The Lakshmana temple is one of the oldest and finest of the western group of temples of Khajuraho. This striking temple stands facing the Varaha and Devi Mandapa. It is as tall as it is long measuring approximately 29.87 x 13.79 meters (98' x 45'3'') and similar in plan and design to the Kandariya Mahadeva temple, which it seems to have preceded by nearly half a century. The temple has only one entrance on the east side, set at the top of the stairs. The porch has a pretty torana or stone garland above the entrance. Cemented along the porch wall is Chandella stone inscription found in the vicinity of the temple.
Dated v.s.1011/954 A.D.¹ it is the long Sanskrit eulogy in 49 verses and contains a complete genealogy of the dynasty up to time. The inscription records that Yashovarman, who was also called Lakshavarman, the seventh Chandella ruler constructed a temple to install a Vishnu image, gifted to him by his Pratihara overlord, Devapala, probably the ruler of the Kannauj. The image was brought originally from Tibet. This majestic form of four armed, three headed Lord Vishnu called Vaikuntha. The deity of the temple is variously known as Lakshmana, Ramachandra or Chaturbhuja attesting its Vaishnava dedication. Dhangadeva who was ruling in 954 A.D. has also been mentioned in the inscription. It is therefore assumed that Lakshmana temple was built just before 954 A.D.

Fig. 6.2 South side view of Lakshmana Temple
The temple is a five shrined or panchayatana complex and major temple of Vaikuntha stands in the centre of high platform along with its four subsidiary shrines in the corners, each one being a complete temple in it’s with a sanctum and a portico of two pillars in front and has similar ornamentation of sculptures. The small shrine facing the temple possible housed Garuda, the mount of the God Vaikuntha but now it contains the image of Brahmani, locally called Devi. This is the only temple which preserves the subsidiary shrine and platform terrace with their features and decorations intact in Khajuraho. This is also one the rare existing and well preserved temple of Vaikunth-Vishnu in India. Vaikuntha from of Vishnu was worshipped by the followers of Pancharatra sect of Kashmir or Tantrantara School. Although in its earlier phase of Pancharatra cult was non-vedicand opposed varnasrama-dharma, in its later historical development it admitted Vedic elements. Khajuraho in the 10th century represents this phase of Pancharatra and this temple supports Trayidharma of the Vedas and prosperity has some
remarkable features. The roof of its of brahmanas. Sculpturally and architecturally, this temple mahamandapa, mandapa and entrance porch are of phamsana type resembling those of the Orissan mandapas and shows a pyramidal superstructure of a straight contour crowned by a prominent ghanta (bell-member), which is shared only by a Brahma temple. The mandapa roof of this temple also exhibit the following peculiarities- (i) The stepped tiers of its mandapa and mahamandapa roof show tile-ribbings (ii) The terminal ends of the stepped tiers of mahamandapa roof are decorated with miniature figures of adoring Nagas and (iii) The mahamandapa roof is crowned by a pitcher-finial with drooping foliage, representing the design of pot and foliage. Its basement moulding show a bold elephant frieze and its jangha are decorated with two bands of graceful sculptures which are noted for their expression, distinct echoes of Gupta tradition. The interior of this temple is also sculptured with as much detail as its outer wall. The
graceful image one passes on the way to garbha-gariha reminds one of divinities that are inherent in all aspects of the living world.

ARCHITECTURE

The Khajuraho temple, constructed with spiral superstructures, adhere to a northern Indian shikhara temple style and often to a panchayatana plan or layout. The Lakshmana temple is a sandhara prasada of the sanctuary is pancharata. Architecturally, this temple represents all the elements of a developed temple type, except for its triangular sanctum and other minor deviations, in the spire and facades. Being a panchayatana temple it had four subsidiary shrines on four corners and the main shrine in the centre of podium, which comprises their base. The essential elements of plan- the mukhmandapa or entrance porch, the mandapa or hall, the mahamandapa, antrala or vestibule and garbha-gariha or sanctum with an ambulatory and three transepts are present in the temple. These elements are all along aligned on a single axis.

ELEVATION

The east facing temple has overall dimensions of 85' x 44' and its height is 80'. The temple has three main divisions on its elevation- the plinth or basal story or adhishthana, the wall or jangha and the roof or spire or shikhara. In addition to it, the platform (jagati) on which it stands; the temple has a high basal story with a series of ornamental mouldings depicting human activities (narathara), masks of glory (grasapattika) and geometrical designs. The details of division of elevation of Lakshmana temple are-

Jagati

The temple stands on a large 10 ft high jagati. Even though restored and altered, the platform is exactly as it was in the original plan. A reconstructed steep of eleven steps with two niches on either side (now empty) leads to terrace of jagati from the ground level. It was originally enclosed by an ornamental balustrade of four usual mouldings.
The main temple stands in the centre of the rectangular terrace with its four subsidiary shrines (chapels) at the four corners measuring 18¼ x 11½ ft. wide each rendering the structure a complete panchayatana complex. Subsidiary shrines situated at the back of the adhishthana face east and remaining one face each other, if they too faced east, it would have been necessary to build steps to reach them. So the direction of all five temples is arranged in such a manner that a devotee ascending the stairs to the terrace will face the doors of all the five temples there is boundary railing also. The jagati has mixed of granite and sandstones. The khara-sila forming the lowest course of plain granite is only on the north side. Above this, there is a plain sandstone dhara-sila supporting ornamental mouldings which is i) decorated with lotus scrolls and lotus petals ii) jadya-kumbha ornamented with thakarikas iii) projecting pattika decorated with frills of triangles. Above this rests the second series of mouldings consisting of i) khura ii) kumbha iii) kalsa iv) recessed course i.e. antara-patta with frieze showing hunting and battle scenes, processions of elephants, horses and soldiers and miscellaneous representation of royalty, religious teachers and everyday life including domestic and erotic scenes, v) kapota decorated with thakarikas above the gagaraka below and vi) pattika decorated with stenciled tamala-patras and is surmounted by rajsena vedika, assanapatta and kakshasana mouldings. This jagati has its mouldings intact and the only temple in Khajuraho, which has an intact parapet in the form of a setback. The parapet is largely located in the north-east but little bit is still in the south-west side as well.

**Adhisthana**

The main temple stands on an emphatically high adhisthana which comprise of a pitha and a vedibandha. It has two series of moulding. The lower series pertaining to the plinth (pitha) consists of- (i) plain bhitta (ii) ornamental bhitta decorated with stenciled scrolls (iii) karnika (iv) bhitta decorated with lotus petals with a beaded band below (v) jayda-kumbha carved with stenciled tamala-patras below and thakarikas above (vi) minor recess (antara-patta) decorated with kunjaraksha design (vii) garasa-patti (viii) broad gaja-pitha showing projecting foreparts of seated elephants carved in round, flanked by
mahouts or couples (ix) kapotapali decorated with thakarakas above and gagarakas emanating from the lotus petals below.

The upper series of moulding pertaining to the vedibandha comprises (i) khura (ii) kumbha with a central projecting band of grasa-pattika (iii) kalasa (iv) a recessed course (antara-patta) showing a procession of elephants and horses with or without riders, warriors, musicians, dancers, acrobats and devotees and miscellaneous domestic and erotic scenes (v) a pair of minor pattikas decorated with a frill of triangles and gagarkas respectively (vi) kapota decorated with thakarikas and (vii) projecting pattika decorated with processional frieze, disposed in compartments. The nine principle niches of this basement facade invariable, start above the kapotapali i.e. top moulding of the lower series. These niches are framed by pilaster and crowed by an elegant pediment of chaitya-arches which contains an important series of images. Smaller niches showing the figures
of Gods and Goddesses and canopied by tall pediments are also addorsed to the kumbha and kalsa courses. An examination of the east side of the adhishtana reveals that the upper part, the balustrade, the niches and even a large part of the frieze decorating the podium at the height of a man, have obviously been, replaced by stone blocks of a recent date. But the lower part which, after all follow closely two lines of plan, looks as if it is original.⁸

**Jangha**

Over the stable and ornate base, rests the jangha or wall of the temple forming the central zone. The wall has canopied windows (eaves) with balconies to admit air and light in to the interior, forming beautiful opening for the inner compartments i.e. garbha-gariha, the mandapa and the mukhmandapa. The jangha is decorated with two rows of sculptures containing figures of divinities, interspersed with apasaras on projections and mithunas and erotic scenes in recesses. The sculptures disposed in two rows stand on pedestals and are separated by a pair of two pattikas, the lower carved with a frieze of Vidyadharas carrying garlands or playing on musical instruments and upper row of sculptures is topped by a projecting pattika decorated with heart-shaped foliage (stenciled tamalapatras). Above the pattika, there is a row of panels depicting scenes of dance and music, crowed by pediments of thakarikas which are surmounted by a frieze of large kirttimukhas, alternating with recessed panels of dance and music.

Above this, there is a two-tiered eave-cornice comprising a pair of kapotas with intervening recesses, decorated with diamonds and kunjaraksha motif. It is above the upper recess that the shikhara start. On the facades of mukhmandapa, mandapa and five transepts, the jangha shows the moulding of rajsena, vedika, asana-patta and kakshana. The elevation above the balustrade displays prominent openings, canopied by over hanging ribbed eaves supported on short pillars with kumara-brackets.
Shikhara

Above the central zone of the wall rises the roof consisting of a series of graded peaks that resemble a mountain range often mount Kailash or Meru in the scriptures. All the compartments have individual roofs that rise in a modulated crescendo, from lowest over the entrance porch to the loftiest over the sanctum. These peaks arrayed along the axial line, rise and fall alternately while maintaining their overall upward ascent and culminating in the tallest spire or shikhara, which is raised directly over the sanctum and is curvilinear in design.

The shikhara of this temple is of twenty nine andakas, comprising four urah-sringas (leaning half spires) and twenty four smaller sringas (spire lets) clustered around the mula-manjri and is completely covered with mesh of chaitya arches (thakarakas). There is only one row of urah-sringas and two rows of other sringas. The mula-manjri (core-spire) is of seven storeys marked by six angle-amalakas, each of a semi-circular section. There is a well-marked neck course, griva, decorated with a design of half- diamonds sand is
crowed by a large amalasaraka which is carved with rosettes. Above the amalasaraka occurs a chandrika surmounted by a smaller amalaka. The upper amalaka is again surmounted by a chandrika which is crowed by a kalasa with two rims and a karna. The central ratha of the mula-manjri projects like a tongue beyond the shoulder vijapuraka (pitcher-finial). The mula-manjari has three angas i.e. ratha, pratiratha and course, which constitutes a distinguishing feature of the central temple architecture. The pratirathas show two rows each of minor sringas on each side while karnas show other rows each only one sringa on each side. All the sringas of the lower row are of same size but those of the pratirathas of the upper row are smaller.

The roof over the transepts starts with a row of five niches showing a divine couples in the central niche, female attendants in the flanking one and loving couples in the terminal ones. The row of niches is flanked on each side by miniature pyramidal rooflets and is surmounted by an ascending series of six pediments of chaitya-dormers (udgamas). The highest pediment has a rectangular finial crowed by a kumara figure. The terminal ends of the large udagmas are surmounted by flying Vidyadharas carrying garlands or brandishing weapons or playing on musical instruments. The surviving lower pediments also have a rectangular finial decorated with a perforated chess-pattern. The urah sringas starts above a recess which concedes with the top of the highest pediment of the transepts roof. This recess occurs all round the shikhara and has niches showing divine couples or group of three divinities. A large flying Garuda depicted in the round immediately above this recess and flanks the west side of the base of the southern urah-sringa. Another flying Garuda holding a sarpa (snake) in the left hand occurs at the same level on the southern flank of the western urah-sringa and a bearded Garuda is also carved in round at the same level at the base of the western urah-sringa and faces west. This Garuda figure sets on a kumara finial which surmounts the highest of an ascending series of six pediments which crown the western transept of the sanctum and middle pediment shows a figure of a rampant Lion fighting a warrior.
Roof of the Antrala, Vestibule and Kapili

The roof of the kapili or antrala from the front shows the level of sringas a principal niche containing an image of four-armed standing Vishnu carrying abhaya, gada, chakra and another hand broken, flanked by niche of female attendant on each side. The niches are surmounted by the front antefix comprising a series of three pediments. The highest pediment (udgama) is flanked by makara transoms and is surmounted by a rectangular finial which supports the crowing figure of the warrior fighting a lion. On the southern and northern faces of the antrala roof, there occurs a recess above the sringas containing diamonds or mithuna reliefs in niches, surmounted by a kapota moulding. From this level, there is a fair sized rathika in ascending order showing a standing two-armed divine couple crowned by udgama, a frieze of seated devotees in niches, a kapota, a frieze of seated Vidyadharas, a pair of horizontal courses respectively decorated with chess board design and scrolls, a recessed course and two grass-pattikas with an intervening kapota. The upper grasa-pattika is crowned by three pediments which are addorsed to the surasenaka of the sukanasa crowed by a warrior fighting a Lion figure having a curled up tail.

Roof of the mahamandapa

The roof over the mahamandapa transepts is a replica of that over the sanctum transept in all details. Behind the pediment rises the pyramidal (phamsana) roof of the mahamandapa. The roof level starts here with a row of niches flanked on each side by a pair of tilakas. Above there is a grasa-pattika surmounted by a recess showing dancers and musicians in the niches framed by pilasters. Above this recess rise the eight ribbed stepped tiers of the pyramidal roof, each decorated with chaitya-arches (thakarikas) at intervals and by nagas in anjali at the ends. Each tier alternates with a recess decorated with chess-board design. The crowing ornaments above the neck course comprise a large bell member surmounted by an amalaka, chandrika, kalasa and vijapuraka. The bell member is decorated with a small pediment in each cardinal direction while the kalasa is embellished with drooping foliage.
**Roof of the mandapa**

The row of niches here is flanked on each side by a miniature model of balconied window (kaksha-kuta) complete with human figure and crowned by four stepped tiers (pidhas), bell, amalaka and kalasa. The niches are crowned by an ascending series of three pediments (udgamas). Behind these, rises the main pyramidal roof of six stepped tiers of same design as those of mahamandapa roof with the difference that the recess between these stepped tiers are plain and the topmost tier is crowned by a bell member decorated with four short pediments in cardinal direction capped by an amalaka, chandrika and kalasa.

**Roof of the mukhmandapa**

This is also of the same design but progressively smaller than the roofs of the mahamandapa and mandapa. The principal niches are flanked by two model pyramidal roofless (tilakas) and crowned by ascending pair of pediments. Behind them, rises the pyramidal roof of five stepped tiers, crowned by a bell-member. Therefore, the roofs of the mahamandapa, mandapa and mukhmandapa also show a progressively smaller gable in front resembling the gable over the antrala.

**PLAN OF THE TEMPLE**

The temple is entered through the ornate Makara-torana, the profusely carved arched entrance flanked by crocodile. This entrance porch or mukhmandapa is modest, oblong passage and broadens in to wider mandapa which is open on three-sides and is enclosed by sloping balustrades. Next lays the mahamandapa which is a closed hall with lateral transepts (that has a corridor around it). This hall leads in to the antrala beyond which lies the garbha-gariha or the sanctum with an ambulatory and three transepts and sandharas with the subsidiary shrines on the four corners making this temple a pachayatna. Figure 6.8 show the plan of the temple.
**Makara-torana**

After ascending an imposing flight of steps with two moon-stones (chandra-sila) at the two lowest steps, one enters the interior of the temple through a highly ornate makara-torana (festooned arch). The makara-torana is of the simple type showing two loops, each emanating from the mouth of a flanking crocodile, which has been forced open by a bearded gladiator carrying a sword in the right hand and a scarf like object in the left hand. A male figure carrying lotus flower in the left hand is carved seated on the proboscis of the crocodile. The loops are decorated with a running frieze of Vidyadhara couples carrying a garland or brandishing swords or dancing or playing on musical instruments. The meeting point of the loops is decorated with a large gagaraka pendant dropping from the mouth of a kirttimukha.

![Makara torana of Lakshmana temple](image-url)
Mukhmandapa and mandapa

The porch i.e. mukhmandapa rests on a four upper pillars of which two are common with the mandapa and the mandapa on eight similar pillars and four pilasters, disposed in two rows on each side. They are all of square section with cardinal projections i.e. bhadraka type. The lower section of these pillars and pilaster below the asanapatta are of similar design but pain. The upper pillars of the mukhmandapa and those of inner row of the
mandapa are carved in the upper half with designs of kirttimukhas, lotus scrolls and nagins flanked by vyala in relief. All of them have a design of vase-and-foliage on the top section of the shaft. Their capitals are square, surmounted by brackets representing four-armed kumaras (Atlantean figure), each supporting a superstructure with two upper hands.

The kumara brackets of the porch carry an architrave decorated with stenciled scrolls surmounted by a processional frieze showing teachers and devotees, dancers and soldiers, interspersed with horses and elephants with and without riders. The architrave supports a cornice and frieze, the former decorated with bands of lotus petals and circular rosettes and latter with garland loops enclosing half diamonds. It is this frieze which supports the magnificent circular (nabhichchandra) ceiling consisting of four concentric circles of coffered cups with a long staminal tube (padmakesara) issuing from the centre. The ceiling is made circular by cutting the corners and filling them up with kirtimukhas and scroll in relief. A grasa-pattika is shown around the vertical rim of the outer circle. Each cusped course represents complete section of a flower. The ribs of these flowers end in adoring nagas. This is one of most beautiful ceiling in the central India,\(^{10}\) which is entirely of swirling circles, overlapping each other in an abstract geometrical pattern (figure 6.9).

