

Originally appeared in: *Ritual, State and History in South Asia. Essays in Honour of J.C. Heesterman*, edd. A.W. van den Hoek, D.H.A. Kolff, M.S. Oort. Leiden, etc. (1992), 199-221.

## The "Sarvatobhadra" temple of the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa and the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh

ALEXANDER LUBOTSKY

"Where in reality the Sarvatobhadra of the 'Viṣṇudharmottara'  
was built and when, cannot be said as yet".  
Stella Kramrisch, 'The Hindu Temple', p. 421.

In the winter of 1977-1978, as a third-year student of Indology in Leiden, I wrote a term paper on the temples described in the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa. Now, thirteen years later, I would like to present this paper, thoroughly revised, to Prof. Heesterman once again.

1. In spite of the fact that we find many descriptions of temples in the Sanskrit literature, it appeared hardly possible to identify the different varieties described in the texts with the remains of actual temples and this is quite understandable. For a successful identification, the following requirements must be met:

- 1) the description must not be too fragmentary;
- 2) the text must contain the description of a real temple and not a fantasy of the author;
- 3) the state of preservation of the archaeological remains must allow identification;
- 4) the chronology of the text and the chronology of the remains of the temple must correlate.

It does not often occur that all these requirements can be met. The archaeological remains are too scanty and often too damaged while the descriptions of the temples found in the texts are in general too fragmentary, usually only containing the norm for the main proportions of the temple and a classification of different types, which is not enough for a successful identification. Nevertheless, sometimes an identification seems possible and in the present article I shall try to show that the temple described in the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa under the name 'Sarvatobhadra' is in reality the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh.

2. The third khaṇḍa of the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa (henceforth, the abbreviation VDh will be used for the third khaṇḍa of this text) consists of short treatises on Sanskrit and Prakrit grammar, metrics, poetics, dancing, singing, music, painting, iconography and architecture. These treatises are composed as a dialogue between the king Vajra, who poses the questions, and the mythical sage Mārkaṇḍeya, who gives the answers in the form of prescriptions. The temple architecture is

dealt with in three chapters: chapter 86 "Prāsādalakṣaṇam" ('The characteristics of the temples') presents the classification of a hundred temples; chapter 87 "Sarvatobhadraprāsādalakṣaṇam" ('The characteristics of the Sarvatobhadra temple') is dedicated to the description of the so-called "Sarvatobhadra" temple; and, finally, chapter 88 "Sāmānyaprāsādalakṣaṇam" ('General characteristics of the temples') gives general information about temple proportions. The iconography is dealt with in chapters 44-85. 200

The only temple which is described in great detail is the Sarvatobhadra temple,<sup>1</sup> dedicated to the four emanations of Viṣṇu (see below, section 6.1). Requirement 1) from section 1 above does not present any problems: the author of the VDh meticulously describes the form of this temple and registers the iconography of the shrines.

3. As to requirement 2), there are several indications that the author described a real temple. The description of the Sarvatobhadra temple is concluded by a lengthy eulogy (87.43-63) to the merits one gets when he builds this temple, worships gods there or even merely sees it. Here are some extracts: "One who builds such a temple in accordance with the prescriptions and always worships<sup>2</sup> all gods is known as Cakravartin (the sovereign of the world) in the beginning of the Tretāyuga, he resides in the heaven as long as he wishes and then he attains communion with Viṣṇu. The man who has once worshipped all gods in this temple with all kinds of offers will certainly get the benefit of the gift of the three worlds and without any doubt will attain whatever he desires. As soon as the very beautiful temple with its Cakras and Patākas becomes visible, the calamities disappear. Undoubtedly, anyone who enters it is not susceptible to disease, sudden death, calamity. Demons have no power over him... The king in whose dominion this temple is built remains in the heaven of Indra and rejoices for a long time... No harm should be done to this divine object. The king or his representative who does this goes to the terrible hell together with his sons, cattle and relatives and his position in this world will certainly vanish ...".

The temple is so precisely described and its merits are so eloquently praised that one gets the impression that the author saw the Sarvatobhadra temple himself. The special importance of this particular temple for the author of the VDh also emerges from the fact that he did not include this temple in the classification of hundred temples, but described it in a separate chapter. He definitely wanted to indicate that the Sarvatobhadra temple is something unique.

---

<sup>1</sup> The name can be interpreted in two ways: either, literally, 'auspicious on all sides', or, taking the technical meaning of *bhadra* into account, 'with buttresses on each of the four sides' (cf. Kramrisch 1946: 419). In other Śāstras we find the name Sarvatobhadra more than ten times (ibid.: 419ff), but there it is a name for one of the varieties of temples.

<sup>2</sup> The correct analysis of 87.44 (*sarveṣāṃ devatānāṃ tu nityaṃ vihitapūjanam / kalpaṃ tretāyugasyādau cakravarty abhidhīyate*) is given by Priyabala Shah (1958: 408), in spite of her wrong translation in 1961: 213. In 44c one has to read *kalpan*, the nom.sg. of the participle 'performing', instead of the attested *kalpaṃ*, which makes no sense.

As all treatises in the VDh are presented in the form of prescriptions, it need not surprise us that the description of the Sarvatobhadra temple looks as if it were an instruction on how to build it. It is noteworthy, however, that Mārkaṇḍeya hardly allows any alternatives in this instruction. Once (87.17-18) he says that the image of Vāsudeva in the main shrine should face the east or the west and no other direction, but then he adds: *vāsudevadiśam cātra pūrvām rājan prakalpayet // tasyāś caivānusāreṇa diśaḥ syāt parikalpanā* 'O king, one should consider the direction of Vāsudeva to be the east. The order [of the deities] should be in conformity with this direction'. And, indeed, in the following placement of the deities Vāsudeva occupies the east while the place of the other gods is given in relation to Vāsudeva's position. If the prototype of the Sarvatobhadra temple faced the east, this reservation would not be necessary. Therefore, it seems probable that in the real temple Vāsudeva stood with his face not to the east as one would expect, but to the west.

201

The only other free choice in Mārkaṇḍeya's instruction is given for the iconography of another temple, which should be built in the courtyard of the main temple. In the niches of the enclosure around this temple one should put manifestations of Viṣṇu or all classes of gods in the proper order (see below, section 6.9). Here, too, it seems plausible to assume that the author expected the placement of manifestations of Viṣṇu in a Viṣṇu temple, but, in reality, he found different classes of gods installed in the niches.

In view of these considerations we may assume that while describing his Sarvatobhadra temple the author of the VDh had a real temple in mind, a temple which he himself saw and admired.

4. Both requirements concerning the text being met, we can turn to the archaeological remains of the temple which I believe to be the prototype of the Sarvatobhadra temple of the VDh. In the secondary literature this temple is usually called the Gupta temple or the Daśāvatāra temple ("The temple of ten avatāras of Viṣṇu", which is an unfortunate name) at Deogarh (Jhānsi District, Uttar Pradesh). The first scientific description of this temple is Cunningham's report (1880: 104ff), where he described the remnants and proposed a reconstruction of the ground plan. He recognized that this temple was built during the Gupta period and was dedicated to Viṣṇu. In 1917-18, Daya Ram Sahni excavated the platform of the temple and found the remains of four shrines in the corners of the platform. In 1952, Vats published a complete description of the remains of the temple, providing measurements, drawings of the elevation and of the ground plan, a description of its iconography and an isometric projection of the reconstructed temple.

