

Fig.7.8: Site Layout





Fig.7.9: South-West View from Temple Location

As it can be seen in the site layout (fig.7.8), provision has been made for the priests' home on the north-west corner of the site. Here a priest who takes care of the temple and keeps the Holy Fire burning at all times is expected live with his family. Although the main temple building doesn't have any provision for restrooms, the area of the priests' home would contain one that travellers to this place could use.

The location is easily accessible for the priest on a daily basis and in the event of any emergency as well as close enough to allow devotees to use the restroom facilities. The site levels between the home and the temple building are the same and that allows for comfort of use for the head priest. The design of the home has not been done as that would stray from the idea of a temple for fire but its location on site, validates the need for a full-time head priest for the temple.



Fig.8.0: North Entrance to Temple Building



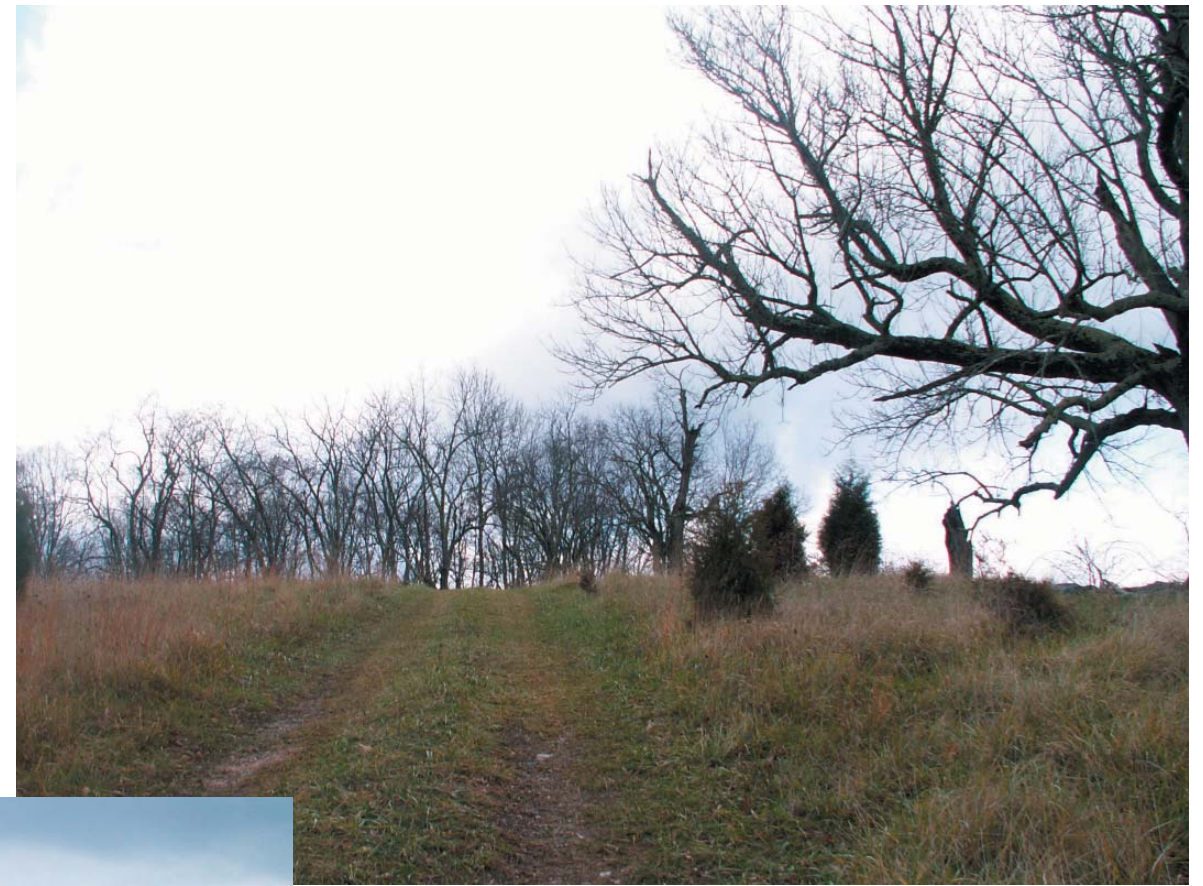


Fig.8.1: South View from Temple Location



Fig.8.2: View of site from South-West



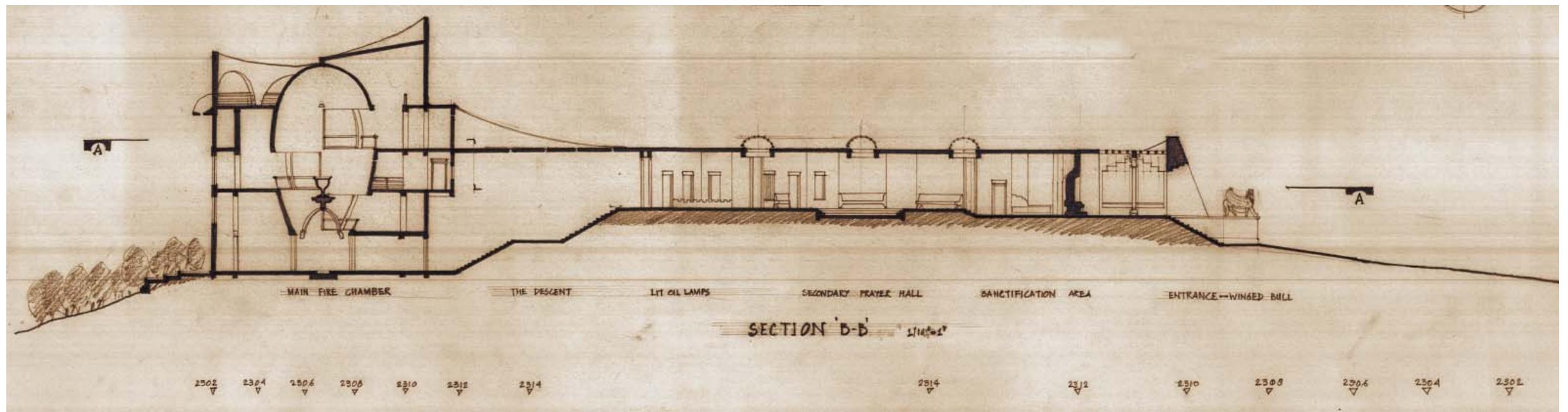


Fig.8.3: Section through central axis of temple building



It is often through tradition and community practice that the architects of today find peace in their designs. Certain traditions have been followed through centuries and although they may seem baseless now, at that time and in that era, there were reasons that encompassed all logic. It would be an architect's ideal location to place a temple building on a hill or on rolling meadows. A place where serenity, nature and freedom seem to explicitly go hand in hand. I too chose to do so by choosing a site that I felt was worthy of a Zoroastrian temple or any place of worship. It seems illogical when there are more places that are accessible from a pragmatic point of view, but to me, it is faith that governs all design especially in a temple. If a feasibility study was to be carried out with the number of Zoroastrians and location of a major temple in