Four of upper pillars of the inner row of the mandapa show the niches containing the figure of Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha and Kubera facing the passage. The bracket carries a plain beam surmounted by an architrave decorated with a running design of miniature pyramidal roof lets. In between these roof lets standing devotees or couples are carved on the north, east and south but on the west are floral petals. Above this, is a cornic decorated with lotus petals and it supports the
ceiling. The square ceiling has a circular vitana of five deep circular coffers, each of three tiers of kola (coffered cusps) courses; the central one is deeper than the remaining.

**Mahamandapa**

The mahamandapa is a closed rectangular hall with five lateral transepts with balconied window, two each on north and south one on the west. Its inner walls are plain in lower half but have transepts and niches carrying images. The upper portions of the walls starting with projection are decorated with a band of stenciled heart-shaped foliage (tamala patra) coming at the level of kumara-bracket of the pilaster. Above this rests an architrave of two course, the lower decorated with stenciled scrolls surmounted by a frieze of niches showing dancers, musicians, vidyadharas, gods and goddess and upper course is carved with miniature pyramidal rooflets (tilakas) which is the crowning decoration of niches. Between the niches, mithunas are depicted. The architrave carries a double row of cornice which is decorated with designs of lotus pitals, triangular frills and circular rosettes. The cornic supports a corbelled ceiling consisting of three cusped courses, marked with ribs, each terminating in a miniature figure of naga in anjali. Mahamandapa has in its centre, tall four pillars which stand on 12 inches high podium. These pillars have a plain shaft with ornate bases and capitals. The base mouldings comprise khura, kumbha, kalasa and kapopta. The capitals are surmounted by brackets showing four larger kumaras (Atlantean figures) in the corners. Each shaft is carried up as an attic section which supports a capital of the same design crowned by four kumara-brackets in the cardinal direction and a figure of goddess in each corner. These are socket-cut in lower parts of all the upper brackets and upper parts of all the lower ones for insertion of ornamental struts showing four apsaras in the cardinal direction and four vyala in the intermediate corner. The upper kumara-brackets support an architrave of two courses, the lower one decorated with stenciled scrolls surmounted by a row of niches and upper one with a miniature pyramidal roof (tilakas) of the same design as an architrave of main hall. The niches show mithuna figures and so do the recesses between the niches. Upper square framework of architrave, which is first turned into an octagon
and then into circle and supports a ceiling of overlapping concentric courses. This ceiling

Fig. 6.10 Upper view of Mahamandapa

is similar to that of the entrance porch with central pendant broken off. The kirtimukhas
in the corner of the ceiling are pierced by sockets for the reception of four apsara-
brackets of which only one is survived in the south east corner showing an apsara playing
on vina.

The compartment between mahamandapa and the antrala is rectangular with a flat
ceiling decorated with three lotuses in relief. The ceiling rests over a chatushki formed by
two pillars of the antrala and two western pillars of the mahamandapa and also has the
same mouldings as those of mahamandapa. Their shaft is octagonal below; sixteen sided
in the middle and circular above and also carry a circular capital. Their upper kumara
brackets support architraves carved by stenciled scrolls and niches containing couples
flanked by recess and also containing couples on the north, south and east side. The
niches are surmounted by miniature pyramidal roofs of same design as of mahamandapa, but on the west these are replaced by a frieze of garlands. The upper architrave adorned with a frieze of grasa-pattika (kirtimukhas), supports the ceiling. The ceiling shows three tiers of diminishing squares decorated with kola courses (floral designs of coffered cups) terminating in a long centre pendant. Four apsaras-brackets abut against the four corners of the ceiling. Added to the inner ambulatory of the sanctum and the mahamandapa hall is two pair of transepts. Each of these transepts has an opening which lights and ventilates the interior.

Each opening of the transept has two pairs of pilasters which support the continuous beam of the hall. Two pilasters stand on a base of the usual ornamental design resting on a pitha bearing a simple decoration of lotus petals. The shaft of the pilasters and upper pillars of the transepts are decorated up to upper ⅓ with ornaments in the same way as of mandapa and mukhmmandapa. They carry the ornate capital and kumara-brackets. The architraves surmounting the brackets also bear the same design as of main hall. The lower pillars of three transepts of the sanctum are of a different design and show an octagonal base and shaft carrying a plain octagonal capital.

The ceiling of the transept is supported on two dwarf pillars and pilaster. Their shaft capital and kumara-brackets are also same in shape and design as of mukhmmandapa. But the pillars carry four kumara-brackets and the pilaster carries only three such brackets. These brackets support an architrave of two courses, the lower decorated with stenciled scrolls surmounted by niches and with miniature pyramidal roofs crowning the niches. Over this rests a plain architrave with three offsets which support flat, irregular ceiling decorated with three lotuses in relief.

_Antarala (Vestibule)_

The two pilasters flanking the sanctum doorway are of bhadaraka type and stand of square base. They show partly stencilled and partly relief decorations in the upper ⅓ and elegant sculpture of Vaishnava pritihas (door-keepers) carrying a bow and arrow, in the
lower ⅓. The upper section of the pilaster has kumara-brackets as usual but the kumaras are replaced by an image of Ganesha on the southern pilaster by a standing god on the northern pilaster. These brackets carry an architrave of two courses, the lower decorated with stencilled scrolls surmounted by niches alternating with recesses, both containing couples. The upper course of architrave is decorated with a frieze of garland loops surmounted by a plain offset decorated with three lotuses in relief. Two apsara-brackets abut against the north-eastern and south-eastern corners of this ceiling and rests on the corresponding corner brackets below showing the sculptures of seated goddesses.

Doorway of Sanctum

A shallow passage with a pair of moon-stone steps (chandrasila) leads up to the ornate doorway of the sanctum. This doorway has seven ornate bands (sapta-sakha). The first band is decorated with stencilled scrolls. The second and sixth bands consist of rampant vyalas while the third and fifth band shows ganas dancing or playing on musical instruments. The fourth band (sakha) which is pilaster has three niches on each side containing representation of Vaishnava incarnations. Matsya, Varaha and Vamana incarnations are shown on the south jamb and Kurma, Narasimha and Parshurama on the north jamb. Kurma combines a symbolic representation of the churning of the ocean. The upper most niches are crowned by a circular capital (bharani). The seventh band which is the outer band is decorated with large lotus petals showing wavy scrolls in bold relief. The door lintels have two friezes each consisting of three projecting niches and two recesses. The projecting niches are crowned by miniature pyramidal rooflets (tilakas). Four-armed Gaja-Lakshmi is represented in the central niche of lower frieze; its end niches represent four-armed Brahma and four-armed Shiva on the proper right and left respectively. The upper frieze shows the Navagraha and its extreme proper right niche represents two-armed seated Surya riding a chariot driven by the seven horses.

The river-goddess panels comprising of five figures are carved on the base of doorway. Ganga is shown on the right while Yamuna on the left. The panels also include figures of four-armed Vaishnava door-keepers. The doorsill shows two running friezes
representing dancers and musicians in recessed registers and gods and goddesses in niches with attendants. Between the two friezes occur mouldings of jadya-kumbha and karnika to which are addorsed three niches containing figures of four-armed seated gods. On the extreme ends below the seventh band is carved with divine couples on each side.

Sanctum (Garbha-gariha)

The sanctum is a modest chamber 7'-3" wide having four pilaster of square section with cardinal offsets. These show pot-and-foliage in the lower and upper portions and carry the usual ornate capital surmounted by brackets of plain carved profile. The brackets support a lintel decorated with scrolls surmounted by a frieze depicting scenes of dance and music by Vidyadharas. The pair of central gods on each side holds a crown. Above the frieze rests a cornice decorated with lotus petals. The cornice supports a ceiling made of two intersecting squares, the vertical faces of which are carved on each side with religious processions centered on a figure of Vishnu. Yogasana Vishnu is represented on three sides and Vishnu riding on Garuda on the fourth. The ceiling terminates in a projecting lotus pendant of a modest size. The interior walls are plain except for a niche in the south wall and a bracket-shaft in the north wall. Against the hindwall rests an elaborate pedestal carrying a standing image of the Vaikuntha, the main deity of the temple surrounded by a large prabhavali showing number of figures of gods and goddesses. The outer frieze of the prabhavi is framed by two pilasters supporting a makara-torana with two loops while its extreme sides is decorated with figures of gajasardula below and a female chauri-bearer.

Externally, the sanctum proper is pancharatha on plan as well as in elevation. It rests on a highly ornate pitha and Vedibandha. Among all the temples of Khajuraho, the Lakshmana has the most ornate sanctum with the finest finish and preservation.
SUBSIDIARY SHRINES OF THE LAKSHMANA TEMPLE

South-eastern Shrine

The shrine is pancha-rata on plan as well as in elevation and consists of a sanctum, a constricted kapili and a porch, carried on chatuskhi of two pillars and two pilasters. The porch however is restored by collecting old material from different temples. The pillar has a square base and a capital carved with the design of a vase-and-foliage in bold relief and shows a plain shaft which is octagonal below, sixteen sided in the middle and circular above and circular section capped by a madhya-bandha decorated with floral and kirrtimukha designs. The basement mouldings are of two series. Lower series comprises-(i) a plain bhitta (ii) jaya-kumbha carved with thakarikas (half diamond shape) (iii) pattika showing stenciled tamala-pataras and (iv) kapotapali decorated with thakarikas above and gagarakas emanating from the lotus petas below. The upper series moulding comprises-(i) khura (ii) kumbha decorated with thakarikas (iii) kumbha moulding has on each of the three bhadras, a niche carrying a deity. The jangha shows a lower row of sculptures representing surasundaries on projection and vyalas in recesses. The upper row

Fig. 6.11 Plan with Subsidiary Shrines of Lakshmana Temple
Fig. 6.12 Front view of south-eastern shrine

Fig. 6.13 Door-Jamb of south-eastern shrine

Fig. 6.14 Shikhara of south-eastern shrine

Fig. 6.15 Adhishtana of south-eastern shrine
Fig. 6.16 Front view of south-western shrine

Fig. 6.17 Door-Jamb south-western of shrine

Fig. 6.18 Shikhara of south-western shrine

Fig. 6.19 Adhishtana of south-western shrine
has diamonds only in the niches on projection as well as recess. The upper row is separated from the lower row by a projecting pattika decorated with stenciled tamalapataras. The bhadaras show niches containing image of deities in both rows, the same scheme is repeated on the single ratha of the kapili. The upper row of niches is surmounted by a projecting pattika decorated with a garland motif surmounted by a kapota decorated with thakarikas (half diamonds) with which the jangha portion ends. The shikhara is separated from jangha by a recessed course decorated with kunjaraksha motif which is surmounted by a kapota decorated with thakarikas. Below the kapota and the shikhara occurs a short recess. The shikhara is completely covered by a mesh of thakarikas and is of seven bhumis marked by bhumi-amalakas. The north face of the shikhara is fully preserved while all other faces are restored including the crowning elements which consist of an amalaka, chandrika, smaller amalaka, kalasa and vijapuraka. The doorway of the sanctum has three bands. The central band shows dancing ganas and vyala and apsaras in the two flanking bands. The door lintel contains a four-armed image of form of Vishnu. The doorway lintel also carries a frieze of navagrahas. River goddesses with female attendants are depicted below the central band. Pratiharas are also depicted on each side of doorway.

The doorsill is carved with frieze of dancers and musicians. The sanctum comprises of two chatushkis made of six pilasters of the bhadraka type. The pilasters of the first chatushki, the central portion of the shaft is plain but the lower and upper portion are decorated with an undercut vase-and-foliage design, the other chatushki carry a square capital which support brackets of a plain curved profile. The bracket carry an architrave decorated with stenciled scrolls and architrave supports a flat ceiling with a diamond in relief and surmounted by a boarder of scrolls and kirtimukhas. The walls of the sanctum are quite plain.

South-western Shrine

This heavily restored shrine is also identical in plan and design with south-eastern shrine as explained above. The original features are preserved form base to the pattika decorated
Fig. 6.20 Front view of North-western Shrine

Fig. 6.22 Shikhara of North-western Shrine

Fig. 6.21 Door-jamb of North-western Shrine

Fig. 6.23 Adhishtana of North-western Shrine
Fig. 6.24 Front view of north-eastern Shrine

Fig. 6.25 Door Jamb of north-eastern shrine

Fig. 6.27 Adhishtana of north-eastern Shrine
with tamala-patras surmounting the lower row of sculptures on the jangha. The entire ornamental architecture of the shrine above this level is damaged now and is under the process of restoration. This shrine also shows a second row of sculptures while no other subsidiary shrines have this row. The whole interior also appears to be a restoration with older material and its internal layout and design and decoration is same as of south-eastern shrine.

**North-western Shrine**

This is the best preserved of the four shrines. It shows even the original eaves of the porch surmounted by a recess decorated with sunken half–diamonds. The mouldings of basement of this shrine consists of- (i) plain bhitta (ii) jadya-kumbha decorated with thakarikas (iii) projecting pattika decorated with stencilled tamala-patras (iv) kapota decorated with thakarikas in the lower series and (i) khura (ii) kumbha (iii) kalasa and (iv) kapota decorated with thakarikas in the upper series.

The jangha of this temple is also similar to that of the south-eastern shrine described earlier. Shikhara is also identical with the south-eastern shrine. The interior arrangement and architecture of the shrine is also similar to that of above mentioned shrines except the sculptures and other figures.

**North-eastern Shrine**

This is generally of the same plan and design as the other subsidiary shrines, but the porch is completely lost.

**Iconography of Lakshmana Temple**

**INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE**

The purpose of visiting the Temple is to behold the beauty of the deities and worship them. The temple is designed as a sacred space to facilitate communion between the created (human being) and the creator (Supreme Being). The essential elements that
facilitate this contact come from the ancient texts that have the directions and the regulations for Temple architecture. Every temple has the permanent image, in the shrine and the other gods of the pantheon as well as subsidiary deities in the niches, and semi divine, celestial beings in various parts of the structure. The field enclosures and pavilions through which the devotee must pass to reach the sanctum are symbolic. As he proceeds, the familiar mythological themes, carved on the inner walls attune his attitude. The immediate pavilion and vestibule near the sanctum are restrained in sculptural details and decorations; these simpler motifs and the prevailing semi darkness help the worshipper to put aside distractions and try focusing his attention on the sanctum. Finally

Here,


Fig. 6.28 Placement of images in the mahamandpa and pradakshina-patha of Lakshmana Temple
the shrine, devoid of any ornamentation, and with its plainly adorned entrance, leads the devotee further to tranquility, to fulfillment and to the presence of God. The devotee is now fully-absorbed in the beauty and serenity of the icon. He or she is now in the inner square of Brahma in the vastu-mandala, and in direct communion with the chief source of power in the temple.

**Images in interior Niches of Mahamandapa and Pradakshina-patha**

**Niche I:** Starting clock-wise from the east in the pradakshina-patha, there is a sculpture of three-headed and four-armed Karttikeya, standing in a tribhanga. He holds a manuscript in his upper left hand and his lower left hand is in plitha mudra (on the shoulder of a female figure) while his both the right hands are mutilated now. The god wears kirta-mukuta instead of trisikhandaka coiffure, a pair of torques, hara, upavita, keyuras, wristlets, long mala, anklets and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled loops and tassels. His mount peacock is shown standing behind the God whose head is now broken. Here Karttikeya is shown as divine teacher. He is worshipped for getting vidya and described as revealing a system of grammar called Katantra and Agni Purana has a chapter on Kaumara grammar revealed by Karttikeya. A Goddess carrying a lotus stalk and scarf is shown on the left and a male attendant holding lotus and kati is depicted in the lower field on the each side of the God. The halo is depicted by three headed with central head bearded and four-armed standing Brahma carrying kati, sruk, book and water vessel on the right side while four-armed Vishnu holding abhaya, gada, shankha and one hand broken is represented on the left side of the halo. This niche is placed on the south east corner of the temple which is according to Kriyapada mentioned in the Padma Samhita.
**Niche II:** This niche contains a four-armed Shiva standing in sambhanga. He holds trisula and sarpa in his upper right and left hand respectively while his both the lower hands are broken. He wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, upavita, keyuras, wristlets, long mala and lower garment fastened by a belt with jeweled tassels and a scarf. A male attendant is shown on each side while the figure on right holds khatvanga and kati. A female attendant holding lotus stalk and scarf is carved on either side of the male attendant. Mount of the god, Nandi is also shown on the pedestal below the feet of the God. Three headed with central head bearded and four-armed seated Brahma is represented on the right side in the halo while on the left side, four-armed Vishnu carrying abhaya, padma, chakra and sankha, seated in sukhasana is shown. The niche is placed in the south side.

![Shiva standing in sambhanga](image)

**Niche III:** This upper niche contains a ten-armed Chandika with a benign smile seated on a lotus in lalitasana, with her mount, lion seated below. She holds akshamala in varada pose, sword now broken, trisula and damaru in her right hands while another right one is broken and she holds a shield, manuscript, sarpa, a skull-cup (kapola) in her lefty hands and one left hand is also broken. Her hair is arranged in jata, studded with a row of seven skulls and she wears kundalas, torque with pendant, hara, keyuras, wristlets, anklets and long mala of skulls with central clasp made up of a skull and pair of arms and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled loops and tassel. The halo is flanked on each side by

![Chandika](image)
flying Vidyadharas carrying garlands. Two male devotees are shown seated near the pedestal praying to her.

