

The Śiva-mandira at Anwā, Maharashtra

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Anwā is located off the Aurangabad-Ajanta Highway¹ in Maharashtra. There is a small temple there, referred to as 'Śiva-mandira'. At present, the sanctum contains a Śiva-liṅga. The temple has been dated to 12th century on the basis of style (Fig.1).

There is no doubt that originally the temple was dedicated to the supreme goddess of Vaiṣṇava sect. The floor plan and photographs of the different parts of the temple are presented here in support of the statement. It is a temple that should be on the tourists' itinerary for its beautiful design and sculptures and the scholars' itinerary for the unique iconography.



Fig. 1 : View from south-east, Anwā

James Fergusson commented in the 19th century,² “few temples have a dome more pleasing than the little temple at Anwā; the thirty small columns that support the roof externally are so well proportioned and so artistically arranged as to leave little to be desired.”

Dr. G. B. Deglurkar has already pointed out in his article³ that, beyond doubt, this temple originally belonged to the Vaiṣṇava sect and was most probably dedicated to a Vaiṣṇava goddess, judging from the Vyūhāntara Śaktis portrayed on the jaṅghā rather than Vyūhāntara-mūrtis of Viṣṇu.

The temple stands on a four feet tall platform. The plan of the east facing temple is stellate. Its maṇḍapa is encircled by dwarf walls carrying half pillars. Although the platform has three sets of steps (east, south and north), there is only one entrance leading to the maṇḍapa through the east mukhamaṇḍapa. The steps leading to it are flanked by large dvārapālas. The layers on the dwarf wall of the

maṇḍapa show a gajathara, which also has lions and mythological gaja-simhas.

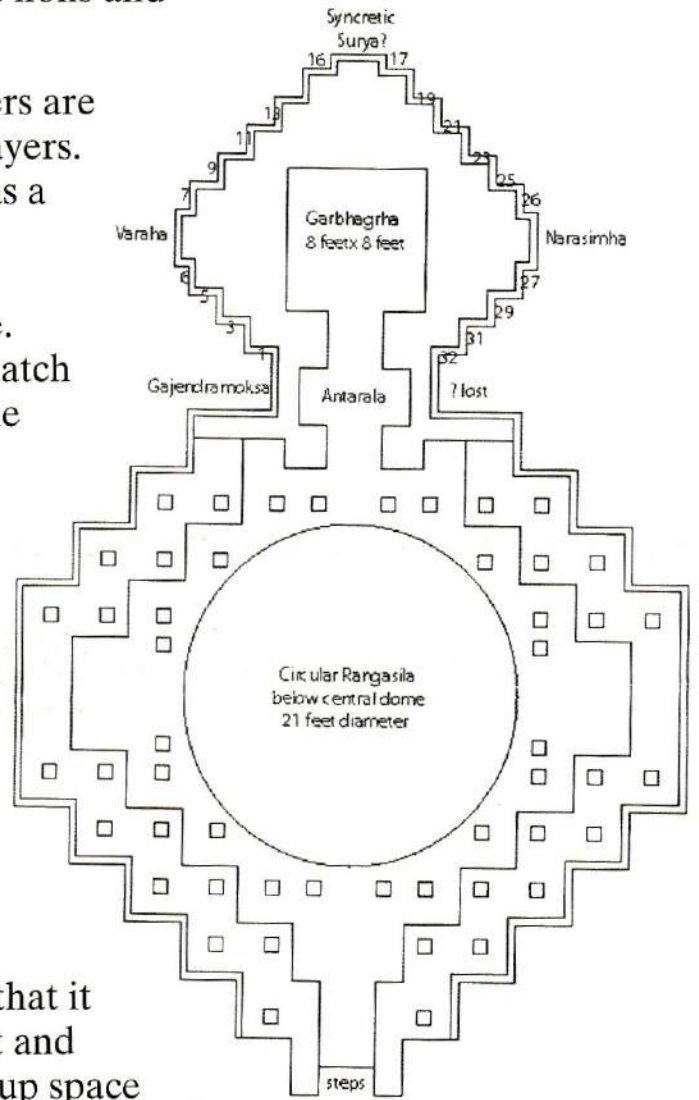
On the maṇḍovara, the vertical layers are much more ornate than the horizontal layers. Each image of the Śakti on the jaṅghā has a small image of a seated goddess at the lowest level and a small standing Vyūhāntara-mūrti Viṣṇu on a panel above. Most of the Vyūhāntara-mūrtis seem to match the stance and āyudhas of the Śakti on the jaṅghā.