Blacksburg, Virginia, then there would be no good reason as to why the temple should be here. To me no technical study can supercede faith. My first glimpse of this place on a hilltop seemed perfect for what I wanted and felt was right. Although it lay within a distance of about 50 feet from some houses, that factor seemed negligible as other features compensated for it.

*"The Architect is born in a land famed for this skill and he is free of any physical deformity. Being a superior person, he knows how to establish structures and is well versed in all the sciences. He is strong, imbued with justice and compassion, equanimous in mind, without jealousy and other weaknesses, handsome and astute in mathematics. He is learned in the ancient texts and about their authors. He is frank and sincere in his actions as he has controlled his sense organs. Drawing on his skill and he is acquainted with the geography of all lands. Greed is his undoing but he is known by his generosity. His health and energy are good and he is thus free of the seven deadly vices: abusive language, stealing property, acts of violence, hunting, gambling, wine and women. His concentration and persistence are great and he bears proudly a distinguished well-chosen name; he easily crosses the ocean that is the science of architecture"*

*Rohit Arya - Vaastu, The Indian Art of Placement*

An ancient Indian concept of building called 'Vaastu', the science of orientation and placement, is closely related to the selection of a site and the orientation of a building within it. Even the interior planning of a building with its rooms and requirements is included in this science. According to vaastu, all work begins from the navel. The process of carving an idol is always begun from the navel, and the construction on a site also begins from the navel of the Vaastu Purusha (the symbolic man related to orientation). The navel is supposed to be the locus of creative energies, the stable point of a body. Because each image represents the Yupa Stambha, the Axis Mundi, or Pillar of the universe, great care and concern were always taken before work began.

