CHAPTER–6

Kailash Temple: Culmination of Monolithic Architecture at Ellora
Kailash Temple: Culmination of Monolithic Architecture at Ellora

Cave 16 is well known as the Kailash or Rang Mahal. It is a great monolithic temple. The final type of Brahmanical rock-cut architecture consists of one example only, the Kailash (Siva's Paradise) at Ellora. It stands a class apart by itself. Instead of the underground halls like caves, it is isolated from the surrounding rock and carved both on the outside and inside. The architectural design suggests that its creators threw aside all previous conventions. They boldly undertook the task to reproduce a structural temple on a very large scale and in full detail of the period in the living rock. Percy Brown has said "the Indian artist had an extraordinarily developed plastic sense. No other people has ever dreamed of sculpting such great temples out of the solid rock as it was. Indeed, Indian architecture proceeds, not as ours, according to the principles of construction; it is rather conceived as an object cut out of solid material as any ivory figure might be."\(^1\)

Kailasha is indeed a memorable experience one would never forget. The scholars in the 80's and 90's have broken new grounds in the study of Kailasha. One of the new ground way to examine Kailasha as a pilgrimage centre, although earlier it has appeared in the Puranic list that includes the site as one of the Jyotirlingas or as a place where shradha would be performed and later in a tantric text that Kailasha is named as one of the fifty Sakti Pithas.\(^2\)

---


Figure 89: View of Kailash Temple from North East
Courtesey: Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi

South Elevation of Kailash Temple (After Burgess)
Historical Development

In the historical references, the control of Deccan was taken by the Raštrakutas from the early Western Chalukyas around 750 CE. In this way they began a supremacy that was lasted around 973 CE. Though the political might of this family has been widely acknowledged, little is known about the artistic developments that took place during the period of their supremacy. The major site related with these rulers is Ellora. Several cave excavations were carried out at Ellora under the aegis of Raštrakutas.

Its boldness suggest centuries of traditions in which carving techniques and an understanding of the rock medium were developed. It enabled craftsmen to push the architectural type to its limits. It can be said that the Kailaśa temple is more than simply a building. It is a huge complex with all the architectural members of contemporary free standing southern type temple.

It is difficult to say how long it took to create the main temple and its surroundings elements or the precise sequence of the excavations. Most scholars today feel that the major portion of the monument, including the central temple and Nandi shrine as well as the gateway belong to the reign of the Rastrakuta king Krishna I, who ruled from around 757 to 773 AD. However, it may be possible that the temple was planned and begun under his predecessor, Dantidurga. It is evident from the cave prior to the Kailaśa temple cave no. 15 which bears an inscription of the earlier king reigned from 735 to 757 CE. These two cave temples are very similar in terms of stylization.

---

5 Dayalan, D., *op. cit.*, p. 3.
6 Ibid, p. 4.
There is some conceptual relation between Kailaśa temple and the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal and Kailaśanath temple of Kanchipuram. But here Soundrarajan has opined that ‘Undeniably, all the three are of the same genre—the southern architectural style – but perhaps the resemblance almost ends here. The integrally constructed seven subsidiary shrines of identical shape built in the thickness of the wall around the central shrine of Kailaśanath each not only showing identical god-head within, namely, the Somasakanda panel, but also having only a restricted eastward or westward orientation and not at all having any front vestibule beyond it transept passage as emerges from the cella, is so completely and drastically different from the phraseology implicit in the Virupaksha and the one manifest in the Kailaśaa.’

From an analytical point of view it may be surmised that monolithic Pallava Rathas at Mahabalipuram were the initiator of this typology in southern part of the country. The Kailaśa temple was conceived and carried out when structural temple architecture in the stone medium had already developed. It is also interesting that there was no contemporary monolithic architecture to take immediate inspiration except for Rathas of Mahabalipuram. It must have been a novel experimentation in terms of freestanding monolithic complex hewn in the living rock. The most prominent and an innovative experimentation was done by the King Narsimhvarman I, Māmalla. Mamallapuram was the famous sea-port of the Pallavas. King Narsimhavarman might have chosen it implements his dream to make sanctuary of vested legends.

