



# Parabrahman symbolism and the majesty of Prambanan Temple: Analyze its role in global Hindu traditions

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Prambanan Temple, one of the largest Hindu temple complexes in Southeast Asia, can be understood not only as an architectural monument but as a theological system that materializes the concept of *Parabrahman*, the absolute, infinite principle underlying all existence. This study aims to analyze how architectural structure, spatial organization, and visual narratives within the temple articulate the relationship between transcendental unity and divine manifestations in Hindu theology. **Methods:** This research employs a qualitative interpretive approach integrating library research, field observation, visual-architectural documentation, and semi-structured interviews with selected experts. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), and visual-semiotic analysis, supported by methodological triangulation to ensure analytical rigor. **Findings:** The findings reveal that the tripartite structure dedicated to the Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva) represents a hierarchical cosmology in which *Parabrahman* is not directly depicted but symbolically mediated through spatial stratification, sacred geometry, and narrative reliefs. The central dominance of the Śiva temple reflects a theological synthesis in which multiplicity converges into a unified metaphysical principle. Furthermore, the reliefs function as visual exegesis, translating abstract cosmological doctrines into accessible symbolic forms that guide spiritual understanding and ritual practice. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that Prambanan Temple operates as a form of material theology, bridging metaphysical concepts and lived religious experience, and reinforcing the continuity of Hindu theological discourse beyond its Indian origins. Its significance lies in its capacity to encode complex philosophical ideas into enduring architectural and visual forms. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The novelty of this research lies in its integrative analytical framework that combines theological hermeneutics, iconographic analysis, and integral consciousness theory to position Prambanan Temple as an active epistemic medium for constructing and transmitting the concept of *Parabrahman*, an approach that remains underexplored in existing scholarship.

**KEYWORDS:** Prambanan; *Parabrahman*; Global Hinduism.

## 1. Introduction

Prambanan Temple, located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, is one of the largest and most magnificent Hindu monuments in Southeast Asia. Built in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the temple is an outstanding example of Hindu architecture and reflects the majesty and complexity of Hinduism (Surpi, 2020). The temple is known for its magnificent structure dedicated to

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Trimurti: Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva. In the Hindu religious context, *Parabrahman* is a concept that symbolizes God who is absolute, without attributes, and beyond all forms and names. This research focuses on how *Parabrahman* symbolism is realized in the design and architecture of Prambanan Temple and its impact on global understanding of Hindu traditions. The spatial structure of the Prambanan temple is mathematical and admirably regular (Endaristi et al., 2023). This shows that the design of Prambanan temple was intelligent and full of calculation. Not merely structure and beauty, but full of symbolism and even strong energy configurations as the house of God or aspects of divinity that are felt in Hindu shrines (Nishant & Das, 2022).

One evidence of the glory of the Hindu kingdom in Java is proven by the construction of Prambanan Temple in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. The largest Hindu temple in Indonesia has been named a world heritage site by UNESCO since 1991. Prambanan Temple was built during the reign of the Medang Mataram Kingdom (Ancient Mataram). Based on the Candrasengkala, the year formulation on the Śivagrha inscription, the temple is estimated to have been built in 778 Saka (856 AD). Uniquely, the temple, which is now 1168 years old, holds extraordinary theological and philosophical knowledge. Although dedicated as a place of worship for the three Gods; Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva in the Hindu tradition, the temple was built with the extraordinary theological concept of leading and uniting devotees to the universal, integral consciousness of *Parabrahman*. *Parabrahman* is a term in Hindu philosophy that refers to God who is absolute and beyond all limitations of earthly forms (Frazier, 2024). In Vedanta teachings, *Parabrahman* is the supreme consciousness that is the source of all things but cannot be identified with specific attributes or worldly phenomena. As a manifestation of the ultimate truth, *Parabrahman* is not bound by time and space, and this concept is the core to many Hindu schools of thought, including Advaita Vedanta (Bilimoria, 2024). In the context of architecture and art, explaining how these abstract concepts are interpreted in physical form provides insight into how philosophical teachings can be translated in concrete forms.