It is clear that requirement 3) is also fulfilled, as the remains of this temple are sufficient to allow identification.

5. The date of the VDh and of the Deogarh temple (requirement 4) cannot be determined with certainty, but the limits are clear. Priyabala Shah gives as the most probable date for the VDh the

period between ca. 450 and 650 A.D. (1958: XXVI). Stella Kramrisch believes that "the chapters of the Vishṇudharmottara dealing with painting must have been compiled in the seventh century, contemporary with the latest paintings of Ajanta" (1928: 5). Gail (1977: 159ff.) assumes that the first two khaṇḍas of the VDh were compiled around 600, whereas the third khaṇḍa is of a later date. Pal (1981: 14 and fn. 9) also dates the Viṣṇudharmottara with the seventh century.

The exact date of the Deogarh temple has also been disputed. Cunningham (1880: 110) thought that it could not be placed earlier than A.D. 600 or later than 700, but other investigators presumed an earlier date: Brown (1976: pl. XLI) dated the temple at circa 500 A.D. and Vats (1952: 10f.) ascribed it to the early part of the sixth century A.D. Recently, Joanna Williams (1982: 132) suggested that there were two campaigns in the carving, which is indicated by "the unusually large number of unfinished portions in the sculpture of the temple": the first at about 500, the second roughly 520 to 550. Anyhow, it seems safe to assume that the temple was completed in the first half of the sixth century A.D. (cf. Williams 1982: 132 fn. 98 for an overview of different opinions).

It is therefore clear that, as far as the chronology is concerned, the Deogarh temple could be the prototype of the Sarvatobhadra temple of the VDh. It seems reasonable to assume that the Deogarh temple for many centuries remained in high esteem in North India.

6. Now we may try to compare the description of the Sarvatobhadra temple in the VDh with the actual remains or the proposed reconstructions of the Deogarh temple. Chapter 87 of the VDh, where the Sarvatobhadra temple is described, does not provide any proportions as these are treated in chapter 88, which deals with characteristics and proportions valid for all temples. If not otherwise stated, the text of the VDh is given in accordance with the edition of Priyabala Shah.

### 6.1. The dedication.

Sarvatobhadra. The main shrine is dedicated to the four aspects of Viṣṇu as follows from the first śloka of the chapter, viz.

87.1 *prāsādam atha vakṣyāmi sarvatobhadrasamjñitam*  
*caturātmā harir yatra kartavyo jagatīpate*

"I shall tell you now about the temple, known as "Sarvatobhadra", where Hari in his four-fold aspect should be placed, o king".

The term *caturātmā* is most probably used here in the sense of the more usual *caturvyūha* 'of four aspects, emanations', the doctrine of the quadripartite divine nature of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa in its classical form.

The VDh (87.14-39) gives the iconographical program of the whole temple, precisely indicating which shrine should be dedicated to which deity and which images should be placed on the panels around the platform. As chapters 44-85 provide vast information about the iconography of every deity and his attributes, we can get some impression of the essential iconographical points of the Sarvatobhadra temple. A detailed study of the iconography of the Sarvatobhadra temple and a comparison with that of the Deogarh temple must, however, be reserved for another occasion. [[Cf. now A. Lubotsky, The iconography of the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh and the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa. *Ars Orientalis* 26 (1996), 65-80.]]

203

Deogarh. There can be no doubt that the Deogarh temple is dedicated to Viṣṇu. This is indicated by a relief above the doorway (the so-called *lalātabimba*), which depicts Viṣṇu sitting on the serpent Ananta with Lakṣmī carressing his foot and with two manifestations of Viṣṇu, Nara-siṃha (Man-Lion) and Vāmana (dwarf), to his right and left, respectively. The reliefs in broad and deep niches on the other three sides represent Viṣṇu as a warrior liberating the King of the Elephants (*gajendramokṣa*) at the north, Viṣṇu in the form of two sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa at the east, and Viṣṇu sleeping on the serpent Ananta (the so-called *anantaśayana*), engaged in the act of creation, at the south.

It seems probable to me that the four sides of the temple are dedicated to the four aspects of Viṣṇu: the entrance to Vāsudeva, the Gajendramokṣa side to Saṃkarṣaṇa, the destructive aspect of Viṣṇu, the Naranārāyaṇa side to Pradyumna, the preserving aspect of Viṣṇu, and the Anantaśayana side to Aniruddha, the creative aspect of Viṣṇu. I hope to discuss the details elsewhere.

## 6.2. The orientation.

Sarvatobhadra. As already indicated above (section 3), the VDh allows two alternatives for the orientation of the Sarvatobhadra temple: "the image of Vāsudeva should face the east or the west and no other direction. One should consider the direction of Vāsudeva as the east. The order [of the deities] should be in conformity with this direction". If the prototype had faced the east, this reservation would have been unnecessary, which seems to indicate that the prescribed orientation was the east, but, in reality, the temple faced the west.

Deogarh. The Deogarh temple faces the west, but not exactly. It is slightly turned towards the south in such a way that the last rays of the setting sun could shine on the image in the main shrine (see fig. 1). The orientation to the west was not unusual for temples with a "dark" shrine (cf. Kramrisch 1946: 272). It is important that the so-called "Varāha" temple (see below, section 6.7), is oriented to the east, and its reliefs, being practically identical to the reliefs of our temple are also facing the opposite directions. The temple is turned, as it were, 180 degrees, which is in conformity with the prescription of the VDh: the direction of Vāsudeva is the east, and the placement of the other gods depends on it.

## 6.3. The platform.

204

Sarvatobhadra. According to the VDh, the platform or the plinth of the Sarvatobhadra temple must be square (87.2a *caturasrā*). From chapter 88 we further learn that the temple platforms should be very high:

88.6cd *ṛtīyam aṁśam vasudhā ṛtīyāṁśaḥ kaṭir bhavet*

88.7ab *mañjarī ca ṛtīyāṁśaḥ prāsādasya mahābhujā*

"The platform (*vasudhā*) should make up one third of [the total height of] the temple, the outer wall (*kaṭi*) one third and the *mañjarī* (a type of superstructure) one third, o king".

As the Sarvatobhadra temple does not have a *mañjarī* superstructure, but a spire-like *sikhara* (see below, section 6.8), the division of height in three equal pieces is irrelevant. Still, the platform and the outer wall are probably of the same height.

This prescription concerning the division of the temple height in three equal segments may have been taken over from another treatise on the architecture, as it is also mentioned in the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* (VarBrS LVI.11) written by Varāhamihira in the first half of the sixth century A.D. (for the date cf. Kern 1865: 4).

The width of the platform is three times the width of the temple, cf.

88.9ab *vasudhāsañcaro rājan kaṭyamśadvitayena tu*

"O king, the area for walking (*sañcara*) of the platform [measures] two parts of the outer wall (*kaṭi*)".<sup>3</sup>

I take *sañcara* to mean 'the ambulatory, the area for walking', i.e. the length (=width) of the platform minus the length (=width) of the temple. Therefore, the length/width of the platform is three times the length/width of the *kaṭi*.

