

THE KATHMANDU DARBAR INITIATIVE 2000-2003
RESTORATION OF MAHA VISHNU TEMPLE

FINAL REPORT

KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST
December, 2003

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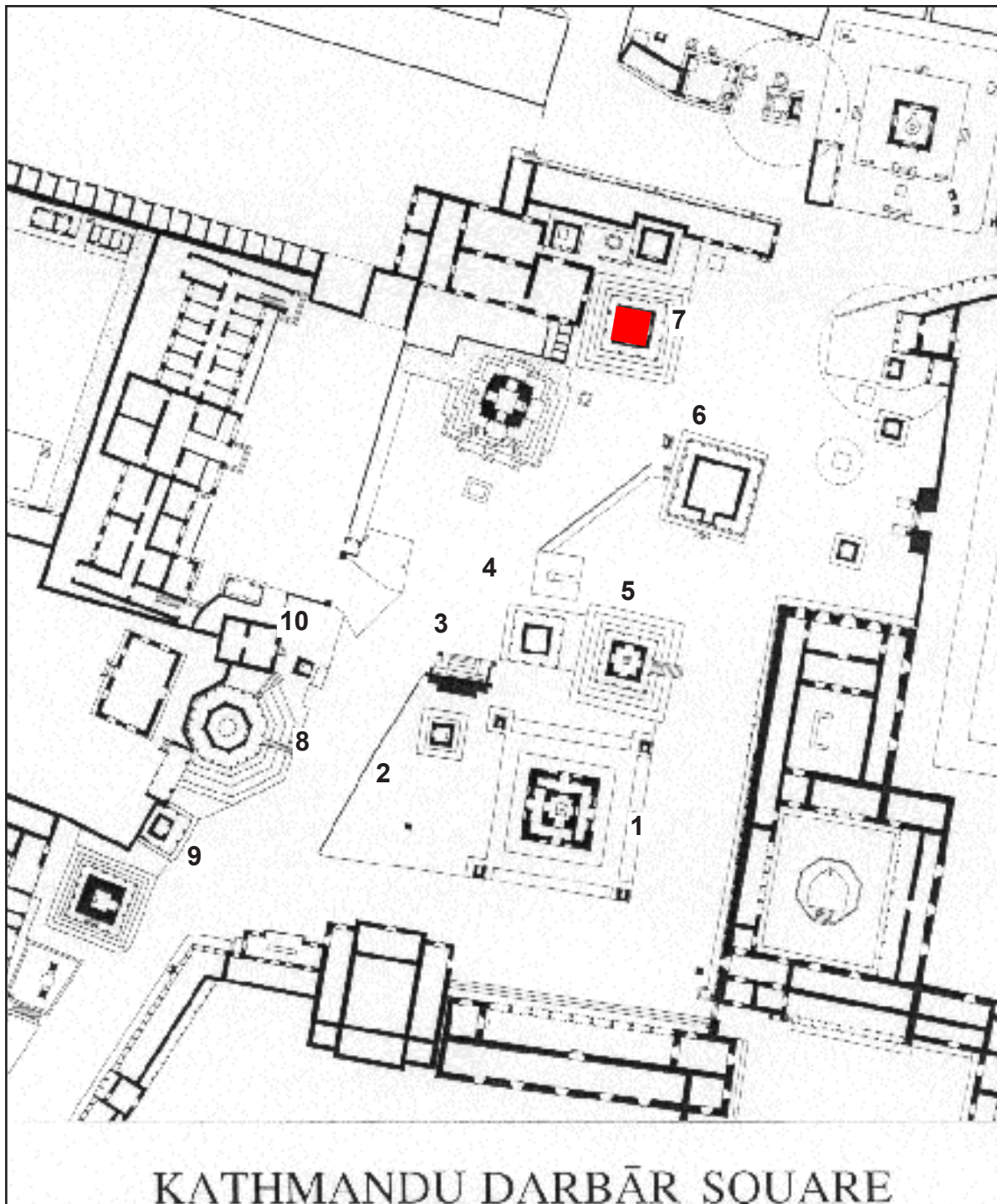
KEY

Kathmandu Darbar Initiative

- 1. Jagannath Temple (1563)
- 4. Indrapur Temple (1674)
- 5. Narayan Temple (16th c.)

Target Projects

- 2. Siva Temple(17th c.)
- 3. Kal Bhairav
- 6. Kakesvara Mahadev Temple (1711)
- 7. Maha Vishnu Temple (17th c.)
- 8. Bansagopal Temple (1649)
- 9. Saraswati Temple (16th c.)
- 10. Drum House (19th c.)



left: Site Plan showing all the focus temples in the Kathmandu Darbar World Heritage Site which are part of the Kathmandu Darbar Initiative.

opposite: Detail of a column in the eastern arcade.

KATHMANDU DARBAR INITIATIVE 2000-2003

Kathmandu Darbar World Heritage Site.

Justification

This most prominent cluster of pagoda structures standing at the entrance to the Kathmandu Royal Palace will be the focus of the of the Nepal's first corporate campaign led by Soaltee Group/STC. There could be no more appropriate site to launch this model effort, the country's premiere examples of pagoda architecture located at the heart of the World Heritage Site.

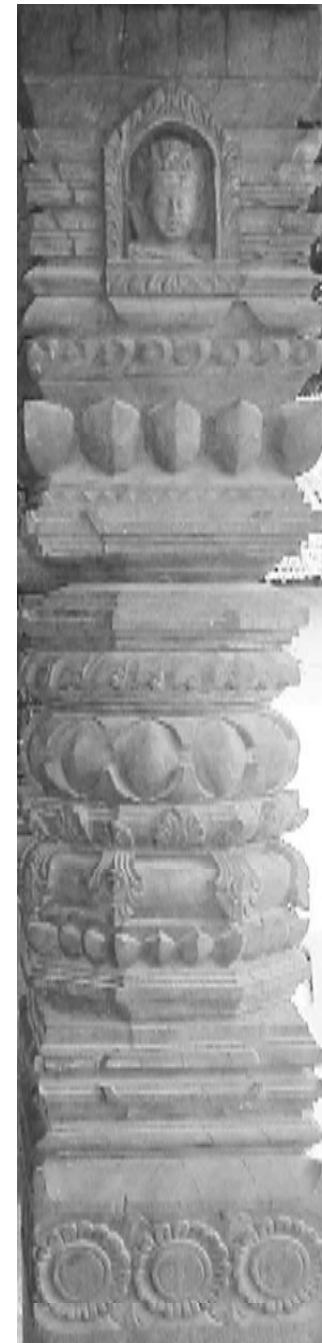
Given the historical and artistic importance of the three structures, their restoration to the highest international standards is deserving. The Jagannath Temple, for example, may be the most significant of the Malla period (1420-1769) structures with its fully extant program of the wood carvings and historical inscriptions.