The south and the north bhadras have Varāha and Nṛsimha images, respectively. The main west bhadra has an image in samabhaṅga pose. Identification is not possible as the arms are broken, but it could be Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa.⁴ The southern antarāla has Gajendramokṣa episode, there is no image left in the corresponding niche on the north.

The plan of the garbhagrha is such that it allows ten images each in the south-west and north-west quadrants. The antarāla uses up space of four images each on the south-east and north-east quadrants of the garbhagrha, thus the total number of images on the garbhagrha jaṅghā is $10 + 10 + 6 + 6 = 32$. The aṣṭa-dikpālas are placed on the karṇas, leaving 24 images. Given that the temple is of Vaiṣṇava faith, a plan with twenty-four images immediately brings to mind the twenty-four Vyūhāntara forms of Viṣṇu. Instead, the twenty-four Śaktis corresponding to the Vyūhāntara forms of Viṣṇu are portrayed on the jaṅghā, a unique feature of this temple. According to Dr. Deglurkar, it indicates that the temple was originally dedicated to Lakṣmī. This is further substantiated by the presence of dvārapālikās on the dvāraśākhā of the sanctum door.⁵

Stella Kramrisch calls the Hindu temple 'a monument of manifestation.'¹⁶ According to her, the 'essence' dwells in the garbhagrha, but its manifestation come through the walls in the four directions as images on individual buttresses; these are the main aspects of the divinity in the temple.

Adam Hardy considers that architecture should be understood as only the



The Floor Plan of the Temple

language or medium of communication,⁷ which is used to convey the concepts with ingenuity.

The plan of any temple and its iconography are the domains of the preceptor priest, while its execution is the responsibility of the master architect. Each temple thus reflects the religious concepts of the preceptor priest blended with his creativity to yield the master plan. Every image, every pillar, every little decorative detail is where it is supposed to be as visualized by him in his mind's eye. It is for us to observe the details and thereby try to understand the concepts that were sought to be conveyed.

It is obvious from the numbers (24) that the plan of the temple at Anwā was specifically designed with this iconography in mind.⁸ Assuming that the temple was built by the Yādavas, a passage in the Sāttvata Saṁhitā may be relevant. Upāsanā for the three castes other than Brāhmaṇas, does not involve mantra. They, 'who have sincerely taken refuge with the lord', should perform the several rites connected with the worship of the four Vyūhas.

It is essential here to refer to the concept of Lakṣmī as well as the four Vyūhas as described in the philosophy of the Pāñcarātras.⁹ In the eighth part of the Pauruṣī Rātri, the great Śakti of Viṣṇu, so far indistinguishable from the Absolute, flashes up in her dual aspect of kriyā (acting) and bhūti (becoming), that is Force and Matter. The doctrine emphasizes that Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu are distinct but not separable. The dualism is a method for preserving the transcendent character of Viṣṇu. Lakṣmī alone acts, though everything she does is the mere expression of the Lord's wishes. The transcendent aspect of Viṣṇu (Param Brahma) remains so completely in the background in the Pāñcarātra that we are practically only concerned with the one force (Lakṣmī) which, as Bhūti, appears as the universe, and as Kriyā, vitalizes and governs it.¹⁰ The first four Vyūhas are Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The śaktis of these four are portrayed in the four quadrants at Anwā – Vāsudeva's (at 4, SE quadrant), Saṅkarṣaṇa's (at 24, NW quadrant), Pradyumna's (at 27, NE quadrant) and Aniruddha's (at 14, SW quadrant).

It is imperative that Śaktis be understood in this context and not as 'consorts' of the caturviṁśati-mūrtayaḥ. The 24 forms of Viṣṇu themselves represent the different guṇas of Viṣṇu or Para Vāsudeva. Similarly, the 24 śaktis represent different aspects of Lakṣmī, the great śakti of Viṣṇu.

A preceptor priest, well versed in the Pāñcarātra doctrine, could very well choose to dedicate a temple to Lakṣmī as the first manifestation of the Lord. The whole character of the temple is in keeping with the deity. It is beautifully ornate. The portrayal of 24 śaktis is an ingenious device of the preceptor to put Lakṣmī in the proper perspective.¹¹

A table of identifiable only nineteen śaktis out of twenty-four in the order in which they appear on the jaṅghā, the corresponding Vyūhāntara forms of Viṣṇu and their attributes is given below.¹² The attributes – Śaṅkha, Cakra, Gadā, Padma (denoted by s, c, g, p) – are listed in the order : lower right hand (LR), upper right (UR), upper left (UL) and lower left (LL) hand. A few of the panels of śaktis have lost the attributes and cannot be identified with certainty.

