

Khajuraho Temple (Kandariye Mahadev Temple)

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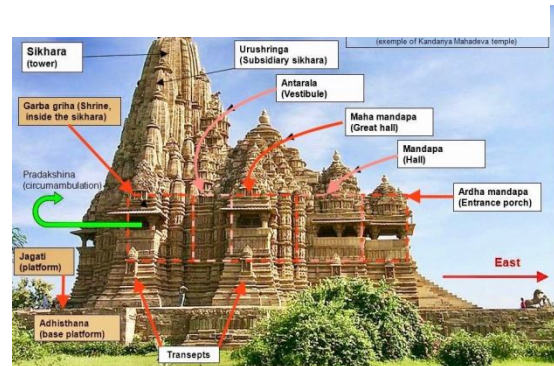
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Khajuraho is situated near Jhansi and now a railway line is also attached to this historical but now a small village declared as World Heritage Site. A number of historical stone inscription found at Khajuraho proclaim that these were built by the Chandella rulers, a branch of the Rajput clan. It was in those days known by the name of Kharjjuravahaka.

The site overgrown by jungles and apparently abandoned was rediscovered in 1838 A.D. by a British officer, Captain T.S. Burt of the Royal Bengal Engineers. This ancient city was filled with numerous tanks scores of lofty temples of sculptural grace and architectural splendor.



Khajuraho Group of Temple

In original there were about 85 temples, but now only 24 among them are extant. The Chausathyogini temple, the Brahma and Mahadeva temples are made up of granite and all the other remaining temples are constructed out of locally available sandstone. For the purpose of study these group of temples are grouped into western and eastern areas.

The Western group of temples was dedicated to the Brahmanical religion. The temples that include in this group Matangeswara temple, Lakshmana temple, Varaha Mandapa, Lakshmi temple in one group, Vishvanatha temple, Kandhriya Mahadeva temple, Devi Jagadamba temple, Chitragupta temple.

To the south-east of the western group is Chausath Yogini temple, the earliest temple in Khajuraho. A little away from this group of temples are the Brahma temple, Chaturbhuj temple, Vamana temple and the Javari temple.

A kilometer to the east is the Eastern group of temples was dedicated to the Jaina religion. They are the Parshvanatha temple, Adininatha temple. A little away from this is the Duladeo temple. Among the

various temples the Kandriya Mahadevi temple is the grandest and the temple architecture has reached its highest stage of excellence in this temple. The Parshvanatha temple is the largest among the Jain temples of Khajuraho. It has an entrance porch, a small hall, a large hall (mandapa), a vestibule, and a sanctum. The temple structure has an oblong architectural plan with projections at two ends. The front (eastern) projection forms the entrance porch, the back (western) projection is a shrine attached to the sanctum. The ceiling of the entrance porch features chain and floral patterns, and a pair of intertwined flying vidyadharas. The door-lintel of the mandapa has the sculpture of Adinatha's attendant: a ten-armed Chakreshvari riding a Garuda. The sanctum features sculptures of the Jinas. The outer walls have three bands of sculptures. These sculptures feature surasundaris (graceful women), flying couples, dancers, musicians, and celestial beings. Despite the temple's Jain affiliation, the outer walls also depict Vaishnavite themes including sculptures of Hindu gods and their incarnations with their consorts. These include Vishnu-Lakshmi, Rama-Sita, Balarama-Revati, Parashurama, Hanuman, Brahma and Yamalarjuna legend of Krishna. These sculptures are similar to those of the Lakshmana Temple in modeling, proportions and poise. Unlike the Lakshmana temple, the Parshvanatha temple doesn't feature explicit erotic sculptures, although one particular image appears to show a cross-legged apsara masturbating with an object.

King Yasovarman (A.D.954) built the temple of Vishnu now famous as Lakshmana temple. It is a Sandhara Temple of the Panchayatana Variety. The entire temple complex stands on a high platform (Jagati), as seen in image. The structure consists of all the elements of Hindu temple architecture. It has entrance porch (ardh - mandapa), Mandapa, Maha - Mandapa, Antarala and Garbhagriha. Unlike other temples in Khajuraho, its sanctum is Pancharatha on plan (top-view). Its shikhara is clustered with minor urushringas (refer images of temple top i.e. shikhara). The wall portion is studded with balconied windows with ornate balustrades. It has two rows of sculptures (refer images of temple's outer wall) including divine figures, couples and erotic scenes. The sanctum doorway is of seven sakhas (vertical panels). The central one being decorated with the ten incarnation of Vishnu. The Lintel depicts goddess Lakshmi in the centre flanked by Brahma and Vishnu. The sanctum contains four-armed sculpture of Vishnu. One of the niches has the image of the sculptor and his disciples at work.