These ideas eventually expanded into the concept of a temple being representative of the Purusha, cosmic man. In this context, every part of a well-designed vaastu temple fits into a particular section of the human body. The top of the temple is the head, the sanctum corresponds to the neck, the assembly hall is the stomach. The boundary walls are the legs and the entrance serves as the feet. The idea of the temple being a representation of the human body is neither original nor unique to India. The temples of Greece and Egypt were based on similar principles. In his brilliant work 'The temple of Man', the Egyptologist R.A.Schwaller de Lubicz shows that every detail of the temple of Luxor is designed to reflect the cosmos in the form of human.



As in vastu, the temples in Egypt were based on the rectangle, however the cosmic man was vertical in vastu, reaching up to the spire of the temple, while in Egypt the man was laid out horizontally, the entire complex becoming the body and the sanctum usually located where the heart of this primal man would be.

The architecture of the temple building is a factor that needs to be addressed. How would I reference the design of the windows? What typology of materiality and articulation would I use? It is true that as architects, we get influenced by tradition depending on how ingrained the beliefs are and in the case of this Zoroastrian temple, it is an offset of the vernacular style of architecture followed in Iran and in turn also followed in India. Because of moving settlements, styles of architecture and detailing have undergone changes over time yet at the same time have managed to maintain their identity as Persian architecture. If a Persian mason was asked to come into the country and put a building together, he would begin with generic styles that would personify Persian architecture. It would be inherent for him to reference his methods of construction to the typology of Iran and to him history would play a major role. When I thought of the design of the windows and the elevations together with the materials, I realized that a lot of post-modernism, a style that has influenced many young architects coupled with historical references from the temples that I have visited and seen brought about a result that pleased my senses.