Prambanan Temple consists of three main temples dedicated to Trimurti, Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva, as well as many other smaller temples surrounding them (Singh et al., 2022). The structure and design of these temples not only reflect religious beliefs but also display sophisticated artistic aesthetics. Each main temple presents important aspects of Hinduism with intricate details and precise symmetry. For example, the Śiva Temple, which is the centrepiece of the complex, is designed with a tall and majestic structure that symbolizes the power and authority of Śiva as the God of dissolution to lead to the re-creation and also provide the ultimate gift of enlightenment. The spatial arrangement, sculptures, and reliefs in this temple are examples of how spiritual symbolism is integrated into architecture to create spaces that are not only religious but also visually impressive (Surpi et al., 2023). This, like the construction of Hindu temples, not only creates a sense of awe for the building but also establishes a configuration of energy that helps lift the consciousness of devotees to a higher plane, while performing various ritual activities. There is even an amazing activation of spiritual intelligence.

Understanding how *Parabrahman* symbolism was integrated into the design of Prambanan Temple provides a valuable perspective on how Hinduism was adapted outside of India. Prambanan Temple demonstrates how profound Hindu teachings can be translated into architectural forms that can be understood by local communities. This is not only an example of cultural adaptation but also demonstrates how Hindu teachings have flexibility and relevance across various contexts. This research also enriches the global understanding of the diversity and evolution of Hindu traditions, providing an overview of how spiritual values are interpreted in different forms of artistic and architectural expression around the world.

Research on *Parabrahman* symbolism in Prambanan Temple is not only important for academic understanding but also for cultural preservation and identity. Understanding the original meaning and purpose of Prambanan Temple helps in conservation efforts, ensuring that the restoration and maintenance of this temple maintains its spiritual and cultural integrity. In addition, this research contributes to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue

by showing how abstract spiritual concepts can manifest in very concrete forms. This supports the strengthening of local cultural identity and increases global awareness of the contribution of Indonesian culture to the world's spiritual heritage. As such, this research has far-reaching implications, not only in an academic context but also in heritage preservation and deeper cultural understanding.

In the Advaita Vedanta Hindu tradition, the process of Brahman realization is a very important part, even the main goal of all learning. For yogis, *Parabrahman* is both the goal and the realization (Nagar, 2023). Hindu philosopher Sri Sankaracarya explains about Brahman and *Parabrahman*. The Brahman or *Parabrahman* as the highest consciousness or entity of the universe capable of being experienced by humans through a number of recommended means (Aithal & Srinivasan, 2025). This state of supreme consciousness is precisely the goal of the highest realization at the Prambanan Hindu Temple or the original name Śivagrha.

This article discusses Prambanan Temple and the concept of *Parabrahman* as a bridge between various religious and cultural traditions. The research shows how Hindu teachings are interpreted and practiced in different contexts. It can also strengthen understanding and appreciation of the diversity of spiritual traditions around the world. Overall, research into the symbolism of *Parabrahman* and the majesty of Prambanan Temple is not only important for academic understanding, but also for the preservation of cultural heritage, strengthening of cultural identity, and intercultural dialogue. This helps connect the past with the present and provides relevant insights for the future. By explaining how *Parabrahman* symbolism is integrated in practices and structures outside of India, this research makes an important contribution to the global understanding of the variation and adaptation of Hinduism. It expands insights into how Hindu traditions are interpreted and practiced in different parts of the world. As is known, Java was the centre of Hindu civilization during the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms of Nusantara (the common name for a large area during the Majapahit kingdom until before the formation of the modern state of the Republic of Indonesia).

Massive construction of temples was carried out in Nusantara generally in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, with the aim of being a centre of worship, asceticism, and commemoration of the death of a king. Although there are hundreds of Hindu and Buddhist temples, Prambanan Temple is significant as the largest, most magnificent temple complex with marvellous architecture. In addition, the depth of the religious message continues to be relevant today. Moreover, the Indonesian government has declared this temple as the centre of worship for Indonesian and world Hindus in order to restore the Brahman light from this magnificent temple.



Fig. 1. Prambanan Temple as a contemporary center of Hindu worship in Indonesia and the global context

Prambanan Temple has undergone a significant functional revitalization, not merely as a historical monument but as an active center of Hindu worship in Indonesia and globally. This transformation reflects both cultural restoration and spiritual reactivation, where the temple is repositioned as a living sacred space that reconnects contemporary Hindu practice with its classical roots. The designation of Prambanan as a center of worship for Indonesian and international Hindu communities reinforces its role as a locus of ritual, pilgrimage, and collective religious identity, embodying the continuity of Hindu civilization beyond its historical origins. This refunctionalization also signifies a broader effort to revive the metaphysical essence of the temple as a manifestation of divine consciousness, where ritual activities are not only symbolic but also experiential pathways toward the realization of *Parabrahman*. As illustrated in Figure 1, the temple is actively utilized for religious ceremonies, demonstrating its renewed role as a dynamic spiritual hub within the global Hindu tradition.