The platform must be surrounded by an enclosure:

87.3 *eṣāṁ pṛṣṭhe jagatyūrdhvaṁ prākāraṁ viniveśayet*  
*sarvatra mekhalākāraṁ tatrāpi viniveśayet*

"Behind them (the shrines on the platform, see below), perpendicular to the platform one should make an enclosure (*prākāra*). One should make there on every side a kind of a girdle (*mekhalā*)".

We can learn even more particulars about this enclosure if we look at the classification of the hundred temples in chapter 86. The Sarvatobhadra temple belonged to the group of the so-called *maṇḍapa*-temples, i.e. temples with porticoes, for which see below, section 8. The main temple of this group is called Rājarāja, and the text says about its platform:

205

<sup>3</sup> I do not understand why Priyabala Shah (1958: 249 and 408) wants to emend the text to *kaṭyamśe hi tathaiva tu*, which does not make any sense.

86.106ab *prākāre jānudaghnāḍhyā yasyaikā jagatī bhavet*  
*c prāsādatryamśatulyā tu ...*

"There should be only one vast platform, reaching up to the knee in [its] enclosure and equal to one third of the temple".

The meaning of *prākāre jānudaghnā* seems to be that the enclosure must reach up to the knee when one stands on the platform. This passage has been misunderstood both by Priyabala Shah and Stella Kramrisch. Priyabala Shah (1961: 204) translates: "Rājarāja temple... should be in an enclosure. One Jagatī of the main temple reaches upto the knee and is equal to one-third of the temple", which is of course nonsense. Stella Kramrisch (1946: 417) assumes that there were two platforms: "It has one lower and wider Jagatī which is as high as the knee, below, and in addition to, the Jagatī proper, whose height is one-third of the Prāsāda". The text, however, explicitly states that this group of temples has only one platform, in contrast to the previous group with more platforms, which renders this interpretation impossible.

Deogarh. "The plinth (= platform, AL)... measures 55'6" square... Though very much ruined, the plinth must, no doubt, have risen to the level of the doorstep of the shrine which is about 9 feet above the moonstones at the bottom of the flights of the steps. Over this, the parapet would have risen to another 2 feet as shown in the conjectural restoration (cf. fig. 2, AL). Numerous pieces of its coping are stacked in the compound... The vertical height of the terrace at the bottom of the door-sill of the sanctum would thus work to about 9'10" above the moonstones and along the parapet to some 9'7" by allowing a slope of 3"." (Vats 1952: 5).

It is clear that the platform was very high and on Vats' isometric projection the height of the platform is equal to the height of the outer wall. The enclosure mentioned by the VDh corresponds with the parapet in Deogarh. "As the parapet round the plinth also accomodated a smaller series of panels about 1'2" high it must have arisen above the terrace by the height of the coping which is 1'6"" (Vats, ib.). This 1'6" (ca. 45 cm) is exactly what is meant by the VDh as "reaching up to the knee".

As far as the area of the platform is concerned, it has already been noticed by Cunningham that "the whole occupies 9 equal squares, of which the temple itself forms the middle square, while the remaining 8 squares form a terrace" (1880: 105). The outer wall of the temple measures 18'6" x 18'6", so that the length/width of the *kaṭi* is exactly one third of that of the platform (55'6").

#### 6.4. The staircases.

206

Sarvatobhadra.

87.4cd *catuṣṣu dikṣu sopānaṃ mekhalāyāṃ nivēśayet*  
 87.5ab *sopānas tryamśavistāro mekhalāyāḥ prakīrtitaḥ*

"On the four sides a staircase [leading] to the girdle must be made. The width of the staircase is proclaimed to be one third of that of the girdle".<sup>4</sup>

The fact that the staircase must lead to the girdle indicates that the staircase must begin outside the platform. It seems probable that the girdle was erected not only along the platform, but also along both sides of the staircase. The staircase must therefore be rather broad. This is corroborated by a passage from chapter 88

88.9cd *aṣṭamena tathā hīno madhye sopāna iṣyate*

"The staircase should be placed in the middle and be 1/8 less [in width than the *kaṭi*]".

This prescription about the width of the staircase corresponds to another passage in the VDh, viz. 86.6cd *kaṭimūlāṣṭabhāgonah*<sup>5</sup> *sopānavistaro bhavet* "The width of the staircase should be 1/8 less than the bottom of the *kaṭi*".

Further information about the staircase is given in

88.10 *samasamkhyam*<sup>6</sup> *tu kartavyam sopānam nityam eva tu nātyartham samkaṭam kāryam na vistīrṇam tathaiiva ca*

"The staircases should always consist of the same number [of steps]. They should be neither too dense, nor expanded".

The meaning of this śloka seems to be that the staircase becomes *samkaṭa*- 'narrow, dense' when there are too many steps, while it becomes *vistīrṇa*- 'expanded, large, broad' when there are too few steps.

Deogarh. Four broad staircases, beginning outside the platform, lead to the temple. All staircases have half-round bases, the so-called moonstones, which are not mentioned by the VDh. Vats does not provide the measurements of the staircases, while on the plan of the temple drawn by Cunningham the width of the staircases is given as 15'6". It is less than 7/8 of the width of the temple (7/8 from 18'6" is ca. 16'2"), but Cunningham's figure is probably incorrect. At that time the platform had not yet been excavated, and he could not exactly measure the staircase. According to the ground plan of Vats, the width of the staircase must be ca. 16'6"-17', which is a satisfactory approximation of the VDh norm.

As to the proportion of the width of the staircase to the parapet, I could only try to determine it on the basis of the ground plan given by Vats (his pl. II). I arrived at ca. 50' for the

207

<sup>4</sup> *tryamśa*- can mean 'one third', cf. *aṣṭāṣa*- 'one eighth' in 86.9. The author of the text often uses a wrong gender, cf. 88.6c *amśam*, 86.25 *dvārah*, etc., which may account for the masculine gender of *sopāna*- (instead of the neuter).

<sup>5</sup> I adopt the reading of manuscripts A and B instead of *bhāgena* in the edition of Priyabala Shah.

<sup>6</sup> Priyabala Shah has already proposed to emend *samasamkhye* to *samasamkhyam* (cf. *samasamkhyam tu kartavyam sopānam* in 86.7ab). Writing -e instead of -am is a typical palaeographic mistake.

length of the parapet on one side, which would be exactly three times the width of the staircase, if it were 16'8". Here, too, the approximation seems acceptable.

### 6.5. The shrines on and around the platform.

Sarvatobhadra. In addition to the main temple, there are thirty six minor shrines on and around the platform: twenty four on the platform (six on each side), four in the corners of the platform, and eight at the bottom of the staircases (two shrines at every staircase). First, the description of the shrines on the platform is given:

87.2cd *tasyāṃ garbhagr̥hāḥ kāryā viṃśatīś caturuttarāḥ*

4ab *prāsādakā mahārāja caturviṃśatir eva ca*

5cd *sopānobhayato rājan prāsādās te trayas trayah*

6 *bhavanti mekhalāpṛṣṭhe<sup>7</sup> tad ādau garbhamandiram*

*vimekhalam tu sāmānyam madhye teṣāṃ vimaṇḍapam*

7 *himavatsamjñītau kāryau tasya pārsve vimekhalau*

"Twenty four *garbhagr̥has* (shrines, cellas) should be placed on it (on the platform). O great king, one should also erect twenty four small temples [around the shrines]. To the left and to the right of every staircase, o king, there are three temples against the girdle: in the middle first a temple of the "Sāmānya" type without a girdle and without porticoes (*maṇḍapa*) and at its both sides two "Himavān" temples without a girdle".

