

PHOTO FEATURES OF TEMPLES OF KHAJURAHO

By Dr. Krishna Chandra Jha

The UNESCO World Heritage Site, **Khajuraho** is a group of Hindu and Jain temples in Madhya Pradesh (India, about 175 kilometers southeast of Jhansi. The temples are famous for their “NAGAR” style (North Indian Temple’s Architectural Style) and their erotic carvings.

Most of the Khajuraho temples were built between 950 and 1050 by the Chandela dynasty. The first recorded mention of Khajuraho temples in accounts of Foreign Albiruni in AD 1022. Local traditions list 85 temples in Khajuraho, out of which 25 temples are surviving & scattered in 20 sq. kilometers area. The temples were built together but were dedicated to two Hinduism & Jainism, suggesting a tradition of acceptance and respect for diverse religious views in the region.

4 Purushartha is an ideal concept of Indian social thinkers since millennium. These are known as **Dharma** (ethics, duty), **Artha** (wealth, prosperity), **Kama** (pleasure, sensual gratification) and **Moksha** (liberation, spiritual values). These are the blueprint for human fulfillment, signposts and those points us to a successful, satisfying, balanced existence in the world. Working with them can help you to make a balanced life at the deepest and most holistic level.

In Indian literature and philosophy, **Kama** denotes longing and desire, often with a sexual connotation. But the broader concept refers to any wish, passion, and pleasure of the senses, affection, love or enjoyment of life. In the *Upanishads* (ancient Hindu texts), the term is used in the broader sense of any type of desire.

We Indian have special god known as “Kamdeva” (god of sex). So it is only natural that we have erotic sculptures on our temples.

A lot of texts are in Indian traditions those directly or indirectly deal with this concept as the integral parts of human life. Among them, *Kamsutra*, *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, *Kumarsamhavam*, *Raghuvamham* & *Guhyasamajtantra* are some notable texts those describe the

different aspects of “Kama”. The Epic *Kumarsamhavam* of Kalidas especially deals with love & sexual practices of “Shiva-Parvati”.

There are a lot of temples those describe the elements of “kama” through different pose carved in their sculptures. Sun Temple (Konark), Jagdish Mandir (Udaipur), Markandeshwar (Maharashtra), Padavali (Madhya Pradesh), Sun Temple (Gujrat), Osian Temple (Rajasthan), Virupaksha Temple(Hampi), Tripurantaka Temple(Karnataka), Kailash Temple(Ellora), Ranakpur Temple(Rajasthan), Bhoramdeo Temple (Chhatisgarh, Nandadevi Temple (Almora)& Lingaraj Temple(Bhuvneshwar)are some remarkable examples of this tradition, but the erotic scenes carved in the temples of Khajuraho are the best among them .

LAXMAN TEMPLE



The Lakshmana temple was the first of several temples built by the Chandella kings in their newly-created capital of Khajuraho. The original patron of the Lakshmana temple was a leader of the Chandella clan, “Yashovarman”, who gained control over territories in the Bundelkhand

region of central India. The central deity at the Lakshmana temple is an image of “Vishnu” in his three-headed form known as Vaikuntha.





Images of Female's beauty from Laxman Temple



Images of Female's beauty from Laxman Temple



Erotic Images from Laxman Temple



Erotic Images from Laxman Temple

JAGDAMBI TEMPLE



The arches and porches Devi Jagdambi temple is very beautiful. It is the goddess temple merely worshiped by the devotees from all over the India. It is place of spiritualism which performs a lot of functions. People here can be the most advantage by fulfilling theirs need through goddess Jagdamba.