Thus, the reactivation of Prambanan Temple as a living center of Hindu worship extends beyond cultural preservation and religious revival, and instead reveals a critical analytical space that necessitates deeper scholarly investigation. The transformation of the temple from a historical monument into an active ritual site demands a renewed interpretive framework capable of capturing the complex interplay between architecture, symbolism, and spiritual consciousness, particularly in relation to the manifestation of *Parabrahman* as ultimate reality. Without rigorous and systematic inquiry, there is a substantial risk that the temple's symbolic and metaphysical dimensions will be reduced to mere aesthetic appreciation or heritage discourse, thereby obscuring its profound philosophical significance. Accordingly, this research becomes urgent and necessary, as it seeks to bridge the gap between material heritage and lived spirituality, while contributing to a more comprehensive global understanding of how sacred architecture operates as a medium for the articulation, transmission, and reconfiguration of transcendent knowledge within contemporary contexts.

## 2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design within an interpretive paradigm to examine the symbolism of *Parabrahman* in the architectural and cultural context of Prambanan Temple. The research was conducted over a three-month period, from May to August 2025, in the Prambanan Temple complex and its surrounding areas. A qualitative approach is adopted to enable an in-depth and contextualized understanding of symbolic meanings, cosmological representations, and philosophical constructs embedded within temple architecture. Data collection was carried out through four main techniques, namely literature study, direct observation, visual-architectural documentation, and semi-structured interviews. The literature study involved a systematic review of academic sources related to Prambanan Temple, Hindu cosmology, and the concept of *Parabrahman*, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and archaeological reports. This stage aimed to construct a strong theoretical foundation and identify conceptual linkages between architecture, symbolism, and metaphysical doctrine.

Field observations were conducted directly at the temple site to examine spatial organization, structural hierarchy, relief narratives, and symbolic ornamentation. Particular attention was given to vertical and horizontal cosmological axes, mandala patterns, and the hierarchical arrangement of temple structures as representations of Hindu cosmology. Observational data were systematically recorded through structured field notes to ensure consistency and analytical depth. To complement observation, visual and architectural documentation was carried out using photographs, video recordings, and schematic sketches. This documentation enabled detailed post-field analysis, particularly in identifying recurring symbolic motifs, proportional relationships, and architectural alignments that reflect metaphysical principles. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected experts, including historians, archaeologists, temple custodians, and Hindu philosophers, using a purposive sampling technique to ensure

domain-specific expertise. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and organized for systematic analysis (Woodward, 2001; Prasetyo et al., 2022).

Data analysis was conducted through a multi-layered qualitative strategy combining thematic analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), and visual-semiotic analysis. Thematic analysis was applied using an inductive-deductive coding process to identify recurring patterns across literature, observation notes, and interview transcripts, which were then categorized into broader analytical themes such as cosmic hierarchy, sacred geometry, and divine manifestation. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed to explore deeper philosophical meanings articulated by experts, particularly regarding the experiential and conceptual understanding of *Parabrahman*. Furthermore, visual-semiotic analysis was used to decode symbolic representations embedded in architectural forms and reliefs, focusing on iconography, spatial symbolism, and metaphoric expressions of cosmological principles. To enhance analytical rigor, methodological triangulation was applied by cross-validating findings from multiple data sources, thereby reducing interpretive bias and strengthening the credibility of the study.

This research adopts the integral consciousness framework developed by Ken Wilber as the primary analytical lens to interpret the findings. Within this framework, the study examines how the architectural and symbolic elements of Prambanan Temple reflect interconnected dimensions of consciousness- individual, collective, and cosmic, positioning the temple as a symbolic medium that embodies the principle of *Parabrahman*. Wilber's model of cosmic hierarchy is further utilized to analyze how spatial organization and structural stratification represent metaphysical order and spiritual ascent, conceptualizing the temple as a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm. In addition, this framework is employed to assess the broader contribution of Prambanan Temple symbolism to global Hindu discourse, particularly in understanding how architectural forms function as vehicles for transmitting spiritual knowledge and expanding consciousness across cultural contexts. To ensure research validity and reliability, this study applies criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through data triangulation, prolonged field engagement, systematic documentation, and analytical transparency.