There are thus six temples at every side of the platform: three to the left and three to the right of every staircase. Of these three temples, the one in the middle is of the Sāmānya type and is flanked by two Himavān temples. These types are mentioned among the hundred varieties in chapter 86.

The other shrines must be put as follows:

87.7cd *sopānamūle prāsāde<sup>8</sup> dve dve kārye manorame*

8 *damṣṭrādevakulākhye<sup>9</sup> te sāmānyākhye vimaṇḍape*

*tathaiva jagatīpṛṣṭhe koṇe devakulam nyaset*

"At the bottom of every staircase two beautiful temples should be built. These so-called tusk-temples [should be] of the Sāmānya type without *maṇḍapas*. Moreover, one should put a temple in the corner[s], against the platform".

<sup>7</sup> As suggested to me by Dr. Ellen Raven, the expression *mekhalāpṛṣṭhe* (87.6a) probably means 'against, close to the girdle' and not 'behind the girdle', cf. also *jagatīpṛṣṭhe* 'against the platform' in the following verse.

<sup>8</sup> The dual *prāsāde* shows the feminine ending. There are more of these wrong pairs in the VDh, cf. the nom.pl. *śikhārāḥ* to nom.sg. *śikharam*, nom.pl. *dhārāḥ* to nom.sg. *dvāram*, etc. See also fn. 2 above.

<sup>9</sup> The reading *damṣṭrā-* of mss. A, B, C, F (cf. the noot in Priyabala Shah 1958: 373) is preferable to the reading *damṣṭre* adopted by Priyabala Shah.

Deogarh. As the platform is very ruined (see above, section 6.3), there are no traces of the shrines on the platform. There are likewise no traces of the "tusk-temples" on either side of the staircases, but one can still see that the steps were flanked by rather broad walls, which could contain small shrines.

As to the corner shrines, "excavation of the plinth carried out by Daya Ram Sahnī revealed at each corner the existence of a small square shrine so that together with the central cella this temple constitutes the earliest example in northern India of the *pañcāyatana* type" (Vats 1952: 5). Two shrines are facing the west, and two are facing the east.

#### 6.6. The main temple. The door and the shrine.

Sarvatobhadra. In the description of this temple no proportions are given so for that purpose we must consult chapter 88, where we find the following figures about the door:

- 88.2 *dvāraṃ ca madhyamaṃ tasya samadiksthaṃ praśasyate*  
*dvāraṃ vistarataḥ kāryaṃ bhūpala dviguṇocchrayam*  
 5 *dvāramānāṣṭabhāgonām<sup>10</sup> pratimāṃ tu sapinḍikā*  
*dvau bhāgau pratimā tatra ṛṭīyāṃśās ca pinḍikā*  
 7cd *garbhapādena<sup>11</sup> vistīrṇaṃ tathā dvāraṃ praśasyate*

"It is commendable to place the central door of the temple in one of the cardinal points. The height of the door should be made double its width, o king. [One should make] the image together with the pedestal on 1/8 lower than the height of the door. The image [should be] two parts [of the whole] and the pedestal a third part. It is commendable to make the width of the door equal to 1/4 of [the width of] the shrine".

The same proportions are given in the description of the "Himavān" temple, the first temple of the hundred varieties:

<sup>10</sup> 5a *bhāgānām* makes no sense, and I accept Priyabala Shah's emendation to *bhāgonām*. The accusative in 5ab is strange. The passage of the VarBṛS with the same proportions shows better syntax, cf. 56.16 *dvāramānāṣṭabhāgonā pratimā syāt sapinḍikā dvau bhāgau pratimā tatra ṛṭīyāṃśās ca pinḍikā*.

<sup>11</sup> 88.7c *garbham* does not make sense. I emend it to *garbha-* on the basis of VarBṛS 56.12cd *garbhapādena vistīrṇaṃ dvāraṃ dviguṇaṃ ucchritam* 'The door is 1/4 of the shrine in width and twice as high'. The proportions of the door are also dealt with in 88.6ab *kaṭir aṣṭamabhāgonam dvāre kāryaṃ vijānatā*, but this passage is syntactically impossible and must be emended. Instead of *dvāre* one must certainly read *dvāraṃ* with the four mss. A, B, C, and F (cf. Priyabala Shah 1958: 373), but what is the meaning of the sentence? "One must make the outer wall equal to the door diminished on 1/8" does not make any sense. It seems to me that the meaning must be "The [width of the] door should be 1/8 of the outer wall", which would correspond to the other proportions: the door is 1/4 of the width of the shrine (VDh 88.7, VarBṛS 56.12cd), while the width of the shrine is 1/2 of the temple (VarBṛS 56.12ab). We must therefore emend *aṣṭamabhāgonam* to *aṣṭamabhāgena* and assume that the attested *kaṭir aṣṭama-* instead of *kaṭyaṣṭamabhāgena* is due to a metrical licence.

86.9 *dvārocchrāyaś ca kartavyo devāś cāṣṭāmśasamṃyutāḥ  
vistāram dviḡṇam cātra dvārocchrāyam tu kārayet*<sup>12</sup>

"The height of the door should be [that of] the deities increased by 1/8. One should make the height of the door double [its] width".

The proportions of the shrine can be found in

88.8 *bhittir garbhāṣṭabhāgonā tathā kāryā vijānatā  
prāsādocchrāyabhāgena caturthena ca śasyate*

"The [thickness of the] inner wall (*bhitti*) should be made by a wise man 1/8 less than [the width of] the shrine, and [its height] is proclaimed to be 1/4 of the height of the temple".

209

The meaning of *bhitti* ('inner wall, the wall of the shrine') follows from VarBrS 56.12ab *vistārārdham bhaved garbho bhittayo 'nyāḥ samantataḥ* 'The shrine should be 1/2 of the width [of the temple] and should have separate walls all around'. If our passage describes the section of the temple and thus the thickness of both walls is meant (which seems quite probable to me, otherwise the walls would be too thick), the proportions are slightly different from those of the VarBrS, the shrine being 8/15 of the width of the temple (G being the width of the *garbha*, we have the following equation:  $7/8G + 1G =$  the width of the *kaṭi*, or  $G = 8/15$  *kaṭi*).

Deogarh. The door of the Deogarh temple faces west and measures 6'11" x 3'4½", i.e. its height is almost double its width, which corresponds with the norm of the VDh. The image is missing, so that its proportions cannot be verified. The shrine is square and measures 9'9" x 9'9". The width of the shrine is a little bit more than 8/15 of the width of the temple (ca. 18'4" instead of 18'6"), but the difference seems negligible.

