



“One Should Fear Vaastu Less And Love Vaastu More”

- Mr. Ashish Chandrakant Sompura



ARCHITECT'S VOICE

Mr. Ashish Chandrakant Sompura hails from a family that is renowned for temple architecture. The family, since generations has been designing famous temples in



Mr. Ashish Chandrakant Sompura



Project by Ashish Chandrakant Sompura at Rakhiyal, Ahmedabad

India. Born in 1971, Ashish Sompura is an Ahmedabad-based architect. He first completed his diploma in civil engineering in 1992 from B&B Polytechnic, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat and thereafter did his Architecture at the Institute Of Environmental Design, D. C. Patel School of Architecture, Vallabh Vidyanagar in 2007.

He worked under Mr. Ashok Purohit for 8 years and garnered experience from various types of Projects, mainly

multiplexes and shopping malls.

We met Mr Ashish Sompura at his residence in Ahmedabad.

Excerpts from the Interview:-

On his father and great-grandfather

My great grandfather, Prabhashanker Oghadbhai Sompura has written 14 volumes on ship shastra and for this he received the Padma Shri. In 1947, the entire

planning and execution of the gigantic work of reconstruction (from the foundation) of the famous Somnath Temple was entrusted to him by the late Shri Sardar Patel, the first home minister of Independent India who had vowed that he would re-build the Somnath temple.

Mr. Prabhashanker Oghadbhai Sompura has also designed many of the Birla temples.

My father Chandrakantbhai Balwantbhai Sompura has designed the proposed Ram Mandir temple at Ayodhya, the disputed site which is highly controversial. He has also designed the Nij Mandir (main inner temple) of the Ambaji Temple. He is currently performing the renovation of the Baucharaji temple in Gujarat and designing the 51 Shakti Peeths on the periphery of the Gabbar at Ambaji.

While we were being given the brief, Chief Minister Narendra Modiji insisted that these 51 temples should be miniaturized replicas of the original temples scattered across India, so that devotees would have darshan of all the 51 Shakti Peeths as they did the perambulatory round of the Gabbar. We researched the subject for over one and a half years during which we made trips to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal to study the Shakti Peeths there. This was over and above the various Shakti Peeths in India.

You will be surprised to know that I am the first and only person in our family who is a

Projects of Mr. Ashish C. Sompura

Commercial Complex: Commercial Complex At C.g.road, Ahmedabad • Commercial Complex At Rakhial, Ahmedabad • Commercialcomplex At Naranpura, Ahmedabad • Commercialcomplex At Naranpura For Kapadia Corporation, Ahmedabad • Residancial Plots Scheme, Gandhinagar

Residential : eTwin Bungalow And Apartment Tower For M/s. N. Kumar, Nagpur • Akshar Estate At Bopal, Ahmedabad • Bungalow For Shre C. B. Sompura, Ahmedabad • Bungalow For Shree Parakh, Jodhpur • Bungalow For Shree Y. U. Trivedi, Bhuj • Bungalow For Shree Kishore Trivedi, Ahmedabad • Bungalow For Shree Tirath Bhimani, Deesa • Bungalow For Shree Prakashbhai Bhimani, Deesa • Bungalow For Shree Samir Patel At Rayasan, Ahmedabad • Kapadia Corporation Apartmental Building At Naranpura, Ahmedabad

Institutional: Total Site Development Of Krupalu Samdhi Mandir, Malav - Kalol • Total Site Development Of Shri Lakshmi Vallabh Parshanth Trust, Bhinmal - Rajasthan. • University Planning, Hyderabad • M.b.a. And M.c.a. College For Aryodaya Educational Trust, Deesa • Total Site Development Of Kirtiyashsuri Maharajsaheb, Samet Shikharji - Jharkhand. • Shri Laxmi Vallabh Parshwanat Trust, Bhinmal • Meditation Hall, Bhavnagar • Entertainment Park At Udaipur, Udaipur

Corporate Buildings : Chandrika Milk Dairy, Mehshana • Office Of Shreem Developers, Ahmedabad • Office Building Of Steel Company, Himmatnagar

Multiplex : Shree Ram Multiplex, Deesa • Multiplex At Delhi, Delhi



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qualified architect and who is practicing modern architecture. It was my father's wish that I become a qualified modern architect, because, occasionally, there arise situations, especially in government and trust-related paper work that require an architect.

The art and skills of designing and constructing temples have been handed down to us from our ancestors and I very much belong to that mold and apart from my own work as a modern architect, I am fully engaged with my traditional temple architecture assignments at my father's firm. I feel blessed that I am party to both schools – the traditional temple architecture and the modern western architecture.

Temple Architecture

In temple architecture, all the dimensions of the temple are related to the dimensions of the Garbha Griha (inner sanctum) which in turn is related to the size of the idol that will be housed in it. The Hindu temple is the most scaled and proportionate building on earth. Each and every dimension, including the wall thickness is derived from the Garbha Griha.