### 3. Results and Discussion

During the Ancient Mataram era, a number of temples were built, both Hindu and Buddhist temples in Java. Ancient Mataram is one of the oldest kingdoms in Java. During this period, the construction of temples developed rapidly. The Ancient Mataram Kingdom was once under the rule of two dynasties. Firstly, the Sanjaya Dynasty which embraced Hinduism. Second, the Sailendra Dynasty which embraced Buddhism, but in the middle of this dynasty, Hinduism returned and was present again in people's lives. These two dynasties gave birth to two streams of temples, namely Hindu temples and Buddhist temples. Despite having two different schools, there are some irregularities in identity. Some Hindu and Buddhist temples are located very close to each other, even within the same temple complex. In addition, it is suspected that there are also similarities in some elements of Hindu and Buddhist temples at that time (Tuyu et al., 2021). Some of the relationships that occurred between Hinduism and Buddhism on the design methods of Hindu and Buddhist temples during the Ancient Mataram period. The relationship can be found in the aspects of figures and ornaments, while differences can be found in the aspects of mass and spatial arrangements. However, there is a special case where the relationship between the two teachings can be found, namely at Prambanan temple. In this case, there is a mixture of both teachings in the architectural design. Therefore, this can be seen as the beginning of the acculturation of temple architecture in Indonesian culture (Perdana & Kurniawan, 2022b). Prambanan Temple, whose original name is Śivagrha, is a masterpiece of the Hindu Mataram era that still stands strong today. Babad Tanah Jawa, an ancient treatise in Indonesia states that the rulers of Ancient Mataram built Prambanan Temple, Sajiwan Temple, Sambisari Temple, Keraton Boko Temple, Banyunibo Temple, Ijo Temple, and

Barong Temple. These temples not only symbolize the glory of the past, but as a study material to understand the pattern of Javanese religion in the past.

Archaeologically, the Prambanan Temple complex is divided into three courtyards that are square in shape, and arranged in steps. The innermost courtyard measures 110 x 110 m, there are temples located in a row from south to north, consisting of Brahma Temple, Si Temple, and Vishnu Temple. All these temples face east. In front of these temples are three smaller temples, all of which face west. Between the two rows of temples are two smaller temples, each of which is called Candi Apit, measuring 6 x 6 m, 16 m high and located at the north and south side entrances. The facing direction of each temple is to the south and to the north, so they are facing each other. In addition, at each corner of the innermost courtyard, there are smaller temples, namely Candi Sudut and Candi Kelir, measuring 1.55 x 1.55 m and 4.10 m high.

The second courtyard consists of 224 ancillary temples and the outermost courtyard, of which only part of the perimeter fence is currently known. From this structure, it can be understood that the Prambanan Temple complex is divided into one concept, namely the Śiva temple as the main temple (worship centre) with the Śiva Mahaguru area as its main area. Śiva Temple is the main temple which is bigger than the other temples. The temple itself has a base size of 17 x 17 m and it stands on a subassement that measures 34 x 34 m. The overall temple height is 47 m, which stands on a foundation. The Śiva Temple as a whole shows harmony in size and parts, the balance between vertical and horizontal frames is very harmonious, coupled with various decorations to heighten the beauty and deep messages/teachings.

In the body of the Śiva Temple there are four chambers. Each chamber contains a statue. The statue of Śiva Mahadeva as the main statue is in the east side chamber. Agastya statue as Śiva Mahaguru is in the south side chamber. The statue of Ganeṣa as the son of Lord Śiva is located in the west side chamber (Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020). Durga Mahisasuramardini statue as Śiva's ṣakti is in the north side chamber. The roof of the temple is multi-tiered, each adorned with several jewel decorations. Śiva temples are very detailed, grand, and magnificent, and can be given interpretations or meanings. The original name of this Hindu Temple complex in Sanskrit is Śivagrha (House of Śiva) or Śivalaya (Realm of Śiva), based on the Śivagrha Inscription dated 778 Saka (856 AD). Trimurti is venerated in this temple complex with its three main temples venerating Brahma, Śiva, and Vishnu. However, Śiva Mahadeva who occupies the main room in the Śiva Temple is the most venerated deity in this temple complex. The Prambanan Temple was first built around 850 AD by Rakai Pikatan and was continuously refined and expanded by King Lokapala and King Balitung Maha Sambu. Based on the Śivagrha Inscription dated 856 AD, this sacred temple was built to honour the god Śiva, and the original name of this building in Sanskrit is Śivagrha (Sanskrit: Śiva-grha meaning House of Śiva) or Śivalaya (Sanskrit Śiva-laya meaning Realm of Śiva or Nature of Śiva). Śiva Mahadeva is physically worshipped in statues, but the devotee's consciousness is continually elevated towards ParamaŚiva (consciousness without form and shape) and finally merges into the consciousness of the spirit of the universe, the supreme Brahman (*Parambrahman*).