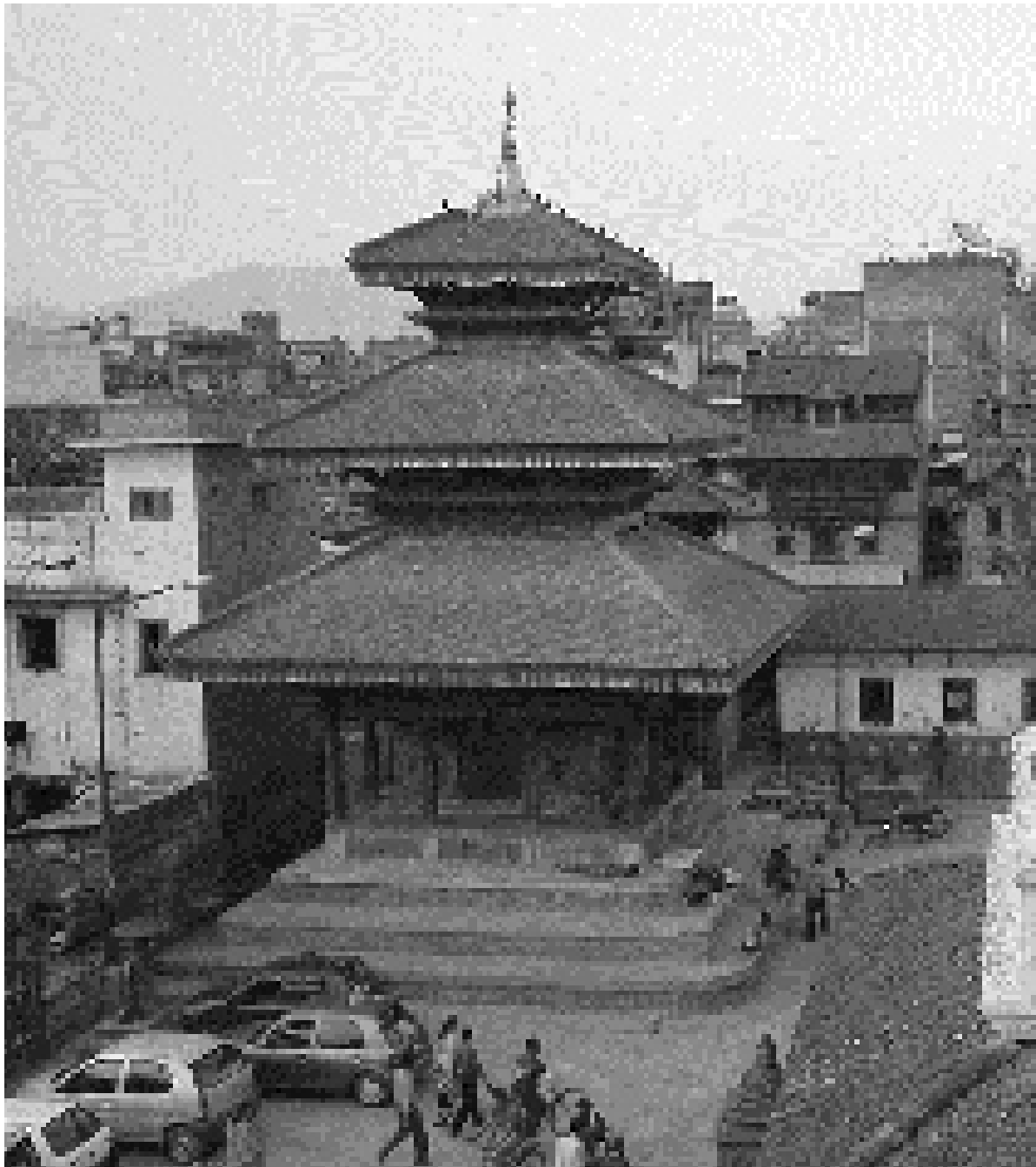
The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, recognized internationally as leader in the development of state-of-art conservation technology in Nepal, is uniquely positioned to undertake this effort as the only international heritage charity registered in Nepal and with a dozen restoration projects successfully completed.

The Kathmandu Darbar Square, largely ignored by national and international restoration efforts for the last twenty years, is in desperate need of attention. While many projects have designed and executed for the Darbar Squares in Patan and Bhaktapur, the square of the square of the greatest historical richness has been sadly neglected: virtually every one of the 48 temples in the historic precinct is in bad repair!

The need to rally private sector support of the historic preservation is acknowledged worldwide- the job is too big for the government alone. This campaign, with the prestigious support of the World Monuments Fund (USA), will raise awareness about the role business can play in the care of Nepal's precious architectural heritage, it may even have the potential to raise additional money during the project period to allow restoration of the additional, adjacent historical structures such as Maha Vishnu Temple. To this end the public relations components of the effort are the key. These include the design of three inaugural events at each temple, and historically appropriate stone inscriptions identifying the generosity of the donors.