---

9 Tadgell, Christopher, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
11 Huntington, Susan L., op. cit., p. 346.
Karka-II, Rastrakuta monarch rightly mentioned about this temple as:12

\[ Elāpur-āchala-gat-ādbhuta-sanniveśāmyad=vīkṣya \]
\[ vismita-vimana-char-āmarendrāḥ I \]
\[ Etat savayambhu siva-dhāma na kṛ trime \]
\[ srīś dṛṣṭ = edṛ s=iti satatam bahu charchayanti II \]
\[ Bhūyas-lathāvidha-kṛ tau vyavasāya-hānir- \]
\[ Etan-mayā katham-aho kṛ tm=ity-akasmāt I \]
\[ Karttāpi yasya khalum, ver vismayam-āpa śilpi \]
\[ Tan-nāma-kīrttanam=akārayyata yena rājnā II \]

Meaning13: (That King) by whom verily was caused to be constructed a temple on the hill at Elāpura of wonderful structure, - on seeing which the best of the immortals who move in celestial cars struck with astonishment, think much constantly, saying, “this temple of Śiva is self-existent; in a thing made by art such beauty is not seen” - a temple, the architect-builder of which, in consequences of the failure of his energy as regards (the construction of) another such work, was himself suddenly struck with astonishment, saying, Oh, how was it that I built it!”

If we see the rock of the Deccan trap it would be difficult to believe that the complexes at Ellora were created with such an aesthetic perfection. However, it is equally true that Kailaśa temple was not built in a day.14 It is evident from the site that it took ages for the development of architectural skills to reach such a level of perfection which have been discussed in the subsequent chapters.

---

12 Dayalan, D., op. cit., p. 3.
13 Ibid, p. 4.
At the time of initiation of Kailaśa temple, as already mentioned, Mahabalipuram group of temples served as a model. But in the late eighth century monolithic architectural models were well patronized. The earliest of these temples are- Vettuvankoil\(^{15}\) (800 CE) at Kalugumalai in the Pandyan country, after that Dhamner (850 CE)\(^ {16}\) in Madhya Pradesh, the Chaturbhuj Viṣṇu on Gwalior Hill\(^ {17}\) during late ninth century. The series of seven monoliths at Masrur in Kangra valley\(^ {18}\) of the same time. The small rectangular unfinished shrine with wagon types *sikharas* at Coglong in Bihar,\(^ {19}\) sometime later. The excavation of monolithic temples is practically go out of vogue after ninth century A. D.\(^ {20}\)

The importance of Ellora largely stems from the awesome showpiece of the Kailaśa temple. Ellora was part of a chain of monolithic carvings of architectural forms set in motion from the time of Dantidurga. It carried on up to the second quarter of the ninth century CE, beyond the time of Govinda III.\(^ {21}\) There is much variety in this series of five. The Kailaśa temple built by Krishna I is the most ambitious, complete and intricate of the series at Ellora.\(^ {22}\) It is overwhelming and attributed to the perfect rhythm and harmony of component parts. The double story excavation of Kailaśa temple complex is a marvel example in realm of monolithic architectural edifices. It is located in the central place in the 34 caves at Ellora.\(^ {23}\) Not only the location but also the style of execution gives an important place in the history of architecture.

---


\(^{16}\) Dayalan, D. *op. cit.*, p.2

\(^{17}\) *Ibid*, p. 3.

\(^{18}\) *Ibid*, p. 4.

\(^{19}\) *Ibid*, p.5


\(^{21}\) Dayalan, D., *op. cit.*, p. 5.

\(^{22}\) Huntington, Susan L., *op. cit.*, p. 342.

\(^{23}\) Dhavalikar, M. K. *op. cit.*, p.6.
Philosophical aspect of the Kailash temple

It is quite strange that the vastu-sastras are almost quiet on this style of architecture. M. N. Deshpande in his paper has proposed that the monolithic temples in general and the Kailaśa temple at Ellora in particular had the impact of Śankara’s philosophy of Advaita (monism). Here, it is important to mention that the very first reference of monolithic temple’s association with Advaita philosophy is from Amṛ tānubhava in Marathi. It is written by Jnāneśvara, a thirteenth century saint poet of Maharashtra.