The only serious deviation from the norm of the VDh is the correlation between the width of the door and the width of the shrine. The text states that width of the door should be 1/4 of the width of the shrine, but in reality it is 1/3. It is probable, however, that the door was made of wood<sup>13</sup> and consequently had a wooden frame. The door opening was then smaller and could have been 1/4 of the width of the shrine.

Vats does not give the height of the shrine, but from the section of the temple on his pl. III one arrives at approximately 13'6". According to the norm of the VDh, the height of the temple must be  $4 \times 13'6" = 44'$ . "Unfortunately, the summit is too ruined for its detailed shape to be made out, although its height when entire could not have been less than 40 feet" (Brown 1976: 50). In the isometric projection of Vats the total height of the temple is appr. 45'.

<sup>12</sup> Emendations proposed by Priyabala Shah for this śloka are unnecessary. The proportions are exactly the same as given in 88.2 and 88.5, which inspires confidence in the textual tradition.

<sup>13</sup> The VDh (88.3) prescribes that the door should be made of the wood of "Devakula" trees, should not be perforated, exuding moisture, or hollow.

### 6.7. The main temple. The porticoes.

Sarvatobhadra. According to the description of the VDh, the temple had four *maṇḍapas*, which is in this text a term for a (small) entrance hall, a portico:

87.9 *prāsādo madhyamaś cātra kartavyo maṇḍapānvitah  
catvāro maṇḍapās cātra kāryāḥ śikharasamsthitāḥ*<sup>14</sup>

10 *madhyaprāsādakoṇeṣu tathā maṇḍapasandhiṣu  
dvidvigarbhagrḥān ramyān prāsādān viniveśayet*

11 *ekaikaṃ maṇḍapaṃ cātra dvāratritayabhūṣitam  
caturthe ca tathā dvāre devagarbhagrhaṃ bhavet*

12ab *maṇḍapasya ca ye dvārāḥ kāryās te stambhabhūṣitāḥ*

210

"The central temple should be built with *maṇḍapas*. There should be four *maṇḍapas* with *śikharas* (curvilinear superstructure). In the corners of the central temple, in the junction of the *maṇḍapas* one should build four beautiful temples with two shrines each. Every *maṇḍapa* should be adorned with three doors. In the fourth door there should be a *devagarbhagrha*. The doors of the *maṇḍapa* should be adorned with pillars".

It follows from the description that the *maṇḍapas* are attached to the four sides of the temple. The meaning of *devagarbhagrha* is unclear. It seems to be a technical term and not simply 'a shrine of the god', which does not make sense in this context. Possibly, *devagarbhagrha* is an equivalent of *devakoṣṭha* 'a niche with an image of a deity'.

Deogarh. The question whether or not the Deogarh temple had porticoes has always been a matter of controversy. Already Cunningham (1880: 105f) suggested that on each of the four sides of the temple there was "a portico or veranda supported on four large pillars. Two of these pillars still remain complete, but fallen, and there are portions of two others of the same design lying on the edge of the terrace... High up on each wall there are the remains of four beams or architraves, which once projected from the building for the purpose of supporting a flat canopy over the sculpture in the niche below. A piece of one of these beams, between 3 and 4 feet long, still projects on the east side, and still carries a portion of its roofing-slab... It seems highly probable, therefore, that they must have supported the ends of the beams which projected from the four sides of the building. But this probability becomes almost a certainty when we find that the pillars are of exactly the same height as the pilasters of the niches containing the sculptures before which they were placed".

<sup>14</sup> The reading *śikharasamsthitāḥ* 'provided with *śikharas*', proposed by Priyabala Shah, gives better sense than the attested *śikharasamjñitāḥ* 'known as *śikharas*'.

Cunningham's reconstruction was accepted by Brown (1976: 50), but Vats (1952: 6f.) disagreed with it: "There are only two pillars ..., but the third is fragmentary... Had there been a porch on each side one would expect at least 8 pillars, a number of lintels, capitals and bases of pillars". He rather assumed that "the cantilever beams were strong enough by themselves to have adequately supported a 5' wide projecting canopy which would certainly have served the primary object of protecting the icons and the reliefs, while at the same time allowing the doorway and the great panels to remain in full view even from below the plinth".

Important evidence in favour of the portico has been brought up by Banerjee (1963), who pointed to many similarities between our temple and another Gupta temple at Deogarh, the so-called "Varāha" temple, dedicated to the boar-incarnation of Viṣṇu. This Varāha temple is built on a large platform, its *kaṭi* is square (18'4" x 18'4") and has central projections at three sides. There is only one staircase, but it is very broad and has the same moonstone at the bottom, as in our temple. Moreover, the reliefs on all sides are almost identical with the reliefs of our temple. The doorway faces east, and in front of the doorway there are the remains of a portico, originally supported by two pillars. Banerjee (ib.: 42ff) argued for an early date of the Varāha temple and assumed that this temple served as a model for the more elaborate and delicate later variant. The date of the Varāha temple has been disputed (cf. Banerjee : 43), but even if the Varāha temple is of a later date, which I doubt,<sup>15</sup> this would not change the argument to any great extent. Both temples clearly belong to the same period (cf. Viennot 1976: 246), and whether the Varāha temple is a model or a copy of our temple, the portico in the Varāha temple strongly suggests the previous existence of porticoes in the other temple, too.

211

According to Banerjee (ib.: 40), further evidence is that "the idea of a *maṇḍapa* on all the four sides around the miniature *śikhara* shrine... over the *garbha-griha* is clearly indicated in the later Kuraiya Bir temple, near Deogarh, situated two miles away on the forest road to Saipura *en route* to Lalitpur".

The description of the VDh points to the reconstruction of the four porticoes with two pillars each: for the door in the middle two pillars are needed, while the two side doors were formed by the same two pillars and the pilasters in the niches, if we assume that the author of the text made no difference between pillars and pilasters. As noticed by Cunningham, the four pillars "found on the platform are all square in section, and of the same style of ornamentation as the pilasters at the sides of the niches" (1880: 106). Moreover, the scenes depicted on the pillars allow to determine their original place. Vats' pillar No. 1 with four scenes showing a male with two females (Vats 1952: 27f. and plates XII-XIV) must have stood before the Gajendramokṣa

<sup>15</sup> The position of the river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā at the bottom of the door-posts may be an indication of the later date of the Varāha temple (cf. Viennot 1964: 165). On the other hand, the fact that these goddesses are depicted without a *vāhana*, rather points to an early date of this temple (cf. Viennot 1964: 2, Banerjee 1963: 42). Also the fact that the image of Nṛvarāha has only two arms points to the period before the beginning of the sixth century (cf. Gail 1977: 148).

niche, the pilasters of which are adorned with similar scenes. All scenes on the medallions of pillar No. 2 (Vats 1952: 29) take place in a grove or under a tree, which points to the realm of ascetics. On one of the sides we see the same two bearded ascetics as on the Naranārāyaṇa niche and it seems probable that this pillar belongs there. The round pillars possibly stood before the entrance, so that more sun could get into the shrine.

The text says that "in the fourth door (of the *maṇḍapa*) there should be a *devagarbhagr̥ha*". If we assume that *devagarbhagr̥ha* is a term for a niche, the niches of the Deogarh temple exactly correspond to the description of the VDh. Note that the niches of the Deogarh temple are made in the form of doors, adorned with door-posts and lintels.