Quadrant	Panel Number	Śakti	Vyūhāntara Viṣṇu	Order of Attributes				
				LR	UR	UL	LL	
	Antarāla		Gajendramokṣa					
(Fig.2)	1 Dikpāla		x					
	2 Dikpāla		Indra					
	3	x	x					x
	4	Lakṣmī	Vāsudeva	g	s	c	p	g1
	5	Kirti	Keśava	p	s	c	g	p1
	6	Dayā	Acyuta	g	p	c	s	g2
	S Bhadra		Varāha					
(Fig.3)	7	Śraddhā	Padmanābha	s	p	c	g	s1
	8	Kriyā	Trivikrama	p	g	c	s	p2
	9	Umā	Janārdana	p	c	s	g	p3
	10	Lakṣmī	Vāsudeva	g	s	c	p	duplicate
(Fig.4)	11 Dikpāla		Yama					
	12 Dikpāla		Niruti					
(Fig.4)	13	Lajjā	Dāmodara	p	s	g	c	p4
	14	Rati	Aniruddha	c	g	s	p	c1
(Fig.7)	15	Tuṣṭi	Mādhava	g	c	s	p	g3
	16	Puṣṭi	Govinda	c	g	p	s	c2
	W Bhadra		Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa?					
(Fig.5)	17	Harṣā	Hṛṣikeśa	g	c	p	s	g4
	18	Medhā	Śrīdhara	p	c	g	s	p5
	19	Vidyutā	Narasimha	c	p	g	s	c3
	20	x	x					x
(Fig.6)	21 Dikpāla		Varuṇa					
	22 Dikpāla		Vāyū					
(Fig.6)	23	Śānti	Madhusūdana	c	s	p	g	c4
	24	Sarasvatī	Saṅkarṣaṇa	g	s	p	c	g5
	25	Śuddhi	Hari	s	c	p	g	s2
	26	Vasudhā	Puruṣottama	c	p	s	g	c5
	N Bhadra		Narasimha					
(Fig.6)	27	Prīti	Pradyumna	c	s	g	p	c6
	28	Dhṛti	Viṣṇu	g	p	s	c	g6
	29	x	x					x
	30	x	x					x
	31 Dikpāla	x	x					x
	32 Dikpāla	x	x					x
	Antarāla		x					