**Niche IV:** This antarala niche represents a four-armed Parvati standing in sambhanga. Her head and hands are broken, but evidently two of them carry lotus stalk and on her left Ganesha occurs to be seated on the lotus. Parvati wears usual ornaments and garments. Her Lion mount is represented on the right and a pair of deer on the left of her feet. There is a seated female attendant on the right with incense (dhupa) and bell (ghanta) and another on the left with a garland. The halo is flanked by a three headed, four-armed seated Brahma holding varada, book, water vessel and another one broken on the right and four-armed Vishnu holding varada, gada, chakra and shankha on the left. The Pratihara temples of central India have a tradition of depicting Parvati in panchagi tapas in the north facing bhadra niche or in kapili. But Agni-kundas are not shown in this panel, so we cannot describe the goddess as performing tapas. There is a engraving below the niche which can be read as ‘Udhasi’ and other letters ‘Sri’, ‘Kote’, ‘Devera’ and ‘Sri’ seems to be sculptor’s name or mark.\(^\text{13}\)

**Niche V:** This is also an upper niche of the south which shows four-armed goddess seated in padmasana carrying varada, pasa, amkusha and patra (drinking vessel). The goddess having her lower hands in varada and abhaya mudra and holding pasa and ankusha in upper two hands should be Bhuvanesari.\(^\text{14}\) The Goddess with description carrying patra (drinking vessel) in the fourth hand instead of its being in abhaya mudra may also be identified with Bhuvanesari. She being a form of Durga can have the drinking vessel.\(^\text{15}\) She could represent the Tripura aspect of Gauri with varada, amkusha, pasa and abhaya.\(^\text{16}\) Here in the niche the goddess wear usual ornaments and garments.
She is flanked by a goddess on each side, that on the left carry abhaya, lotus, lotus and sakti. She appears to resemble the goddess called Aparajita.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{images/6.33.png}
\caption{Mother of goddess seated in padmasana}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{images/6.34.png}
\caption{Mother of goddess seated in lalitasana}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Niche VI:} This niche contains a four-armed mother goddess seated in lalitasana holding a child in her lap with her two lower hands while her two upper hands are broken. This niche is placed on the south-west corner. The Pancharata text while describing a Vishnu temple advocates the worship of Ambika on the ninth day of the month.\textsuperscript{18} The Agni Purana is also directs that Ambika is to be worshipped in the north-west or south-west. So the goddess can be identified as Ambika. The Lion vahani goddess with a baby on her left arm may be identified with Ambika due to her vahana.\textsuperscript{19} But here his mount/vahana is not depicted. All her hands are also broken. She wears a low crown and other usual dress and ornaments. She is flanked by a female chauri bearer on each side. Two goddesses playing on vina are depicted on either in the halo. They are surely Sarasvati.
Niche VII: The niche shows eight-armed Kshemankari seated in the lalitasana with two Lions depicted below the seat. She holds akshamala in varada pose in upper right hand and trisula in lower right hand while other two right hands are broken and sakti, amkusha, sankha and water vessel are there in her left hands. She wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and there is a full blown flower behind her head-dress. She is flanked by a female attendant on each side. The halo is flanked by a seated goddess on either side. The goddess Durga Kshamankari is paired with mother goddess in the south west corner, who bestows health and well-being.

![Fig. 6.35 Kshemankari seated in the lalitasana](image1)

![Fig. 6.36 Balarama standing in tribhanga](image2)

Niche VIII: The niche containing a four-armed Balarama standing in tribhanga is placed in north-west corner of the pardakshina-patha. He stands under a canopy of nine snake-hoods and wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments and garments. All his hands are broken except one which carries kati. He is flanked by four female attendants, of whom, the one on the left carries a cup and on the right one holds a wine jar and in the extreme corners, two female figures are shown carrying a scarf and lotus in their hands. Four-armed Kubera carrying kati, book, purse and flower can be seen on the each side.
flanking the snake-hoods of the gods are shown on the pedestal. The words ‘Bhadra ga and Jaje ga’ are engraved on the pedestal.

**Niche IX:** This niche is paired in the same corner with Balarama i.e. on north-west corner. It contains a forceful ten-armed Durga-Mahishasuramardini or Katyayani carrying wielding trisula with lowest pair of hands and holds sakti with a human head, chakra, quiver (from which an arrow is being drawn) and sword in her remaining right hands while her left hands carry bell, shield and remaining left hands are broken. She has placed her right foot on Mahisha, the zoomorphic buffalo demon, whose head is severed by trisula while her mount Lion pounces upon the demon from the back and shown on the right of the goddess. The body of the demon is also pierced by a pair of arrow.

Mahishasuramardini is quite popular in West Bengal and shown eight-armed carrying in clock-wise direction disc, trident, arrow, sword, tarjani mudra, the tuft of the hair of demon, shield and bow. Besides the eight-armed image of goddess the most commonly worshipped image is ten armed deity and she is represented with elaborate jata-mukuta and is shown as fighting vigorously with the demon in pratyalidha pose with the left and right legs placed on the decapitated buffalo demon and lion respectively. Here in the niche the goddess wears a donnet-shaped headdress and other usual ornaments and dress. She also wears kuchabandha on her breasts which is rather rare at Khajuraho. A seated four-armed goddess carrying abhaya, sarpa, flower and trisula is represented on each side of the halo. A bearded ascetic who is standing with folded hands is shown behind the Lion while the mutilated two armed demon in human form holding a sword is also shown on the left of the deity. Mahishasurmardini in the context...
of Vishnu worship is considered to be Vaishnavi. In the Pancharatra text Lakshmi Tantra, she is regarded as manifestation of Lakshmi.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Niche X:} This is the upper niche which is placed in the north side. Four-armed Gaja-Lakshami seated in lalitasana carrying varada, lotus stalk in right hands and upper left hand surmounted by elephants and the nectar pot in the lower left hand. The goddess wears donnet-shaped headdress and other usual ornaments and garments. The elephants sprinkle water by upturning pots over the head of the goddess. A devotee with folded hands occurs on the each side of the deity.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{gaja_akshmai}
\caption{Gaja akshmai}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Niche XI:} This antrala niche shows Shiva-Parvati as Kalyanasundarmurti, depicting their marriage ceremony. Both the deities wear usual ornaments and garments. Three headed and two armed Brahma is offering oblations to fire with a struk as official priest of marriage ceremony and a two armed goddess stands behind. Ganesha and a male attendant occur on the left while a mutilated female attendant holding garland on the right. A vertical row of six mangala-ghata (pots) surmounted by a bird are shown on the each side to grace the marriage scene. Indra riding on the elephant is depicted on the right side of the halo while Vishnu on Garuda is on the left along with Vidyadharas carrying garlands. Their respective mount Nandi and Lion can be seen among the dancing ganas on the pedestal. The placement of marriage scene exactly opposite the scene depicting Parvati in penance grove is noteworthy and marriage scene in the antrala also suggests the coming together of the divinity and the devotee.\textsuperscript{22}
**Niche XII:** Four-armed Sarasvati seated in lalitasana carrying vina in lower right and upper left hands, spiral lotus stalk in the upper right and water vessel in the lower left hand, is shown in the niche placed in the north. She wears donnet-shaped headdress, and other usual ornaments.

**Niche XIII:** This niche is placed on north-east corner and contains four-armed Vamana, the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu, standing on a lotus in sambhanga. His hands clock wise holds varada, broken, chakra and broken. Here Vamana is pot-bellied and has short curly hairs without any headgear. He wears usual ornaments and dress on the body. He is flanked by a dwarf, pot-bellied Chakrapurusha on the right and similar Sankhapurusha on the left. Garuda holding kati in right and sarpa in left hand stands behind the Chakrapurusha while Lakshmi carrying lotus and scarf shown standing behind the
Sankhapurusha. A seated Brahma occurs on the right and Shiva on the left of the halo.

**Niche XIV:** This niche is placed at the end of the avarana circuit. It shows twelve headed and twelve armed form of Vishnu i.e. Visvarupa, standing in tribhanga and carries chakra, gada and arrow in the surviving right hands the attributes of remaining right hands are broken. While lowest left hand is held in kati which is the only surviving left hand and others are broken. The foremost head which was human is broken flanked by the faces of Lion on the right and Boar on the left with a serpent-hood represented behind each. On the back of these three faces, there are two more faces of Matsya and Kurma which are unseen as generally mentioned in Silpa text. The subsidiary nine human heads arranged in a fan-shaped behind the three lower head probably refers to the Visvarupa form of Vishnu. The God wears kundalas, torque, kaustubha-maní, hara, upavita, keyuras, wristlets, vanamala and anklets and garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels and a scarf. A corpulent male attendant wearing karanda-mukuta and carrying gada and padma is shown on the right, while another attendant holding sword in right hand and left hand being broken is depicted on the left of the God. Headless Garuda who lifts up his right hand in a praising attitude and left hand in kati is
depicted by the side of the latter attendant while on the opposite side Lakshmi is shown seated on a wicker stool with folded hands. The halo is flanked by four-armed, three-headed Brahma on the right and four armed Shiva on the left.

Harivamsa mentions Vamana’s birth is followed by a description of Visvarupa. However Visvarupa in this temple, the only image of this form at Khajuraho, is iconic rather than expressive of cosmic qualities as seen in the Visvarupa images of Samalaji. This Visvarupa niche faces west in the direction of Vaikantha of sanctum and in the similar way as Twelve-armed Sadashiva Chatushapada image faces the Shiva-Linga in the Kandariya Mahadeva temple.

Significant Images on the Sanctum wall enclosed by the Inner Ambulatory

Lakshmana temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. As the images in the temple have their function in ritual and puja to be carried out according to the religious system to which it was affiliated. The architects of this temple might be guided by the acharyas of religious system, has a well planned representation of sculptures in the scheme of the temple. The forty second verse of the inscription mentions specifically that Yasoverman built this splendid temple of Daityarati which reveals the snow-clad mountain peaks. The concept of Vaikuntha as Daityarati, the enemy of demons, suggests the avatar aspect of Vishnu.

“Whenever the earth is over-burdened with sins, it was held, the God incarnates Himself to rescue her and to protect saintly people from the grips of the wicked.”

“Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati bharata, Abhyutthanamadharma sya tadatmanun srijamyaham”

In the Lakshmana temple, the avatar of Vishnu- Matsya, Varaha and Vamna are represented on the south jamb paired with Narasimha and Parasurama on the north jamb. Vishnu in the form of Matsya saved the Vedas from the Hayagriva demon, the composite form of Horse and Man. Kurma incarnation is shown in the southern upper niche while Matsya in the northern upper niche, the western cardinal niche, centred between the two, represents the supreme Narayana. As Kurma, the source of the universe,
Key,


Fig. 6.43 Placement of images on the sanctum wall of Lakshmana Temple
Vishnu-Narayana gave a long discourse on the subject of ultimate knowledge to Narada and other sages and in the form of Matsya; He gave discourse to Vaivasvat Manu and Seven Rishis. Vishnu as powerful Varaha rescues the earth Goddess who sits on his raised elbow in the southern lower niche. The western cardinal niche, a twelve-armed Narsimha slays the demon Hiranyakashipu. Krishna-lilas also find an important place on the sanctum wall of the temple. There are twelve episodes spread out on the three sides of the sanctum wall on its upper row flanking Vishnu Yogesvara images.

There are 8 Vasus, 8 Dikpalas, 12 Krishna-lila scenes, 12 Vyala and 24 Devanganas or Sursasundaries, along with Vishnu’s incarnations on the three sides of the sanctum. Devanganas with complex postures placed on each side of the devakastha with high spherical breasts. Subsequent to the figure of devanga is placed a vyala followed by another devanga and yet another vyala. At the end of the sequence is placed a male deity, dikpala. The programming includes another tier of figure in smaller size representing Krishna-lila episode in synoptic form squeezed into recesses while devanga are placed in alternate sequences, beside male deities. The details of sculptures are:

A. South face - The sculptural programming of south wall of sanctum is shown in Fig 6.43. Description of main images of this wall is:

(i) Lower row

1. Gaja Lakshmi

The southern niche of the lower kapili shows a four-armed Gaja lakshami seated in lalitasana carrying akshamala in varada pose, lotus stalk, lotus stalk and water vessel (kamandalu). She is seated on the lotus and wears a donnet-shaped headdress, kundalas, hara, keyuras, wristlets, torque with pendant and anklets and is draped in a lower garment fastened by a belt. The elephants standing on the lotus are depicted as sprinkling water over her head.
2. **Indra**

The next niche contains four-armed Indra wearing karanda-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras and wristlets and lower garments fastened by a belt with loops and tassels and scarf. His hands clock-wise hold broken, broken, amkusha, and kati. Indra is the Lord of East. So in this temple its sculpture is placed facing east.

3. **Agni**

A sculpture showing a four-armed, pot-bellied, Agni is placed on the south-east corner as Dikpala deity. He is bearded and carries abhaya, sruk, book and fourth hand is broken. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and garments. The Lord of the south east has Ram as his pet animal with his chariot being driven by red horse according to Agni Purana. Fire, trisula, water vessel and mala are his ayudhas according to Vishnudharmotra. Some of the images have their first hand in abhaya mudra and other hand carry sruk, book and water vessel (kamandalu). So the image can be identified as Agni but no Vahana is depicted here.
4. Varaha

The main cardinal niche of the south shows four-armed Nri-Varah, incarnation of Vishnu, standing in pratyalidhasana under a canopy of lotus leaf. His head and right hands are broken. The upper left hand carries chakra and supports Prithvi/Bhu-devi (Earth Goddess) who sits on his raised elbow and lower left hand is broken. The God wears torque, hara, yajnopavita, wristlets, scraf and vanmala and lower garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels. His left foot rests over a lotus in anjali of Sesha Naga and his consort. The god is flanked by Sankhapurusha and Chakrapurusha on the right and by Lakshmi carrying lotus stalk and scarf and Garuda on the left. Seated Shiva on the right and Brahma on the left are depicted in the halo. A seated figure holding danda occurs on each flank in the middle field.

According to the authorities, Varaha, the third incarnation of Vishnu, may be in three forms- Bhuvaraha, Yajnavaraha and Pralayavaraha. Of theses the first form show as holding the legs of Prithvi (Bhu-devi) and smelling her.29 But here in the temple, the image the Prithvi is shown sitting on the elbow of his left upper hand and God is looking at her and not smelling her as Bhuvaraha should. The God at Khajuraho has his hands in
kati, holding gada, chakra and sankha with Prithvi seated on his third arm in which he holds chakra. This image has been given the arrangement of ayudhas pertaining to Trivikrama and not Vishnu.  

5. **Yama**

![Fig. 6.48 Yama](image)

A niche depicting four-armed Yama carrying kati, book and remaining two hands broken is placed in the last of south facade. Yama is the god of south whose vahana, according to Sanskrit authority is Buffalo and who has female attendant with fly whisks on each side. Here in the niche his mount buffalo with mutilated head is represented on the left. Yama is represented bearded with raised curls. He wears kundalas, torque, yajnopavita, wristlets and long mala with pendant clasp showing skull with arms and lower garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels and scarf.

(ii) **Upper row**

1. **Parvati**

The first upper niche of south shows four-armed Parvati seated in lalitasana is shown in the upper niche of the Kapili. Her head is broken and carries abhaya, trisula, bell and water vessel. She is flanked by two male devotees on each side.

2. **Vasu**

The next niche shows four-armed bull headed Vasu carrying varada, spiral lotus stalk, book and water vessel. He wears karanda-mukuta and usual ornaments and dress.

3. **Vasu**

Same description as mentioned above.
4. **Krishna-Lila** (Trinavarta-Vadha)

A niche containing the scene of Trinavarta –Vadha is placed on the south wall. This is the first Krishna-Lila scene which is seen by the devotee in the pradakshina. Krishna is seated on the shoulder of Trinavata (the storm-demon in human form), who looks fierce with a beard and whiskers and rolling eyes and is represented flying and forcibly kidnapping Krishna whose feet he has tightly gripped with both hands. Krishna is shown as boy instead of child and is represented as if he were dancing with his left hand placed against his beard and the right hand held up near his right ear. Krishna has curly hairs and wears kundalas, torque, hara, valayas and anklets and is draped in lower garment fastened by mekhala with jeweled loops. Trinvarata too wears same ornaments and dress.

Demon Trinvarata carried away the child Krishna in the form of whirlwind at the instigation of Kamsa. The whole Gokula was wrapped with dust and darkness for sometime. The demon reached the sky but he was unable proceed further on account of the heaviness made by child Krishna. Krishna gripped his neck tightly and the demon become powerless and couldn’t throw down the wonder-child. Being unable to bear his weight as well as of the child, the demon Trinvarata fell on the ground with all his limbs shattered on the stone below. He took his original form and Mata Yashoda was astonished to see her child lying on the chest of the dead demon.

![Fig. 6.49 Krishna-Lila (Trinavarta-Vadha)](image)

5. **Krishna-Lila** (Balrama slays Suta Romaharshana)

In the niche, Balarama is shown striding towards the Suta and striking him with the plough held in his right hand. Balarama has a canopy of Naga (serpent-hood). He is
potbellied, curly haired and wears kundalas, graiveyaka, hara, kaustubha-man, upavita, keyuras, valayas, vanamala and anklets and is draped in lower garment fastened by mekhala with jeweled loops. Suta Romaharshana is bearded and potbellied and also wears the same ornaments. He is seated on the low stool with his flex right knee tied to his belly with a yogapatta and the suspended left foot resting on the ground while Balarama is represented as agitated. In the forest of Naimasaranya where great sages were performing an important sacrifice, the speaker Romaharsana Suta did not stand up when Balarama arrived while all the participants of the meeting- great sages, ascetics, barahamans and learned scholars arose from their seat and welcomed Him with great honour and respect. When Lord Balarama noticed that Romaharshana Suta did not understand the highest principle of religion, in spite of his having studied all the Vedas, he decided to chastise Romaharshana for being puffed off. He killed him simply by striking a kusa straw which was noting but a blade of grass.

