



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor: 5.2  
IJAR 2017; 3(6): 1450-1453  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
Received: 01-04-2017  
Accepted: 05-05-2017

**Dr. Ambika Bajpai**  
Associate Professor, Navyug  
Kanya Mahavidyalaya,  
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh,  
India

## Review on the architecture of Khajuraho temple

**Dr. Ambika Bajpai**

### Abstract

In this context the Indian Hindu temple architecture are not only the abode of God and place of worship, but they are also the cradle of knowledge, art, architecture and culture. The characteristic temple plan of the northern India was developed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century under the rule of Hindu dynasty. These temples consisted of all the basic elements- the grabha-gariha surrounded by an ambulatory path, an outer portico with columns in front and flat roofs of stone. The temples constructed during this period were simple and less impressive compared to the temple constructed during the 10<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century temples. Some of the examples from this period are temples at Sanchi, Tigawa and Deogarh. The development of shikhara started at the temple of Deogarh in Madhya Pradesh.

**Keywords:** Architecture, temples, Lakshmana, Khajuraho

### Introduction

The temple of Teli-ka mandir, Gwalior and Vaital Deul, Bhubaneswar were unique and inspired from the early Buddhist architecture with rectangular plan and the barrel vault roof of chaitya hall. These temples don't make the full composition of Hindu temple as they only consist of main sanctuary with neither the mandapa nor the portico. This form of architecture was abandoned by the architects in the

north but was accepted in the architecture of south India. A distinct architectural style developed in the temples of Orissa (7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century). The elliptic curve of shikhara from the earlier periods were modified as a perpendicular prismatic tower and converged near the peak. For the first time in history special attention was given to the construction of mandapa; the roof of the mandapa was now pyramidal with tapering at the top and lower than the shikhara. The finest examples of this period are the Lingaraja temple, Bhubaneswar, the Jaganath temple Puri and the Sun temple Konark with their shikhara height ranging from 43 m to 57 m high.

Khajuraho situated in District Chhatarpur of Madhya Pradesh has the distinction of possession one of the most compact and homogenous group of Indo-Aryan or Northern temples, built under the patronage of the Chandalla rulers. Except for a few number, all the temples of Khajuraho pertain to a cognate style and are manifestation of a distinctive and consented architectural movement, differing only in details of expression. These temples were built of sandstone and professedly carved with erotic sculptures. These temples are also famous for their conical tower made of piles of stone with an arrangement of miniature towers called shikhara. Each of these temples has portico, entrance hall and the sanctum. The roofs of various sections of the temple have distinct form. The sanctum is Sapta-ratha; the Shikhara divided into seven segments showing two series of mouldings. Each and every facade, wall, ceiling of these temples have carved figures from the mythology and history. The finest examples are the Kandariya Mahadeva temple and Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho. Khajuraho temples were built in the short span of a hundred years from 950 to 1050 A.D. in an inspired burst of creativity, but were abandoned after the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Khajuraho temples have been listed in the world heritage site and are also considered in the Seven Wonders of the World. Khajuraho was the capital city of Chandella dynasty in primeval time. The Chandella capital was moved to Mahoba after this time, but Khajuraho is continued to flourish for some time. The historic town Khajuraho has largest and spectacular group of medieval Hindu and Jaina temples. Khajuraho is a small modest town located in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, south of the Gangetic Plain and north of the rising Deccan plateau.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Ambika Bajpai**  
Associate Professor, Navyug  
Kanya Mahavidyalaya,  
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh,  
India

The expensive landscape of the state is cradled by the Vindhya and Satpura hills ranges and watered by large river, Narmada and Chambal. Myths, legend, ancient literature and inscription provide a jigsaw-puzzle picture of the story of Khajuraho, but there are still some missing pieces. There is mention of Khajuraho in ancient texts which explain how the village got its name.