In addition, a satellite project, restoration of the adjacent Maha Vishnu temple will be undertaken by the Department of Archaeology with technical support from the Trust. This will be one of the first projects where collaboration between international and national agencies produced the highest standards of technical achievements. It aims to be a model effort of joint cooperation between the Trust and the Department.





left: The structure of the Darbar Square has dramatically changed after the restoration of Maha Vishnu Temple

opposite above: The upper roof structure was in extremely poor condition before the restoration work started in 1999.
opposite below: A view of the restored temple in September, 2003.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

December 3, 2003

I. Summary

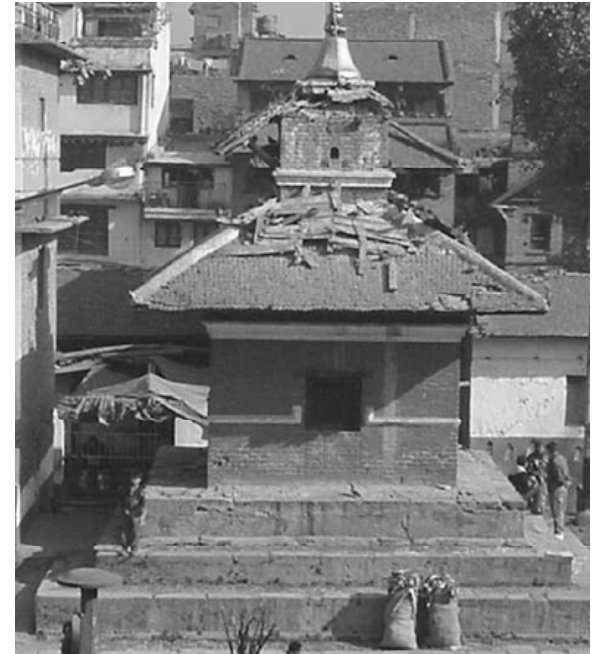
With generous support from local donors, leaders of which includes Soaltee Hotel Limited, Surya Tobacco Company, Nepal Lever Limited and Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Limited together with joint venture of the Robert W. Wilson matching scheme Kathmandu Darbar Initiative, the mega project of Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, continues to be a success story. In addition, the German Development Service (DED) has not only provided technical support but has also supported the project with financial grants.

Under the expert leadership of Nepal Program Director Dr. Rohit Kumar Ranjitkar, the specialized team of Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust has endured to work towards creating a positive impact in the environment of the historic center.

II. Construction In Progress

Restoration of the second focus temple of project, the **Narayan** Temple is in progress and is 90% complete. Some of the weathered roof struts of the two lower roofs were structurally reinforced with steel members. Newly carved latticework was installed above the ground floor arcade with reference to a historic photograph of the pagoda and a thorough research of similar monuments by the Trust's technical team. It will be inaugurated in December, 2003.

The three-tiered **Maha Vishnu** Temple, located north-west of the Kathmandu Darbar Square has been successfully restored by Department of Archaeology with technical support from the Trust. It was one of the first campaign to be supported through a joint cooperation between the Trust and the Department. The highest standards of conservation practice was possible only due to experienced supervision of the Trust's specialized team on site.





above: Maha Vishnu Temple(foreground) before the 1934 earthquake.

below: The temple was not restored according to its historic configuration after it was severely damaged during the earthquake.

BRIEF HISTORY

Kathmandu Darbar Square has been and is still a historic as well as cultural center for many decades. This 18th century temple dedicated Vishnu was severely damaged during the great 1934 earthquake during which many of the temples around the valley collapsed. This temple was never restored according to its former grandeur.

The repaired structure was an eclectic mixture of a Newari temple architecture and Rana style of building with plain roof struts and a door, which is similar to the plain ones used in Nepali houses. The pillared arcade at the ground floor, typical of Newari temple, was completely eliminated in the hastily done restoration. The only historic element used was the extraordinary finial surmounted by a golden umbrella. The main image of the Maha Vishnu of the sanctum was taken to the Nasal Chowk inside the Hanuman Dhoka Durbar for safe keeping.

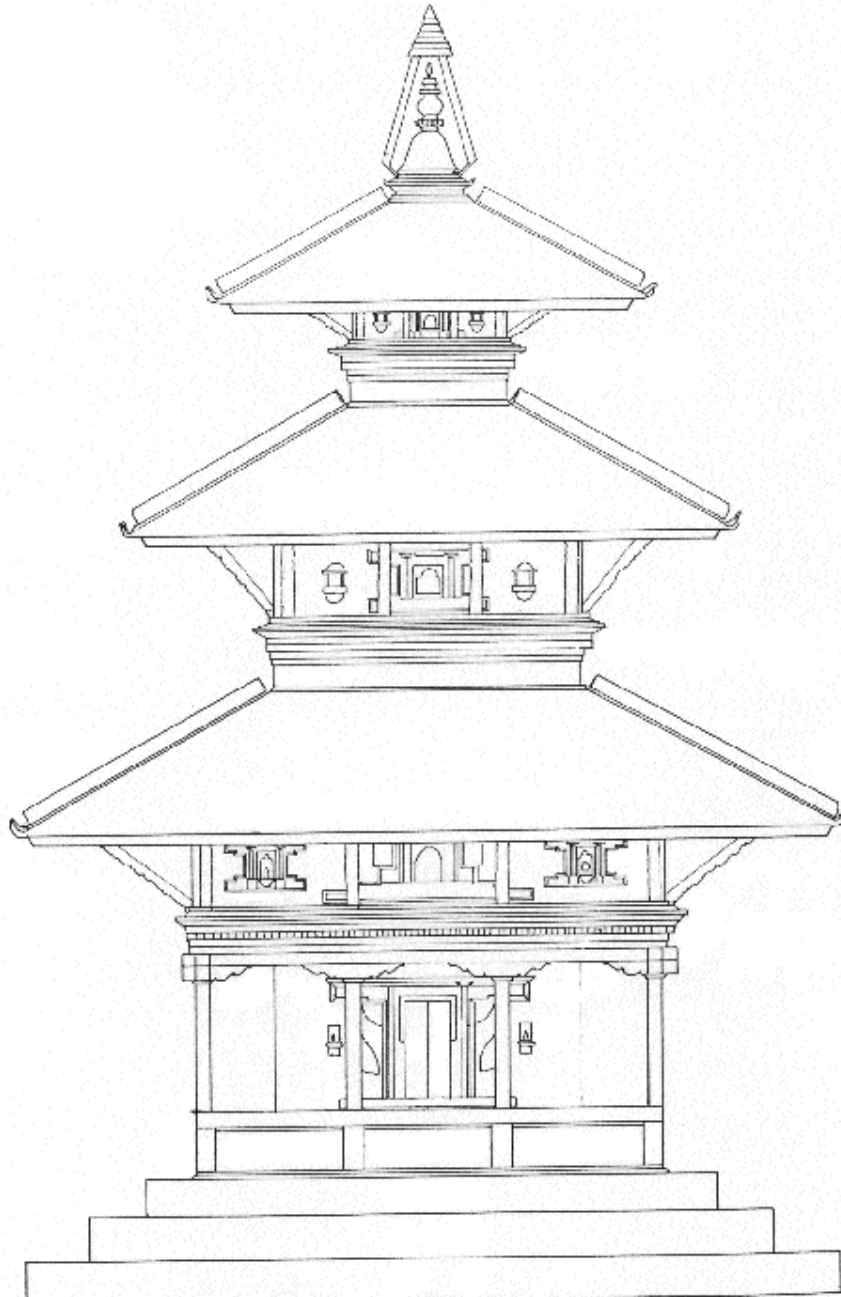
When the image was moved a golden amulet was found in it that bore the outside the name of King Jagajjaya Malla (1722-36). Other historical records indicate that a temple built by Jagajjaya Malla in memory of his son Rajendra Malla was located near the Kot. This bears close resemblance to the location of the present Maha Vishnu Temple. It is very likely that the original temple was built by Jagajjaya Malla.