Fig. 6.50 Balrama slays Suta Romaharshana

Fig. 6.51 Yogasana Vishnu

6. Yogasana Vishnu
The main upper niche of the south shows four-armed Yogasana Vishnu seated in a lotus posture with the two lower hands in dhyana and carrying gada and chakra in his upper right and left hand respectively. In this niche Vishnu has Kurma (tortoise) marked on his seat indicating his identity as Kurma-Naryana. A seated ascetic on the right seems to be Narada. The six standing figures and one seated behind Narada are shown as Seven Rishis. The emaciated ascetic seems to be conversing with the figure on the extreme left. This is an unusual form of Kurma amid Narada and the seven Rishis to whom He gave a discourse on ultimate knowledge. He tells them on the occasion of the churning of the ocean. God wears kirti-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets and vanamala. Kurma and Matsya incarnations are generally portrayed in their natural form or in a composite form with a half human body as Nri-Kurma and Nri-Matsya but such form is not shown here in this temple.

7. Krishna-Lila (Chanura-Vadha)

In the niche four-armed Krishna vanquishes a powerful bearded wrestler figure who seems to be Chanura. Krishna holds the wrestler from his neck with his stretched upper left hand and caught the right leg of his opponent with his two lower hands and ready to strike the wrestler with the gada which is held in his upper right hand. Chanura has been floored on the ground and is poised precariously on his left knee and toes and trying to get rid of Krishna’s grip with his hands expressing agony and helplessness. Krishna wears kiriti-mukuta, kundalas, graiveyaka, hara, upavita, keyuras, valayas, vanamala and anklets and lower garments while Chnura is draped in a scarf and shorts and wears usual ornaments.

Chanura was a great wrestler of Mathura, who was ordered by Kamsa to kill Krishna and Balarama. In the wrestling arena, Chanura
challenged Lord Krishna and Krishna accepted the invitation to wrestle. He squared off with Chanura, as did Lord Balrama with Mustika. Grabbing each other’s hand and locking legs, the competitions struggled mightily each eager to defeat his opponent. Lord’s blows fell on Chanura like lighting bolts, breaking his body and causing him great pain and fatigue. Infuriated Chanura assaulted Lord Krishna with the speed of hawk. The Lord Krishna grasped Chanura’s arm and swung him around. They had a very tough contest in which Chanura was whirled round a hundred times until his breath was extended in the air. Krishna dashed him on the ground very forcefully as to smash his body into a hundred fragments and his hair clothes and ornaments scattered.

8. Krishna-Lila (Kuvalayapida-vadha)

A niche containing four-armed Krishna killing the elephant Kuvalayapida is also placed on the south wall. Lord Krishna stands facing in tribhanga with his head inclined. He has gripped and violently twisted the trunk of rutting elephant with his two hands and crushes the back of the elephant by pressing his left foot upon it. He holds a heavy gada in his uplifted upper right hand while the attribute of the fourth hand is not clear. The elephant seems to be helpless and in extreme agony. Lord Krishna is shown in his usual ornaments and dress.

While in Mathura, Lord Krishna and Balarama heard the drums from the wrestler arena. When Krishna came to the arena’s main gate, he saw the gigantic elephant Kuvalayapida who had the strength of one thousand ordinary elephants deliberately blocking the way, at the urging of his keeper. Understanding the situation, Krishna said, “O’ driver, move aside and let us pass! If you do not, then I shall send both of you this very day to the abode...
of Yamaraja.” Being thus threatened, the elephant’s keeper became angry and started goading the elephant to attack Lord Krishna. The elephant charged at Krishna, trying to seize him with his trunk. Krishna deftly moved behind the elephant, however, thus disappearing from his view and He grabbed the powerful elephant by the tail and playfully dragged him, while pulling him from side to side. Then, Krishna came in front of the elephant and gave him a strong slap. Kuvalayapida pursued the Lord who then suddenly lay down, playing himself under the elephant’s legs, causing to trip and fall. Krishna then pounced upon the elephant and pulled out a tusk and with it He killed the beast along with his keeper.33

9. Vasu

A niche containing four-armed bull headed Vasu carrying varada, book, lotus and water-vessel is placed on the south-west corner. Vasu wears usual ornaments and dress.

B. West face- Description of the sculptural programming of western wall of sanctum is given below.

(i) Lower row

1. Nirriti

A sculpture of four-armed nude Nirriti is placed on the south-west corner. He carries sword in right and sarpa in left hand while one right and other left hand is broken. He wears jata-mukuta tied with with a snake, sarpa kundalas, sarpa-hara, sarpapavita, sarpa-valayas, keyuras and mala. A recling human figure is represented on the pedestal as his vahana. In Hinduism, Nirriti is one of the dikpala representing the south-west (guardian of the direction) having Lion or man vahana according to the Agamas.34 While the Wikipedia describes Nirriti as the goddess of death and corruption
and Nirrta, is the name of Rudra.\textsuperscript{35}

2. **Narsimha**

The western cardinal (bhadra) niche contains a twelve-armed god standing in pratyalidhasana ripping open the belly of Hiranyakasyapu with his two lower hands while all the other hands are being broken. He tramples under his right foot two asuras holding sword and shield while three asuras figure holding the same weapons are depicted on his right flank and one on the left. In Narsimha Avatar Lord Vishnu incarnates himself as a semi-man and semi-Lion form. The king of demons, Hiranyakasyapu meditated for Lord Brahma and obtained a boon that he be killed neither by a man or by beast nor in daylight or at night and neither inside or outside a building. Getting boon (wish) he considered himself the Supreme God and forbade all worship of gods by anyone. But his son was an ardent devotee of Vishnu. This enraged Hiranyakasyapu very much. He ordered numerous ways to kill Pralada including asking his sister Holika to sit with Pralada in the fire. But every time Pralada escaped unhurt. Once Hiranyakasyapu knocked down a pillar and asked Pralada if yours Lord is everywhere, show him. Pralada remembered Lord Vishnu, then he emerged as a half-Lion, half-man from the pillar and carried the Hiranyakasyapu under the arch of the doorways i.e. neither indoor nor outdoor and then the time was evening i.e. neither night nor day. He then killed the demon with his claws by keeping him on his thighs, neither on earth nor in the sky.

3. **Varuna**

As Varuna is the God of the west, guardian of the direction, a niche containing four-armed Varuna, is placed in the west. Varuna carries pasa, nilotpala, book and kati. His mount crocodile is represented on the right and a devotee having a garland is shown on the left
of the feet of the god. Here Varuna wears kranda-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, long mala, keyuras, wristlets and lower garments fastened with jeweled loops and tassels and scarf.

(ii) Upper row

1. Vasu

A sculpture of four armed bull headed Vasu carrying clock-wise hand broken, sruk, book and broken is placed in upper row in west side.

2. Krishna Lila (Kaliya damana)

Four armed Krishna subjugating Kaliya sarpa is shown in lower western the niche. Krishna is dancing with his head sharply inclined. Krishna carries lotus stalk in his two lower hands and he has threaded the mouth of the sarpa with the lotus stalk held in his lower hand. The upper right hand of Lord is held over the head in the dance ecstasy, while the upper left hand carries a chakra. Kaliya is shown as human faced serpent, half man and half serpent, is in extreme agony and to looks up to Krishna in helpless submission with his threaded mouth and his hands are in anjali-mudra. Krishna wears kirtimukuta, kundalas, hara, keyuras, valayas, vanmala and anklets. Kaliya is shown as bearded with a canopy of serpent hoods.

Serpent Kaliya, son of Kadru left his Ramanaka Island for the fear of Garuda and came to Yamuna River in Varindavan. Garuda has been cursed by a Rishi Soubhari dwelling at Varindavan that he could not come Varindavan without meeting his death. Kaliya knew about this. Therefore he sought shelter in Yamuna at Varindavan. But due to this poisonous naga, the water of Yamuna for four leagues all around him boiled and bubbled with his poison.
Once, Krishna and gopas (cowherd boys) were playing with ball on the bank of Yamuna. The ball fell into river and Krishna jumped after it. Kaliya fiercely attacked Krishna and wrapped himself around Krishna body. But Krishna extricated himself from the clutches of this serpent. He suddenly sprang into Kaliya’s hood and assumed the weight of whole universe and danced upon them. Kaliya had one thousand hoods, one hundred being the chief. Sri Krishna tramped down with his feet each one of the hoods. Then Kaliya began to die. But then the naga’s wives came and prayed to Krishna for their husband’s life. Krishna pardoned him and left him goes free to leave the river and go to his island and told him that Garuda will not touch you as his hoods bear the marks of his feet. The water of the river then turned as sweet as nectar itself.36

3. Krishna Lila (Krishna defeats Sala)

In the niche two armed Krishna is shown subjugating a wrestler of Kamsa’s court, probably Sala. Krishna has raised the gada in his right hand to strike the Sala’s head, whose right wrist he has caught with his extended left hand. The wrestler defends his head against the blow of the gada with his appraised right hand, while he holds his left hand in trijani-mudra. The wrestler has a stouter physique but he is shown in defensive attitude. Krishna wears his usual ornaments and dress.

4. Yogasana Vishnu- Narayana

This sculptured scene in the western cardinal niche is set in the Sveta-dvipa where Vishnu-Narayana is seated below a tree, whose leaves only can be noticed. He is in the padmasana with two lower hands in dhyana-mudra and holds a chakra and conch in his upper right and left hands respectively. He is flanked by the ekantin devotees, all looking equally brilliant with haloes around their heads and standing with folded hands. In the foreground on the left, two of the devotees are performing a sacrifice. A sage Trita,
emacated due to severe penance which was performed to see the Narayana, is depicted on the right. So he shown seated with his back towards Narayana. This panel takes up into the heart of the Pancharata, into the mythical Sveta-dvipa (island), where ekantin devotees have costant darsana of Narayana.37

5. **Krishna Lila** (Grace on Kubja)

In this niche the scene represents the offering of scented paste by Kubja, who is depicted as a hunch-backed women and the mirthful acceptance of the present by Krishna and shown as turning aside to Balarama for approval. Both the Krishna and Balarama are shown two-armed. Krishna wears kirtimukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, keyuras, valayas, yajnopavita, vanmala and anklets. Balarama also wears the same ornaments and dress but mukuta is replaced by a canopy of serpent hood. Balarama is represented as holding his right hand in chinmudra and carrying hala in the left hand. Krishna and Balarama wondering in the city of Mathura before entering the palace of Kamsa, they met an old hunch-backed lady Kubja, who was providing scents and perfumes for Kamsa. She had a beautiful face but an ugly body, bent over in three ways. Though God never asks
anything from anyone but if someone offers something he returns it a hundred fold. After accepting the present from Kubja, Krishna put his one foot on her foot and one hand under the chin and stretched out her body straight as a dart. Her crooked back was gone. She shed tears of gratitude to Krishna for restoring her beautiful shape.  

6. **Krishna Lila** (Krishna breaking the cart)

This niche contains a four-armed curly haired child Krishna overturning the cart. Krishna has gripped with his two lower hands the two poles of the cart which he crushes between his legs. The left leg is plated on the ground against the cart while the right one is planted on the opposite wheel. His upper right hand is held up in the kataka pose, while he carries some object in his upper left hand. Krishna is shown in dancing attitude as if he were performing the feet in a sport. He wears his usual ornaments and dress.

As per folklore, during one of the birth ceremonies of child Krishna, Mata Yashoda kept fast asleep Krishna under a cart full of milk. Child Krishna started crying for milk after getting up, but Yashoda didn’t hear his cries. So Krishna kicked the cart
with his feet. The cart was upset, the milk pots were broken, the wheel and axles were upturned and the yoke was shattered. The milk started following into the mouth of Krishna. When the story of overturned cart was narrated to Mata Yashoda, she could not believe it and no one realize the immeasurable strength of that child.\textsuperscript{39}

C. North face- The sculptural programming of north wall of sanctum is shown in following figures. Description of main images of this wall is:

\textit{(i) Lower row}

1. Vayu

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{vayu.png}
\caption{Vayu}
\end{figure}

Four armed Vayu carrying kati, hand broken, book and dhavaja (flag) with staff placed on the north-west corner. His vahana with horn broken is represented on the left but it looks more like a bull than a deer. A standing devotee is depicted on the right. God wears kranda-mukuta, kundalas torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets and long mala reaching below the knees and lower garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels and scarf.

2. Hayagriva

The main cardinal niche of the north shows four armed horse-necked Hayagriva standing in sambhanga as padmasana. His lower right hand is in varada pose, upper right hand carries a mace (gada) while two left arms are mutilated. The god wears kranda-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets and vanamala reaching below the knees and is draped in a scarf and lower garments. He is flanked by a female attendant on the right and a male attendant on the left, each holding a lotus stalk. Sankhapurusha is depicted behind the female attendant and Chakrapurusha behind the male attendant. The halo is flanked by three-headed, four
armed Brahma on the left and four armed Shiva on the right. Once, Lord Brahma becoming tired of his creative activities wanted to rest. Because of his tiredness Lord Brahma yawned. All the four Vedas came out from his opened mouth. Two demons Madhu and Kaitabha had stolen the Vedas and hidden them under water. Lord Vishnu took his incarnation as Hayagriva to protect the Vedas. In this avtara his face resembled that of a horse and rest of his body resembled that of Sri Narayan with all of his four hands carrying the various weapon and emblems of Vishnu. He killed the demon and protected the Vedas.  

Another verse, Yajnavalka, the great sage, lost the Yajurveda as a result of his Gurus curse. He performed severe penance. Son God, pleased by his penance, appeared before him as a deity with the horse head and taught him the same Veda in another form. This section has come to be known as Vajasanyi Samhita. The origins of the Hayagriva Avatara one perhaps found here. Hayagriva is the god of learning akin to the goddess Sarasvati. In the Sakta tradition of Hinduism, Hayagriva occupies a different role. Here a demon named Hayagriva first appears as son of Kashyapa Prajapati. Through great penance, the demon managed to obtain the boon from the goddess Durga that he can only be killed by another Hayagriva. This instilled a sense of invincibility and he started harsing the Devas. The Devas turned to Vishnu for aid, but despite a long struggle he was unable to kill Hayagriva. Tried and drained after the battle Vishnu proceeded to Vaikuntha Dham to rejuvenate and meditate in padmasana with his head supported by the upper end of his taut bow. The Devas once again approached Vishnu for help but were unable to arouse him from his meditation. Lastly, the string of the bow on which Vishnu was resting was cut away by a swarm of termites as asked by the Devas. The broken string lashed out with a great force and cut Vishnu’s head from his
body. The Devas were mortified and prayed the goddess Durga for guidance. As per instructions of Durga, Balarama attached the head of a white horse to Vishnu’s body and the revived Vishnu eventually he killed demon Hayagriva.  

3. **Kubera**

This sculpture shows four armed Kubera with all hands broken except the lower left holding mongoose purse. His vahana Ram is depicted on the left. The God wears kranda-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets and long mala reaching below the knees and is draped in scarf and lower garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels. Kubera should have a Ram for his Vahana according to Amsumadhadagama. But according to Rupamandana, the four armed image of Kubera should carry gada, purse, fruit and water vessel with elephant Vahana. Kubera is the god of wealth and Lord of north in Hindu mythology. Kubera is the son of sage Vishrava and also elder brother of Ravana. He is said to have performed austerities for a thousand years, for which Brahma, the creator, gave him immortality and made him god of wealth, guardian of all the treasures of the earth. He is one of the Ashta Dikpalas representing the north.

There is also another story that Kubera was stumped to see the splendour and beauty of Goddess Parvati. He felt sorry that he had not worshipped such a fine goddess for so long and one of his eyes shut itself. Goddess Parvati got angry that Kubera was winking at her and looking at her with evil intension. She made her eye burst. Kubera lost sight in one eye and was also cursed that he would always look ugly. Kubera pleaded with Lord Shiva to forgive him and explained that he had not seen the Goddess with evil
intension. Lord Shiva left the choice to his consort. Goddess forgave Kubera and left the eye grows back but it was smaller than other one. Kubera was rewarded by Lord Shiva with the post of being one of the guards of the eight directions- the north. The Goddess made him the lord of wealth and material; his responsibilities are to distribute them while creating wealth is with Goddess Lakshmi.46

4. Isana

A niche representing four armed Isana carrying varada, trisula while other two hands are broken, is placed on north-east corner as guardian of the direction. The god of the north-east is known as Isana who may be playing on his vina held in lower two hands having the upper two hands in abhaya and varada poses. His vahana is bull.47 In the temple Nandi is represented on the left as regardant. The god wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets and long mala and lower garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels. A standing devotee is depicted on the right.

Fig. 6.64 Isana

5. Sarasvati

The last lower niche of north contains four armed Sarasvati seated on a lotus in lalitasana. Clock-wise her hands carry broken, spiral lotus stalk, book and broken. According to Agnipurana (Chapter 50) Sarasvati should carry vina in her first and third hands, rosary in second and book in the fourth hands and her vehicle is the swan.48 The seated image of Sarasvati in Khajuraho temple carry the vina in the first and third hands and lotus in second hand, the fourth being in varada pose or with vina in first and fourth hands, book and lotus in the second and third hands.49 Here in this temple Sarasvati perhaps carried
vina of which the vyala-shaped resonator survived.\textsuperscript{50} The mount of the Goddess is also not depicted. She wears chakra-shaped headdress, kundalas, torque with pendant, wristlets, long mala and anklets. She is flanked by a flutist on the right and a dwarf dancer on the left.

(ii) Upper row

1. Vasu

A niche containing four armed bull-headed Vasu carrying varada, struk, book and water-vessel is placed in upper row of north face.