Research on the symbolism of *Parabrahman* in the design of Prambanan Temple revealed a deep connection between Hindu philosophical concepts and artistic expressions seen in the architecture and ornamentation of the temple (Galewicz, 2023). Through this analysis, it is possible to understand how abstract spiritual teachings are integrated into concrete material forms, as well as their impact on the understanding and preservation of Hindu traditions on a global level. The level of worship and awareness at Prambanan Temple ranges from the material, concrete level to the abstract and supreme level. Similarly, the abstract spiritual is realized in tangible material form. The results showed that *Parabrahman* symbolism greatly influenced the design and structure of Prambanan Temple. *Parabrahman*, as the concept of God who is absolute and beyond all forms, is interpreted through design principles that reflect eternity and perfection. Prambanan Temple, with its symmetrical layout and use of vertical space, reflects an attempt to create a physical representation of the metaphysical reality of *Parabrahman*. The tall and majestic structure

of the temple, particularly Śiva Temple as the central, not only symbolizes the power and majesty of Śiva as the god of destruction and creation but also emphasizes aspects of eternity and the interconnectedness between the material and spiritual worlds.

The ornamental details and reliefs in Prambanan Temple also serve as a visual expression of the concept of *Parabrahman*. The reliefs that adorn the temple not only depict mythological stories but also contain philosophical symbols related to *Parabrahman*. For example, reliefs depicting the Trimurti; Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva, are manifestations of a divine unity that transcends the individual. Every element of the relief, from the pose to the attributes of the deities, is designed to reflect the underlying principles of the *Parabrahman* concept (Nagar, 2023). These details provide insight into how abstract teachings can be interpreted and presented in a visual form that can be understood by visitors to the temple at that time. This research also reveals how the concept of *Parabrahman* was adapted and translated in the local cultural context in Indonesia. Prambanan Temple is not only an example of the application of Indian Hinduism outside its homeland but also the result of the interaction between local culture and Hindu traditions. The design and ornamentation of this temple show a unique aesthetic adaptation that suits the local conditions and needs of the community that built it. This reflects how Hinduism can adapt to different cultural contexts, resulting in distinctive and relevant forms of expression.

The research results make a significant contribution to the global understanding of Hindu traditions by showing how abstract teachings such as *Parabrahman* can be translated into architecture and art forms outside of India. Prambanan Temple serves as a bridge between philosophical theory and religious practice, as well as an example of how Hindu traditions can adapt and thrive in different parts of the world. This enriches the global perspective on the diversity and flexibility of Hinduism, and strengthens the understanding of how spiritual values can be integrated into various forms of cultural expression. Also, Prambanan Temple can be a bridge for the integration of global Hindu both in the past and present, in order to reach the higher goal of liberation.

This research also has important implications for the preservation and strengthening of cultural identity. Understanding the symbolism of *Parabrahman* in the design of Prambanan Temple helps in the preservation of the temple by maintaining its spiritual and cultural integrity. Knowledge of the temple's original meaning and purpose provides guidance for a more accurate restoration that is sensitive to its historical and religious values. In addition, this research supports the strengthening of local cultural identity by highlighting the important role of Prambanan Temple in Indonesia's cultural heritage and its contribution to global Hindu traditions in the present day.

Prambanan Temple is a marvellous example of how the abstract concept of *Parabrahman* can be translated into concrete architectural and art forms. The design and ornamentation of this temple not only reflect the majesty of Hindu teachings but also show how those teachings can be adapted and evolved in different cultural contexts. This research provides valuable insights into the relationship between philosophical theory and religious practice and enriches the global understanding of the Hindu tradition. In addition, the results of this research have important implications for the preservation of cultural heritage and the strengthening of local cultural identity, as well as supporting intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Intercultural and interfaith dialogue is very important as a bridge to build unity and mutual understanding so as to build a better life and cooperation. Prambanan Temple has shown in the context of religion and spirituality, that there are patterns of integrality and common ground even with different traditions.