The name Khajuraho, ancient Kharjuravahaka, is derived from the Sanskrit words kharjura = date palm and vahaka = "one who carries". According to a tradition, Khajuraho was so called because one of its city-gates was ornamented with two golden Khajur trees (bearer of date palm). In the Prithviraj Raso, the book written by Chandabardai Khajuraho is called Khajurapura or Khajjnapura. Abu-Rahim who accompanied Sultan Mahmud mentions it as the territory of king Bida, Vidyadhara. Ibn- Batuta who visited this place in 1335 A.D. calls this place as Kajarra or Kajura. In inscriptional records this place is known as Khajjuravahaka. Possibly in ancient time the place was full of Khajur trees, hence it was named after Khajuraho.

During the Janapada time the region was part of the Vatsa Kingdom and then it came under the Mauryan supremacy. Discovery of Asokan rock edict at Gujjara in district Datia attest the supremacy of Mauryan Empire. From the early historic time to the arrival of Chandellas, the region has witnessed the rule of Kuhanas, Nagas, Vakatakas, Imperial Gupta and Pratiharas. According to the Chandellas and other contemporary records the land was known as Jejabhukti or Jejakabhukti with a few derivative variants like Jejahuti, Jajhuti and Jijahuti, Jijhoti, Jajhaoti and the Chinese from, Chi-chi-to or Chi-ki-to in Chandellas times. This seems to account for the suggestion that Jijhoti is an abbreviation of Jejakabhukti. Mahoba inscriptions delineate the genealogy of Chandella dynasty and refer that the Kingdom has been named after King Jeja. The earliest inscriptions of King Dhanga dated to 954 A.D. suggest the occupation of Khajuraho by the Chandella rulers. Albaruni in 1022 A.D. speak of the region Jejahuti. The Madanpur inscriptions dated to 1182 A.D. refers the territory as Jejakabhukti or Jejakamandala.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century Khajuraho was under the rule of the Chandela dynasty, which traced its origin to the moon god, Chandrama. The Mahaba Khand of the Chandabardai's (the famous medieval court poet) "Prithviraj Raso", folk balled of the 17<sup>th</sup> century recounts a beautiful legend concerning the origin of the Chandella dynasty, who came to rule the region in 10<sup>th</sup> century, after the birth of Christ. The story of the origin of great Chandella dynasty is very interesting. Hemraj, was the royal priest of Kashi or Banaras (the old name of Varanasi), had an exceptionally beautiful daughter named Hemavati, who was unfortunately a child widow. One sultry summer night while she was bathing in a lotus- filled pond (Rati Talab) with all her clothes put off. Chandra, the Moon God (Chandrama) was so dazed by her beauty. He descent to earth in human form full of lust and passion and ravished her. The child born of their union was Chandravarman, who was raised in the forest by his mother who sought refuge there, away from the censorious eyes of the medieval society. He grew up and become the founder of the Chandella dynasty. When established as a ruler he had a dream visitation from his mother, who implored him to build temples that would reveal human passion, and thus bring about the realization of the emptiness of earthy desires. Chandravarman thus started the tradition of building

temples. Later the subsequent Chandella kings carried on building temples to maintain this magnificent tradition. Chandellas built 85 temples surrounding by lakes and gardens at Khajuraho.

### Re-emergence in the Nineteenth Century

The first local ruler to take interest in the preservation of these temples was Maharaja Pratap Singh, who, between 1843 and 1847, undertook large scale renovation of the Khajuraho temples. However, since he used lime and brick in the repair work, which did not suit the ancient monuments, some of his renovations had to be removed later by the Archaeological Survey of India. General F.C. Maisey has been credited with the earliest drawings of Khajuraho, which he made in 1852.

### Review of Literature

There are several theories- such as the creation of a religious centre, but there is no agreement among researchers. The temples of Khajuraho represent the high peak of North Indian stone architecture. However, the temples are world famous not for their sheer aesthetic beauty but for their exquisite erotic sculptures.