2. Krishna Lila (Arishtasura-vadha)

The niche contains the scene of two-armed Krishna killing the bull demon Arishtasura. Krishna violently wrenching the right horn and muzzle of the bull with his right and left hand respectively and is shown as dancing and crushing the bull under his right leg. He is depicted as curly haired boy and wears usual ornaments and dress. Smiling face and expression of agony can be clearly noticed in the sculpture. Arishta was a demon disguised as giant bull with a large hump, send by Kamsa. His appearance was as dark as smoke along with very sharp and piercing horns. He made the earth tremble as the tore it apart with his powerful hooves. The domestic animals and the cowherd community fled the pasture in fear. But the Krishna clapped his hands in order to challenge the Arishtasura. Arishtasura got charged and attacked Krishna with his pointed horns.
Krishna immediately held his horn with tight grip and knocked him to the ground with his feet. Krishna finally yanked out one of the horn of Arishtasura and attacked him with same horn. This attack ended the life of demon and Arishtasura fell down and had a painful death. But the people of Gokul blame Krishna for killing an animal which was sin according to Hindu mythology.51

3. Krishna Lila (Yamalarjuna episode)

This niche shows Yamalarjuna episode scene – two armed dancing Krishna uprooting the twin trees (Yamalarjuna) held in each hand. Human heads are shown on the tops of the two uprooted trees representing the two Yaksha brothers Nalakubera and Manigriva. Krishna is depicted as a young boy wearing kirtimukuta, kundalas, torque, kaustubhamani, hara, upavita, valayas and anklets and is draped in a lower garments fasted by mekhala with jeweled loops and tassels. Once, the two sons of Kubera naming Nalakubera and Manigriva were playing with Gandharva girls in a river, in a naked state. Narada happened to pass that way. The celestial damsels felt ashamed at their nudity, and at once put on their clothes. But these two Yakas did not care to do so. Hence Narada gave a curse and let them became trees but favoured that they will turned to their original form by the touch of Sri Krishna and will not lose their memory. These sons of Kubera become a pair of Arjuna tree in Varindavan. After one hundred Deva years Krishna approached the trees Yamala and Arjuna. He placed himself between the trees.
and uprooted them. They fell down with a terrible crash. Two Siddhas came out of the trees and illuminated the place with their lustre. They praised Kubera then rose upward.\textsuperscript{52}

4. **Yogasana Vishnu**

This upper cardinal niche of a north represents four armed Vishnu-Narayana in his Matsya incarnation. Like Kurma, he sits in padmasana in dhayana mudra and holds a gada and chakra in his upper right and left hand while his lower hands are in dhayana and fish is represented on the seat. He wears kirti-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, wristlets and lower garments. Vishnu gave discourse to Vaivasat Manu and seven Rishis as mentioned in Matsya Purana.\textsuperscript{53} The Parsara Samhita and Agni Purana also describe Matsya as Narayana. Here in the niche also, Matsya Narayana (Vishnu) is attended by
Vaivasvat Manu (the oldest man represented) seated with folded hands on the low seat to the left of the God and the Seven Rishis viz. Atri, Vasishta, Kasyapa, Gautama, Bharadvaja, Visvamitara and Jamadagni. Six of the Rishis are depicted standing and one is seated to the right of the Matsya.\(^{54}\)

According to Hindu myths, Mastya Avtara was taken by Mahavishnu at the end of Satyuga, when the world was destroyed by a great flood. Legend has explained it that the king of pre-ancient Dravida called Satyavrata, later known as Manu, performed severe penance for thousand of years, when Brahma became pleased by his austerities, He granted the boon as desired by Manu that he will save the living beings of this world and world itself during the time of annihilation.\(^{55}\) Thereafter one day as Manu was performing oblation in the Krtamala River, a small fish ‘saphari’ came into his hand and just as he was about to throw the fish back into river, the tiny fish requested the king to save its life from big fish. So king placed that fish in his water pot. Overnight the fish became large, then Manu transferred it to clay vessel but the fish again expanded to the length of three hands in one night. Then the king put the fish in the river, but it soon outgrew the river and king then threw it in the Ganges but it continued expanding greatly and it has to be transferred to the ocean. But the fish occupied the whole ocean. The king realized that this must surly be the Supreme Lord Vishnu itself and then the Lord made an appearance and told the king that world came to an end by a huge flood in seven days and asked Satyavarata to collect herbs, seeds of all plants and animals, to assemble all the Seven rishis (saptarishis) and wait. He advised to build a huge boat and fill it up with all the flora and fauna on the each and told him that He would appear as a fish to propel the boat to Mount Himavan for surviving from the flood to the next Yuga. True to his words, after seven days, the Lord Matsya appeared and the king tied the boat to a horn of the fish by using the royal serpent Vasuki. The huge flood occurred as expected and destroyed the planet but fish took all of them to
Mount Himavan and kept the Manu and his wife and the sample of every species safely there till the flood was over. The havoc stopped after a few years and the boat was then towed to land. It is said that the king and his queen started a new life using the samples of various species. They created a new life on earth for the new era.56

5. Krishna Lila (Putana-Vadha)

This upper niche represents demoness Putana’s deliverance. Krishna is represented as a nude standing baby sucking the left breast of Putana who is seated in lalitasana with both her hands raised in mortal agony by the fierce sucking. The joyous expression on the face of Krishna and agony and horror of Putana are clearly carved.

According to legend, the king Kamsa send demoness Putana to kill new born male infants in Mathura, neighbouring towns in the move to kill the new born Lord Krishna. She took the form of beautiful women and smeared her breast with poison. She entered the house of Nanda and saw the divine child in the cradle. The cruel Putana took the baby on her lap and suckled it with her breasts. The Lord squeezed her breast by his hands. Putana sucked to the last drop of her blood and reduced to a hideous skeleton with sunken cheeks and belly, protruding eyeballs and all her veins and bones completely

Fig. 6.69 Putana-Vadha

Fig. 6.70 Vatsasura-Vadha
exposed. As before dying she assumed her original form and died.\textsuperscript{57}

6. **Krishna Lila** (Vatsasura-Vadha)

This niche of the north represents scene of four armed Krishna killing the calf-demon Vatsasura. Here Krishna is represented as a boy with curly hairs. Krishna pounces upon the calf demon by pressing its down with his right leg and aggressively twists the tail and muzzle of the calf with his lower right and left hands while his upper hands are held up in the kapittha pose. Lord wears his usual ornaments and garments.

Once Krishna and Balarama were playing with other cowherd boys and tending the calves on the bank of river Yamuna. Demon Vatsasura assumed the form of a calf and got mixed among the herd with the intention to kill Krishna and Balarama. But Krishna identified the Asura in the form of calf. He silently approached the demon. He caught him by his head and struck him against a tree. The Asura died. The cowherd boys praised Sri Krishna.\textsuperscript{58}

7. **Vasu**

Four armed bull headed Vasu carrying Varada, invisible, book and water vessel.

8. **Kali**

The last figure which is in the upper niche of the Kapili contains a four armed Kali seated in lalitasana. She carries a khappara in the lower right hand from which she is licking blood, a severed head in her upper right hand, the upper left resting on the ground and a sword in the lower left hand. She is flanked by two pretas on each side. The image found at Khajuraho has sword, khappara, skull and fourth hand is broken. She is shown with ‘flesh dried up, bones showing through the skin, eyes sunken, abdomen contracted and hair standing at ends with snakes peeping out’. She seems to be Chamunda or Kali.\textsuperscript{59} N.K. Bhattasali has also identified her Kali with same description.\textsuperscript{60}
Door Divinities of Sanctum

Hayasirsha Pancharatra,\textsuperscript{61} Lakshmi Tantra as well as the Agni Purana mention the worship of the divinities of the door among various rites to be performed by the devotee. The texts provide the karma of worship. The devotee is to first worship the Kshetrapala in the centre of the threshold, then Lakshmi in the centre of the lintel, followed by the worship of the two door guardians Chanda and Prachanda, and on the out side of the entrance the door-guardians Jaya and Vijaya. Then devotee is to worship the river goddess Ganga and Yamuna, visualized as youthful women, on the sakhas of the door, then the Sakha-nidhi and Padma-nidhi stationed near the threshold. The Agni Purana adds worship of the door guardians Dhata and Vidhata.\textsuperscript{62}

The Lakshmana temple has an interesting sanctum doorway. This is the only temple in Khajuraho that depicts the Avatara of Vishnu on its jambs pairing Matsya, Varada and Yamana on the left jamb with Kurma, Narsimha and Parsurama on the right jambs. Lakshmi lusted by elephants occupies the centre of the lintel. She is flanked by dancers then vina-players on each side. Brahma sits in the extreme left niche and Shiva in the extreme right. Nava-grahas namely Surya, Chandra, Mangala, Budha, Brihaspati, Sukra, Shani, Rahu and Ketu are represented four armed and are placed on the upper lintel of the door above the main lintel. Below in the centre of the threshold, there is a niche containing the image of seated four-armed pot-bellied deity wearing karandamukuta carrying a purse in his lower right hand is identified as Kubera, though the text prescribes worship of Kshetrapala at this place.\textsuperscript{63} Kubera is the Lord of wealth and material. He is always remembered with the goddess of fortune, Lakshmi. So it may be placed rightly below the image of Lakshmi instead of Kshetrapala. Flanking Kubera on the threshold is a seated image of Padma-nidhi and Sankha-nidhi on each side. Two haloed couples standing gracefully are depicted on the extreme left and right respectively of the threshold.

Southern sanctum door jamb have the image of the river goddess Ganga and the door-guardian Chandra on the lower section and the central Sakha of the jamb in
ascending order shows the three incarnations of Vishnu; i.e. Matsya, Varaha and Vamana. Goddess Ganga holds a lotus stalk in one hand while the other hand rests on a dwarf female attendant. While on northern jambs, there is an image of river Yamuna with her mount tortoise and the door guardian Prachanda in the lower section. Here in the central Sakha, in ascending order another incarnations of Vishnu; Kurma, Narsimha and Pursuarama are paired respectively with the three incarnations of the southern jamb.

**Interior of the Sanctum**

The sanctum shows a majestic three-faced standing Vaikuntha image about 1.21 metre (4 ft) in height, form of Vishnu as the main deity below a lovely sixteen-petalled lotus ceiling and is surrounded by large prabhavali. The central face is of human and two side faces though mutilated, can be recognized as that of Lion (Narsimha) on the right and a boar (Varaha) on the left. But the temple’s inscription quotes that the Vaikuntha image installed by Yasovarman had a Kapila face like the Chaturanana (four-faced) images of Kashmir, Chamba and other northern centres and was different from the present three-faced one in the sanctum. The figure is four-armed but all hands are broken with their ayudhas. Twenty four forms of Lord Vishnu are represented on the Prabhavali. The fish and tortoise are shown flanking a miniature figure of Yogasana Vishnu representing the Matsya and Kurma incarnation in the top niche. Four Vedas are shown as standing in human form behind the Matsya, Varaha and Narsimha occur on the sides, Rama, Vamana and probably Parshurama on the right jamb and Balarama, Krishna and Kalki on the left jamb. Two seated images carrying a staff and a lotus flower are depicted above the representations of Varaha and Narsimha. Garuda is shown behind the Kalki on the left while the earth goddess (Bhudevi) carrying a lotus stalk in one hand and kati in other is depicted on the corresponding right side. A goddess on a tortoise under a canopy of snake-hoods is depicted on the pedestal as emerging after churning of the ocean. She is mentions that Earth Goddess to be represented below and between the two feet of Vasudeva.
The halo is flanked by three-headed, four armed Brahma on the right and four-armed Shiva on the left. The halo is surmounted by a four-armed Yogasana Vishnu in a niche which is also repeated on the top of the outer frame. The outer frame shows twelve other forms of Vishnu. Below the outer frame occurs a standing figure on each side of a four-armed Vaishnava Prathihara carrying sankha in only surviving hand while other hands are mutilated. The main deity Vaikuntha wears kirti-mukuta (partly broken), torque, kaustubhamani, hara, upavita, keyeras, double looped girdle and padangada leg ornament above the anklet.
EXTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE

The images of the temple serve as windows through which the deity is manifest to the world outside. These are also mirrors for us as all deities are personifications of qualities within us. The image on the outer wall of the temple is the one most closely related to the deity in the inner shrine.

Niches on outer Adhishthana-Vedibhandha Images

There are nine principal niches of the vedibhandha around the temple containing an interesting group of divinities standing from Ganesha in the south and ending on Durga-Kshamankari in the north. Devangana Desai has identified these vedibhandha divinities as Navagraha. Out of which seven grahas are depicted in the beautiful niches. Astrologers claims that grahas influence the auras and minds of beings connected to the earth. The energies of the garahas are getting connected in a specific way to the...
individual auras of humans at the time they take their first birth breath in a given nativity and remain with natives of the earth as long as their current body lives. So in the Hindu religion and mythology, these Navagraha are supposed to have significant effect in the lives of individuals. Therefore a Hindu adorns these planets as deities. As per Hindu customs the Navagrahas are typically placed in a single square with the sun in the centre and other deities surrounding surya, no two of them are made to face each other. In south India, their images are generally found in all important Saiva temples. Grahas are also guardian of the quarters. In the Lakshmana temple these grahas are placed in the vedibhandha. The details of these images are:-

**Niche I:** Starting from the southern side, paradakshina-wise there is first niche which represents an eight armed dancing Ganesha (Naritya Ganpati). Ganesha, the supreme deity, is worshipped as a Lord of beginnings and destroyer of evils and obstacles (Vignesha). Ganesha is shown as a pot-bellied and Ekadanta (one-tusked). The trunk is left turned at the shoulder level. He carries clock-wise a shell, rosary, lotus, goad, serpent, hand broken, dance gesture and lower left hand is put on the waist as a dance gesture. He is standing in a quite dynamic posture. He wears a jeweled headdress, torque, necklace, keyuras and wristlets and is draped in a lower garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels. His mount rat is not depicted. A male playing on dholak along with another dancing figure is carved on the right and a drummer on the left of the God. Two female figures are depicted in the halo on either side.

![Dancing Ganesha](image)

**Niche II:** This niche contains two armed standing divinity Sani. All though his orginal both the hands are broken but preserved right hand with rosary is in the preaching mudra. His slightly bent left leg is placed on a thin foot rest with lotus motif. Sani is one of the
nine primary celestial beings in Hindu astrology. This figure is identified as the planet Sani by Devangana Desai. He wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, upavita, keyuras and undergarments fastened by a jeweled belt with tassels and loops. Two seated female figures in anjali-mudra are depicted on each side of the feet of God. A female attendant holding khatvanga on the right and another female carry some object which is mutilated on the left of the God. Number of the figures is carved in the frame.

Fig. 6.77 Sani

Fig. 6.78 Brihaspati.

**Niche III:** This Vedibhandha niche shows the four armed standing Brihaspati. He is the Guru of Devas, personification of piety and religion, the chief officer of prayers and scarifies, represented as the Purohita of the Gods. His preserved right hand displays varada-cum-rosary, while the upper left hand carries a manuscript and other two arms are damaged. Two bearded males are depicted on the left and two standing male figure with folded hands and a standing female behind them are shown on the right in the halo. Vayalas are carved on each side of the God. At the right bottom in niche, his vahana hamsa with broken hand is shown and a seated child holding some manuscript is on the left. God wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, hara, torque, yajnopavita and under garments
fastened by a jeweled belt with tassels and loops. Two standing male are also depicted on the extreme right and left bottom.

**Niche IV:** Divinity in this vedibhandha niche seems to be Soma (moon) as he wears a crescent moon in his jata (matted hairs). He is a lunar deity. He is described as young, beautiful, fair; two armed having in his hands club and a lotus. But here in the niche, the deity is shown as four armed carrying a club in upper right and lower right hand is in preaching mudra while lower hand is broken and upper left hand holds a manuscript but arm is mutilated. He wears jata-mukuta, kundalas and other usual ornaments. Here also Vyalas are shown on the south sides of the deity in the frame. Three figures are carved on each side of the god at extreme corners.

![Fig. 6.79 Soma](image)

**Niche V:** This niche is placed on the western face and contains Surya. As per Hindu customs, the navagraha are typically placed in a single square with Surya in the centre and other deities surrounding. Here in the Vedibadha images, the Surya is placed in the centre. Surya is the chief, the solar deity, one of Adityas, son of Kasyapa. Shaivites and Vaishnavas often regard Surya as an aspect of Shiva and Vishnu respectively. As a Surya Narayana he holds chakra, padma, padma and shankha in his four hands. But here in the niche, his all hands are broken as he is shown as two handed. His chariot is pulled by seven

![Fig. 6.80 Surya](image)
horses. So, two horse-faced Asvinikumaras are represented in the frame on each side of the deity. Above it Vyalas are also shown. A standing goddess is depicted on the pedestal in front of the god. Two animal faced figures are standing on each side of the god and behind these figures, other male attendants are standing. The holo is depicted by a figure that holds bow in hands and and seated on knee in ready posture on each side of the god. God wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments.

**Niche VI:** The divinity in this Vedibandha niche is Mangala. According to Gopi Nath Rao, the four handed images of this god should have sakti, gada and trisula with first hand in Varada pose and have goat vahana. One has abhaya pose with rosary club, book (manuscript) and water vessel. Here in the niche, the god has same attributes but fourth hand is broken.

Mangala is the god of Mars. Mars is also called Angaraka or Bhauma, son of Bhumi (Prithvi). He is the owner of the Aries and Scorpio signs. In the niche, lamb is
represented as his cognizance below the lotus pedestal, so the deity seems to represent the planet Mangala.\textsuperscript{75} Number of figures is depicted in the frame. Two female attendants are shown on the each side of the god. God wears jata-mukuta and usual ornaments and dress.