Experimentation in temple design is not possible. You cannot defy the visual expectation of the devotee when it comes to temple design. Temples must look like temples, otherwise they will not be treated like temples. Even in case of construction materials, the scope of variation is limited to natural materials like stone and wood, though sometimes glass is used in the interiors. Steel, Plastics and ceramics are definitely out.

Does Vaastu affect temple construction?

God, and devotion to God are supreme and temples as homes of God are therefore theoretically above Vaastu. Yet, Vaastu is taken into consideration for selecting the location of temples and the water bodies that will be used by people.

Experience of Vaastu as a modern architect

It is often lamented by modern architects that Vaastu interferes with design. The answer to that is yes; but so does everything else. No design is made in a utopia of no restraints. Today, it is fool hardy to go on an anti-Vaastu spree, for after all, Vaastu is part and parcel of the client's brief. It is because the client insists on the Vaastu consultant's supremacy over the architect, that an architect feels he is cornered into



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submission. However, the truth is that Vaastu is less a matter of architectural discussion/debate and more a matter of purposeful action/implementation.

As far as design is concerned, let me say that given site conditions, you can have 500 different designs without Vaastu and also 500 designs with Vaastu. It is not entirely true that Vaastu is rigid. Vaastu confers on the architect the task of putting into practice what it prescribes. In spite of the constraints by which Vaastu seems to limit the architect, it is also true that Vaastu gives considerable latitude in the architectural parts as also in the appearance that the construction may have. As Vaastu seeks to encompass all possible circumstances, it allows an extended series of specific variations



Birla Temple At Alibag Designed By : C. B. Sompura

THE SOMPURAS

The word *Som* means moon and *Pura* means people who stay in a particular place. Thus, Sompura means people who stayed in the moon. When the original Somnath temple was to be constructed Vishvakarma, the divine architect, brought to earth a select few Sompuras from the moon to build the temple. Once the temple was constructed, the craftsmen requested Vishvakarma to send them back to the moon. However, Vishvakarma told them that they were to stay back and carry on with temple construction.

The Sompuras are a sub-group of the Brahmin community and are mostly to be found in the state of Gujarat where they are concentrated in and around the town of Prabhas Patan. The Sompuras' main profession was and continues to be to build Temples and Derasars (Jain Temples) as per Vaastu Shilp Shastra, the ancient Indian Science of Architecture. They are very well known as Temple Architects worldwide. Their, other main profession was and remains *panda giri* (priestly services) in the temples, particularly in and around Somnath. The community is strictly vegetarian and avoids garlic and lentils.

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wherein it is left to the architect to choose "this or that" option "according to circumstances".

Though it is true that modern technologies have crowded out the architectural logic of many of the Vaastu tenets, there are still several Vaastu rules we must follow. I shall give one example. I strongly recommend that one should not sleep with the head towards the north. Do you know that as per Hindu ritual dead bodies are placed with their head in the north?

Another important Vaastu trait is the insistence on dimensions and proportions. Dimensions, and more than the dimensions themselves, their proportions occupy a very important place in Vaastu.

You cannot cheat fate, yet it is possible that with Vaastu on your side, you will have the gumption to meet adversity. As long as the fear factor goes, I don't think there is malice in Vaastu. If a couple of things are not as per Vaastu, all is not lost. To put it differently, if you were to have 45% happiness and growth, good Vaastu will definitely get you a higher score but it is not as if with poor Vaastu you will not even get 30%.

So, one should fear Vaastu less and love Vaastu more, for by following it good shall come your way. ■



Chandrakantbhai Balwantbhai Sompura (Seated) with his sons.
Ashish (left) and Nikhil (Right)

THE TEMPLE PROJECTS OF C. B. SOMPURA

Indian Projects : Somnath Temple, Prabhas Patan (Gujarat) • Sheshshai Vishnu Mandir, Nagda (M.P.) • Swaminarayan Mandir, Mumbai • Akshar Dham, Ahmedabad (Gujarat) • Sun Temple, J.C. Mills, Gwalior • Ambaji Mata Mandir, Ambaji (Gujarat) • Birla Mandir, Kolkata • Ram Mandir, Ayodhya • Nandprabha Prasad, Palitana • Swaminarayan Mandir, Surat • Ganesh Mandir, Alibaug • Hastagiri Desarasar 72 Jinalay, Palitana (Jalia) • Lotus Temple, Palitana • Sammet Shikharji Tirth, Raska • Koteswar Mahadev Temple, Koteswar • Radha Krishna Temple, Reliance-Mumbai • Lalbaug Jain Sangh, Mumbai • Agassi Jain Tirth, Mumbai • Shri Bahucharaji Mataji Mandir, Bahucharaji • Mukeshbhai Ambani Residence Temple, Mumbai • 51-Shakti Pith Project • Gabbar Parikrama, Ambaji, Gujarat.