Fig.8.4: View of Holy Fire from first level



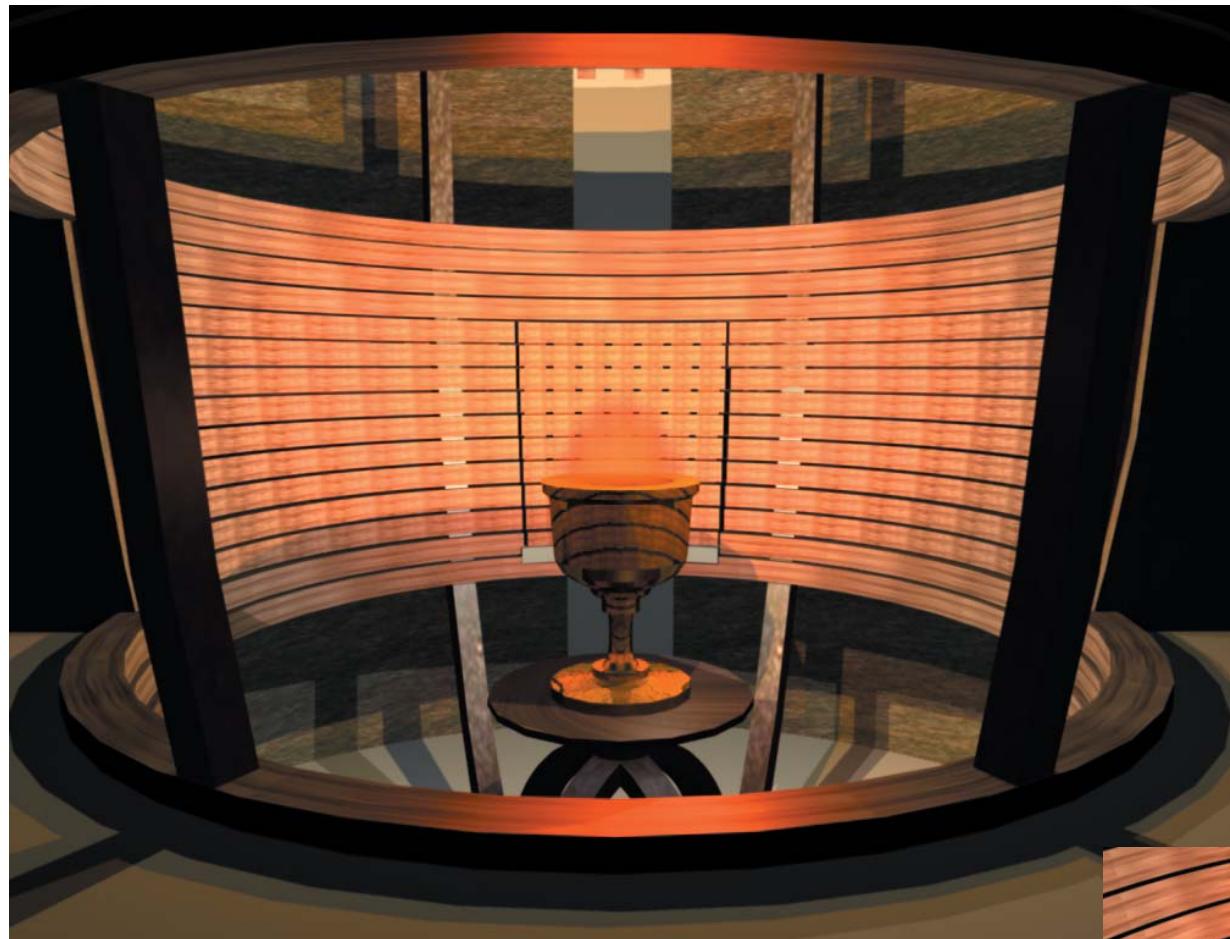


Fig.8.5: View of Holy Fire from second level

In the above image, a door can be seen behind the fire. This door is not accessible to the devotees as it leads into the Fire chamber directly from the priests room and the storage for the wood and oil. In order to keep the sanctum pure and free of projections, a bridge was designed seen in gray below the door to mechanically extend out for the priests to reach the fire.