Deva deūla parivāru kīje korunī dongaru
Taisā bhaktīkā vyavashāru kana vhāvā I

- Amṛ tānubhava (9.43)

Meaning: “God, shrine and devotee carved in the rocky hill, such is the affair of non-dualist unity of knowledge and devotion’.

The physical relationship between the caves and the cliff is a strange one. They differ from it even as they are of it, and they are visible within it even as they sometimes seem to disappear in its own variegated surface. There also have physical, philosophical and religious grounding which inspired the construction of the caves. While the relationship between a religion or philosophy and its physical manifestations is a complicated one, the cave temples at Ellora clearly depict Indian beliefs about and desires for architecture, pilgrimage sites and ritual. Stella Kramrisch has written that “tirthas and ksetras on Indian soil are potent sites where a presence is felt to dwell. Its support is in the place itself.

28 Ibid, p. 188.
Whatever makes the site conspicuous or memorable is reinforced in its effect by the attention of the people directed towards and concentrated on that spot.”

The text of Amṛtāṅkubhava also gives details about the technique of carving. Interestingly, Saint Jnāneśvara expresses his surprise about the reverse process of starting the carving of the Kailaśa temple from top to bottom in a very mystic style. He says, ‘the space was created out of a tamarind leaf and the construction laid down the pinnacle first and the foundation last.”

While praising the skill of the artisans at Ellora, Carmel Berkson has said, “The Rastrakutas artists seem to have been driven also by the philosophy which denied by absolute with corollary. It would nullify an exclusive focus on the theory that the central point influences all forces within the configuration of the panel. The conceptions which eliminate God and might also prove to be useful tool by means of which to approach the art in the relief panels, since magnetic forces outside the panel sometimes force a relative view of all the elements.”

It shows the qualities of the absolute exist in the central point. In this way, a certain ambiguity arises out of the question of what is beyond the circumference of the cave.

The association of the name Ilapura and Ellora represents a long mythological tradition. Ila is the Goddess of priests and the kings in the Vedic period. The Puranas mention a river Ela somewhere in the Deccan and a tribe called Elikas or Ailikas. There is also reference of Chalukyan King Vijyaditya issued a grant during his military encampment at Elāpura in 704 A.D. It may be

---

29 Kramrisch, Stella, op. cit., p. 4.
32 Soar, Micaela, op. cit. p. 81.
33 Ibid, p. 82.
34 Ibid, p. 83.
proposed that the circumference which exists in Ellora was occupied by many powerful dynasties.

Micaela Soar has stressed on the quasi mythical stories providing a paradigm for worship at Ellora. This story according to soar, suggest lingam worship by women at Ellora.\(^{35}\) Another medieval Marathi story about the queen Manikavati and the king of Elapura was also discussed by Dr. M.K. Dhavalikar. Dhavalikar has also written a stylistic analysis of Kailasha another interesting study.\(^{36}\)

The Mansara, a text on architecture describes in details that all such cities have special significance as they are based on cosmic geometry also called \textit{vastu-purush} mandala. It is generally square is shape. All the four corners of this square represent the four cardinal directions of the world. Within this square there is a circular design. This circular design represents the universe. Square and circle these two geometrical signs also represent the celestial and domestic fires. Fire in \textit{Vedas} is omnipotent. It is the most vital source of energy. This energy is both spiritual and temporal. It contains occult potentiality. So cosmic city also consists of spiritual power which is subtle and sublime and it is inherent in the sacred ecology of the cosmic town.\(^{37}\)

**Architectural Plan**

After visiting Kailash, one could understand that the ground plan of the Kailaśa approximates in area that of the Parthenon at Athens. Its height is one and half times that of the same Greek masterpiece, some idea of the magnitude of the undertaking may be conceived.\(^{38}\)

In its plan and general arrangements the Kailaśa bears a certain resemblance to the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, even then a recent building, and one which was no doubt at the time considered the last word in temple design. But although the early Chalukyan example may have provided some inspiration.


