity can solve their daily problems, this often leads to extortion and exploitation of gullible and emotionally disturbed worshippers which further ruins the reputation of temples.

The threats and risks to the *rāṣṭra* and *rājya*.

The main threat to the *rāṣṭra* and *rājya* is asphyxiation and extinction of an ancient civilisation. One might argue that change requires renewal and death of old concepts. However, the above dissertation proves how the temple adds value and brings harmony to society. Surely, this argument is enough for the preservation of the temple ecosphere.



The second threat, mainly to the culture (*samṣkṛti*) is extinction of ancillary arts such as temple music, dance, sculpture and architecture. The problem here is that these are soft skills, heavily dependent on people, so when these people die, they will take these skills away forever. This trend is already visible and requires urgent redressal.

There are three opportunities that are being lost;

- Economic activity and job creation: Annexure 1 details out how a temple (*devālayam*) can contribute to making *Bharat* a \$10 trillion economy by 2030 and to reducing poverty as well as unemployment.
- Stabilising of *dharma*: *dharma* is creation of order and temples contribute heavily by modulating the human psyche towards a stable sense of identity (*asmitā*) and harmonic existence.
- Temples are designed to be entities that have their own identity. They are also helpless and cannot look after themselves. So, they need volunteers or sevaks to look after them in a variety of areas such as administration, accounts, people management, event management, charity, cleanliness, and many other fields. People learn these skills by participating in temple activities. This makes temples incubators for people who sacrifice time, effort and money for a social cause. Consequently, this develops a culture of sacrifice and value creation which are the basis of a resilient *rāṣṭra* and these people go to become future leaders of the *rājya*.

## Conclusion

Temples are presently badly neglected. Should this condition be changed and temples freed from government control as well as interference, then one may assume that there will be a 100% increase in income and employment, income will reach over Rs. 1,20,000 crores (over \$150 billion) and employ over three crore people directly and indirectly as well as resurrect many skills that are currently on the verge of extinction.

An experiment was conducted by the Gujarat Government on making Somnath a tourist destination. Within five years, the income increased from Rs. 2 crores to Rs. 10 crores and the number of visitors increased from 100000 to 500000. Other temples have been able to

experience growth as well when marketed appropriately. This supports the above assumption that a national 100% short term growth is achievable [53].

However, the above successes are for large temple sites that can be developed as temple centres. For smaller temples, these efforts would need to be individualised and that cannot be done by the government. So, it is imperative that the government leaves temple administration to those for whom the temples are symbiotic with their lives and practices.

A key lacuna in the above Somnath experiment is that economic development will not yield complete benefits to the *rāṣṭra* and the individual if they do not understand the real reason for the existence of the temple, which is to help them integrate into a symbiotic resilient and harmonious society. This can only be achieved only when economic development is woven with education on how temples can contribute to overall personal as well as personality development, bring in a *rāṣṭra* that is resilient, tolerant, participative and *dhārmic*.

It is hoped that this document is able to provide impetus in this direction.

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## Annexure 1

Estimation of temple income in India in 2020. Assuming 2000000 temples.							
Income range	%	Numbers	Income	Total direct	Crores	income \$ @ 75	
Income around Rs. 12000/- per year	85%	1700000	12000	20400000000	2040	272000000.00	
Income between 12000 - 200000	10%	200000	100000	20000000000	2000	266666666.67	
Income between 200000 - 10000000	3%	60000	500000	30000000000	3000	400000000.00	
Income over 1000000	2%	40000	1000000	4E+11	40000	533333333.33	
					47040	6272.00	\$Mil
						62.72	\$Bil
Assumption - 100 cr Hindus, 4/ family. 25 cr families visit temples 4 times/ yr (birthday, new year + 2 festivals). Direct spend = Rs. 50/- samagri + Rs. 50/- dakshina + Rs. 100/- travel + Rs. 200/- food etc. Total spend / trip = Rs. 400/- or 400x4 = Rs. 1600 / annum. Outstation temple visits of travel+ boarding+ lodging would be extra.							
Indirect income using above range	%	Numbers	Income	Total indirect	Crores	income \$ @ 75	
income around Rs. 12000/- per year	85%	1700000	1600	2720000000	272	362666666.67	
Income between 12000 - 200000	10%	200000	1600	320000000	32	42666666.67	
Income between 200000 - 10000000	3%	60000	1600	96000000	9.6	1280000.00	
Income over 1000000	2%	40000	1600	64000000	6.4	853333.33	
					320	42.67	\$Mil
						0.43	\$Bil



Income from temple lands assumes that small temples get Rs. 1000/- per annum, mid-size temples get Rs. 1.2 lacs per annum, large temples get Rs. 6 lacs per annum and very large get Rs. 12 lacs per annum on average.							
Income from temple lands	%	Numbers	Income	Total land	Crores	income \$ @ 75	
income around Rs. 12000/- per year	85%	1700000	12000	20400000000	2040	272000000.00	
Income between 12000 - 200000	10%	200000	100000	20000000000	2000	266666666.67	
Income between 200000 - 10000000	3%	60000	600000	36000000000	3600	480000000.00	
Income over 1000000	2%	40000	1200000	48000000000	4800	640000000.00	
					12440	1658.67	\$Mil
						16.59	\$Bil
People employment - assume that small and mid-size temples employ 1 priest + 1 cleaner = 2 direct + 1 indirect people = 3. Large temples employ 4 priests in 2 shifts + 4 helpers + 4 cleaners = 12 + 10 indirect (samagri + F&B) = 22. Very Large temples have multiple an average of over 100 direct + 100 indirect = 200							
	%	Direct and indirect jobs			Income from direct, indirect & land		
		Numbers	People	Total jobs	Income	income \$ @ 75	
income around Rs. 12000/- per year	85%	1700000	3	5100000	4352	580266666.67	
Income between 12000 - 200000	10%	200000	3	600000	4032	537600000.00	
Income between 200000 - 10000000	3%	60000	22	1320000	6609.6	881280000.00	
Income over 1000000	2%	40000	200	8000000	44806.4	5974186666.67	
				15020000.00	59800.0	7973.33	\$Mil
				1.502		79.73	\$Bil
<b>Temples generate income of Rs. 60,000 (\$80 Billion) cr/ yr &amp; employ over 1.5 crore directly and indirectly.</b>							