The largest and the grandest temple is Khandriya Mahadeva temple built by king Ganda (A.D. 1017-29). The Kandariya Mahadeva Temple, 31 metres (102 ft) in height, is in the western complex, which is the largest among the three groups of the Khajuraho complex of temples. This

western group of temples, consisting of the Kandariya, Matangeshwara and Vishvanatha temples, is compared to a "cosmic design of a hexagon (a yantra or Cosmogram)" representing the three forms of Shiva. The temple architecture is an assemblage of porches and towers which terminates in a shikhara or spire, a feature which was common from the 10th century onwards in the temples of Central India. The temple is founded on a massive plinth of 4 metres (13 ft) height. The temple structure above the plinth is dexterously planned and pleasingly detailed. The superstructure is built in a steep mountain shape or form, symbolic of Mount Meru which is said to be the mythical source of creation of the world. The superstructure has richly decorated roofs which rise in a grand form terminating in the shikara, which has 84 miniature spires. The temple is in layout of 6 square kilometres (2.3 sq mi), of which 22 are extant including the Kaṇḍāriyā Mahādeva Temple. This temple is characteristically built over a plan of 31 metres (102 ft) in length and 20 metres (66 ft) in width with the main tower soaring to a height of 31 metres (102 ft), and is called the "largest and grandest temple of Khajuraho". A series of steep steps with high rise lead from the ground level to the entrance to the temple. The layout of the temple is a five-part design, a commonality with the Lakshmana and Vishvanatha temples in the Khajuraho complex. Right at the entrance there is torana, a very intricately carved garland which is sculpted from a single stone; such entrances are part of a Hindu wedding procession. The carvings on the entrance gate shows the "tactile quality of the stone and also the character of the symmetrical design" that is on view in the entire temple which has high relief carvings of the figurines. Finely chiseled, the decorative quality of the ornamentation with the sharp inscribed lines has "strong angular forms and brilliant dark-light patterns". The carvings are of circles, undulations giving off spirals or sprays, geometric patterns, masks of lions and other uniform designs which has created a pleasant picture that is unique to this temple, among all others in the complex.

ARCHITECTURE: Khajuraho temples, almost all Hindu temple designs, follow a grid geometrical design called *vastu-purusha-mandala*. This design plan has three important components - *Mandala* means circle, *Purusha* is universal essence at the core of Hindu tradition, while *Vastu* means the dwelling structure. The design lays out a Hindu temple in a symmetrical, concentrically layered, self-repeating structure around the core of the temple called garbhagriya, where the abstract principle Purusha and the primary deity of the temple dwell. The shikhara, or spire, of the temple rises above the garbhagriya. This symmetry and structure in design is derived from central beliefs, myths, cardinality and mathematical principles. The circle of mandala

circumscribe the square. The square is considered divine for its perfection and as a symbolic product of knowledge and human thought, while circle is considered earthly, human and observed in everyday life (moon, sun, horizon, water drop, rainbow). Each supports the other. The square is divided into perfect 64 sub-squares called padas.

The Khajuraho temples are built on a high platform without any enclosure wall marking the culmination of the central Indian building style both in plan and elevation. All the components of temples viz: ardhmandapa (entrance porch), mandapa (hall), antarala (vestibule) and garbhagriha (sanctum) are interconnected internally and externally and are planned in an axis. In some of the large temples, lateral transepts with balconied windows and ambulatory path have been added.

The whole temple is profusely carved with sculptures of various motifs and designs in series. They are divisible into five broad categories. The first category comprises the cult images executed all around the temple. The second category comprises the Parivaradevatas and Parsvadevatas. They are placed in niches or figured against the walls of the temple. The third category consists of the Apsaras or Sura-Sundaries, known for their alluring appearance. These sculptures are carved either in round or in high or medium relief on the outer and inner walls, pillars and ceilings. These SuraSundaris are definitely represented as sensuous and youthful nymphs attired in the choicest gems, garments, grace and charm. But more frequently, the Sura-Sundaris are shown to express common human moods, emotions and activities as: disrobing, yawning, scratching the back, touching the breasts, rinsing the water from the wet plaits of hair, removing thorn, painting the feet, playing with a baby, writing a letter, admiring her self in mirror, applying collyrium, playing on flute or vina, playing with pets like parrots and monkeys. Dancers and musicians, erotic couples or group. The last includes some of the miscellaneous themes including domestic scenes, teacher and disciples, finest sculptural compositions of Khajuraho vibrating with a rare sensitiveness and warmth of human emotions. It is believed that these erotic sculptures shown on the temples are auspicious rather than indicative of lack of morality.