Thus, restoration of the temple was conceived as a satellite project of the Kathmandu Darbar Initiative (KDI). Reconstruction of the temple has enhanced the environment of the historically significant urban space. The sheer volume and monumental scale of the structure has created a backdrop for the other focus projects of KDI.

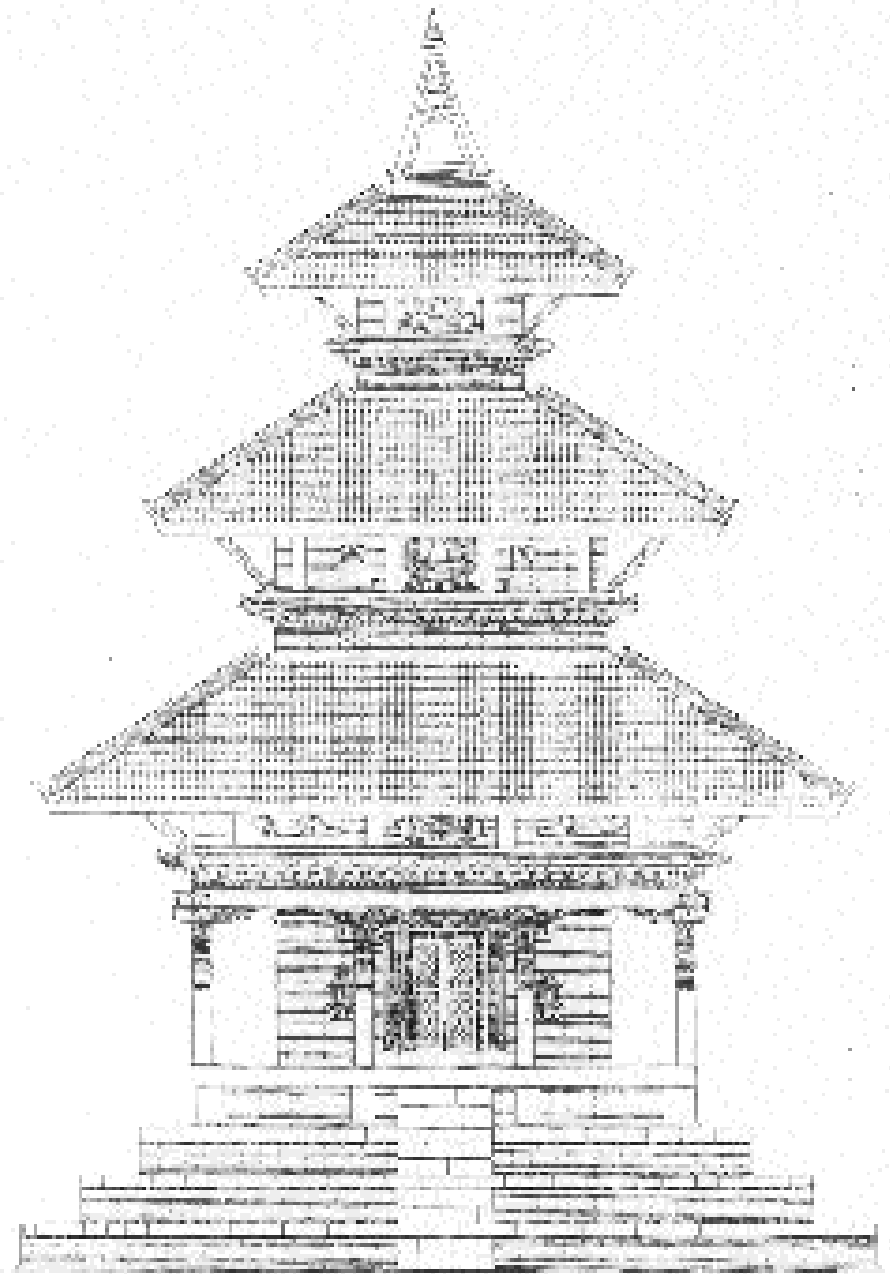


above: The most famous view of the Kathmandu architecture. This photograph by the Calcuttan firm Bourne and Shepherd shows the principal monuments—Indrapur, Narayan, Jagannath and Kal Bhairav in the early years of the century

below: This photograph was taken from the Hanuman Dhoka Royal Palace before the 1934 earthquake. Maha Vishnu Temple (seen in background) was a magnificent three-tiered temple. The buildings adjacent to the temple were replaced with the present Police Head Quarters.