Prambanan Temple, as one of the largest Hindu temple complexes in Southeast Asia, offers a stunning example of how the abstract concept of *Parabrahman*, the absolute and infinite God in Hindu philosophy, is translated into physical and architectural form. *Parabrahman*, according to Vedanta, is the supreme consciousness that transcends all worldly forms and attributes, and the depiction of this concept in the architecture of Prambanan Temple requires a deep understanding of the relationship between philosophical theory and artistic practice. Prambanan Temple, with its magnificent

structure and design, is designed to reflect God's power and majesty through principles that align with the idea of perfection and eternity inherent to *Parabrahman*.

One of the main aspects of this integration is the use of vertical and symmetrical designs that dominate the architecture of Prambanan Temple. The vertical design, characterized by tall towers and towering temple structures, serves as a metaphor for spiritual attainment and proximity to ultimate reality, which is central to the concept of *Parabrahman*. This structure depicts an attempt to connect the material world with the higher spiritual world, an important principle in Hinduism. In addition, symmetry in the temple's design not only provides visual balance but also reflects cosmic harmony which is a manifestation of unity in diversity, in accordance with the teachings on *Parabrahman* (Soekmono, 1995). This shows how aesthetic aspects and architectural structures can serve as a medium to express abstract philosophical concepts (Singh et al., 2022; Yanagisawa et al., 2020).

The ornamental details and reliefs in Prambanan Temple also play an important role in realizing the symbolism of *Parabrahman*. These reliefs, which adorn the walls and panels of the temple, serve not only as decorative elements but also as a means to convey spiritual teachings. For example, the Trimurti relief at Śiva Temple depicts the manifestation of God in the three aspects of Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva, illustrating how the divine unity can be divided into seemingly distinct yet interconnected forms. This is in accordance with the view of *Parabrahman* as the unity of all things, which transcends individual boundaries and specific attributes (Susetyo, 2022). By using reliefs as a medium of expression, this temple design is able to articulate complex metaphysical concepts in a visual form that can be accessed and understood by temple visitors.

This research also reveals how Prambanan Temple is an example of local cultural adaptation to Hinduism. Although the temple was built based on Hindu principles from India, the design and ornamentation of the temple show significant adjustments to the local cultural context in Indonesia. This theme highlights how Hindu traditions are adapted and customized with elements of local culture, resulting in a form of expression that is unique and relevant to the society that built it (Surpi, 2020). These adaptations are visible in various aspects of temple design. One example is aesthetic and structural adjustments that may reflect local construction techniques and available materials. Although Prambanan Temple follows traditional Hindu design principles, local cultural influences can be seen in the decorative patterns and stonework techniques used. For example, ornamental details such as carvings and geometric patterns show integration with artistic elements that existed at that time in the Java region. These adaptations not only add to the aesthetic uniqueness of the temple but also show how Hinduism has blended with local culture, creating forms of expression that reflect not only religious teachings but also local cultural identity.

The cultural interactions that occurred also contributed to the adaptation of Hindu traditions in the local context. Prambanan Temple serves as a meeting point between Indian Hindu tradition and Javanese culture, resulting in a synergy that enriches religious and artistic practices in Indonesia. This adaptation can be seen in elements of mythology and symbolism that may be adjusted to be more easily understood and accepted by the local community. This demonstrates the flexibility of Hinduism and its ability to adapt to different cultural contexts, resulting in forms of expression that are relevant and resonant with local communities.

The results of this study have significant implications for the preservation of Prambanan Temple and the strengthening of local cultural identity. Understanding the symbolism and design of Prambanan Temple is essential to ensure that the temple's restoration and maintenance efforts maintain its spiritual and cultural integrity. This theme highlights how in-depth knowledge of a temple's original meaning and purpose can provide important guidance in designing restoration strategies that are sensitive to historical and religious values (Surpi et al., 2023). The restoration that considers the spiritual and cultural aspects of the temple ensures that the changes made not only improve the physical structure but also maintain the deep meaning of the existing design and symbolism. By understanding how *Parabrahman* is integrated into the architecture and ornamentation, maintenance efforts can be directed towards preserving important elements of the spiritual and cultural

heritage contained within Prambanan Temple. This helps in preventing the loss of historical and religious significance associated with the site while maintaining the values that are part of the local cultural heritage.