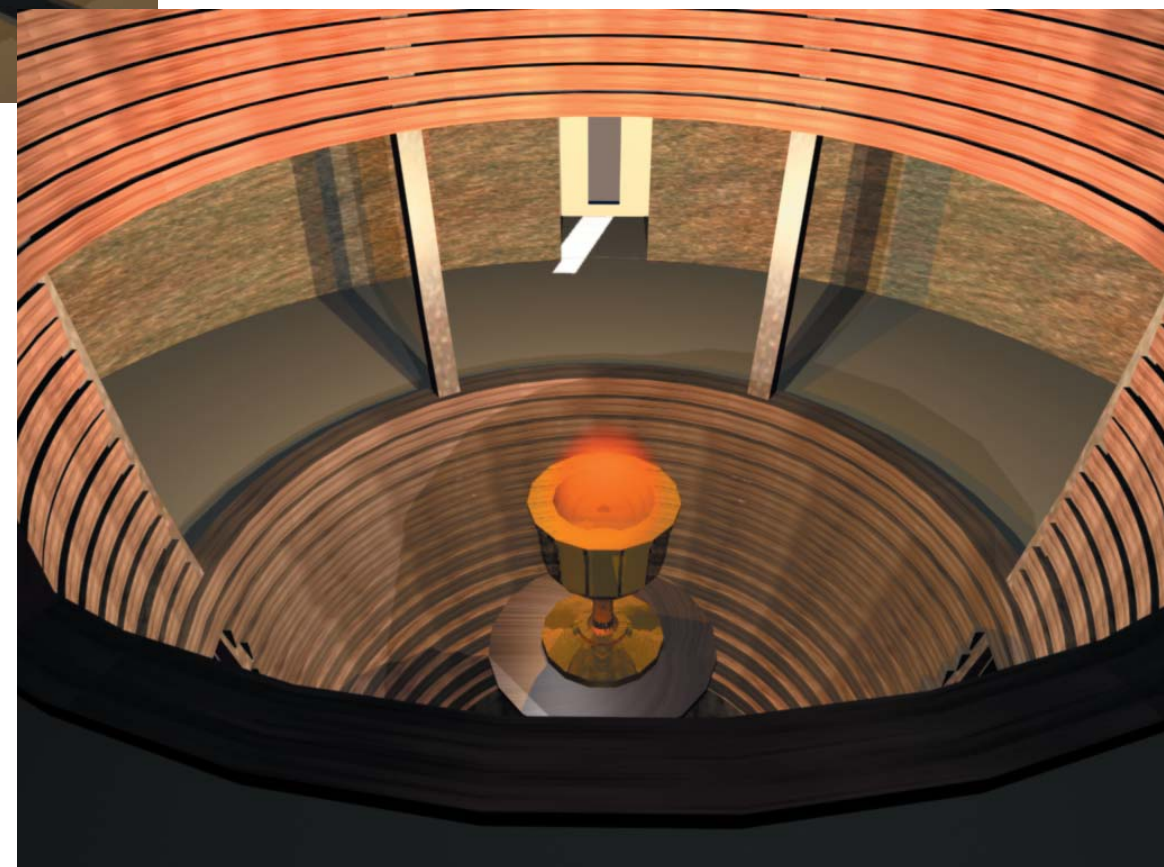


Fig.8.6: View of Holy Fire from third level





Fig.8.7 Sectional model of Fire cella



# Study Model

Fig.8.8

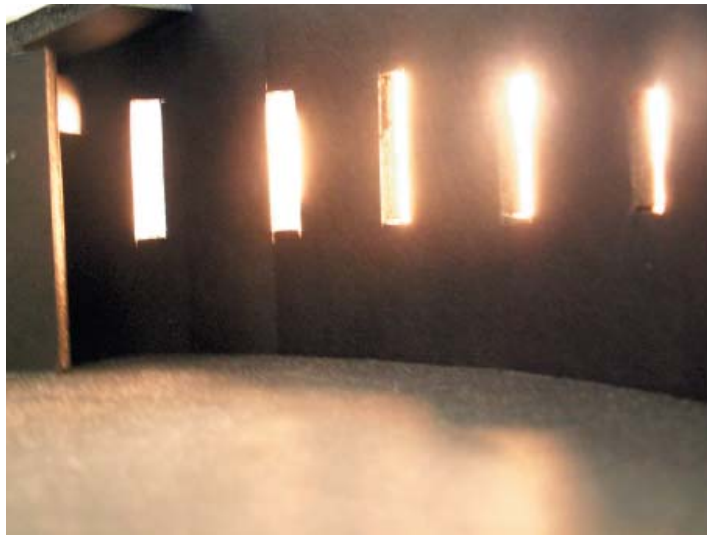
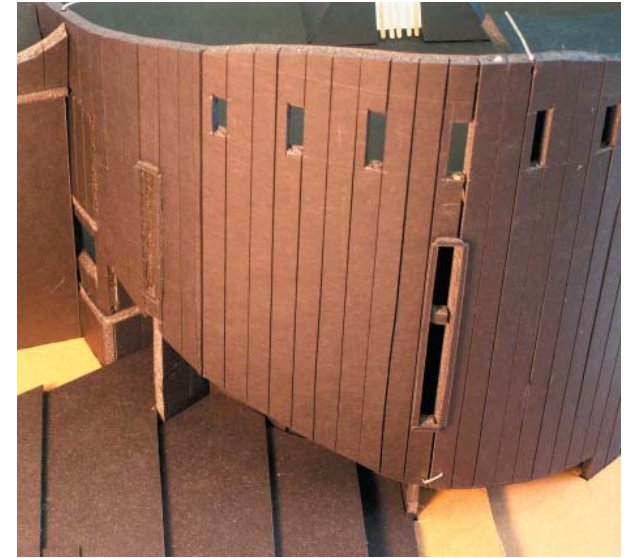




