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AIHC & Archaeology, Course No.403

Study Material for Unit-4, Lecture 3

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### **Khajuraho**

1. Khajuraho, situated in dist. Chhatarpur of MP is a very important centre of Central Indian temple architecture. A large number of homogenous temples were built here under the patronage of the rulers of Chandella dynasty, who ruled in **Jejakabhukti** region between ACE.850 to ACE.1100. The chandella kings like Yashovarman, Dhanga, Ganda and Vidyadhara were great connoisseurs of arts and letters and they took special interest towards building activity during their long and eventful reign. Not only Khajuraho, but they concentrated their cultural activities over a vast land of Jejakabhukti (Bundelkhand) particularly in their strong holds of Kalanjara, Ajaygarh, Mahoba, Dudhai, Chandpur, Madanpur, Devgarh and Jhasi dist. area. On the basis of architectural designs, style of sculptures, changing pattern of decorative motifs, ornaments, narrative panels and variety of temples together with available epigraphic evidences, it seems clear that the temples were executed here into two separate groups-(a) the earlier group is represented by Chausath Yogini,

lalguan Mahadev. Brahma, Matangeshvar and the Varah temple.

(b) The later group is represented by all other temples of Khajuraho. Excellence of art and culmination of architecture can be observed in Laxman temple, Vishvanath, Parshvanath and the Kandariya Mahadev temple.

2. Distinct architectural features of plan, elevation and other aspects of these temples are following-

(a) They are magnificent and lofty and have no any enclosure wall.

(b) Temples are raised on a high platform terrace (**jagati**).

(c) The main component parts on plan, are **mukha mandapa** (entrance porch), **gudhamandapa** (main hall), **antarala** (vestibule) and **garbhagriha** (sanctum) in almost all the temples.

(d) All the above components are interconnected internally and externally to each other and have been drawn in one axis.

(e) The lateral transepts (porch) with balconied windows are provided in the larger temples to enter into the **gudhamandapa** from the remaining two directions for example-the Kandariya Mahadev temple.

(f) Some larger temples have inner ambulatory (**pradakshina patha**) round the sanctum. Such temples are called the **sandhara prasada** in the **vastu** texts.

(g) The ambulatory is also provided with a pair of lateral transept (very small **parshava mandapa**) and a rear transept with a balconied window for ventilation of inner side as in Kandariya Mahadev and Parshvanath temple.

(h) Some larger temples like Kandariya Mahadev and other have subsidiary shrines (small **mandapa**) in all the four corners of the platform to render the concept of **panchayatana puja** of **vedic** rituals.

(i) The **sandhara** temples with a transept having balconied window on either side of the ambulatory form a Latin-cross with two main arms, on plan.

3. **Features of elevation**- (a) the temples raised on high platform terrace have an **adhithana**. This is arranged with a series of ornamental moldings (**bandhanas**) namely **pitha** and **vedibandha**. These members produce a light and shed effect to the elevation.

(b) The **jangha** over **adhithana** is at the centre of the exterior wall portion. This is actually the back wall of sanctum.

(c) The **jangha** is highly ornamented with the sculptures and different decorative motifs.

(d) The **sikhara** rises above **jangha** consisting of **urushringas** (small replicas of the tall **sikhara**) which resemble a mountain range (Kailash or Sumeru) and remind the abode of Lord Siva.

(e) The compartments like **mukhamandapa**, **gudha mandapa** and the **antarala** have their individual roofs which rise in sequential order, from the lowest over the **mukhamandapa** to the loftiest over the **garbhagriha**. These roofs except **sikhara** are pyramidal in shape.

(f) The **sikhara** over the sanctum is tallest and curvilinear in design embellished with subsidiary **sikharikas** or **urusingas** of varying sizes arranged at the different heights, as in Kandariya Mahadev temple.

(g) The doorjambs of sanctum as well as entrance porches are highly ornate. They are composed of various **sakhas** (vertical bands)

(h) The **sikharas** are of **panchahratha** and **saptaratha** variety in plan and elevation both.

4. **Features of interior plan-** (a) The **mukhamandapa** is oblong in size, which further broadens its axis into a slightly wider compartment (**mandapa**).

(b) These entrance porches are open on three sides and have sloping **kakshasana** (balustrade) in the form of a very shorter wall or enclosure. These balustrades have dwarf pillars and pilasters on either side which carry the lintel.

(c) The ceiling of **gudhamandapa** rests on the four tall pillars in centre. These pillars have square shaped capitals which are further surmounted by the octagonal and circular members and support the ceiling.

**Miscellaneous:** (a) The exterior and interior of the temples are highly embellished with the sculptures of deities, **bhutas, ganas, apsarases** (heavenly nymphs) and the **salabhanjikas** (women sporting with the branches of trees). The **apsarases** in different postures are shown serene and charming. Erotic figures are also another attraction of these temples, which are being researched worldwide.

Thus, the temples of Khajuraho gifted by the rulers of Chandella dynasty constitute the highest rhythmic accentuation of the early medieval temple architecture of Central India.