Furthermore, this research also contributes to the strengthening of local cultural identity by highlighting the important role of Prambanan Temple in Indonesia's cultural heritage. The temple symbolizes the long history and diversity of Indonesian culture and its contribution to the global Hindu tradition. By deepening the understanding of temple design and symbolism, local and global communities can better appreciate Indonesia's cultural heritage and its role in shaping the broader Hindu tradition. It also supports the strengthening of local cultural identity by increasing awareness and appreciation of existing spiritual and cultural heritage. The important contribution of this research to global understanding by showing how philosophical concepts such as *Parabrahman* are integrated in the design of Prambanan Temple. The findings reveal a deep connection between philosophical theory and artistic practice, as well as showing how Hindu teachings can adapt and evolve in different cultural contexts. Through thematic analysis, it can be seen that Prambanan Temple is not only an example of the application of Hinduism outside India but also a manifestation of how this tradition can be adapted to local cultures, resulting in unique and relevant forms of expression (Endaristi et al., 2023).

This analysis also broadens perspectives on the flexibility of Hinduism and its ability to integrate with various cultural contexts. Prambanan Temple demonstrates that although spiritual and philosophical teachings originated in India, they can be translated into different forms that suit local needs and contexts. This enriches the global understanding of the diversity of Hindu traditions and their contribution to world cultural heritage (Surpi et al., 2021). This research also underscores the importance of understanding and maintaining the relationship between architectural design and philosophical meaning to ensure that the preservation of cultural heritage remains true to its underlying values (Woodward, 2001).

Prambanan Temple shows how Hindu traditions in Indonesia interact with elements of local culture. This includes adjustments in symbolism and mythology that may be more easily understood and accepted by the local community (Surpi, 2020). This adaptation shows how Hinduism was not only accepted but also modified to blend with different cultural contexts, creating a synergy between tradition and locality (Woods & Kong, 2022). Prambanan Temple plays an important role in Indonesia's cultural identity. Understanding the symbolism and design of the temple strengthens awareness of local and national cultural heritage. It also enhances global appreciation of Indonesia's cultural contribution in the Hindu tradition and helps in building a strong and sustainable cultural identity at local and international levels (Roskies & Jordaan, 2000). This thematic analysis shows that Prambanan Temple is an outstanding example of the integration of spiritual teachings in architecture, cultural adaptation, and preservation of cultural heritage. Through this approach, it can be seen how the concept of *Parabrahman* is articulated in the temple design, how Hindu traditions adapt to the local context, and how this research contributes to the preservation and strengthening of cultural identity. It provides valuable insights into the way philosophical teachings can be translated into relevant and meaningful forms in different cultural contexts. The architecture of Prambanan Temple contains symbolism and philosophy in each of its elements. Each deity represented in the temple has its own meaning and role in Hindu cosmology (Sundberg, 2022).

In the Hindu tradition, the concept of integral consciousness refers to a holistic understanding of reality that encompasses the various dimensions of existence. This concept is inspired by the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, which teaches that all forms of existence are ultimately one, and that apparent differences are illusory (*Maya*) (Chalise, 2021). Hindu integral consciousness involves an understanding of the *Purusharthas*, the four purposes of human life, *Dharma* (duty), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire), and *Moksha* (liberation), all of which play a role in the human spiritual journey (Bhandari, 2022). In addition, the concept of *Gunas* (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*) provides a framework for understanding the basic qualities of matter and mind that influence individual experience.

In the context of Ken Wilber's Integral Theory, *Parabrahman* can be analyzed through the lens of comprehensive integral consciousness. Wilber developed the integral theory of consciousness to bring together multiple perspectives on reality and human experience within a coherent framework. In Wilber's model, reality is considered to include several dimensions or "quadrants," namely physical, psychological, social, and cognitive (Ulanova, 2020). *Parabrahman*, as the ultimate reality in Hinduism, transcends and encompasses all these dimensions. In the physical quadrant (Lower Left Quadrant), *Parabrahman* manifests in physical manifestations such as the architecture of Prambanan Temple, which reflects Hindu cosmology and spirituality (Perdana & Kurniawan, 2022a). In the psychological quadrant (Upper Left Quadrant), the individual's experience of *Parabrahman* is reflected in meditation and spiritual practices that help to realize a connection with ultimate reality. The social quadrant (Lower Right Quadrant) involves the social and cultural structures that support spiritual practices and symbolism of *Parabrahman*, while the cognitive quadrant (Upper Right Quadrant) includes the philosophical understanding and theories about Brahman and Atman that form the intellectual framework of this concept (Wilber, 2000).

By combining perspectives from Wilber's integral consciousness theory with the concept of *Parabrahman*, we obtain a comprehensive view of how ultimate reality is integrated in various aspects of human life. This involves vertical integration, which is the understanding that *Parabrahman* encompasses and transcends all levels of experience, from material to spiritual. Moreover, horizontal integration shows how various perspectives, from science to spirituality, can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of *Parabrahman*. Prambanan Temple, with its rich symbolism, serves as a material and spiritual example of this reality, linking art, architecture, and spiritual practices in a harmonious whole (Khairunnisa et al., 2021).