Fig.8.9: Early watercolor rendering



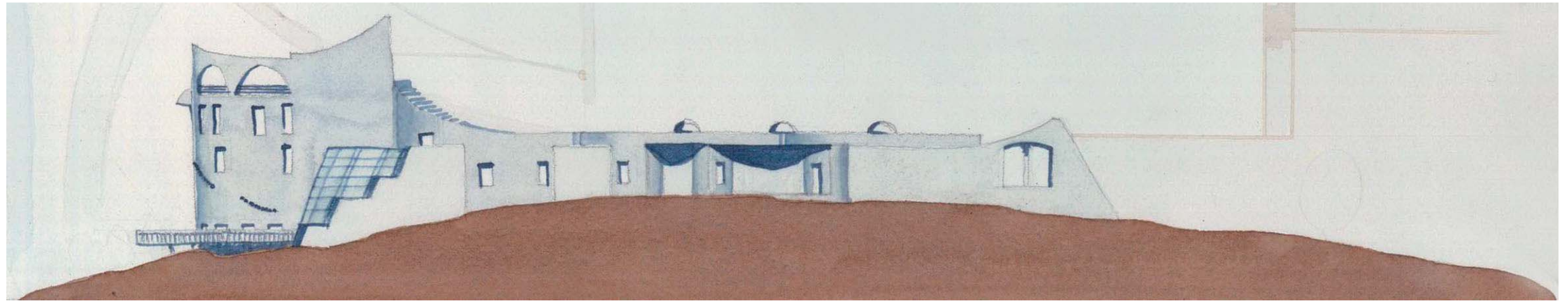


Fig.9.0: Side Elevation

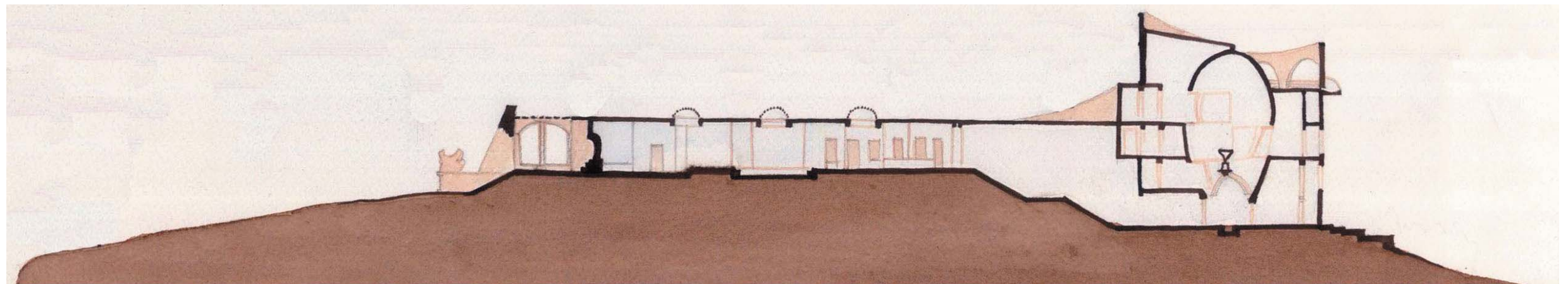


Fig.9.1: Section through central axis



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## *Reflections:*

As much as it is an obscure faith and religion, Zoroastrianism has survived the test of time and till date is practiced as a way of life by Zoroastrians in Iran, India, North America, Russia and smaller countries all over the world. The practices have changed as centuries went by and due to local regimes and impositions, rituals have undergone drastic modification. In India, non-Zoroastrians are not allowed into the temple which is a direct result of the rules laid out by the Hindu king when the Zoroastrians landed on the western shores of India to seek neutral shelter. To this day, this tradition is staunchly followed. In Iran though, anyone can enter the Fire temple as it is much more easily accepted over there being the original state religion in ancient times. In countries around the world, Zoroastrians seek to congregate wherever and whenever possible even in the absence of a fire temple. The majority of Parsis (*name given by the Hindus as the Zoroastrians came overseas from the Pars or Parsa in Persia*), reside in India, approximately eighty five thousand in all, with about twenty five thousand in North America and thirty thousand in Iran. The rest are scattered all over the world. No matter where Zoroastrians have settled, they have tried to follow the tenets of Good thoughts, words and deeds and be honest, sincere and truthful.

Fire temples have graced us for a long time and continue to intrigue the devotees as well as the ones who are not given permission to enter them. The aura that surrounds them, that gets expressed in the utmost simplicity of architecture, adds a fourth dimension to the feeling of piousness and practice of the faith. On entering a fire temple, one feels ritualistic and a certain ambience within the temple expresses the individualistic nature of prayer in Zoroastrianism. A number of fire temples exist in India especially in Bombay with the oldest one in Gujurat on the west coast of India. That one being the first is also the fire of the highest order, an Atash Behram, built in 938 AD and is called the *Pak Iranshah Atash Behram* in Udwada. This one was the first to be consecrated after the Parsis arrived on the shores of India. In all, there are eight Atash Behrams in India and only on the west coast.