\(^{38}\) Brown, Percy, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 73.
The Kailash is more than twice its size, and is clearly an illustration of the normal development of the Dravidian temple-type, adapted to conform to the particular technique involved.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Figure 90:} Plan of Lower Section, Ellora Kailasa Temple (After Burgess)
\textbf{Courtesy:} Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi

It is only logical that each individual temple at this formative period of the art, should be a copy of its predecessor, but improved and enriched by the accumulation of previous experience. Once the idea of the Kailash was conceived, its production became a matter of time, patience, and skilled labour, all of which appear to have been readily forthcoming. It was an expression of exalted religious emotion. It is obvious, but even this condition could not have made such a monument possible. It must had the patronage of a ruler with
unlimited resources and who was at the same time moved by the loftiest ideals.⁴⁰

**Description of the Kailash Temple**

Describing Kailash is the most difficult and stupendous job. The sheer magnitude of the monolithic temple excavated and carved into gigantic form. Its back cliff rising and falling into an immense colossal mass of stone. Significantly, a maze of courtyard, galleries, porches, porticoes, a courtyard surrounding the main temple. The *mahamandapa*, the *dhwajastambhas*, the elephants and semi divinities and divinities are simply a creation of no ordinary mortals. It is a most beautiful example of the blend of the north and south, both at its best. It may be called as one of the well-planned and well-designed temple, excavated with the support of the prosperous Rashtrakuta dynasty.⁴¹

![Figure 92: Roof of the Rangamandapa has been Decorated with Moving Lions](c25908)

*Courtesy: American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon*

It rises to a rocky height of approximately 100 feet, its length about 145 feet nearly 250 feet deep and 150 feet broad. While making notes on architectural plan, Percy Brown had observed, "three trenches were made at right angles and

---


cut down at right angles to the level of the base of the hill. First a mass of rock 200 feet long, 100 feet wide, 100 feet in height was isolated. Than the mass was hammered into shape. Then the sculptors began their work.”

Each part of the carved details appears to have been completely finished as the work progressed downwards. It might be obvious that the entire plan of the temple was conceived before starting the excavation which can be postulated on the basis of its dimensions, the location of the halls and pillars, staircases, the panels, the

---

42 Brown, Percy, op. cit., pp. 73-75.
shikaras of the main and sub shrines, lotuses, elephants, lions on the roof, then the karnakutas, the salas, the kapota etc., all were pre-conceived. The walls of the main shrine that were carved with flying gandharvas above and other deities. The main hall, then the huge adhisthana (plinth) with a vyalavari, the jagati (tall flat course). The upama of the adhisthana (plinth) showing lions attacking elephants at corners and finally the upapitha rising from the floor level with a series of recessed offsets.\(^{43}\)

![Figure 95: Adhisthana of the temple is supported by the elephants](image)

The work was commenced by cutting three mighty trenches in the solid rock—two of them at right angles to the front of the rock. More than 90 yards in length, and the third connecting their inner ends, over 50 yards long and 107 feet deep.\(^{44}\) A great mass of rock was left in front of the court to represent the gopura of Dravidian temples which is here in two storeys. The lower one


\(^{44}\) *Ibid*, p. 41.
with rooms inside, and the exterior adorned with figures of Siva, Vishnu and other Hindu pantheon.\textsuperscript{45}