Maha Vishnu Temple
PRINCIPAL SOUTH ELEVATION
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY



Maha Vishnu Temple
PRINCIPAL SOUTH ELEVATION
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST
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DOCUMENTATION AND DESIGN

Architectural Documentation

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On the Job Training

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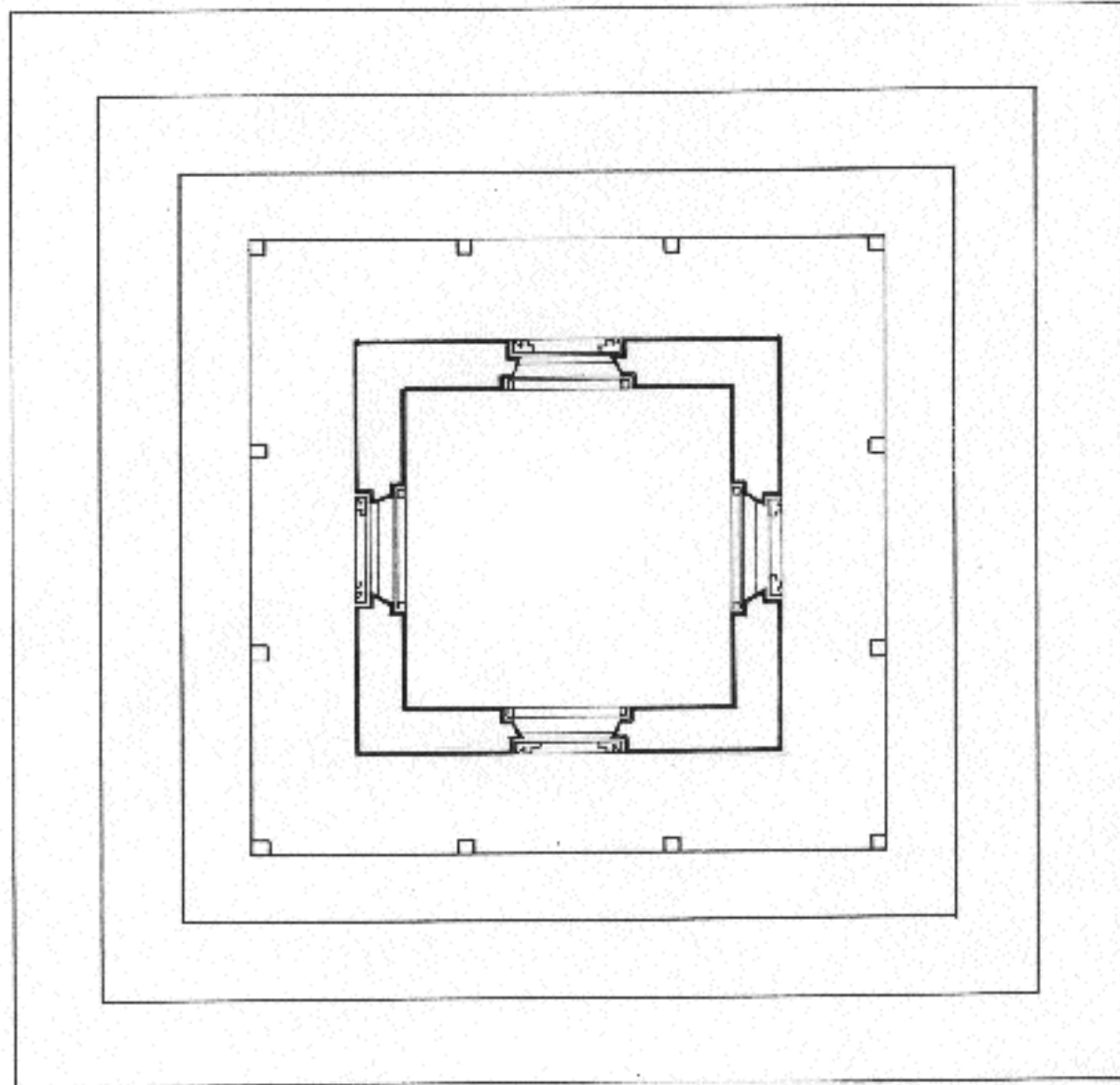
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above: Detail of a blind niche in the ground floor arcade.
Drawing Badri Juwal, 2003

opposite left: Documentation of Principal South Elevation as drawn by drafts person from DOA. Many details are missing.