The Fravahar, the image found by itself at the beginning of this book, is a picture of an mans' head with the wings of an eagle. It is found on all fire temples, generally at the entrance as a guardian soul for Zoroastrians. Literally translated it means 'Forward pulling force' where each part signifies an idea and has philosophical roots. It is winged signifying the ascent of the soul or upward progress. The wing is in three major segments symbolizing Good thoughts, Good words and Good deeds. The ring in the center signifies the eternity of the universe or the eternal nature of the soul. As a circle it has no beginning and no end. The figure is of an old man representing wisdom of age. One of the hands points upwards, telling us that there is only one direction that we should choose. The other hand holds another ring, a ring of promise. This means that when a Zoroastrian gives a promise, it is like a ring. It cannot be broken. The feathered tail below is also in three parts. It represents the opposite of the wings namely bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds. It is at the bottom because such choices weighs us down and impedes our ascent. And finally the two curly threads from the waist signify the duality of our experiences. Through our mind we can make good choices and through its lack or opposite, we will make bad choices.

My own search for something to believe in and express architecturally helped me focus my energies in the history and meaning of my own faith, Zoroastrianism, wherein I found a certain sense of tranquility in the teachings of Zoroaster, a trait we all look for in our daily lives. I have learnt to understand what it is to be a Zoroastrian and above all, a good human being, who should follow the religion of the heart and not of the mind while seeking truth and righteousness.