Foreign Projects : A.P. Temple, London • Sarva Dharma Temple, Bangkok (Thailand) • North America Hindu Union Temple, Pittsburgh, P.A. (U.S.A.) • Shiv Temple (Singapore) • Yantra Mandir, Fair field (U.S.A.) • Jain Temple, Atlanta (U.S.A.) • Tapobhumi Temple, Texas (U.S.A.) • Shri Ram Mandir, Yorkshire, London • Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Bangkok (Thailand).

Ambaji Temple, Gujarat

Ambaji is an important temple town with millions of devotees visiting the Ambaji temple every year. It is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas. The original seat of Ambaji mata is on Gabbar hilltop just 5 km away from Ambaji Temple. A large number of devotees visit the temple every year especially on Purnima days. A large mela on Bhadarvi Poonima (full moon day) is held. Every year, people from all over the country come here walking from their native places just to worship Ma Ambe in July. As per the legend narrated in the "Tantra Chudamani", the Gabbar is the original holy place of Mata Ambaji, where the heart of the dead body of Devi Sati fell.

The Nij Mandir (main inner temple) of the Ambaji Temple has been designed by Chandrakantbhai Balwantbhai Sompura, the father of Architect Ashish Chandrakant Sompura.

Mr. Chandrakantbhai Balwantbhai Sompura is currently performing the renovation of the Baucharaji temple in Gujarat and designing the 51 Shakti Peeths on the periphery of the Gabbar, Ambaji.



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Somnath Temple



"The Somnath temple signifies that the power of reconstruction is always greater than the power of destruction"
Mr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic of India on performing
the installation ceremony of the Somnath temple, May 1951.

The Somnath Temple, near Veraval, on the western coast of Gujarat, India, is one of the twelve Jyotirlinga shrines of the God Shiva. Somnath means "The Protector of (the) Moon God". The Somnath Temple is known as "the Shrine Eternal", having been destroyed six times and rebuilt six times.

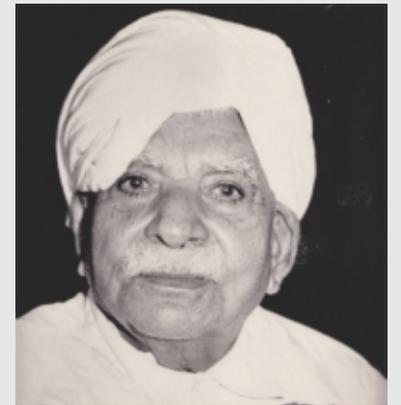
Somnath was once the most revered shrine in the country. It is said that people from the remotest parts of the country came to worship at the shrine; revenues collected from ten thousand villages were spent on the maintenance of the temple. Two thousand Brahmins (priests) served the idol and a golden chain attached to a huge bell plate announced the commencement of prayers.

Mohammed of Ghazni with his regular troops and thirty thousand volunteer-horsemen descended on Somnath in 1024 when the temple was so prosperous that it had 300 musicians, 500 dancing girls and 300 barbers to shave the heads of visiting pilgrims. There is a description to this effect by Al Biruni, an Arab traveller. After a two-day battle, Mohammed of Ghazni carted off the fabulous wealth of the Somnath temple

and also destroyed it, thus setting a precedent of Muslims destroying the temple and Hindus rebuilding it, for it was destroyed again in 1297, 1394 and finally in 1706 by Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor who not only destroyed the temple but built a mosque in its place using the stone and other materials of the destroyed temple.

Most recently, it was rebuilt in November 1947, when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel visited the area for the integration of Junagadh and mooted a plan for restoration. After Patel's death, the rebuilding continued under K. M. Munshi, another minister of the Government of India. When Sardar Patel, K. M. Munshi and other leaders of the Congress went to Gandhi with the proposal for reconstruction of the Somnath temple, Gandhi blessed the move, but suggested that funds for the construction should be collected from the public and the temple should not be funded by the state.

The ruins of the existing mosque present at that site were pulled down in October 1950 and the mosque was shifted a few miles away from the site.



The late Shri Prabhasker
Oghadbhai Sompura

He is the great grandfather of Architect Ashish Chandrakant Sompura. Shri Prabhasker Oghadbhai Sompura has written 14 volumes on Ship Shastra. In 1947, the entire planning and execution of the gigantic work of reconstruction (from foundation) of the famous Somnath Temple in Gujarat was entrusted to him by the late Shri Sardar Patel, the first home minister of Independent India. The title of Padmashri was conferred on Shri Prabhasker Oghadbhai Sompura in the year 1950 by the Central Government of India.