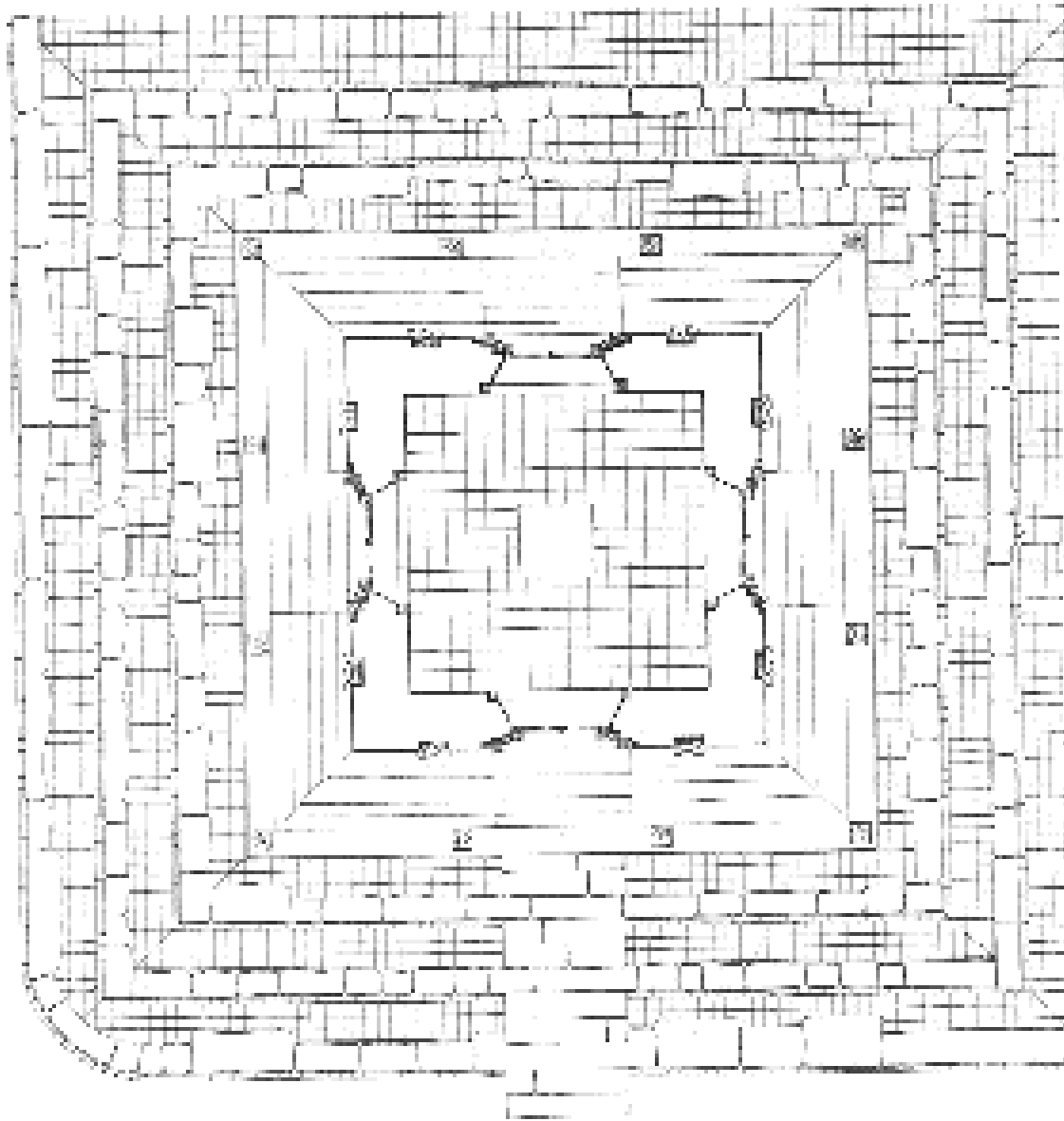
opposite right: The specialized team of KVPT improvised on the drawings and included the missing details.



Maha Vishnu Temple

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

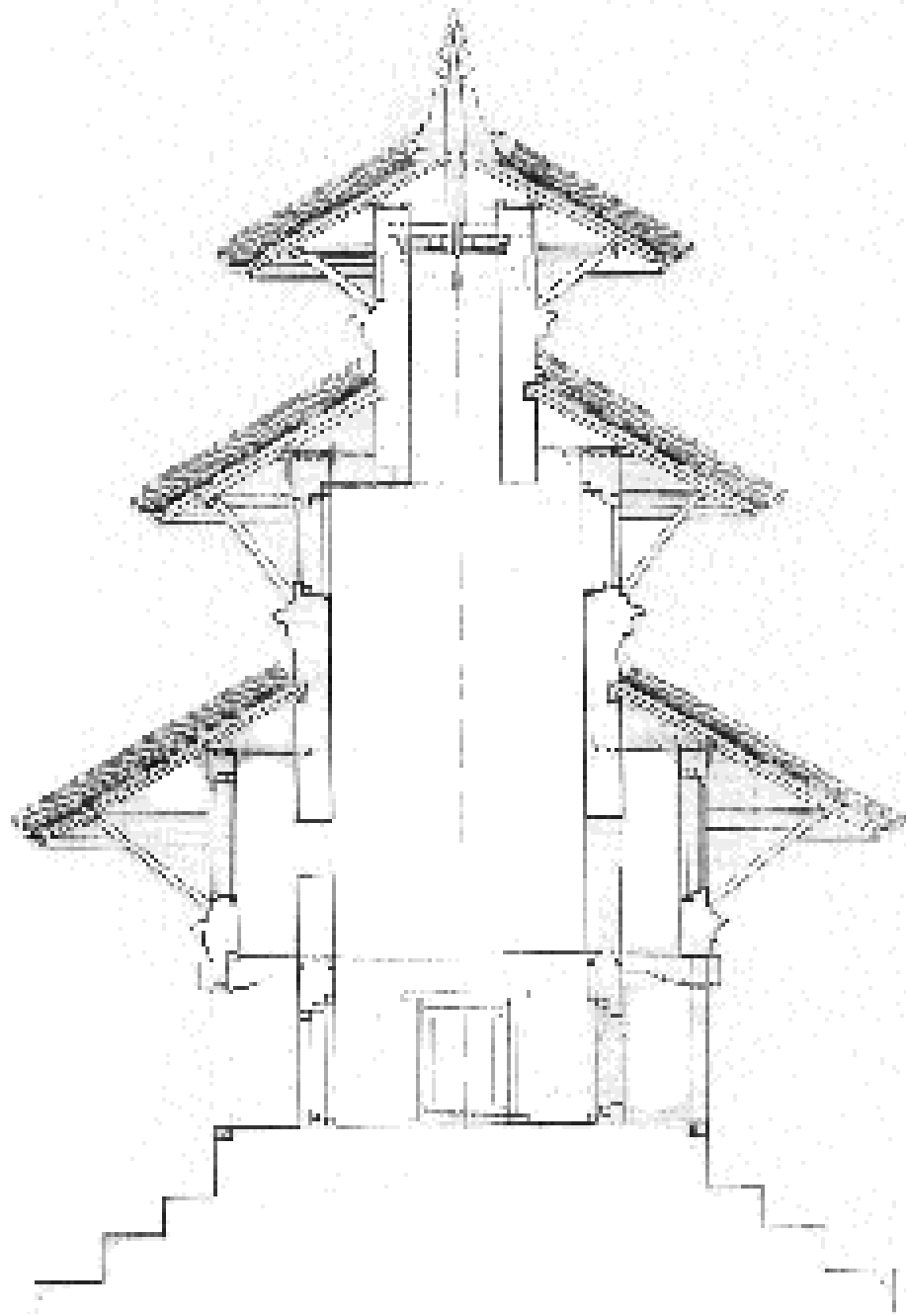
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY