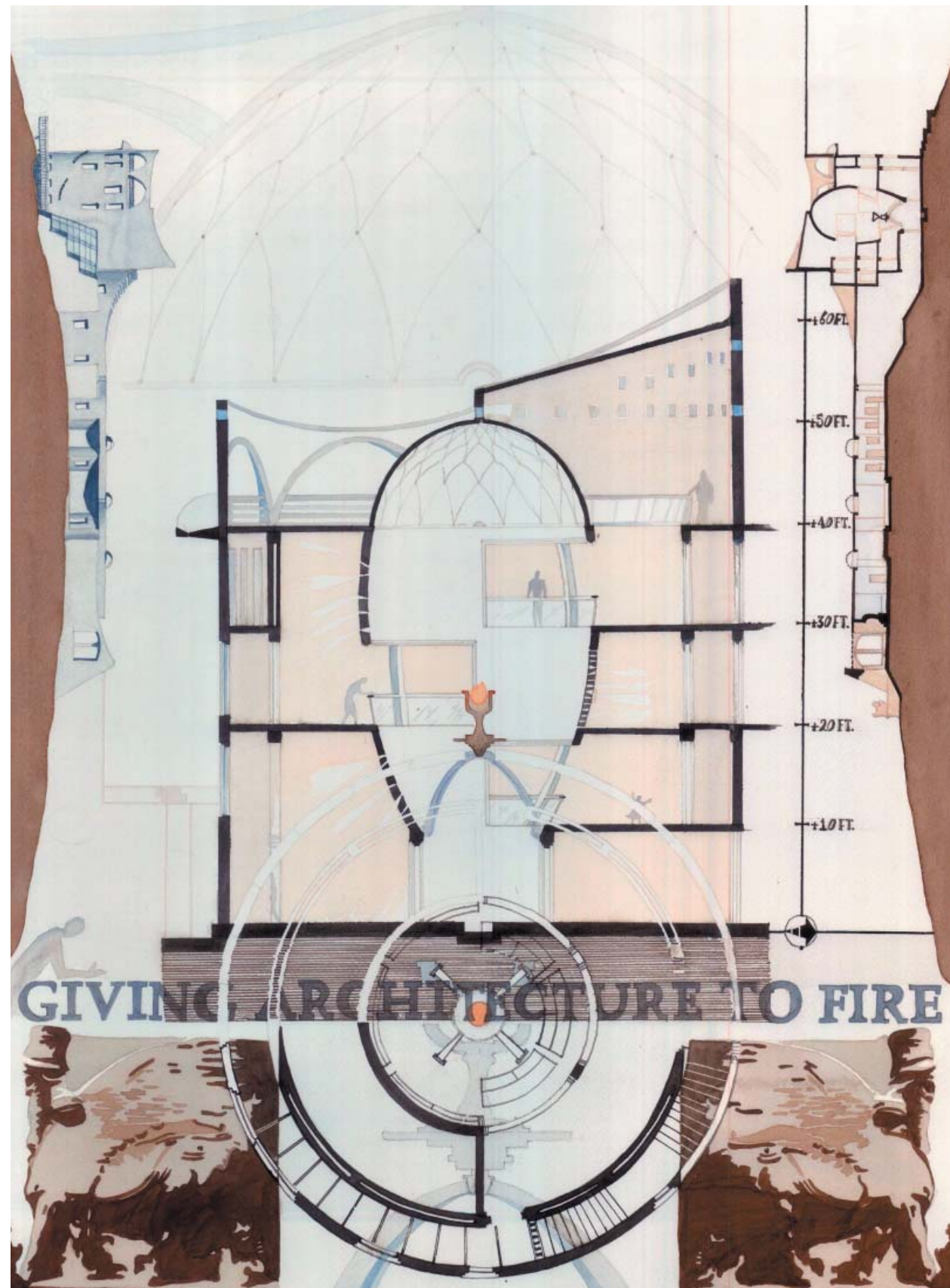


Fig.9.2



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- Extracts from the teachings of Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi of CIMNA (Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America), San Diego, CA, USA

### Images Source:

Fig.1.1: [http://www.fravahr.org/News/A\\_Zoroastrian\\_resurgence/A\\_Zoroastrian\\_resurgence.php](http://www.fravahr.org/News/A_Zoroastrian_resurgence/A_Zoroastrian_resurgence.php)

Fig.1.2: Sketch made for initial design ideas

Fig.1.3: Front Elevation of Temple design

Fig.1.4: <http://www.livius.org/ag-ai/ahuramazda/ahuramazda.html> - pic.'the Fire Temple of Modern Yazd'

Fig.1.5: <http://www.fravahr.org/Philosophy/ZOROASTER/ZOROASTER.php>

Fig.1.6: [http://www.darilanguageproject.org/photogallery/yazd\\_fire\\_temple.jpg](http://www.darilanguageproject.org/photogallery/yazd_fire_temple.jpg)

Fig.1.7: Sketches made for initial design ideas

Fig.1.7.1: [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/fire\\_temple.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/fire_temple.htm)

Fig.1.8: <http://www.sputnik.in-baku.com/inbound/atesh.html>

Fig.1.9: <http://www.sputnik.in-baku.com/inbound/atesh.html>

Fig.2.0: <http://www.virtualani.freemove.co.uk/firetemple/firetemple3s.jpg>

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Fig.2.2/2.3/2.4: [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Architecture/ani\\_fire\\_temple.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Architecture/ani_fire_temple.htm)

Fig.2.5: [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Archaeology/Pre-History/niasar\\_cave.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Archaeology/Pre-History/niasar_cave.htm), <http://www.cais-soas.com/News/2005/august2005/03-08-new.htm>

Fig.2.6: [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Architecture/ani\\_fire\\_temple.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Architecture/ani_fire_temple.htm)

Fig.2.7: [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/fire\\_alters.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/fire_alters.htm)

Fig.2.8: [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/fire\\_alters.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/fire_alters.htm)

Figures 2.9 to 6.6: Design Sketches, Renderings and Final Drawings



Fig.6.7: [www.wienerberger.com](http://www.wienerberger.com)

Fig.6.8: [http://www.rayjoneswoodboxes.com/bloodwood\\_.htm](http://www.rayjoneswoodboxes.com/bloodwood_.htm)

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Fig.7.0: [http://www.thevirtualshowroom.com/CT/granite\\_pics/black/black\\_galaxy.jpg](http://www.thevirtualshowroom.com/CT/granite_pics/black/black_galaxy.jpg)

Fig.7.1: <http://www.creaton.de/english/4-2-2e.htm>

Fig.7.2: <http://www.creaton.de/english/4-1-9e.htm>

Fig.7.3: <http://www.wausatile.com/index.cfm/choice/terrazzotile/productdetail/y/thumbnail/WM726/id/74/productnum/WM726>

Figures 7.4 to 9.2: Design Drawings, Renderings, Models and Computer Graphics