Within the framework of Ken Wilber's theory of integral consciousness, *Parabrahman* is understood as an absolute reality that encompasses and transcends the various dimensions of existence. Integral consciousness allows us to see how *Parabrahman* manifests in architecture, rituals and spiritual experiences, and how it functions as the centre of all aspects of reality. This integration helps us understand the relationship between symbolism, practice, and experience in the Hindu tradition, and how Prambanan Temple serves as a material and spiritual representation of these concepts. In a global context, Prambanan Temple can revive its light as a centre of Hindu civilization, not only for Indonesian Hindus, but Hindus of the world. Various rituals and spiritual activities can be carried out together to build goodness, unity, cooperation and mutual progress.

#### 4. Conclusions

This research reveals that the symbolism of *Parabrahman*, which symbolizes God who is absolute and beyond all forms, is deeply integrated in the design and structure of Prambanan Temple. Through its magnificent architecture and intricate ornamental details, the temple reflects an attempt to realize Hindu philosophical principles in concrete material form. The Śiva temple, as the centre of the complex, not only signifies the power and majesty of Śiva but also underlines the aspect of eternity and the interconnectedness between the material and spiritual worlds. It shows how abstract spiritual teachings can be articulated in visual forms that could be understood and appreciated by the people of the time.

The results highlight how the concept of *Parabrahman* and other Hindu teachings have been adapted in the local cultural context in Indonesia. Prambanan Temple is not only a manifestation of Indian Hindu traditions but also reflects aesthetic and cultural adaptations that suit the needs and context of local communities. This demonstrates the flexibility of Hinduism in adapting to different cultures and conditions, resulting in unique and relevant forms of expression beyond its homeland. This research enriches global understanding of how spiritual values can be integrated into different cultural contexts and contributes to intercultural dialogue.

This research also makes an important contribution to the preservation and strengthening of local cultural identity. Understanding the symbolism of *Parabrahman* in

the design of Prambanan Temple helps in restoration efforts that maintain the spiritual and cultural integrity of the site. Knowledge of the temple's original meaning and purpose provides guidance for more sensitive and accurate maintenance of historical and religious values. In addition, the research results support the strengthening of local cultural identity by highlighting the important role of Prambanan Temple in Indonesia's cultural heritage and its contribution to global Hindu traditions, as well as strengthening awareness and appreciation of cultural and spiritual heritage.

Integral consciousness in the Hindu tradition and the concept of *Parabrahman* can be understood in depth through the lens of Ken Wilber's integral consciousness theory. Hindu integral consciousness reflects a holistic understanding of reality that involves multiple dimensions of existence, including material, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects. *Parabrahman*, as the ultimate reality in Hinduism, encompasses and transcends all these dimensions, creating a harmonious relationship between physical manifestation, individual experience, social structure, and cognitive understanding. Through Wilber's theory of integral consciousness, it can be seen that Prambanan Temple is not only a monumental architectural structure but also a symbol that connects these dimensions, representing universal consciousness and providing a deeper context to spiritual experiences and ritual practices in the Hindu tradition. With this vertical and horizontal integration of multiple perspectives, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of how *Parabrahman* functions as the centre of all existence and how this symbolism can be seen in a global context.

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### **Author Contribution**

Conceptualization, A.P.; Methodology, N.N.S.W.; Software, A.P.; Validation, A.P., & N.N.S.W.; Formal Analysis & Investigation, N.N.S.W.; Resources, Data Curation, Writing–Original Draft Preparation, A.P.; Writing–Review & Editing, T.M.; Visualization, Supervision, Project Administration, A.P.; and Funding Acquisition, T.M.

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### **Ethical Review Board Statement**

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the nature of the research, which is based on qualitative methods including literature review, non-invasive field observation, and expert interviews that did not involve vulnerable populations, medical interventions, or sensitive personal data. All interview participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided their consent voluntarily prior to participation. The research was conducted in accordance with general ethical principles for social science research, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for all participants throughout the study.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and

their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. All data were collected and used in accordance with ethical standards, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

### Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to ethical considerations and the qualitative nature of the research, including interview data and field observations, some data are not publicly available in order to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Grammarly to assist in improving grammar, clarity, and academic tone of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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