Khajuraho was included in a map prepared by Franklin in 1818, as "Kajrow". Captain W.R. Pogson published his book "History of Bundelas" in year 1828 in which he mentioned some important places related to Chandellas history and art. The credit of rediscovering goes to Captain T.S. Burt who visited Khajuraho in 1838. He briefly described the Vishvanatha, Nandi, Lakshmana, Varaha and Matangeshwara temples. It brought Khajuraho to the notice of a number of art and antique lovers. An extract from Burts account, which also highlights the significance of these temples... before finally taking the leave of the seven temples, I shall state my opinion, that they are most probably the finest aggregate number of temples congregated in one place to be met with in all India, and all are within a stones throw of one another. But authentic record/account on Khajuraho temples was published in Alexander Cunninghams

Among the first photographers to photograph the Khajuraho temples was Raja Deen Dayal features prominently. He photographed the Khajuraho temples in 1882, and in 1886, these were published in „Famous monuments of Central India“ by L. Griffin. In 1892, some major inscriptions of Khajuraho were published in the first volume of the "Epigraphia Indica" by F. Kielhom.

The architecture, specifically the sculptures on the outer walls of the temples of Khajuraho, has stunned the world for centuries for its unparallel sophistication. Percy Brown (1942), Stella Kramrisch (1946) and Benjamin Rowland (1953) also showed great aesthetic perception in dealing with the architectural excellence of Khajuraho temples. Raymond Burnier (1950) published a beautiful album of the sculptures mostly of the sursundaries of Khajuraho temples. O.C. Ganguly (1957) published a monograph "Art of Chandellas" which for the first time accords aesthetic value to Chandella sculpture of Khajuraho. He also highlighted the sculptural wealth of Khajuraho with contribution from Stella Kramrisch in art journal Marg. The same year saw the publication of serious analyses of the art and architecture of temples by S.K. Saraswati. He challenged the view held by previous scholars that Khajuraho temples could be dated between A.D. 950-1050 and propounded his

own scheme of chronology of temples on the basis of architectural movement in different parts in India during that time. He affirmed that the original temples referred to in the Khajuraho inscription dating from A.D. 954 -1002 were all destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni and temples now stand there date from middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In 1958, S.K. Mitra published his doctoral thesis entitled "Early Rulers of Khajuraho" describing political history of Chandellas and also highlighted social, economic religious condition along with art and architecture of the Chandellas. Krishna Deva has given a classification of Khajuraho sculptures in his article entitled "The Temples of Khajuraho in Central India" in *Ancient India* (No.15) in 1959 and analysed the Khajuraho sculptures, temple architecture and sculptural art in depth.

Eliky Zannas and J. Aubuyer (1960) have also given a detailed description of the temples along with Chandellas cultural and political background in their work "Khajuraho." Urmila Agarwal (1964) discussed the social significance of sculptures for the study of contemporary social as revealed in Khajuraho sculptures in her doctoral thesis entitled "Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance". She gave an account of contemporary dress and ornaments, hair styles, cosmetics, music, dance, painting, games, amusements and miscellaneous activities of everyday life. Vidya Prakash also studied the social life as reflected in sculptures and carvings at Khajuraho in his book "Cultural Life in Khajuraho Sculptures" in 1967. Kanwar Lal (1965) wrote on erotic themes of the temples. His book "Immortal Khajuraho" is a delightful and well-illustrated literary work which revels in admiring and unfolding the significance of erotic themes. Mulkraj Anand's monograph "Khajuraho" highlighting the aesthetic value of Khajuraho sculptures was published in 1968. L.K. Tripathi has also written on the same. H.D. Sankalia published his paper, "Socio-economic background of Khajuraho" in the *Journal of Indian History* in 1966. He made an attempt to discuss the factors which made it possible for these magnificent elements in its sculpture and possible reasons for the construction of temples at Khajuraho. Krishna Devas guide book "Khajuraho" published

