



A Hindu temple is a divine and yogic representation of a living human being. The Deity in the temple represents God residing in all humans and all beings. In a temple the feet represents *Rajagopura*, the hands represents the *Prakaara*, the abdomen represents the *Mandapa*, the heart represents *antaraala*, and the crown of the head represents the *Garbha Griha* (sanctum sanctorum) where the Deity is installed. Also, the various chakra representations are shown (Ref: Agama Kosha by S.K.Ramachandra Rao)

A Praakara is the enclosure as well as the walkway around the temple. With the Deity as the center of the temple the praakara becomes the circumferential path. A Hindu devotee not only offers prayers to the Deity inside the temple, but also goes around the garbha griha inside the temple and goes around the temple using praakara. This signifies that as Deity is worshipped inside oneself but also kept as center of one's path of activities. In the words of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru "As the earth not only goes around itself but also goes around the sun as the center, in the same way one needs to keep God as the center while carrying out activities in one's life"

Vaahana in Sanskrit is derived from the verbal root "to carry". A vaahana signifies a vehicle. In Hindu religion each Deity has a vaahana. Each vaahana has its own significance in relation to the Deity. The vaahana of Lord Ganesha is Mooshaka i.e a mouse signifying leaky behavior of the mind. In order to make the mind steady and devoted to noble activities, one worships Lord Ganesha for blessings. The Sesha refers to the Divine snake representing the universal energy that is controlled by the Almighty God. The Garuda refers to the Divine flying bird signifying might and the ability to carry God everywhere. The Gaja refers to elephant, a significance of the power of the mind and royalty. Sesha, Gaja and Garuda are vehicles of Lord Vishnu. The vrishabha refers to the power of righteousness that removes evil tendencies. The vrishaba is for Lord Shiva. The Mayura refers to peacock signifying the joy of knowledge and ability to carry God anywhere. The Mayura is for Lord Subrahmanya.

The Deities consecrated in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple are not movable. However, each Deity has a corresponding movable deity. Utsava is a festive celebration of taking the movable Deity in procession on the corresponding vaahana around the praakara of the temple. In an utsava on special occasions such as festivals the movable deities are decorated and taken around the temple and devotees follow the Deities and offer chants, bhajans, music etc. The tradition is that the Deities in Utsava or Procession is carried out to community to enable people to observe and worship the Lord. Thus praakara and vaahana utsava fulfills the role of the temple to the needs of the community.