Images from Jagdambi Temple



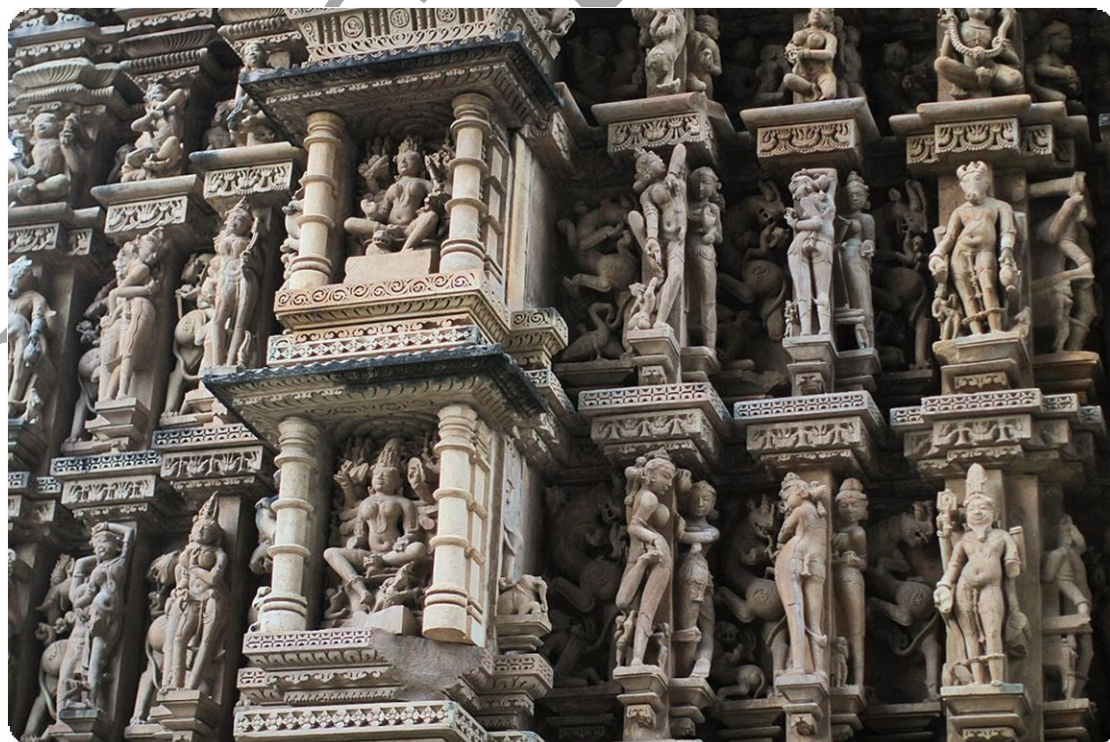
ADINATH TEMPLE





This temple is dedicated to the first “Jain Tirthankar Adinatha”, although it’s exterior walls also feature Hindu deities.

Decoration of Exterior Wall



The exterior walls of the temple have three bands of sculptures featuring Surasundaris (graceful women), Flying Vidyadhar couples, Vyalas(mythical lion-like being) and a dancer with musicians.

PARSHWANATH TEMPLE





Among all other Jain temples in Khajuraho, the Parshvanath Temple is the most impressive. This temple bears ample resemblance with the Hindu temple of Khajuraho. The minute sculptural detailing on the body of the temple makes it one of the main tourist attractions in Khajuraho.



Kama and Rati



Sursundari applying eye makeup



Couple

DULADEO TEMPLE



The **Duladeo Temple** is dedicated to the god Shiva in the form of a Linga. Dulodeo means "Holy Bridegroom". The temple is also known as "Kunwar Math".



The figurines carved in the temple have soft expressive features unlike other temples. The walls have a display of carved celestial dancers (Apsara) in erotic postures and other figures.





Nandi, Devas and erotic sculptures on the external walls

KANDARIA MAHADEV TEMPLE



The Kandariya Mahadeva (The Great god of Caves) temple is compared to a "cosmic design of a hexagon (a yantra or Cosmo gram)" representing the three forms of Shiva. This temple is one of the most of the splendid example of religious art. Among the Khajuraho groups of temple it is one of the prettiest built by one of the great Chandela ruler Dhangdeva in 1050 AD.