The only discrepancy between the text and the remains of the Deogarh temple is the total absence of any traces of the "junction" temples. However, as Joanna Williams remarked (1982: 131, fn.96 and p.136), "there are several round columns in the godown, as well as enough other fragments to suggest the existence of a second sixth-century shrine". There are thus reasons to believe that more small temples stood on the platform. The previous existence of the "junction" shrines may account for the fact that the temple walls at the corners are plain, without any decoration.

212

### 6.8. The main temple. The superstructure.

Sarvatobhadra. The author of the VDh reports that the superstructure of the main shrine and of the *maṇḍapas* has the form of a *śikhara*. This is the term for a specific curvilinear spire, ending with a round cogged ring stone, the *āmalaka*, and a pinnacle. The *śikharas* are richly adorned with *kuharas*, "round niches in which an image is carved" (Kramrisch 1946: 416 fn.7), and with *gavākṣas*, "attic windows forming a tracery which is cast like a net (*jāla*) over them" (Kramrisch ib.: 214). The *śikhara* of the temple is described as follows:

- 87.12cd *prāsādasyāsya śikharā bhavanty evaṃ navaiva tu*  
 87.13 *ucchritam navamam śṛṅgam tulyam syāc chikharāṣṭakam*  
*madhyamam śikharam tatra kāryam śikharavarjitam*  
 87.14 *rūpakair vividhair yuktaṃ na muṇḍam na ca sūlavat*  
*aṣṭau tu śikharās tatra kartavyāḥ kuharānvitāḥ*  
 87.15 *jālāgavākṣakopetaiḥ kuharaiḥ nṛpa bhūṣitāḥ*  
*sarvatra śikharāḥ karyāḥ subhāmalakasārakāḥ*  
 87.16 *sacakraḥ sapatākās ca sadhvajās ca narādhipa*  
*khe'bhīṣakta<sup>16</sup> ivābhāti prāsādo 'yam samucchritāḥ*

<sup>16</sup> Both Kramrisch (1946: 419) and Priyabala Shah (1961: 206) translate 'crowned in the sky', i.e. as if the text had *khe'abhiṣiktaḥ*. The attested *khe'bhīṣaktaḥ* must mean something like 'clinging to the sky, directed to the sky'.

"This temple has nine *śikharas*. The ninth pinnacle should be high, the eight [others] should be alike. The middle *śikhara* should be made without [further] *śikharas*. It should be decorated with various images and be not [blunt like a] bald head and not [sharp] like a spear. The eight *śikharas* should be made with *kuharas*. O king, the *śikharas* on all sides should be adorned with *kuharas* furnished with *jālagavākṣakas*, and with beautiful *āmalakas*, with wheels, flags and banners. This temple rising high looks like reaching for the sky".

Deogarh. "Of the early *śikhara* type the only lithic example extant in Northern India is the Gupta temple at Deogarh... In essence, the Gupta temple appears to have been a straight-edged pyramid built in recessing tiers, the large projection in the centre of each side, which accomodates a broad but deeply recessed niche enclosed by pilasters, being carried up the spire on which the principal decorative element is the *chaitya*-window [= *gavākṣa*, AL] motif still extant on the east for a part of its heights" (Vats 1952: 4).

As a matter of course, the superstructure of the porticoes cannot be verified, but as many segments of copings and many *āmalakas* have been preserved (cf. for instance the photograph in Vats 1952: pl. XXVIId), it is possible that the *maṇḍapas* were adorned with *śikharas*.

213

## 6.9. The courtyard.

Sarvatobhadra.

87.40 *evamvidhe 'tra prāsāde vistūrṇam ajiraṃ bhavet*  
*toyair akṛtrimair divyais subandhair upasobhitam*  
 41 *dvārapālās catasras tu tataḥ kāryā vijānatā*  
*prāsādo dvārasālākhyas samarūpo manoharah*  
 42 *śreṇigatās ca prakāre kāryā garbhaguhāḥ śubhāḥ*  
*prādurbhāvān nyaset teṣu viṣṇor amitatejasaḥ*  
 43ab *atha vā pārhivaśreṣṭha sarvān devagaṇān kramāt*

"In such a temple the courtyard should be extensive and adorned with natural and celestial waters properly banked. A wise man should make there four doorkeepers and a beautiful temple with the common form of the Dvārasāla type. In the rampart the beautiful *garbhaguhas* (caves with shrines) should be made in a row. One should put there manifestations of Viṣṇu of infinite glory or all groups of gods in the proper order, o the best of kings".

Deogarh. As follows from a footnote in Vats' book (1952: 7, fn.1), there was a "smaller Gupta temple 56' north of the main temple of which only a few courses of the basement have been revealed by excavation". Meister, Dhaky and Krishna Deva (1988: 50) mention remnants of even two coeval shrines in the neighborhood of the temple.

7. The correspondences between the form and proportions of the Sarvatobhadra temple and of the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh are so evident that they cannot be due to chance. Theoretically, it is conceivable that the Deogarh temple could have been built in accordance with the prescriptions of the VDh, but, since the temple was built in the early sixth century and the VDh was written in the late seventh or even eighth century, it is clear that the Sarvatobhadra temple of the VDh is a description of the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh. The fact that the VDh described the Deogarh temple as the most beautiful and auspicious temple bears witness to the prestige of this temple even two centuries after it was completed.

8. As a kind of appendix, I would like to discuss some other temples with porticoes included by the VDh in its classification of the hundred varieties of temples. These temples constitute a separate group (the eighth group of temples, according to the analysis of Stella Kramrisch 1946: 416f.) and are dealt with in 86.103ff. I shall limit myself to the first seven temples of this group.

86.103cd *pañcabhiḥ śikharair juṣṭas caturbhiḥ api maṇḍapaiḥ*

214

104 *dvārais caturbhiḥ saṃyuktaḥ kailāsaḥ parikīrtitaḥ  
trimekhalas triśṅgās ca trikūṭo nāma vīsrutaḥ*

105 *śṅgenaikena saṃyuktaś caturbhir api maṇḍapaiḥ  
caturdvāraḥ smṛtas saumyaḥ prāsādaḥ sumanoharaḥ*

"[A temple] provided with five śikharas, four porticoes, and four doors is known as Kailāsa. [A temple] with three girdles and three pinnacles (śṅga) is called Trikūṭa. A beautiful temple with one pinnacle, four porticoes, and four doors is known as Saumya".

106 *prākāre jānudaghnāḍhyā yasyaikā jagatī bhavet  
prāsādatryamīsatulyā tu tryamīsatulyā tathā kaṭiḥ*

107 *śikharāḥ kuharopeto nānārūpakabhūṣitaḥ  
ekamaṇḍapasamyuktas tāḍṛśaiḥ suramandiraiḥ*

108 *svalpair vidikṣu saṃyuktaś caturbhir tu vimaṇḍapaiḥ<sup>17</sup>  
sopānamūle saṃyukto dvābhyām eva narādhipa*

109ab *prāsādo rājarājākhyo mukhyo 'yam parikīrtitaḥ*

"The eminent temple of the name Rājarāja has one vast platform, reaching up to the knee in [its] enclosure and equal to one third of the temple, a kaṭi also equal to one third [of the temple], and a śikhara with niches (kuhara) and adorned with various images. [This temple] is provided with one portico, four small temples of the same type at the intermediate directions without porticoes, and with two [temples] at the bottom of the staircase".