**Niche VII:** This niche of the north represents the planet Budha. Budha is the god of the planet Mercury and the son the Chandra (The moon) with Tara. In the niche He is shown four-armed who carries manuscript in one hand while all other hands are broken. In Vastu text, Budha is described with his mount sarpa. But here he is shown with an elephant. God wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments. A seated devotee occurs to the right of the god while two female are standing on the left. Another two figures are also carved to the right of the god. Vylas are also depicted in the frame. Two standing images (one male and another female) are shown on each side of the god in the halo.

**Niche VIII:** Divinity in this Vedibandha niche represents the Sukra standing on the pedestal. Sukra is the name of the son of Bhrigu and Usahana and preceptor of Daityas and the guru of the Asuras, identified with the planet Venus.\textsuperscript{76} He is four-armed carrying
lotus and manuscript in his upper right and left hand respectively. While lower right hand with rosary is in preaching mudra and lower left hand is mutilated. Vyalas are shown on each side of the god in the frame. A seated image with book listening the teaching occurs on pedestal on each side of the god. The frog as his cognizance is also shown. Three figures standing on the right of the deity and two images standing on its left are also depicted in the halo.

**Niche IX:** This niche facing north contains an image of Yogesvari being a form of Ambika. The ten-handed image with Lion Vahana may be identified with Yogesvari. She carries Vrada with rosary, sword, ghata, trisula, knife, bell, shield, distinct object and remaining two hands (one left and one right) are broken. The goddess wears anklets, torque, hara, keyuras and wristlets and is draped in lower garments fastened by a belt with jeweled loops and tassels. Her Vahana Lions are depicted on each side of the goddess. Two female attendants occur behind the Lions on each side of the goddess. Halo is depicted by three ascetics on either side of the deity.

So seven grahas alongwith Ganesha and Durga form the Graha-mandala around the temple Vedibandha.

**Deities in Small Niche**

There are twenty four miniature niches in the garaspattika row of the basement. The series begins with the image of Ganesha and includes Kubera, Lakshmi, Vaishnavi, Shiva and other divinities.

**Significant Images on the outer facades of the Jangha**

The images on the jangha are systematically arranged in two horizontal rows. The upper row carries the images of different forms of Vishnu (Vishnu’s vyuhantara aspect), surasundaries and vyalas. The lower row represents images of Shiva, surasundaries, nagins and mithunas. Images of Vishnu and Shiva occupy a position on the buttresses and surasundaries nagins (snake goddess), vyala and mithuna couples in the recesses. While programming placement of sculptures on the tiers of its jangha are uniformly
symmetrical, that is the same sequence horizontally as well as the same type are placed in vertical arrangement namely vyala above vyala, male icon above other male icon, similarly with the motif of embracing couples.  

Another significant feature of the sculptural programming of this temple is the additional third tier of figures of smaller size, probably half in proportion to other two tiers and is placed alternating panels of couples and groups of three figures corresponding to the vyala, surasundaries and male deity below. While at antarala conjoint, the mithuna is shown at the lower tier. Vishnu with Lakshmi in the second and third tier adorned with only a single figure of Brahma. This is repeated on the south and north side of the antarala. So the sculptural programming of antarala is shown in figure 6.85.

**Images around the temple starting from South are:-**

*(i) Upper Row*

1. The first niche in upper row of south represents the four-armed Vishnu carrying chakra, padma, sankha and gada. Such form of Vishnu with same attributes is recognized as Purushottama. The God wears kirita-mukuta, torque, hara, upavita, armlets and vanmala and lower garments fastened by a belt with tassels and scarf. Flame-shaped bud occurs on the right of the pedestal. According to ancient iconographic text Rupamandana also, this is Purushottama.

2. The next niche of the upper row contains a divine couple. The four-armed male deity wears jata-mukuta while the female have donnet like head-dress. He embraces his consort with his left hand and right hand is in kati. The goddess embraces her consort with the right hand and holds spiral lotus stalk in her left hand. A female playing on Vina and other playing flute is depicted on the right and left side respectively. A dwarf female attendant occurs between the Vinavandini and the god. Two Vidyadharas playing on flute are also depicted in the upper field. The upper row in this temple carries the images of Vishnu. But forms of Vishnu wear kirti-mukuta except one Kpila form.
3. Above the niche II, occurs a bearded four-armed god standing in samabhanga. He holds akshmala in the Varada gesture, damaru, manuscript and water vessel. He wears jata-mukuta, torque, yajnopavita and long mala and paduka in his feet. A male attendant holding stick in right hand and basket in left is depicted on the right side of the god while attendant on the left holds his right hand in abhaya and left hand in kati. The god is surrounded by emaciated and bearded ascetics wearing matted locks holding a bunch of sticks (samidha) in their left hands while their right hand is hold in vyakhyana mudra with akshmala. Krishna Deva identified the deity as Agni.  

4. Another niche shows the four-armed Vishnu holding gada, chakra and shankha while one upper right hand is broken. According to Rupamandana the image represents Achyuta form of Vishnu. The image of this type, the god is lying on a Seshanaga having gada in first hand, the second hand supports his head and the remaining two carry chakra
and shankha is also identified as Achyuta. Here in the niche god wears kirti-mukuta, kaustubha-mani, vanmala and other usual ornament and dress.

ii) Lower row

1. This niche of south contains the image of four-armed Shiva carrying varada, trisula, nilotpala and fourth hand broken. He wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets, mala, anklets and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled/oriental loops, tassels and scarf. His mount Nandi is represented on the right and a dwarf holding a garland on the left.

2. The niche of Shiva is flanked on each side by a female attendant carrying scarf and spiral lotus stalk.

3. An erotic couple flanked by a nude male on the right and a nude female on the left.

4. Four-armed Shiva standing in tribhanga. He holds his lower right hand in Varada pose with akshmala and serpent in upper left hand while his upper right and lower left hand is broken. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual dress and ornaments. He is flanked by a male attendant on each side. The attendant on the right holds kati in his right hand and lotus in the left. His mount Nandi is also represented on the right of the god.

South west corner

Upper Row

5. Four-armed niche at south-west corner shows an image of form of four-armed Vishnu carrying abhaya, shankha and gada and one hand is broke. He wears kirti-mukuta, kastubha-mani and other his usual ornaments and dress. Vishnu in the form of Kesava holds his first hand in abhaya or Varada with rosary, shankha, chakra and gada. Same attributes of Vishnu are depicted in the niche. According to Rupamandana also, this is Kasava form of Vishnu. A standing dwarf is also shown on the right side of the pedestal.
6. Four-armed Vishnu carrying chakra, padma, shankha and kati. Such form is also identified as Purshottama. The god wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A dwarf in a seated posture occurs on the lower right of the god.

Lower Row

5. This lower niche of corner shows four-armed Shiva carrying varada, trisula, book and water vessel. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual dress and ornaments. A seated dwarf occurs on the left. His mount Nandi as regadant on the right of the pedestal.

6. The next niche represents four-armed Shiva carrying akshmala in varada pose, trisula, book and other hand is broken. Here also god wears same ornaments and dress. He is flanked by a standing female attendant holding scarf and chauri on the right and a standing male attendant on the left. Nandi is also depicted on the right of the god.

Upper Row

7. The niche on the north-west corner contains the four-armed Vishnu holding abhaya, gada, chakra and fourth one broken. The god shown with first hand in abhaya or Varada with rosary, carrying chakra, padma and shankha in the rest, represent Harikesha form of Vishnu. The god wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornament including kaustubha-mani and vanmala and lower garments fastened by belt with tassels and scarf. He is flanked by a male attendant standing on the right side carrying his right hand in kati and uplifting left hand in the praise of the god. A seated devotee occurs on the left side of the deity.

8. Mahahava form of Vishnu is represented in this niche. He is standing in tribhanga and holds gada, chakra, shankha and lotus bud. Such description is given in the Silpa text Rupamandana. The figure wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A seated dwarf attendant wearing fan-shaped headdress, playing on the flute, occurs on the left of the god.
9. Four-armed Vishnu standing in tribhanga and carrying spiral lotus stalk in upper right hand chakra in upper left hand and gada in lower left hand while lower right hand is mutilated. A male attendant holding right hand in kati and lotus bud in the left hand is standing in exaggerated tribhanga on the right of the deity. The form of Vishnu with such attribute is also described in Rupamandana as Padmanabha.

10. The upper niche in the recessed façade of antarala contains a two-armed deity standing in sambhanga. He carries water vessel in his left hand while his right hand is held is abhaya. He is bearded and wears matted locks, upavita and kanpina. A bearded ascetic holding water vessel and stuff is standing on the right of the deity and the attendant on the left is a dwarf. The main composition is flanked by a vertical row of two standing ascetics on each side. The ascetic in the upper row holds their hand in abhaya while figures of the lower row carries sacrificial spoon in their right hand but all of them carry a samidha (bunch of sticks) in their left hand. The halo is depicted by a pair of seated devotees each side. The deity seems to be Agni.  

11. The next niche contains a four-armed deity standing in tribhanga and carrying a gada, padma, shankha and chakra. He wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A dwarf is seated on the left of the god. Image with all the above mentioned ayudhas in his four hands is a form of Vishnu.  

12. Four-armed Vishnu standing in tribhanga and holding chakra, spiral lotus stalk, shankha and varada pose. The god wears kirti-mukuta and other usual dress and ornaments including kaustubha-mani and vanmala. A seated bearded dwarf with folded hands occurs to the right of the god. The image perhaps represents Hrishikesa form of Vishnu.  

13. Another upper niche contains four-armed Vishnu standing in tribhanga carrying abhaya, shankha, padma and kati. He wears kirti-mukuta, vanmala and other usual ornaments and dress. This image seems to be Anirudha form of Vishnu.
14. The upper niche on south-east corner contains an image of Vishnu standing in tribhanga and carries abhaya, gada, broken and shankha. He wears kirti-mukuta and other usual dress and ornaments and vanmala. A sated dwarf holding a vase in his left hand and right hand in abhaya is depicted on the right flank of the god. The pedestal of this figure is engraved with a graffito reading ‘Jakhagana’. This form of Vishnu with same attribute is Trivikarma.89

15. The previous niche is flanked on the right by a surasundaries yawning and on the left by an apsara carrying scarf in her right hand.

16. Another figure on south-east corner represents four-armed standing Vishnu carrying shankha, padma, chakra and gada. He also wears kirti-mukuta and other usual dress and ornaments including kaustubha-mani and vanmala. Chakrapurusha occurs on the right of the god. According to Rupanmandana the image represents Padmanbha form of Vishnu.90

Lower Row

7. This niche is placed on the lower row of north-west corner which contain four-armed Shiva holding varada, trisula, sarpa, and fourth hand is broken. He wears jata-mukuta and usual ornaments and dress. His mount Nandi is represented on the right of the pedestal. A female attendant holding scarf and chauri is depicted on the right of the god while on the left a male attendant whose head is broken is standing holding garland.

8. Four-armed Shiva carrying akshamala in varada, hara, trisuhla, sarpa and fourth hand broken. This figure also wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. He is flanked by a headless attendant standing on left of god who holds flower in the right hand and staff in the left while another attendant standing on the right of the god holds his right hand in kati and staff in his left hand. The mount of god Nandi is also depicted as regardant on the right of the pedestal.

9. Four-armed Shiva standing in tribhanga and holds varada, trisula, nilotpala and broken. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A male attendant wearing
crown is represented on the right holding trisula in his left hand and his right hand in kati. Nandi is also represented on the left of pedestal.

10. The recessed façade of the antarala shows an erotic couple flanked by a standing nude female attendant on the right and a nude Kshapanaka on the left. The male figure is depicted with a wig and plaited hairs and is as heavily jewelled as his consort. He wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, upavita, keyuras, wristlets, long mala and anklets and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled tassels and scarf.

11. Four-armed Shiva standing in tribhanga and carrying varada, broken, sarpa and broken. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments. A female attendant with her hands in anjali mudra is standing on the left and mount of the god Nandi is represented on the right.

12. Unlike other figures in the lower row which invariably show forms of Shiva, this niche represent a four-armed Vishnu standing in tribhanga and carrying gada and padma in his right hands while his both the left hands are broken. He wears kirti-mukuta and his usual dress and ornaments including vanamala. A flower like lotus bud is also represented on the left side of the pedestal.

13. Four-armed Shiva standing in tribhanga and carrying varada, trisula, sarpa and water vessel. A male attendant who held his left hand in kati is depicted on the left side while on the right side of the pedestal seated Nandi is represented.

14. The niche on the south east corner contains four-armed Shiva carrying varada, trisula, serpent with a bunch of flower stalk below the hand and water vessel. His mount Nandi is shown on the right looking up towards the god. God wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets and lower garments fastened by a belt with ornamental loops, tassels and scarf. The attendant in anjali-mudra is depicted on the left of the god and another standing on the right holds khatvanga in his left hand and kapala in his right hand.
15. Niche of Shiva is flanked on the left by a female attendant carrying a lotus stalk in the right hand and scarf in the left and a surasundari on the right holding her plaited hairs in the right hand and has placed her left hand between the breasts.

16. This niche which faces the south represents four-armed Shiva carrying varada, trisula and sarpa and water vessel. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual dress and ornaments. A male with folded hands is seated on the right of the god while Nandi is represented as regardant on the left with a standing female attendant behind.

Images on the Roof Pediment (Superstructure Niches)

The temple’s front facade is adorned by a sculpture of two-armed Surya carrying two lotuses. He wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. According to Visvakarmasilpa, Surya should have one wheeled chariot drawn by seven horses. He should carry lotuses (kamal) in both his hands wear armour with a shield at his bosom and he should be decorated with ornaments. Rupamandana also describes the characteristics ayudhas in two hands of Surya should be kamal. So the image of the temple can be easily identified as Surya. Danda and Pingala stand on the flanks and Usha in front of the feet of the god. The inscription of the temple also gives importance to Surya as it ends with the mantara ‘Namo Savitre.’ Surya is also placed in back façade niche. A female attendant holding a spiral lotus stalk in the right hand and a scarf in the left hand is standing in the left panel.

The southern niche of mukhmandapa represents a composite image of standing four-armed Hari-Hara carrying trisula in the upper right hand and chakra in the upper left hand. Trisula here is the characteristic ayudha of Shiva and chakra that of Vishnu. According to Sanskrit authority, Hari-Hara should be Shiva in the right half and Vishnu in the left. Of his hands one should be in the abhaya mudra, two must hold shankha and the chakra respectively and the fourth should be in the kati pose. But the image of Hari-Hara at Khajuraho has four arms, one in varada mudra holding the trisula, chakra and
shankha in the rest. Female attendant carrying spiral lotus and scarf are depicted in flanking register.

The roof pediment of mandapa facing south shows a four-armed standing deity carrying akshmala in varada pose, sruk, and book and water vessel. He wears jata-mukuta, kundalas, book, torque, hara, upavita, long mala and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled tassels and scarf. As Mount Ram is also depicted in the niche, the deity is identified as Agni instead of Brahma as mentioned by Krishna Deva. According to authority, Agni may be represented like Brahma carrying mala and Saktyayudha. The god with Ram Vahana can only be Agni even though his ayudhas are similar to those of Brahma. Devangna Desai has also mentioned him as Agni. This is flanked on each side by two minor recessed register, each representing a female attendant surmounted by a couple in one case and by a group of three figures in the other.

Human couples and female figures take place of divinities in the rathikas of the mahamandapa and the sanctum. In the pediment above the southern transept of the mahamandapa, one of the intermediate register contains a Nandisvara instead of female figure. Just below the pyramidal roof of the maha-mandapa occurs an erotic scene which is also repeated in a niche of both faces. At the same level, above the central Agni panel between the eastern and western transept occur a sculpture of four-armed Vishnu riding on Garuda on the south face carrying varada, gada, chakra and shankha. There is couple standing in tribhanga on the sanctum face below the sukansika.

The pediment over the western transept of the sanctum shows a semi divine couple in the central panel and human couples in the end panel, intervened by registers containing surasundaries.

The roof pediment over the northern transept of the sanctum represents two bearded ascetics in the central panel while the usual themes are depicted in the side panels. The pediment of the mahamandapa western transept shows the usual couples with male figure being bearded. Above the central panel of the main north face between the
two transepts, occurs a niche containing seated Surya holding lotuses in both hands. He wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornaments. Above the niche below the sukansika, there occurs a semi divine standing couples.

The pediment above the northern mandapa contains a four-armed standing Brahma carrying varada, manuscript, manuscript and water vessel. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. He is flanked by a female attendant on the right and a male attendant on the left. A seated devotee occurs in front of the god and halo is depicted by a standing deity on each side.

The niche in the pediment over the northern mukhmandapa represents a composite image of a four-armed Ardhanarivasara standing in tribhanga. He carries varada, trisula, mirror and water vessel. The male half wears jata-mukuta and female half a tiara and usual ornament. The Pauranic myth, that the god Shiva took such a form to satify his extreme desire for his consort Sati. This composite image is paired on the south by another composite i.e. Hari-Hara. The principal niche of the antarala roof, sukanaska facing east represents a four-armed image of Vishnu standing gracefully in tribhanga. He carries abhaya, gada, chakra and his lower left hand is broken. Such form of Vishnu is of Trivikrama or Upendra. But this image is high up in the shikhara.

So the over all iconographic forms in the roof pediments are Surya in front (east) and back (west), Hari-Hara and Brahma on the south and Ardhanarisvara and Brahma on the northern flank., while human couples in the rathika which possibly represents Purusha and Prakriti or Manu and consort, the pair who help in the creation of the universe.
South-Eastern Shrine

(i) West Face

1. The kapili niche represents an image of four-armed Parvati seated in lalitasana on the lotus seat. She carries varada, trisula, nilotpala and water-vessel. She wears kundalas, torque, hara, keyuras, wristlets and anklets and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled tassels. Her mount lion is represented on the left of the seat and a seated devotee occurs on right. The halo is flanked by a four-armed seated goddess carrying abhaya, nilotpala and water-vessel on each side.