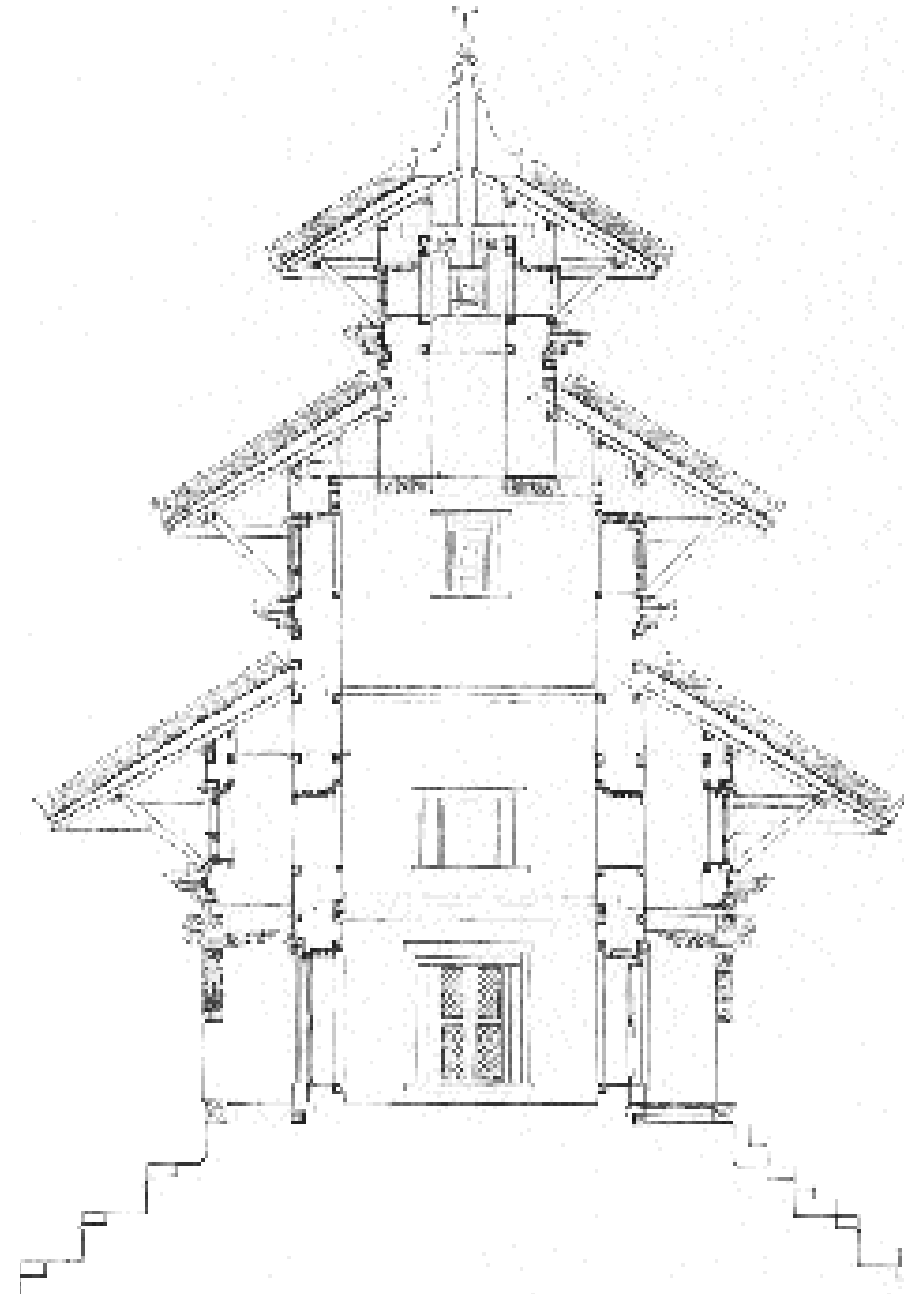
Maha Vishnu Temple

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST



Maha Vishnu Temple
WEST EAST SECTION



Maha Vishnu Temple
WEST EAST SECTION
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST

DOCUMENTATION OF RESTORATION IN PROGRESS



above: The ground floor arcade was built on reconstructed floor stepped plinth. The brickwork on the original plinth was in bad condition thus it had to be replaced.
below: Rafters being installed for the two lower roofs.

RESTORATION IN PROGRESS

Regaining the Historic Configuration

Kathmandu Darbar Square has been and is still a historic as well as cultural center for many decades. This 18th century temple dedicated Vishnu was severely damaged during the great 1934 earthquake during which many of the temples around the valley collapsed. This temple was never restored according to its former grandeur. The repaired structure was a eclectic mixture of a Newari temple architecture and Rana style of building with plain roof struts and a door , which is similar to the plain ones used in Nepali houses. The pillared arcade at the ground floor, typical of newari temple, was completely eliminated in the hastily done restoration. The only historic element used was the extraordinary finial surmounted by a golden umbrella. The main image of the Maha Vishnu of the sanctum was taken to the Nasal Chowk inside the Hanuman Dhoka Durbar for safe keeping.

Thus, restoration of the temple was conceived as a satellite project of the Kathmandu Darbar Initiative (KDI). Reconstruction of the temple has enhanced the environment of the historically significant urban space. The sheer volume and monumental scale of the structure has created a backdrop for the other focus projects of KDI.

