The doorways form one of the most important architectural members in buildings, be they secular or religious in nature, because they are the only means of access to and fro a particular building. Besides their unquestionable utility, doorways also serve the purpose of enhancing the beauty of a building in which their frames play a significant role. This is all the more applicable to the temple doorframes that were made according to well-defined injunctions contained in various texts on vastuśāstra. The size and direction of a doorway in a temple as also the images and designs to be depicted on its frame were carefully laid down keeping in mind their utility, beauty, grace and life to the architectural portion leading to the deity in the shrine. Even the belief to ward off any evil from the temple as well as devotees was taken care of by inserting auspicious symbols on the doorframes. As such a detailed study of the evolution, development and architecture of the temple doorframes is very important.

A host of savants have dwelt upon various aspects of temple architecture from time to time that has resulted in the accumulation of a massive literature on the subject for the benefit of the curious students and researchers. Even if we leave aside the works that deal with the temples of India in general and various regions, periods and styles prevalent in the subcontinent from time to time and concentrate only on a small area with a particular time frame in mind, the list of works would still remain considerably long to handle.
Himachal Pradesh has been nick-named as Devabhūmi or the land of gods because of the numerous temples that dot the entire region through its length and breadth and span a long period of more than two millennia for their evolution and development. They have attracted the attention of a host of scholars in the last two centuries. Numerous works on temples of Himachal Pradesh have been produced in the form of travelogues, religious and historical studies, works on art and architecture and so on. The European scholars and travellers evinced a keen interest in the subject from a very early date resulting in the monumental works by authors like Alexander Cunningham, H. Hargreaves, A.F.P. Harcourt, James Fergusson, J. Ph. Vogel, A. H. Francke, Hermann Goetz, Penelope Chetwode, M. Postel and others. Indian scholars like Krishna Deva, Mian Govardhan Singh, Shanti Lal Nagar, Laxman S. Thakur, O. C. Handa, Subhashini Aryan and others have also dwelt upon the subject from time to time. Some of them have been too general in their observations while the others have concentrated on only one or two aspects of the temples of the region. Even in some of the comprehensive works like that of Laxman S. Thakur it has not been possible to dwell upon each aspect in detail. As such we decided to undertake a micro study of the temple doorframes of Himachal Pradesh from c. A.D. 650 to 1250 which has proved to be a fruitful endeavour.

To make the work comprehensive in nature we studied all the works on the subject by modern scholars carefully noting their observations and findings. Thereafter we surveyed several of the relevant original texts (with their translations) on vāstuśāstra for a peep in to the injunctions laid down by them.
The most laborious but fruitful task undertaken by us was an *in situ* study of all the temples of Himachal Pradesh undertaken in this work through various field work trips in last four year. We were immensely benefited by the guidance through the encyclopaedic knowledge and keen observations of our supervisor Professor Ashvini Agrawal, who managed to accompany us on these field work tours despite his very busy schedule. While describing various doorframes and images, the terms right and left have been used from the viewer’s side and not that of the image or the doorframe unless specified.

The entire work has been divided in to seven chapters. The first chapter by way of introduction familiarises the readers with the geographical features including the geographical divisions and an outline of the history of the state with special reference to its cultural, art and architectural wealth. In the second chapter we have traced the evolution and development of the Hindu temple. Though it consists of a general survey, yet we have taken care of describing the origin and development of various architectural features of the Hindu temple in all India context taking due note of regional variations and styles, especially in the early medieval period. The features of the Indian temples have been duly compared with the contemporary temples of Himachal Pradesh. It has helped us in fixing the dates of various temples and also in studying interaction between the national and regional styles.

The third chapter, though brief, contains a specific discussion on the temple doorframes. An attempt has been made here to take note of the doorframe of important temples of India from the beginning and
compare them with the doorframes of the temples of Himachal Pradesh. It serves as a well laid foundation for the next three chapters.

We have divided the study of the temples of Himachal Pradesh in three chapters viz. the structural stone temples, rock-cut temples and the wooden temples, each forming a separate chapter numbered from the fourth to sixth. They form the nucleus as well as the main body of our thesis. In the fourth chapter we have surveyed the doorframes of all the structural stone temples that fall within the ambit of the present study. They reveal that the development of the temple architecture in Himachal Pradesh was contemporaneous with those of other parts of India and their doorframes were chiselled with great care keeping in view the textual injunctions and the regional originality at the same time.

The fifth chapter is exclusively devoted to the door frame of the only known rock-cut complex at Masrur in Himachal Pradesh. It makes a fascinating study as this single complex has numerous shrines with exquisitely carved doorframes with several new features. No such study has been undertaken of these shrines by anyone in the past.

The sixth chapter deals with the doorframes of the wooden temples. It contains details of some of the earliest temples in the remote areas of Himachal Pradesh, such as Lakṣaṇā Devi at Bharmaur, Śakti Devī at Chatrarhi and Markulā Devī at Udaipur. Though the tradition of wooden temples in the region has been traced to the present day, no one has ever cared before us to write on the possible origin of this art as the known examples of circa 7th century A.D. were already in highly advanced stage of development.
The last chapter contains our conclusions on the basis of our detailed study of the doorframes of Himachal Pradesh. Here we have not only highlighted our findings but have also dwelt upon several moot points and possibilities with cogent evidence.

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