2. A rectangular niche above contains three seated archaryas including one with a long beard. They are attended by a standing disciple on each side listening preaches.

3. Two-armed Indra carrying a staff and vajra facing north is standing in tribhanga. He wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. His mount elephant is depicted on the right.

4. Another niche contains the four-armed Varuna standing in tribhanga carrying chinmudra, book, lotus with stalk and fourth hand broken. He wears karanda-mukuta and usual garment and ornaments with long mala. The crocodile mount is also shown on the right.

5. Vyala is placed in the recess.

6. A Surasundari or apsara is shown standing and applying sindoor with her uplifted right hand.

7. The main niche of this face represents eight-armed Narasimha tearing the belly of Hiranyakasipu and kicking an asura swordman with his right foot. A kneeling devotee with folded hands, probably Prahlada is shown on the right of feet of the god.

8. A rectangular niche above shows a four-armed Vishnu carrying first hand broken, gada, chakra and sankha seated in pralambapadasana. The god is canopied by the cosmic serpent Sesha. He wears kiriti-mukuta and other usual ornaments, vanamala and dress. His mount Garuda is represented on the right and a male-chauri-bearer is depicted on the left. This form of Vishnu is Trivikarma, according to Agni Purana.

10. Apsara standing in three-quarter back-view and plucking throne.

11. Vyala in the recess

12. Four-armed nude Nirriti dikpala standing in tribhanga and carrying sword, book, sarpa and fourth hand broken. He is flanked by a standing male attendant on its right who holds his right hand in kati and carries crooked staff in the left hand. A reclining human figure representing his vahana is shown on the left.

(ii) South Face

13. Four-armed standing Yama carrying skull-cup, damaru, khatvanga and fourth hand broken. He is shown in ferocious looks with upraised curls, protruding eyes and gaping mouth with side tusks. He wears kundalas, torque, hara, upavita, keyuras, wristlets and long mala and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled loops and tassels. A standing male attendant wearing tiara carrying a staff-like object in his right hand and left hand held in kati, is depicted on the left of Yama while the mount buffalo is shown on the right.


15. An apsara standing in a pose and touching her right breast with her left hand.


17. The main southern niche of the bhadra shows a four-armed Varaha standing in pratyalidhasana under the canopy of lotus leaf and carries the Bhu-devi on his upper left arm. His left leg rests on a lotus stalk below which the seated naga couple probably Sesha and his consort in anjali-mudra are depicted. The god wears his usual ornaments and dress.

18. A rectangular niche above shows a reclining mother and child probably representing the Devaki and child Krishna. A female attendant is messaging her feet while numbers of attendants are standing behind.

19. In the lower niche on the vedibandha four-armed seated Saraswati carrying varada, a bunch of flowers, book and water-vessel is represented.

20. Vyala in the recess.
21. An Apsara playing with a ball is shown.
22. Vyala is placed in the recess.
23. A niche containing four-armed deity standing in tribhanga is placed on the southeast corner. He carries abhaya, bunch of rosaries, book and kati and wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. He is flanked by a standing male attendant on his right. Being the sculpture is represented on the southeast corner and some attributes associated with Agni, he may be recognized as Dikpala Agni.

(iii) East Face

24. Four armed deity standing in tribhanga and carrying abhaya, nilopala, sruk-like object and kamandalu. He wears karanda-mukuta, torque, hara, yajnopavita, keyuras, wristlets and long mala and draped in lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled loops and tassels. A headless crocodile is depicted on the right of the deity and a chauri-bearer female is standing behind.
25. Vyala is in recess.
26. A surasundari carrying a spiral lotus stalk and scarf is standing.
27. Vyala in the recess.
28. The main eastern niche of the bhadra contains a three-headed and eight–armed god carrying varada, rosary, trisula and lotus flower in the right hands and lotus flower, sarpa, sankha and kamandalu in the left hands. He wears kirti-mukuta on the principal head and other usual ornaments and dress. He also wears kavacha and high boots which is the characteristic of Surya. He is flanked by a male figure carrying kati and long spear on the left and another bearded figure on the right who holds manuscript and pen. A headless seated female figure with her right hand in abhaya occurs between the feet of the god. This image seems to be composite figure100 of Surya, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma as it has the attributes and ayudhas of all the mentioned deities.
29. In the rectangular niche above, there is an image of seated Kubera carrying wine-cup in right hand and the left hand held in tarjani. He is bearded and potbellied. A female attendant on his right is pouring wine and female on its left is fanning.
30. In the lower niche of the vedibanda, a four-armed goddess seated in lalitasana is depicted. She carries abhaya, nilotpala, nilotpala and kamandalu.

31. Vyala in the recess.

32. A celestial beauty is represented as disrobing.

33. Vyala in the recess.

34. Four-armed kubera standing in tribhanga and carrying kati, gada, mongoose purse and vijapuraka. He wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. His mount Ram with muzzle broken is also depicted on the left of the deity.

35. Two-armed Isana carrying chin-mudra and trisula is standing in tribhanga. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. Nandi is represented on his right.

36. In the kapili niche a divine couple is represented. Two armed god carries his right hand kati and embraces his consort with the left while the goddess carries a spiral lotus stalk in left hand and embraces her lord with her right hand. The god wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A female attendant holding purse is standing on the right and a male attendant carrying abhaya and gada is depicted on the left. A flying vidyadhara carrying garland is shown on the each side of the halo.

37. In the rectangular niche above occurs a scene of seated master architect drawing a design on a board and surrounded by an admiring crowd of pupils, holding hammers and chisels.

**Interior**

1. The door lintel of this subsidiary shrine contains an image of four-armed Vishnu carrying abhaya, gada, chakra and shankha. He is seated on flying Garuda. He wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornaments with kaustubha-mani and dress. An image of three-headed with central head bearded Brahma carrying varada, sruk, book and kamandalu in his four hands is depicted on the right and while on the left flank occurs a seated four-armed Shiva carry varada, trisula, sarpa and kamandalu. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments. His mount goose is shown on the seat and mount of Shiva Nandi is also depicted alongwith the Shiva.
2. The door lintel also shows a frieze of Navagraha.

3. The doorway of the sanctum shows dancing ganas, vyala and apsaras.

4. At the base of lintel there occur the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna carrying lotus stalk in one hand and another hand on the flanking female attendant.

5. Door-pratihara carrying lotus flower and crooked stalk is also shown on each side of door way.

6. Above each pratihara occurs a Naga in anjalimudra represented in the zooanthropomorphic form.

7. The doorshill is also carved with freize of dancers and musicians.

**South-Western Shrine**

*(i) South Face*

1. In the kapili niche of the south shows an eight-armed Ganesha carrying in the uppermost pair of hands a serpent stretched as a canopy. The remaining right hands carry parasu, kataka-hasta and kapitha-hasta, while the remaining left hands hold lotus flower, sweets and scarf. He wears a jewelled head-dress, torque, upavita, wristlets and a lower garment. He is taking the sweets with his trunk twisted to his left. His mount mouse is shown as standing on its hind legs and playing with the hem of Ganesha’s scarf.

2. Four-armed deity carrying abhaya, full-blown lotus flower, flower and kamandalu. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress.

3. Four-armed bearded Agni varying akshamala in varada pose, sruk, book and fourth hand broken. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A bearded male devotee is standing with folded hands on the right while on the left a female attendant is standing.

4. Vyala in the recess.

5. A celestial beauty standing carrying antimony rod.
6. Vyala in the recess.
7. The southern niche of the bhadra contains four-armed Hari-Hara. All the hands are broken except the upper left carrying chakra. Nandi is depicted as regardant on the right while Garuda is shown on the left. The god wears mukuta having attributes of jata-mukuta on the right and kititi-mukuta of the left. So it represents the both Shiva and Vishnu.
8. In the niche below on the vedibandha occurs a four-armed dancing Ganesha carrying broken tusk and axe in his upper hands. This is a crude and wornout image.
10. An apsara is standing carrying a bird in her left hand which is held against her breast.
11. Vyala in the recess.
12. Four-armed standing bearded Yama. His preserved lower left hand is held in kati while the attributes of other three hands are mutilated. He has a ferocious look having raised curls tied with a snake. He wears kundalas and other usual ornaments and dress. A female attendant stranding carrying a lotus stalk and scarf is depicted on the left while his mount Buffalo is on the right of Yama.

(ii) West Face

13. Four-armed nude Nirriti carrying sword, lotus flower, broken and munda now mutilated. He wears a sarpa-hara and his nara-vahana is also depicted.
15. A surasundari standing holding lotus stalk and scarf.
16. Vyala in the recess.
17. The western niche of the bhadra represents two-armed Surya carrying lotus flowers in both hands, standing in sama-bhanga. He is flanked by Danda carrying kati and a long scarf and bearded Pangala holding stylus and manuscript on its right and left side respectively. Bhu-devi is seated in padmasana in front of the feet of the god. The god wears kiriti-mukuta, kundalas, torque, hara, yajnopavita, wristlets, long mala, kavacha and high boots.
18. In the niche below on the vedibandha, a seated two-armed god carrying abhaya and kamandalu is depicted.

19. Vyala in the recess.

20. An apsara carrying a child in her lap and another child by her right side is depicted.


22. Four-armed Indra with all his hands broken is standing in tribahanga. He wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. His mount elephant is depicted on its right.

(iii) North Face

23. Four-armed Agni standing in tribhanga. He holds akshamala in varada pose in his only survived hand. An agni-kunda is shown flamed behind the god. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. His mount is represented as goat. On the left of the god occurs a female chauri-bearer surmounted by another agni-kunda.

24. Vyala in the recess.

25. The main niche of the bhadra of this face contains four-armed Varaha standing in pratyalidhasana under a lotus leaf canopy. God holds kati, gada, chakra and sankha in his four hands. His left foot rests on a lotus supported by a naga couple with folded hands probably the Sesha and his consort. Bhu-devi is depicted on the upper left arm of the god. The god wears usual ornaments and dress.

26. A niche below contains a two-armed seated deity carrying abhaya and nilotpala.

27. Vyala in the recess.

28. A surasundari carrying lotus stalk and scarf.

29. Vyala in the recess.
30. Four-armed Kubera carrying wine-cup, a spiral lotus stalk. Lotus flowers and a purse.

31. Four-armed standing Isana, the dikpala carrying fruit, hand broken, damaru and a long trident. He wears jata-mukuta, long mala and other usual ornaments and dress.

32. The northern niche of the kapili shows the image of a goddess standing in samabhanga. She holds varada, sruk, book and fourth hand broken. She wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A bird is depicted on her right and a lion on the left with a leaping stag behind the lion. She is flanked by a female attendant on each side. This goddess represents the syncretic form of Brahamani and Uma.

33. In the rectangular niche above occurs two seated deities each carrying fruit in the left and right hand held in abhaya.

**North-western Shrine**

*South Face*

1. The kapili niche of south face shows a four-armed standing deity carrying varada, nilopala, book and kamandalu. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress.

2. In the rectangular niche above occurs a male dancer flanked on each side by a male drummer.

3. Vyala in the recess.

4. Two-armed standing Indra image carrying vajra in the left hand. He wears kiriti-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. Half portion of his mount depicted is broken now.

5. Four-armed Agni carrying abhaya, sruk, book and kamandalu standing in tribhanga. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. Flaming Agni-kunda is
represented behind the sruk and book. His mount Ram in human figure with folded hands is depicted on his left and a seated male attendant on the right.

6. Vyala in the recess.

7. An apsara carrying lotus stalk and scarf.

8. Vyala in the recess.

9. The main southern niche contains a four-armed standing Ganesha carrying varada, nilopala, broken tusk and parsu. He is potbellied and wears a flat, jewelled crown and other usual ornaments and dress. A seated male dwarf with folded hands occurs on the right.

10. The rectangular niche above shows two-armed potbellied Kubera seated in pralambapadasana. He holds wine-cup and long purse. He is surrounded by two attendants on each side. A female attendant pouring the wine into the cup from the wine jar in her right hand is depicted on the right of the deity.

11. In the niche below in the vedibandha, a two-armed deity wearing jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments is represented. He holds his right hand in abhaya pose while his left hand is broken and shown seated in lalitasana.

12. Vyala in the recess.

13. An apsara looking into a mirror but her face is broken now.


15. Four-armed deity now completely defaced but from his mount buffalo depicted, can be identified as Yama.

West Face

16. Four-armed nude curled Nirriti with ferocious look carrying sword, gada, sarpa and nar-munda. His nara-vahana is also depicted.
17. Vyala in the recess.

18. A standing surasundari carrying a lotus stalk in her right hand.

19. Vyala in the recess.

20. The main western niche contains three-headed and four-armed image of Karttikeya carrying fruit, sakti, book and kamandalu. He wears sikhandaka type of head-dress, torque, hara, upavita, keyuras, wristlets and long mala and lower garments fastened by a belt with jewelled tassels and scarf. His mount peacock pecking at the fruit held by the god is depicted on the right and a seated female devotee with folded hands on the left.

21. In the rectangular niche above there is a scene of a teacher seated on a cushion, attended by two male students on the right and two female and one male student on the left.

22. In the niche below on the vedibandha occurs a standing two-armed holding his right hand in kati and a bunch of flowers in left hand.

23. Vyala in the recess.

24. A standing apsara carrying scarf and spiral lorus stalk.

25. Four-armed Varuna standing in tribhanga. He holds kati, full-blown lotus flower, book and pasa in his hands. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. His mount crocodile is depicted on the left.

North Face

27. Four-armed Vayu carrying ketu, book, flower bud and kati. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. His mount stag is represented on the right.

28. Vyala in the recess.

29. A surasundari carrying spiral lotus stalk in her right hand is standing.
30. Vyala in the recess.

31. The northern niche of the bhadra represents standing four-armed Shiva as Ardhanarisvara carrying akshamala in varada, trisula, mirror and kamandalu. The image wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. Mount Nandi is shown below the male-half and the lion below the female-half. A gana holding kati and khatvanga flanks the male-half and a female attendant flanks the female-half.

32. Above the niche there occurs a scene of music and dance while the niche below on the vedibanda shows a two-armed deity seated in lalitasana carrying abhaya and kamandalu. The god wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress.

33. Vyala in the recess.

34. Four-armed standing Kubera carrying mongoose-shaped purse, book, nilotpala and kati. He wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. The ram mount is depicted on the right of the god.

35. Two-armed standing Isana carrying abhaya and kamandalu. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. A lotus bud-shaped flame is represented on the left.

36. The northern niche of the kapili shows a four-armed standing god carrying varada, nilopala, book and kamandalu. He wears jata-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. He is flanked by a male attendant holding kati and a bend sword on the right side.

37. In a niche above occurs a male dancer flanked on each side by a male drummer.

**Interior**

1. The door lintel shows an image of four-armed Vishnu carrying varada, gada, chakra and shnakha and seated on Garuda. He wears kirti-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. Three-headed Brahma seated in lalitasana on hamsa carrying abhaya, sruk,
book and kamandalu is depicted on the right end of lintel. The seven mothers flanked by Virabhadra on the right and Ganesha on the left are also represented.

2. At the base of the doorway occurs two-armed Ganga and Yamuna carrying a lotus stalk in one of the hands and both are flanked by the female attendant.

3. Door-pratiharas are also depicted carrying a garland and gada on the each side of doorway.

4. The doorsill also shows udadhi-kumaras holding a water jar on each side.

5. Vyala at the end of doorsill.

North-eastern Shrine

East Face

1. The niche of the kapili contains figure of two-armed god carrying danda in the right hand, while the left hand is held in kati. Lotus bud is represented on the either side.

2. In the niche below on the vedibandha, a seated two-armed god carrying abhaya and kamandalu is depicted.

39. Vyala in the recess.

40. An apsara carrying a child in her lap and another child by her right side is depicted.

41. Vyala in the recess.

42. Four-armed Indra with all his hands broken is standing in tribahanga. He wears karanda-mukuta and other usual ornaments and dress. His mount elephant is depicted on its right.

North-eastern Shrine

Interior

1. Two-armed Ganga on the right and two-armed Yamuna on the left of the doorway.

2. Door-pratihara holding gada occurs on the door jamb on each side.
Surasundaries / Apsaras

Sanskrit Literature- drama, prose and poetry show that among the nine rasas, Sringara Rasa is prominent. The poets and dramatists have largely concentrated on this Rasa and they have created a marvellous literature which stands unique and unexcelled in the whole range of human aesthetic expressions. The aesthetic theories which were prescribed for poetry were also equally applicable to sculpture. For the purpose of aesthetic enjoyment, poet composes the poetry and the sculptor carves its moods and feelings in the form of sculpture. Dhananjaya in the 10th century A.D. counted twenty graces of women in the prime of youth including such inherent qualities as shobha (beauty), kanti (loveliness), dipti (radiance) and madhurya (sweetness) and such dispositions as Lila (sportiveness), vilasa (delight), vicchitti (tastefulness), vibhrama (confusion), lalita (lofting) and vihrta (bashfulness). These are the qualities which poets and dramatists have been portraying in their works and sculptors have been carving on the walls of the temples. Such literary description can be noted in the female sculpture of Devanganas of Khajuraho as handsome maidens in Lila, vilasa, lalita and vihrta dispositions in extremely graceful postures are carved.