by Archaeological Survey of India in 1966, gives an authentic account of Khajuraho temples for general readers and also for scholars. This book provides descriptions of the plans, design, sculptures and images of the Khajuraho temples based off of the original survey reports and Dr. Devas personal research. Krishna Devas monograph is a compilation of original data. Ramashrya Avasthi (1967) made an attempt to study the iconography of some important deities of Khajuraho temples in depth in his book entitled "Khajuraho Ki Deva Pratimayain". R.K. Dikshit's thesis "Chandellas of Jejakabhukti" (1967) provides authentic account of history of Chandellas and is well documented. S.K. Dikshit (1968) has divided the history of Chandellas into two period's viz. I. Creative period in Khajuraho and II. Non-productive period in Khajuraho in his book entitled "Spot-Light on the History of the Chandellas". K. L. Aggarwal's book "Khajuraho" (1980) contains the study of the monuments of Khajuraho in the light of geo-political, socio-economic and religious background. Ahmad also had written on the same in his book "Khajuraho Erotica and Temple Architecture". K.K.

Chakravarti's monograph "Khajuraho" in 1985 specifies the line drawings of Khajuraho temples and sculptures along with beautiful photographs. Laxminarayan Pachori also published his book "The Erotic Sculptures of Khajuraho" in 1989; M.N.P. Tiwari's "Khajuraho ki Jain Puratattava" in 1987 provides a critical account of Jain sculptures of Khajuraho. Shobita Punja studied the Khajuraho temples and published "Khajuraho: The First Thousand Years", "Khajuraho: Our World in Color", "Khajuraho and its Historical Surrounding", "Divine Ecstasy: The Story of Khajuraho", "Khajuraho" (1991), Henri Stierlin's book "Hindu India: From Khajuraho to the Temple City of Madurai" (1998) includes detailed photographs, drawings, plans and excavation materials of Khajuraho temples.

V.A. Smith gave a detail account of Chandella rulers, their temple architecture and art especially feminine world and eroticism in sculptures in his book "Khajuraho Unveiled" (2011). David Raezer and Jennifer Raezers Approach Guide (2012) "India Revealed: The Temples of Khajuraho" provide a detailed review of the art and architecture of Khajuraho. It highlights the architectural advancements that were undertaken to make its Hindu temples the culmination of the North India temple style. This guide continues with a broad discussion of Khajuraho's sculptural legacy and delves into the unique character of Khajuraho's sculptures, with a special focus on the religious philosophy of Tantra that inspired these masterful works.

### Need of Study

Khajuraho represents one of the highest and most intense moments of the Mediaeval Hindu renaissance. Khajuraho temples are world famous for their magnificence, delicacy of chisel and the romance of sculptures. They form a mirror of art and contemporary life. It is strange but true that such an important temple town has not been mentioned in any text as a Tirtha are pilgrimage centre. The Puranas, the Tantras and special manuals on Tirthas such as 12<sup>th</sup> century text Tirtha kanda of Lakshmidhara of Kannauj and 15<sup>th</sup> century text Tirthachintamani are silent about Khajuraho. The Muslim traveler Ibn-Batuta was the first who mentioned Khajuraho in his traveling account. He visited this place in 1335 A.D. The British Engineer T.S. Burt rediscovered it in 1838 A.D. Since then this place is attracting many historians and research scholars. There has been a lot of research has been conducted on art and architecture of Khajuraho temples, still many aspects of this subject is still unexplored. This study attempts to collate all the existing research that has been undertaken in this field, and potentially contribute to the existing body of knowledge through a structural and sculptural analysis of Khajuraho temple architecture and especially two main temples at Khajuraho. I have been opted this topic to deal with the salient aspects of Khajuraho temples. I need this study to have deep insight of philosophical background, spiritual profundity and aesthetic appeal of the temples.