Philosophy of Replacement of Lost carving

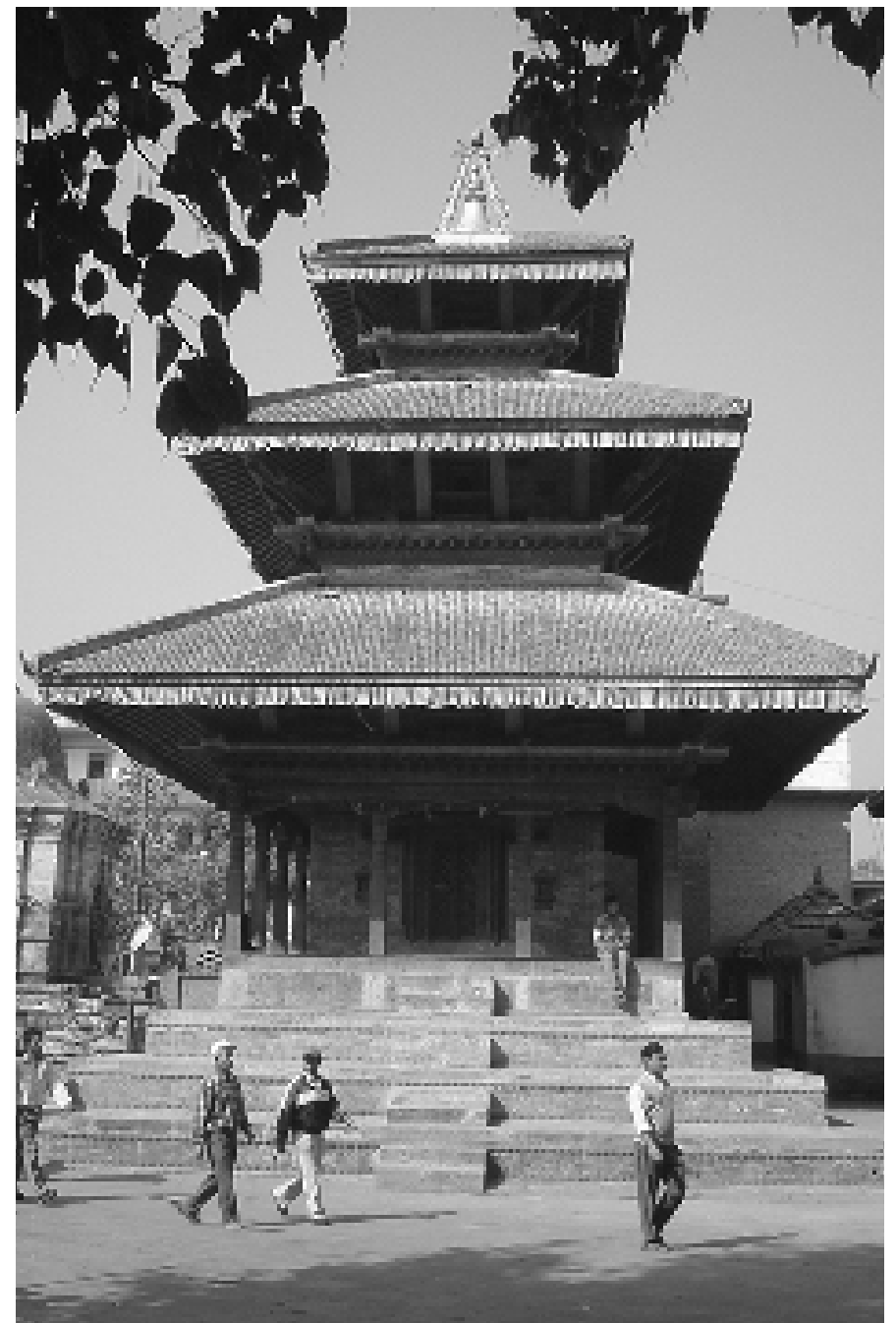
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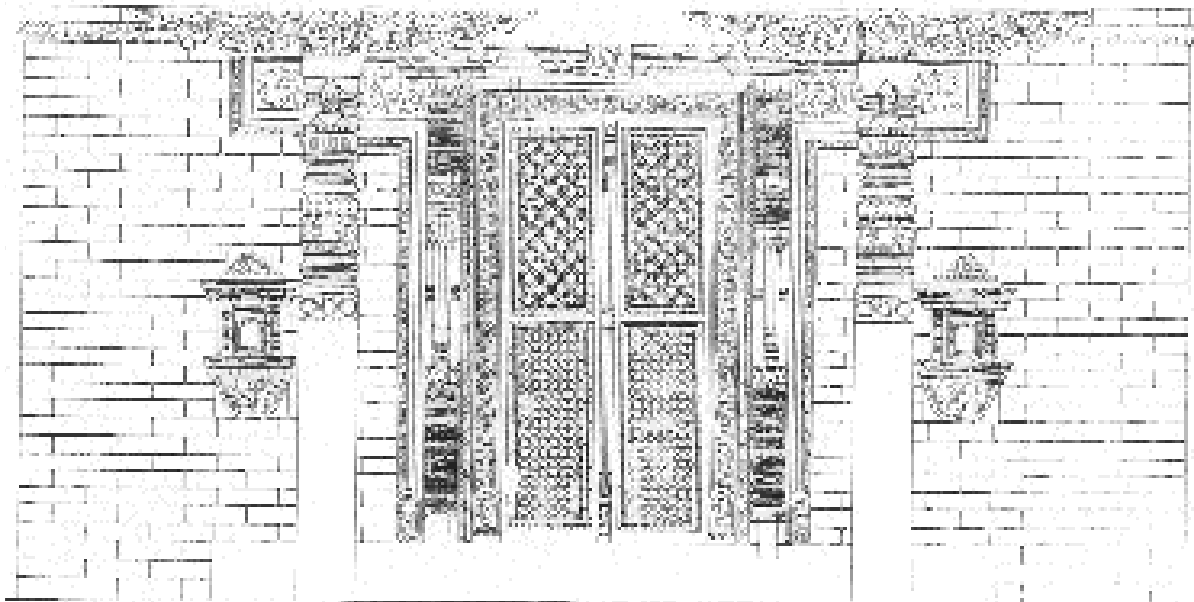
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above: The detail of the blind niche on the ground floor arcade was determined by thorough documentation of the temple and in depth research of similar structures by the specialized team of the Trust.





opposite above: Planking being laid for the mud base and jhingati.

opposite: Maha Vishnu Temple after restoration in 2002.
above: The detail of the main entrance (east facade).

below: The drawing was prepared by KVPT staff with reference to the historic photograph of the temple before the 1934 earthquake. This was drawn in addition to the set of drawings prepared by DOA which were later improved and was used by the carvers during the restoration.



COOPERATION BETWEEN DOA AND KVPT

Supervision of the Site

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Training of Craftmen

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