<sup>17</sup> This reading is found in manuscripts A and B. Priyabala Shah has opted for *caturbhir bhuvī maṇḍapaiḥ* (ms. C and the edition of the Veṅkatesvara Press), which does not make sense.

This description perfectly suits the Varāha temple at Deogarh (cf. Banerjee 1963), with the only exception of the intermediate temples which have disappeared.

- 109cd *prāsāde rājarājākhye catvāro yadi maṇḍapāḥ*  
 110 *sarve śikharahīnāḥ syus tasya sopānamūlagāḥ*  
*aṣṭau devagrāhāṇi syuḥ sa bhaved dharanīdharāḥ*  
 111 *maṇḍapāiḥ śikharopetair vimānākhyāḥ sa vai bhavet*  
*vidikṣu yatra prāsādās catvāro maṇḍapāntare*  
 112 *maṇḍapās śikharopetā madhyamañjarīsamyuktāḥ*  
*navabhiḥ śikharair eṣa prāsadaḥ surarāḍ bhavet*

"If the temple of the Rājarāja-type has four porticoes without *śikharas*, then it should have eight temples at the bottom of the staircases. [The name of] this temple is Dharanīdhara. If the porticoes do have *śikharas*, then the temple is [called] Vimāna. If the four intermediate temples are placed in between the porticoes provided with *śikharas* and *mañjarī* in the middle, then this temple with nine *śikharas* is called Surarāṭ".

215

This classification is very instructive because it shows the connection between the number of staircases and the number of porticoes. Temples with one staircase have one portico, whereas temples with four staircases have four porticoes. This is one more indication that the temple at Deogarh had four porticoes. It further follows that the Sarvatobhadra temple belongs to the Surarāṭ-type, but, in addition to the shrines mentioned for this type, it has four shrines in the corners of the platform.

9. In conclusion, let me cite two authors, who wrote about the same temple, as we now know. First, the words of the author of the VDh, who was so struck by the beauty of the magnificent Sarvatobhadra temple that he devoted a whole chapter to its description and wrote at the end: "This abode of Viṣṇu... must be seen because the man who has seen it is released from all sins and attains merit" (87.63). Compare this to the words of Percy Brown, who concluded the discussion of the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh in his "Indian Architecture" as follows (1976: 50): "When complete, this building was unquestionably one of rare merit in the correct ordering of its parts, all alike serving the purpose of practical utility, yet imbued with supreme artistic feeling. Few monuments can show such a high level of workmanship, combined with a ripeness and rich refinement in its sculptural effect as the Gupta temple at Deogarh".<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> I would like to thank Dr. K. van Kooij (University of Utrecht) and Dr. Ellen Raven (University of Leiden) for a number of valuable suggestions.

## GLOSSARY

218

<i>āmalaka</i>	a cogged massive ring-stone, put at the top of the <i>śikhara</i>
<i>kaṭi</i>	(lit. 'a hip') an outer wall of the temple
<i>kuhara</i>	a cave, niche
<i>garbha(ḡṛha)</i>	a cella, shrine
<i>gavākṣa(ka)</i>	(lit. 'a bull's eye') a blind window
<i>jagatī</i>	(lit. 'the earth, ground') a platform, plinth, socle
<i>jāla</i>	a net
<i>devagarbhagr̥ha</i>	a niche with an image of a deity (= <i>devakoṣṭha</i> ) (?)
<i>bhitti</i>	an inner wall, a wall of a shrine
<i>mañjarī</i>	(lit. 'a cluster of blossoms') a type of superstructure
<i>maṇḍapa</i>	'a pavilion', is used in the texts of the Gupta age in the sense of 'a portico, an entrance hall'
<i>vasudhā</i>	= <i>jagatī</i>
<i>śikhara</i>	'a spire, tower', the name of a curvilinear superstructure
<i>śṅga</i>	(lit. 'a horn') a pinnacle, turret on the top of the temple

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

221

- Banerjee, N.R., 1963: New Light on the Gupta Temples at Deogarh. *Journal of the Asiatic Society (Calcutta)* V (1/2), 37-49.
- Brown, Percy, 1976: *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*. Bombay (7th ed.).
- Cunningham, Alexander, 1880: *Report of Tours in Bundelkhand and Malwa in 1874-75 and 1876-77*. *Archaeological Survey of India, Volume X*. Calcutta.
- Gail, A.J., 1977: Viṣṇu als Eber in Mythos und Bild. *Beiträge zur Indieforschung (Fs. E. Waldschmidt)*. Berlin, 127-168.
- Kern, H., ed., 1865: *The Bṛhat-Saṃhitā of Varāhamihira*. Calcutta.
- Kramrisch, Stella, 1928: *The Viṣṇudharmottara (Part III). A Treatise on Indian Painting and Image-Making*. Calcutta (second edition).
- Kramrisch, Stella, 1946: *The Hindu Temple*. Calcutta.
- Meister M.W., M.A. Dhaky, Krishna Deva, 1988: *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture. North India: Foundations of North Indian Style c. 250 B.C. - A.D. 1100*. Delhi.
- Pal, P., 1981: An Adorsed Śaiva Image from Kashmir and Its Cultural Significance. *Art International* XXIV.5-6 (January-February 1981), 6-60.
- Shah, Priyabala, ed., 1958: *Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa, third khaṇḍa* (vol.1: text, critical notes etc.), Gackwad's Oriental Series, no. 130. Baroda.
- , 1961: *Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa, third khaṇḍa* (vol. 2: introduction, appendixes, indexes etc., a study on a Sanskrit text of ancient Indian arts), Gackwad's Oriental Series, no. 137, Baroda.

- Vats, M.S., 1952: *The Gupta Temple at Deogarh*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No.70. Delhi.
- Viennot, O., 1964: *Les divinités fluviales Gāṅgā et Yamunā aux portes des sanctuaires de l'Inde. Essai d'évolution d'un thème décoratif*. Paris.
- , 1976: *Temples de l'Inde centrale et occidentale. Étude stylistique et essai de chronologie relative du VI<sup>e</sup> au milieu du X<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Mémoires Archéologiques, XI. Paris.
- Williams, Joanna Gottfried 1982: *The Art of Gupta India, Empire and Province*. Princeton.

