

Temple Cultures and Traditions of India

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

September 30, 2022

Location:

India

Subject Fields:

Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Intellectual History, Literature, Religious Studies and Theology, South Asian History / Studies

Braj Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan (A Research Academy for History, Archaeology, Art, Literature and Folk Culture of Braj)

Mandir Shri Dham Goda Vihar Premises, Vrindavan, Mathura-281121

Invites

Abstracts for Three Day National Conference: ***Temple Cultures and Traditions of India***

25th to 27th November 2022

Call For Papers: Braj Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, Vrindavan, invites proposals for an interdisciplinary conference.

The papers and subsequent presentations should connect broadly with our aim to understand the temple culture and traditions of India from multiple standpoints. Please send in your Abstracts of about 500 words by **30th of September, 2022** to Bssseminar@gmail.com. The selected participants would be informed by the 15th of October, 2022 and will be required to submit their full papers by the 15th of November, 2022. The conference is scheduled to be held on **25th, 26th and 27th of November 2022**. The institute will also organise a Heritage Walk on the Historical temples of Vrindavan (detailed schedule of the conference to be released later).

Format □ The language of the Abstract and respective papers can be either Hindi or English. □ They should be typed in Times New Roman font in case of English and Kruti Dev 10 font for Hindi and must be thoroughly proofread. □ The Abstracts must include the Name of the Scholars and their professional affiliation.

Concept Note

Temples have been an inextricable part of Indian society; within the diversity of the cultures, they have often served the society in multiple faceted ways. In the textual traditions, temples have been perceived as Purush and Prakriti, both immutably depicting the cosmos. The connection with the divine, whether as an individual, group or community, is as personal as it is shared. Temples

encapsulate this spirit by acting as sites of sacred space where the revered is the supreme and the devotee a participant in its grandeur. Historically temples have always had a central role to play in the normal functioning of society. Within the several hierarchies of temples being dedicated from Gram devta, Kul devta, Tirtha sthal to Dham, temples have served as public spaces with a binding factor. Therefore, it also gives rise to the material and non-material cultures around themselves.

The Indian Temple has been hailed as a 'Monument of Manifestation' by the eminent art historian Stella Kramrisch. This statement has not even a modicum of fiction in it. Hinduism certainly has a hoary history, and its antiquity could be traced back at least to the Rig Vedic Period. Yajña or the institution of sacrifice, was the core of the Vedic Religion. The Yajur Veda and the Brāhmaṇa texts contain mantras or sacrificial formulae and elaborate injunctions pertaining to the performance of Yajñas. These Vedic Yajñas would be conducted in specially constructed Vedic altars known as chitis. The construction of these chitis was an architectural science, and in their simplest forms, the chitis were a pile of bricks. As time advanced, there was marked shift from Yajñas to worship images in specially built enclosures or temples. However, despite the Yajña rituals gradually waning into the background, the structures of temples owe their origins to the Vedic chitis. The act of temple construction was considered equivalent to a Yajña and was to be initiated in strict confirmation of the prescribed set of rituals. The emergence and dissemination of Bhakti and the ever-growing prominence of sects like Bhāgavata and Śaiva added to the functional and spiritual relevance of temples. The Dharmaśāstra texts incorporated the building of temples in the category of Pūrta Dharmas, and a person belonging to any varṇa could undertake the tasks which were included in the Pūrta Dharma.

The Epics and Purāṇas comprise many references to temples, and those like the Agni and Matsya Purāṇas provide detailed instructions about the creation of temples and consecration of images in them. Moreover, texts specially dedicated to the science of temple building were written and widely used by the sthapatis. Speaking from an archaeological perspective, the history of temples goes back to the Mauryan Period. We find a depiction of small shrines in the reliefs from the Buddhist Stupa sites of Bharhut and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh and Mathurā. Epigraphical evidences from the Śuṅga Period onward also provide testimony to the construction of shrines which archaeological evidences have to a great extent corroborated. The structures of temples became more elaborate and codified from the Gupta Period onward. Apart from the Guptas, dynasties like the Vākāṭakas in central India and the Badami Cālukyas and Pallavas in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu respectively pioneered the creation of temples- both rock-cut and structural. During the Gupta period we find a systematic categorization of temples based on their shapes and dimensions. Around the same time, temple architecture manifested itself in three principal idioms- Nāgara, Draviḍa, and Vesara. Apart from these three major architectural styles, several regional styles of temple building originated and matured in various parts of India. From simple shrine like structures, temples now assumed colossal forms equipped with a garbhagrha (sanctum sanctorum), a line of maṇḍapas or halls, massive śikharas, and shrines of parivāra devatas.

By the early medieval period, individual temples metamorphosed into temple complexes, and these temple complexes grew into the cultural hubs of contemporary society. It was mainly through the institution of temples that performing arts like music and dance, fine arts like sculpture and paintings, and culinary traditions of bhoga were inextricably connected. Temples no longer remained purely religious establishments- they took on multi-dimensional roles as educational, economic,

social, and political epicentres shaping the aesthetic expression of the then societies. Many dynasties, merchants, and common people contributed munificently towards the construction of temples. Hinduism came to be almost completely identified with temples, and art historian George Michell has opined that the Hinduism that developed around the start of the 1st millennium CE is, to a great extent, 'Temple Hinduism'. This statement aptly summarizes the vital position of temples in the gamut of Hinduism. The temples of India not merely evoke a profound veneration towards a deity through various ritual enactments and festivals but also have been subjected to a magnificent oeuvre of cultures when devotees throng its premises from parts of the country. They facilitate intercultural dialogue and circulate the idea of multiplicity of cultures with deeply rooted human values of shared experiences, respect, and togetherness.

The conference therefore, aims to bring together researchers from all disciplines to deliberate upon the philosophical, religious, social, economic, technical, artistic, ethnographic, traditional, landscape, material, and non-material aspects of temples.

Broad Themes of the conference: The topics may include, but are not restricted to: □ Art and Architecture of the temples

- Temples as centres of learning: Textual Traditions of the temples
- Economic and political patronage of the temples
- Temple Pilgrimage, Ecology and the Environment
- Urbanism and the Temples
- Temples as Economic spaces
- Temple Food culture: Bhoga & Śṛṅgāra Paramparā
- Rāga Paramparā : Musical traditions associated with the temples
- Folklore and Oral narratives shaping the temple cultures
- Conservation and Preservation of the temples
- Mobility of the temples
- Social justice: Caste, Untouchability, and access to temples
- House temples and the idea of service
- Temple without deities
- Sampradāyas and the temples
- Temple Festivals and feasts

□ Temples and the colonial state

□ Performative temple arts

A nominal amount of Rs. 800/- can be paid online or on arrival. The institute will provide accommodation and food facilities; however, the travel expenses will solely be the responsibility of the participants. Selected Scholars will have to get themselves registered through Emails.

Please feel free to contact conference organizers for any queries on the above-given Email Id

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