Fig. 2 : South-east quadrant



Fig. 3 : South-east quadrant



Fig. 4 : South-west quadrant



Fig. 5 : North-west quadrant



Fig. 6 : North-west quadrant

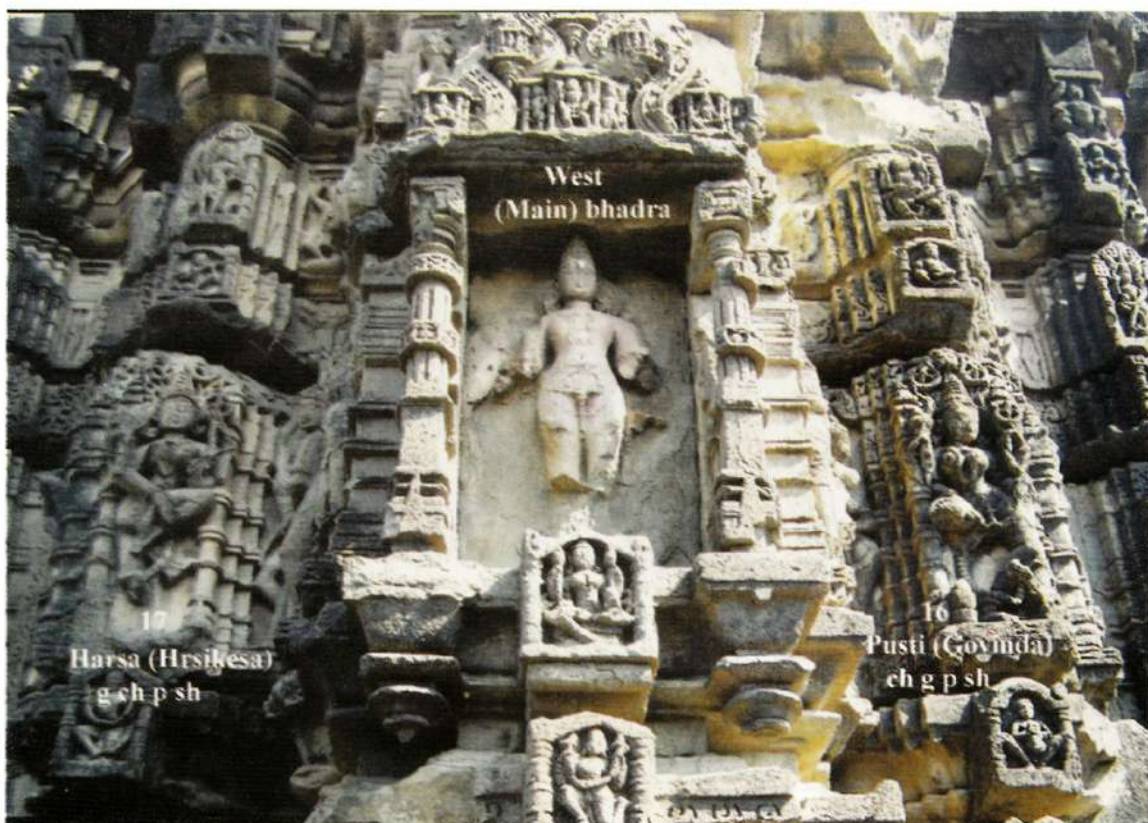


Fig. 7 : Main Bhadra, west

The temple is very ornate on the inside too. The circular arrangement of pillars is very aesthetically pleasing and the fact that after more than eight centuries, the dome is intact, testifies to its judicious design strength. The ornate antarāla ceiling is beautiful.

The pillars are decorated with Vaiṣṇava motifs like Garuḍa and different avatāras of Viṣṇu, including Buddha. The story of R̥ṣabhadeva occurs in the fifth skandha of Śrīmad-Bhāgavata. This may explain images of Buddha and Jina on the pillars (Fig.8).

There is only incidental depiction of Śiva. Some examples are a small panel showing liṅga-worship, on the lintel where the central image of Viṣṇu is flanked by Śiva and Pārvatī along with Brahmā and Sāvitrī, a small image of Bhairava above the main bhadra.

In conclusion, the temple at Anwā is definitely a Vaiṣṇava temple, originally dedicated to Lakṣmī as the great Śakti of Viṣṇu. Its iconography succeeds in conveying the reverence felt for the deity. At the same time, its plan and iconography are testimony to a great preceptor.



Fig. 8 : Garuḍa and Jina

References

1. On the Aurangabad-Ajanta (State Highway 8), past Golegaon (about 82 km from Aurangabad) right turn (to east); Anwā is 10 km from highway.
2. James Fergusson, History of Indian and Eastern Architecture, Vol.II, reprint 1998.
3. Dr. G.B. Deglurkar, 'Anwā Yethīla Śiva-mandira – Eka Punarvicāra,' Vidarbha Saṁśodhana Maṇḍala Vārṣika, 1973, pp.147-151.
4. In the Pāñcarātra text, 12 of the Vyūhāntara-mūrtis are considered tutelary heads (adhidevatas) of the 12 months and 12 suns.
5. Dr. Deglurkar mentions in his article cited above that the village has a small temple of Lakṣmī, which he believes could have been built around the image displaced from its rightful place in the distant past.
6. Stella Kramrisch, The Hindu Temple, Part I, p.165, reprint 2007.
7. Adam Hardy, The Temple Architecture of India, p.31, Chichester, Wiley, 2007.
8. The west facing Ambarnātha temple, with a similar stellate plan, has only 30 images, since the antarāla there cuts off five images from the south-west and north-west quadrants each, of the garbhagrha, so the total number of images is $10 + 10 + 5 + 5 = 30$.
9. F. Otto Schraeder, Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā, pp.34-50, Adyar, Madras S, 1916; (available on the internet – <http://www.archive.org/stream/introtothepancar00shcruoft#page/n0/mode/2up>).
10. Lakṣmī as a philosophical principle is not part of all saṁhitās. Soul and body are two aspects of Bhūti Śakti, an emanation of Lakṣmī; yet from earliest times, Indian philosophy seeks a closer relation of soul with God than of matter with God – hence the concept that soul and body are equally close to Lakṣmī was not favoured.
11. In this sense, Lakṣmī here represents a concept totally different from the Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu.
12. T.A.G. Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol.I, Part I, pp.229,233, reprint 1997. Rao has listed only 14 names of śaktis quoting from the first chapter of the third Rātri of the Nārada-Pāñcarātrāgama; Pratapaditya Pal, Vaishnava Iconography in Nepal, 1985 lists more (The number is fifty-one, which includes 16 Svāra-śaktis and 35 Vyañjana-śaktis – Ibid., Appendix, pp.i-vi); Īśānaśivagurudevapaddhati, Vol.I, Sāmānyapāda, dvitīya paṭala, p.11; Viṣṇumūrtiyādhikāra, Viṣṇuśaktyādhikāra lists 50 Viṣṇumūrtis and corresponding 50 Viṣṇu-Śakti mūrtis, 1988, but Upendra and Adhokṣaja are not listed in the latter two sources.