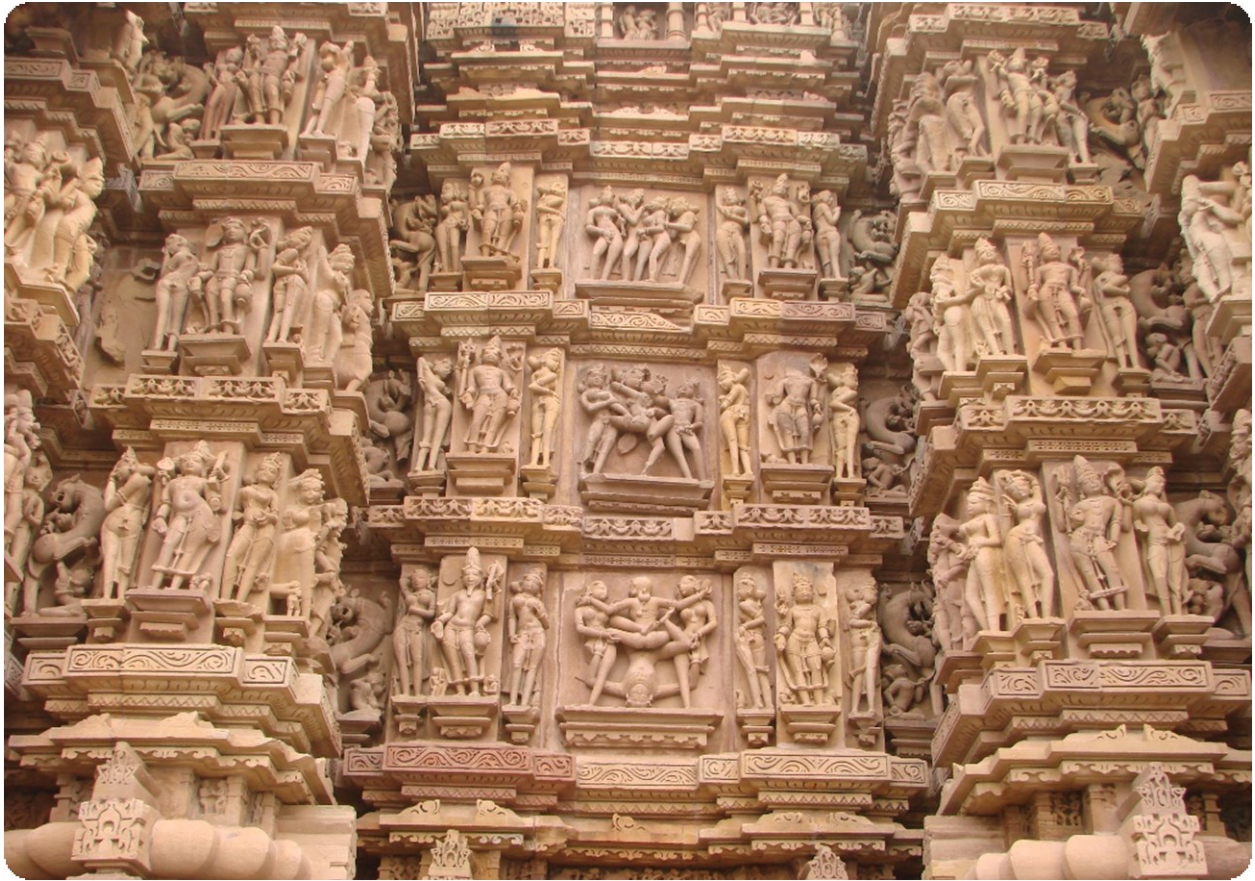
The superstructure is built in a steep mountain shape or form, symbolic of Mount Meru which is said to be the mythical source of creation of the world. It has richly decorated roofs which rise in a grand form terminating in the "Shikara", which has 84 miniature spires called "Urushringas". This temple 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".

Vatsyayana, the author of the **Kamasutra**, describes “kama” as happiness that is a phenomenon of the mind, or ‘*manasa vyapara*’. The *Kamasutra* defines it as “pleasure experienced by the senses while in harmony with the mind and soul”.





The Kandaria Mahadev Temple tower with 84 mini spires



Erotic sculptures on mini spires

An overall estimate says that there are around 870 sculptures in this temple premise, which has height of about 1 meter. Among them 646 statue are more appealing. Both the exterior & interior walls of this temple, the pillars & the ceilings have the depiction of 4 basic Hindu Philosophy of life: Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha.

In order to enter a place so pure, you need to relieve yourself of all your desires & lust. It is by acceptance of lust & desire in you that you can learn to control it. These sculptures are always on the outer walls of temples meaning that humans leave their desire before stepping it.

The significance of erotic sculptures in the Khajuraho temples has been interpreted in many ways. Some regard them as representations mirroring the lax moral standards of contemporary society. For some others, these are the illustrations of erotic postures mentioned in the ancient

text **Kamasutra**, which is regarded as the classical treatise on lovemaking. However, the mostly accepted view is that these sculptures symbolize the concept of Tantric love. According to this, sexual act is a blend of Yoga (spirituality) and Bhoga (physical pleasure). Enjoyment of senses was seen as an easier way to salvation.

They also depict that the inner deity of the Temple is pure like the soul (atman) which is unaffected by sexual desires and other gross tendencies, destiny etc. They give message that one should always have God as the central point in one's life even though one is engaged in worldly activities.



These sculptures depict the various matters of our everyday life including the sculptures of humans & animals. Exterior of the towers have figures of intricately carved sculptures of divine figures & humans. Only 10% of total carving of these temples is erotic in nature & rests of sculptures are related different aspects of our everyday life.

It is said that Chandravarman (founder of Chandela dynasty) had a dream wherein his mother Hemavati came to him and asked to build temples that would reveal human passions. Chandravarman started the construction of the first temple and the rest were constructed by successive rulers of the dynasty.

Another interpretation even goes to say that the temples themselves are designed as a form of the “seductress”. And there is this belief centered on the tantric cult that explains that the sculptures

are metaphors and are actually a form of language, a form of educating the various doctrines of the cult through symbols and imagery.

The art carved in these temples represents a broad minded Hindu society with a vivid portrayal of daily lives, because Love and Lust are an intrinsic part of life.

Bio

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