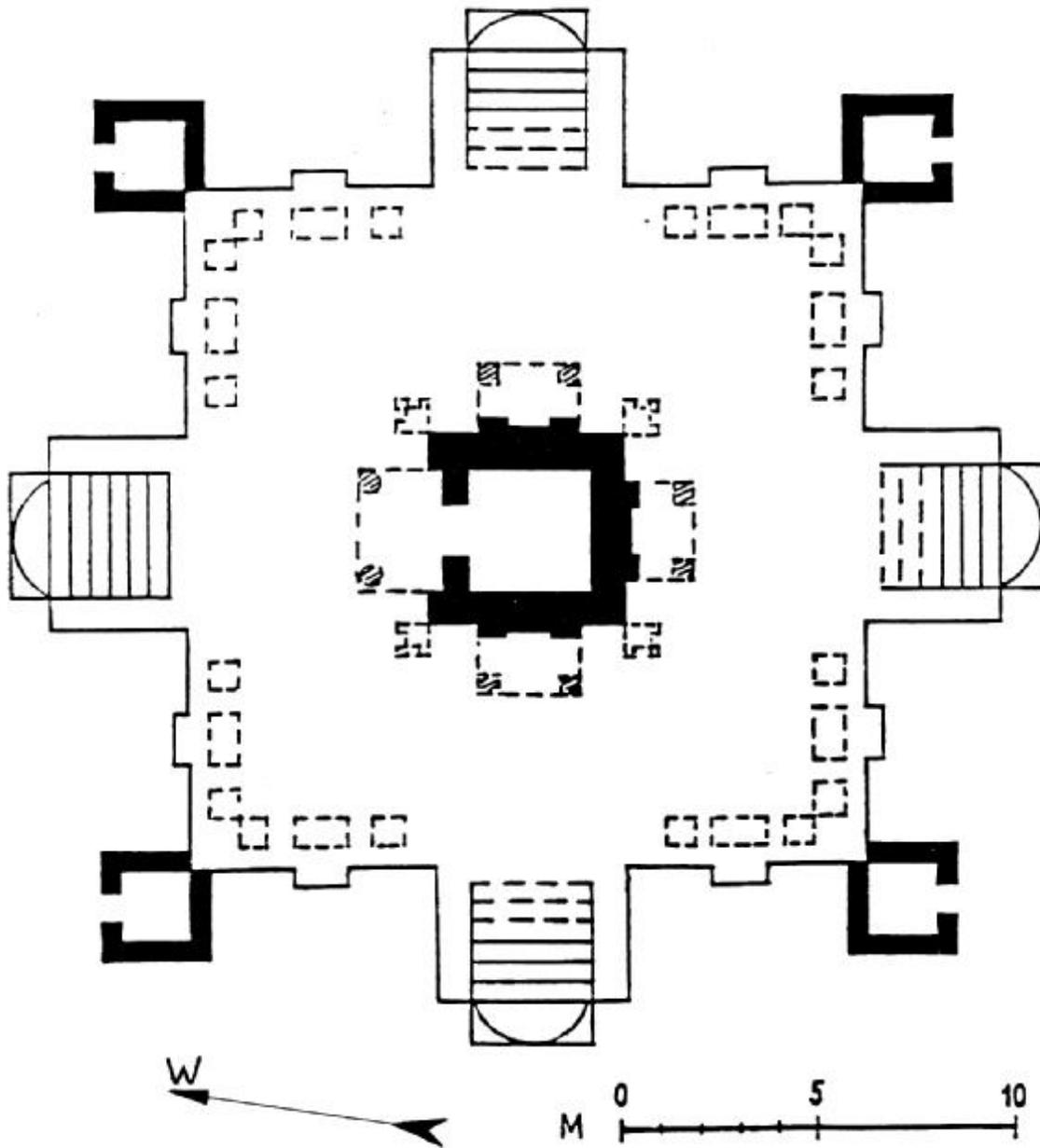


Fig. 1. The ground plan of the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh (drawing made by Mrs. T. Wezel-Ignatova). The reconstructed parts are indicated by dotted lines.

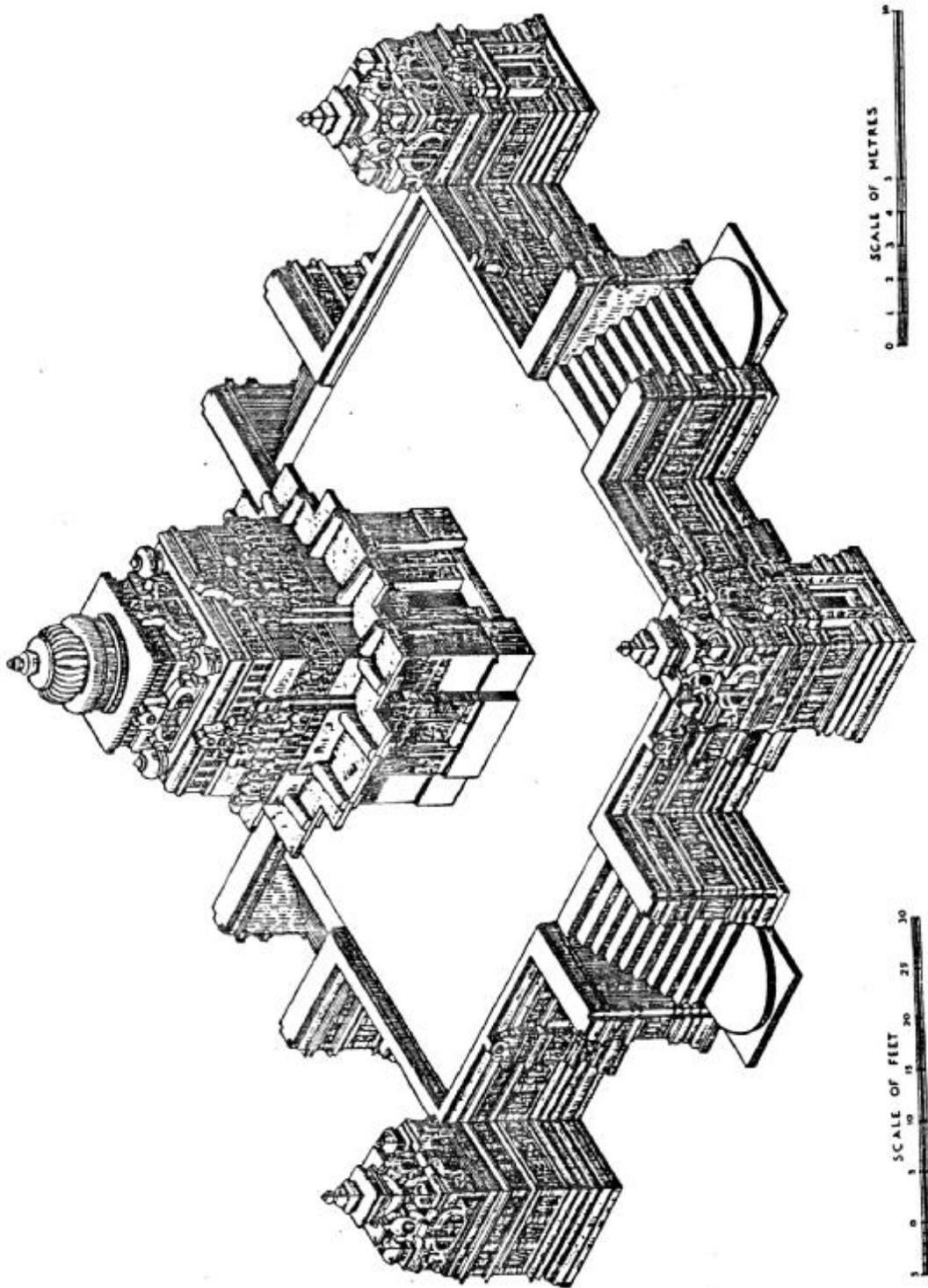


Fig. 2. The isomorphic reconstruction by Vats (1952: pl. V).