### Period of Study

The period of present study is 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Chandellas emerge as a power during the early 10<sup>th</sup> century and survived as a powerful independent royal family until the close of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Before coming to

the power they were feudatories under the empirical Pratiharas. The magnificent temples of Khajuraho were built by Chandellas. They do not illustrate a development over a long period of time. They were all erected within the relatively narrow interval of a hundred years from about A.D. 950 to 1050. The whole area was enclosed by a wall with eight gates each flanked by two golden palm trees. There were originally over 85 temples of which only 22 now stand in a reasonable state of preservation scattered over an area of above 8 sq. miles.

### Scope

Many scholars have dealt with the architectural development, the socio-political atmosphere and philosophical aspects of the erotic contents at Khajuraho. The present study aims to have deeper insight into the role of temples of Khajuraho in various spheres of life from the ancient time to the modern days. It also analyses the contribution of the sacred place Khajuraho to the origin and development of the temple cluster. Another endeavor of this research is to bring out salient features of Khajuraho temples art and architecture.

### Study Temples

The present study aims at art and architecture of Lakshmana and Kandariya Mahadeva temples of Khajuraho. These temples are considered the high point of architectural genius in the medieval period. These temples are situated in southern parts of western group of temples of Khajuraho (Figure 1) and aligned east to west, with the entrance facing east. Western group of temples spread over the 11.307 hectares area. Lakshmana temple (Figure 2) is the earliest organised and well-planned temple of Khajuraho which was constructed in about

A.D. 950 while Kandariya Mahadeva, a century later, is more magnificent and has mature plan and designs. Both the temples are biggest and tallest among the other temples of all groups of temples. These temples are richly carved internally and externally with excellent sculptures that are frequently sensual and, at times, sexually explicit. These temples are made of fine sandstone. The builder did not use mortar; the stones were put together with mortise and tenon joints and they were held in place by gravity. This form of construction requires very precise joints. The columns and architraves were built with megaliths that weighted up to twenty tons. Lakshmana temple is situated in front of Lakshmi and Varaha temple, and Matangeshvara temple sits parallel in southern. It is 80 ft in height. Lakshmana temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It houses a sacred image of Vaikuntha-Vishnu brought from Tibet. Though the temple is one of the oldest in the Khajuraho field, it is also one of the most exquisitely decorated, covered almost completely with images of over 600 gods in the Hindu Pantheon. It looks elegant and well-developed panchayatna temple. The plan of this temple is sandhara type, with two pairs of transepts. Lakshmana temple is probably the earliest and best preserved of



Fig 1: Temples of Khajuraho



Fig 2: Lakshmana Temple

### Conclusion

This study work is based on archival research and other documentary, literary works and theoretical investigation on ancient treatise and modern research works on the temple architecture of India and especially on temples of Khajuraho. The archival research has helped to bring out the basic concept of architecture and how it influenced the design of Khajuraho temple architecture. This features provided an almost inimitable surroundings to the superlative temples. Environmental geography played a key role in the selection of site and construction of temples.

### References

1. Prithvirajaso, Ed. By Shyamsunder Das, p. 2.
2. Alexander Cunningham, Bundelkhand and Rewa in 1883-84, Vol. XXI, part I & II, p. 58.
3. Bose NS. History of Chaddellas, pp. 1-2.
4. Agrawal PK, The Story of Khajuraho, pp. 39-46.
5. Mitra SK. Early Rulers of Khajuraho, p. 1.
6. Shobita Punja. Divine Ecstasy: The Story of Khajuraho, p. 3-4
7. Mitra SK. The Early Rulers of Khajuraho, p. 216.
8. Ganguly OC. The Art of Chandella, p. 16.
9. Mitra SK. Op. cit., p. 209.
10. Dhama BL. Khajuraho Guide, pp. 7-8.
11. Rustam J. Mehta, Op. cit., p. 12
12. Shyam Sharma. Ancient Indian Art, Architecture & iconography, p. 111-112.