Ideals of famine beauty in myriad forms and features are depicted in the temple. These beauties are shown with splendor waist, heavy hips and voluptuous breasts on the inner and outer walls, pillars and ceilings either in the round or in high or medium relief. They are depicted in various postures such as disrobing, yawning, touching the breasts, squeezing water from wet hair, playing on flute, removing a thorn from the foot, applying collyrium to eyes etc. They are richly adorned with jewellery. Their hair, dress and facial features reflect their romantic nature and animator grace. As attendants of devotees they are represented with folded hands or holding mirrors or carrying water jar and lotus flowers as offering to the deity. So of the temple has included a huge the architecture number of female figures in their sculptural strategy.

Kstrarnava of Visvakarma (KV) suggests that devanganas should be depicted in dance acts and postures. It classified their in 32 types mainly on the basis of their acts and
postures, form always remaining the same. No of damsels mentioned in KV are depicted here in the Lakshmana temple.

**APSGA / SURASUNDARIES ON THE EXTERIOR FACADE OF TEMPLE**

1. A devangana standing in tribhanga and looking into a mirror which is held in her left hand and she is arranging the ends of the curls with her right hand uplifted round the head. This figure is recognized as Vidhicta in KV. This sculpture occurs on south-east and south-west façade of the temple.

2. Apsara standing in exaggerated tribhanga with her face in profile. She is standing with her back bent like a bow and represent as yawning. She clasped her hands behind the head. Such figures are placed on south-east, south-west and north-west facade but figure in the north-west is not as exaggerated as on the other mentioned places.

3. An apsara standing in three-quarter back view with her face in profile and writing a letter. KV describes such type as chanderlakha. While such figure is shown as standing facing in tribhanga.

4. A figure of a women pulling out a thorn from her right foot. A dwarf attendant supports her foot in this task. She balances the weight of her body on the left leg.

5. A devangana standing in three-quarter back view her head profile. She holds a scarf in the left hand with the left elbow pushed up to bring into prominence her left breast which she supports with the right hand.

6. A celestial beauty standing in three-quarter back view, rinsing water with both hands from her wet plaits of hair. A goose is picleeg up the falling pearl-like drops.

7. An apsara standing in tribhanga, represented as disrobing. She wears a chakra-shaped dhammila on her head.
8. A nymph standing almost facing with her right leg placed across the left with bust and head in profile and lifting up a child in her lap.

9. A surasundaries standing in this fourth back view and her head is uplifted in profile. She is painting something on the wall with her uplifted right hand. A dwarf male attendant standing in front carrying a jar of paint in her left while his right hand is raised up in admiration.

10. An apsara standing in tribhanga back view playing on flute. Her head is turned in profile showing her elaborate hair style and movement of her fingers on the flute is beautifully carved. This image occur on the north-east facade.

11. Another apsara figure standing facing with her left leg placed across the right, showing the contours of broad hips. She is holding mekhala in both her hands as a preliminary to disrobing.

Fig. 6.86 Apsara with mirror

Fig. 6.87 Apsaras in standing poses
Fig. 6.88 Apasara painting her feet

Fig. 6.89 Apsara Applying Collyrium

Fig. 6.90

Fig. 6.91

Fig. 6.92
In figures 6.90 Apsara standing in the back view showing the contours of broad hips, 6.91 pulling out a thorn from her right foot, 6.92 devangana standing in tribhanga and looking into a mirror which is held in her left hand and she is arranging the ends of the curls with her right hand uplifted round the head, 6.93 mother with child, 6.94 left hand tuoching with her head and 6.95 holding a scarf in the left hand.

APSARA / SURASUNDARIES ON THE INTERIOR OF TEMPLE

There are numerous surasundaries or apsaras sculptures is the Lakshmana temple, executed either in round or in high or medium relief on the jangha and in the minor niche or the facades and on the pillars or ceiling bracket or the recesses between pilaster in the interior. The surasundaries are invariably represented as beautiful and youthful nymphs,
attired in the choicest gems and garareuts and full of winsome grace charam. Inside its sanctum walls, surasundaries with complex postures are placed on either side of the devakostha with tight spherical breasts. The apasaras occurs in the inner ambulatory on the minor projections of both the rows as the following type detail. There are numerous surasundaries or apsaras sculptures is the Lakshmana temple, excuted either in round or in high or medium relief on the jangha and in the minor niche or the facades and on the pillars or ceiling bracket or the recesses between pilaster in the interior. The surasundaries are invariably represented as beautiful and youthful nymphs, attired in the choicest gems and garareuts and full of winsome grace charam. Inside its sanctum walls, surasundaries with complex postures are placed on either side of the devakostha with tight spherical breasts. The apasaras occurs in the inner ambulatory on the minor projections of both the rows as the following type detail.

South face

1. Surasundaries/apasaras standing facing with the left leg placed across the right. She is holding a mirror in the left hand while the right hand is carried behind the head.

2. Surasundaries standing in tribhanga. Suggesting supporting hems of her undergarments with the left hand and holding a bunch of mangoes in her uplifted right hand. A monkey is pulling down her undergarments, with his eyes intent as the mangoes.

3. Surasundaries standing in the quarter back view mixing point with figures in a shell-like container.

4. Surasundaries standing in elegant tribhanga with her left hand touching her right breast and right hand lifted up armed the head.

West face

5. Surasundaries/apasaras standing facing touching her left breast with the right hand and left hand held around the head.
6. Here is a sculpture of a sunsundaries standing in tribhanga in three-quarter view. Her head, hands and left leg is mutilated. She has raised her right foot obviously to remove a thorn from it. But her hands are completed mutilated.

7. Surasundaries standing in tribhanga with the head turned in profile. She is yawing with both hands closed behind the head.

8. Surasundaries is representing standing carrying a scarf in her hand.

9. Apasaras holding a lotus in her hand is depicted small panel.

*North face*

10. Surasundaries standing in tribhanga, wearing chakra shaped dhammila and holding a scarf in the suspended left hand. The bird is now completely mutilated.

11. Surasundaries standing in tribhanga with her head looking up and held is profile. She is yawing.

12. A surasundaries standing in tribhanga whose face is now mutilated. She is holding a letter in her left hand and her right hand is depicted on the right breast with sensitively disposed fingers.

*Southern transept of Sanctum*

13. Surasundaries standing and looking into a mirror the fall bloom of this celestial beauty couples her to see the reflections of her face in the mirror.

14. Surasundaries standing in tribhanga, touching her left breast with her right hand while her left hand is carved up behind her head.

15. Surasundaries looking admiringly in to a mirror which is in her left hand and she is standing in profile and also holds an ear ornament between the thums and index finger of her upraised right hand.
Western transept of Sanctum

16. Apsaras standing in tribhanga and touching her breast in the same way as shown on southern transept.

17. A standing surasundaries carrying a pen in his uplifted right hand and a book in the left hand.

18. A standing apsara seem to be removing a thorn finger her right foot, as her right foot and right hand with which she is removing the thorn is mutilated now.

19. Surasundaries standing in tribhanga having a bunch of mangoes in her uplifted right and a monkey now mutilated is pulling down her lower garments in such a way that it was worn. The motif is repeated again as shown in such face.

Northern transept of Sanctum

20. Apsara standing on her left leg with her bust and face in profile. Her right foot is supported by a male dwarf, while puts on a payal.

21. A standing apsara facing with head in profile carrying a Vina in the left hand and arranging her ear ornament with her right hand.

22. A standing apsara seems to be looking into a mirror while the mirror in the left hand is broken now.

Southern transept a Mahamandapa Sanctum

23. A standing surasundaries carrying a manuscript in her right hand while her left hand is held in a posture.

Northern transept a Mahamandapa Sanctum

24. Apsara standing in tribhanga carrying a lotus in her left hand and shown its petals with her right hand.
Moreover the celestial beauty standing on lotus leaves represented in pairs in the interspaced between the pilasters. The surasundaries in this temple are more proportionate and better preserved and generally show breasts projecting in a sharper relief.

**Mithunas or Erotic Couples**

Mithuna is philosophically explained as representing the Shiva-Shakti principle i.e. cosmic union of Purasa and Prakata.\(^{106}\) The initiating women plays part of Shakti while, the male initiate assumed that of Shiva and both attain together to a realization of immanence within themselves of the consubstantiality of the Goddesss and the God.\(^{107}\) The realization of the presence of the Divine Being in everything and of everything in the Divine Being was the perquisite of the conception of a visual form of the Supreme Being. Invisible God is within all the forms and space. An extraordinary human approach to a divine ideal- a human ecstasy in a process of transformation to a divine sublimity is ably conveyed in abounding mass of lovely figures.\(^{108}\) The sculptors of Khajuraho temples have carved on stone a saga of human emotion and created a fantasy depicting a

![Fig. 6.96 Mithuna Couple](image1)

![Fig. 6.97 Maithunarata](image2)
ceaseless trial of the worldly soul and spiral quest for eternal peace and salvation. “When goals are left behind and mortals appear art become simpler, freer gain in spontaneity what it loses in hieratic calm.” The important aspects of their depiction are, firstly that they were isolated representation on bas-relief and never formed an integral part of an ornamental scheme in architecture, secondary, that they were deemed to be auspicious religious symbols and there was little artistic effect in view, the carver was solely guided by religious fervour more than by an ascetic urge and finally they belong to graceful couple mithunas while other classes of mithunas i.e. Asakta or Amorous couples, Maithunarata or couples in copulation and Bharasta or couples in perverted sexual acts are depicted to reasonable extent.¹⁰⁹
On the middle band of southern wall of the platform of the Lakshmana temple, there is a panel of couple in the Dhenuka or the bovine attitude, the next is an example of cunnilingus and shows a male standing with both of his hands raised up in pleasure and has a wine jar slung on one arm and a female sitting cross legged on the ground for the act of fellatio. In the third is a standing couple. The bearded male is kissing the female who wishes to hold his genital. The next panel shows the male on the bed, the female is lying on her back with her head on the leg side of the bed while man facing the head side of the bed is standing near his chest with one foot on either side held tight in the arms of the female who has raised her legs to go up on the back of the male who bends low and forward making an attempt to lift the women a little upward. An amused attendant stands on the head side.

Another panel contains three men in a wine making session. Two of them are crushing grapes in an hour-shaped drum with long thrashers and third man sitting on the ground does the same with a smaller drum. The middle band also has a number of nargkanyas i.e. female images with crown of serpents. There are also lies on his back on a bed his stretched legs are held up by the women who stand with her feet planted at his pelvis. The women bends low to copulate in this unusual posture. An attendant standing behind the head of the lying male massages his hair. Out of two attendant watching this scene, one covers his eyes by his palms while the other laughing heartily. In one panel women is shown in an acrobatic posture. She stands on her head and is supported by the male opposite directions. Another such panel shows that a woman gratifies the two men. The next scene has a man holding a woman up on her hands and he is attempting coitus, while the woman tries to support herself on his shoulders, she clasps his neck and kisses her. There is also scene of man making with a mare. A woman standing behind the mare is covering her eyes in disbelief, while the male is in front of the mare holds his gentile in his hand. This is the mixos capita zoophilia.

A woman reclining on a bed with stretched legs and she pulls a man by holding his hair and compels him to cunnilingus is shown in scene on the western wall. A lower
panel shows three men, two of which force a woman each to surrender. The third man is busy in love-play with a woman and another worried woman is shown awaited for her turn. There occur dancers and singer to the right of this scene and two women talking to the left. A sculpture of flying Kamdeva shooting from his bow the arms full of passion is also depicted on this wall. Almost the same scenes are carved in different panels around the temple. So freezes outside the temple and inner sanctum contain orgiastic scenes and display naked lust, with the spiritually of sex missing. Dwarf size figures of male and female busy in licking the trickles from genitals are also shown on walls of temple. A panel of shows that female is standing on her hands and feet like a quadruped and male is approaching from behind, falls upon her waist and enjoys her as a bull.

SCULPTURES DEPICTING SOCIAL LIFE AND SOCIETY

The social condition and life of the people during the Chandella period is depicted on this temple through sculptures and friezes. Secular scene in relief depicting the royal hunt, the king at court, marching armies, dance processions, dance class, teacher and disciples, sculptors at work, traders with camels and many others. These are generally themes which are shown in relief panels on the jagati of the Lakshmana temple and on the narathara row on the plinth of the temple.

Subject of every day life have been adroitly dealt with in the frieze around the temple. One scene shows the sculptures going about their task, chiseling an elephant. This is shown on north-east platform. Another sculpture shows the frieze of elephants on the south platform of the temple which shows the use of elephant in combat, their contours and movements are also beautifully carved one elephant is trying to trip another directly ahead of it. One more sculpture shows the battle scene on the north platform of the temple depicting the use of elephants in combat. Elephants formed an important component of medieval Indian armies and were specially trained for warfare. Figure on the panel on the south-facing platform shows the frieze of camels. Camels were also used in army and mostly used as beasts of burden.
A war band is also shown in some panels; armed men are going ahead of an elephant and after them arms the royal elephant. The elephant is guarded by a man on horse back. This is depicted in a panel on the north facing ardh-mandapa. In another scene on platform, two horses are depicted on each end of the panel with their riders on the backs each facing the other. Three men armed with sword, shield and lance are standing in front of the horsemen. Then there is on elephant on each side facing the one standing opposite to the former. After the elephants are shown five armed guards on each side holding lances, gada, sword and shields. In the centre two kings are shown seated on cushions. They are consulting each other and are wearing kirita-mukuta. A huge elephant stands with the front legs high above in the air and the hind ones slightly kneeling. The Mahawat seems to be holding his seat with great difficulty. In front there is a horse with rider. Both are in a defiant attitude. At the back on the horse two men are engaged in dealing blows on one another with long staffs in their lands. A horseman and an elephant with its rider are at their backs. This scene is shown on right front base of the temple. On the same façade five foot-soldiers are shown engaged in fighting. Two soldiers have kept their right and left legs respectively on the back of a dead soldier and one are striking at the left shoulder of the other with a broad sword. There are also another couple of soldiers fighting in the same way. One soldier with his foot placed on the skull is looking towards the fighting ones.
Fig. 6.103 Amusement

Fig. 6.104 Marching army

Fig. 6.105 Soldier going for battle

Fig. 6.106 Ministerial Discussion

Fig. 6.107 Elephant Combat

Fig. 6.108 The Battle Scene
Fig. 6.09 Elephant in Battle

Fig. 6.10 Camels carrying Load for army

Fig. 6.11 Musical Party

Fig. 6.12 Going for Battle

Fig. 6.13 Army on Horses

Fig. 6.14 Amusement scene
Judgement scenes

A singular judgement scene found at the back of an adjacent temple behind the Lakshmana temple shows a breaded man is seated on a cushion with a pen in hand. This man seems to be a judge as there are two female attendants standing behind him with one holding chhattrra. On the opposite side of these female stands two walls as well. In front of the judge, a man tied with rope to his waist is standing. He holds the rope his one hand and seemed hand is in a pose which seems to be explaining and justifying his conduct. Behind the captive stands another man holding the prisoner by the elder.

School scene

In this scene a teacher or Guru is shown seated on the floor with pencil in his right hand and holds a big board with the left hand. A small boy standing behind the board is also supporting it and is peeping from the behind it to see what the Guru is writing. In all there are eight boys four small and two very small boys scattered in disorder around the teacher peeping to see what has writer on the board. Out of which two boys sitting behind the teachers seems to be gossiping and one standing in front of him seems to be curious to be what they are doing behind. This panel can be noticed on the small temple on the right front of the Lakshmana temple. In other scene the teacher is seated on a cushion. One sitting in trent is writing on the Bhoja-patra with pencil and another pupil is sitting at the balta holding a pen in the right hand and inkpot in left. The teacher is explaining some them with his uplifted right hand. Two attendants are standing behind the disciples.

A niche shows three seated teachers, one of there is beard is holding discussion and is attended by a standing disciple on each side. This is shown on west face of south-
eastern shrine of Lakshmana temple. In one scene, a master-architect is shown seating and drawing a design on a board and he is watched by an admiring crowd of pupils holding hammers and chisels. The deistic life is also depicted in the small frieze. In a scene a mother is lying down with her baby resting her head on her palm. She is preparing to suckle the baby who is looking fondly at her. A man in a panel is pulling her wife holding her plaint in his right. The woman seems to resisting and a person is looking sadly at this quarrel between the husband and wife. It is shown in small frieze of the south balcony. In another scene a mother sitting on a cushion with child plying beside her while another such scene depicts a mother holding one of her twin children in her arms and helping the other in climbing up to her waist.

The Lakshmana temple name after the name of tore runner of Chandellas, the king Lakshmanaverman whose genealogical name is Yashoverman, is the one of the finest specimens of sandstone architecture. The temple was built in 24 years between 930 to 954 A.D. This is the best preserved temple at Khajuraho with an original jagati and its four subsidiary shrines intact. The temple has all rules of the classical scriptures strictly adhered to by the architects and sculptors. It is important to note a curios aspect of this temple that there are no mithuns on the doorframes of the sanctum. Its door jams is decorated with dancing figures instead of traditional erotic detail. The shikhara of the temple is similar to the spire of the Brahma temple, which is in peedhadyola style of Orissa temples.

The roofs of its entrance porch, mandapa and mahamandapa each show a simple pyramidal superstructure of a straight contour crowed by a prominent bell-member. Its basement moulding show a bold elephant frieze and jangha is decorated with two bands of graceful sculptures which are noted for their expression, reminiscent of the Gupta tradition and every inch of space bears the mark of the sculptor’s artistic flight of fantasy. In front of the Lakshmana temple there are two open pavilions or mandapas. The one furthest to the south is the Varaha mandapa with huge image of standing Varaha. The entire body of the divine creature is carved in low relief along with the figures of more
than 600 gods and goddess of Hindu pantheon. Besides the Varaha mandapa is a reconstructed Devi mandapa in which image of Brahmani is placed originally. It was probably depicted to Garuda.

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