The \textit{gopura} is pierced in the centre, by an entrance passage with rooms on each side. Beyond this, a large sculpture of Lakshmi seated on lotuses with her attendant elephants has been carved. The leaves of the lotuses contain some letters and a date, probably of the 15th century CE. There have been inscriptions on the bases of the pilasters on each side, which bear characters of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century CE.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Gajalakshmi panel}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure96.jpg}
\caption{Gajalakshmi Panel on the entrance porch below Nandimandapa © Kushal Parkash \newline \textbf{Courtesy}: Lalit Kala Akademy, New Delhi}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushright}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid}. p. 42. \\
\end{footnotesize}
\end{flushright}
Right in front of the entrance gateway when one enters the gateway, the magnificent panel of Gajalakshmi is carved below the Nandimandapa facing west. Lakshmi is generally regarded as goddesses of fortune. Though the panel has been mutilated, the deity of wealth and fortune is seated on a double lotus in the middle of kshirsagar (Milk Ocean) from where she was born as a result of churning of the ocean. Four elephants represent the four cardinal directions who are pouring water on the deity. Another panel is located opposite the entrance passage leading to the Lankeshwara shrine on the northern side. She has been mentioned in Rig Veda as a destroyer of the evil.

_Eta ena vyakaran khile ga vishthitaaiiv I_  
_Ramanta pranyan lakshmiryan papishta aneensham II (RV 10:71:2)_

As mentioned earlier, the Kailasha is a combination of the southern and northern styles. It has, however, a strong Dravidian Complex with the following components:

(i) Gopuram or entrance gate-way

(ii) Nandi mandapa

(iii) The main vimana

(iv) The surrounding cloisters and

(v) An adjoining mandapa.

On the two sides of the courtyard (the north and the south) supplementary halls are carved. In the northern courtyard is the Lankesvara shrine, and the shrine of the river goddesses. These however may be later additions.

---


48 Kapoor, Subodh, Indian Gods and Goddesses, pp. 50-51.

49 Ibid, p. 52.

The entrance gateway is two storeyed and has a *sala-sikhara*. Over the upper entrance is a rectangular *griva* and a wagon topped sikhara. The Nandi mandapa is 25 feet square and stands on a highly decorative base. The plinth or *adisthana* shows mouldings.

The lower mouldings, however, are not properly finished. The plinth shows pilasters with sculptured panels. Near the floor the base rises in the series of recessed offset. Above, in the central space of the side, is a frieze of elephants and lions. Above the plinth is frieze of elephants and then the *kapota*. The *kantha* of the plinth shows a number of *mithuna* sculptures. The Nandi mandapa is connected with the gate of the bridge. The gate house is double storeyed with ample accommodation for the temple guardians.\(^{51}\)

The base of the *vimana* proper measures 164 feet from the east to west, and 109 feet from north to south. The *adhisthana* or plinth of the *vimana* is a solid mass of rock and its impressive height lends grandeur to the entire structure. The base greatly resembles the lower part of a chariot. The whole temple looks like a chariot resting on the back of elephants.\(^{52}\)

---

\(^{51}\) *Ibid*, p. 93.

\(^{52}\) Brown, Percy, *op. cit.* pp. 74-75.
The *vimana* proper is approached by flights of steps from both the courtyards. The flight of steps lead to a porch, the ceiling of which shows some interesting painting. The oldest of these may be contemporaneous with the temple.\(^{53}\)

**River Goddesses Shrine**

A shrine 23½ feet long by 9 feet deep and 11 feet high, with two pillars in front, is just behind the northern elephant. The pillars have moulded bases, sixteen-sided shafts, and massive capitals with a double bracket above. The floor is approached by five steps, with an elephant's head and front feet on each side of them. The rest of the podium is divided into three panels on each side, containing small sculptures.\(^{54}\)

![Figure 98: River Goddesses shrine](image)

The ends also had the heads of elephants. The facade was terminated by gigantic *dvarapalas* with several arms and wearing high tiaras. The doorway of the shrine is intricately decorated with geometrical patterns and human figures.


\(^{54}\) Burgess, Jas, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-33.
On either side are female *dwarapalikas*. On the left hand side is the River goddess Ganga, standing on a makara, and on the right Yamuna standing on a tortoise.\(^{55}\)

The other two lean slightly towards her-the one on the left standing on a lotus flower, with creeping plants and birds among their leaves. To the right on a tortoise (*kurma*), with creepers and water-plants behind. These two represent Sarasvati and Yamuna respectively. The frieze of the facade has been divided into seven panels. In the central panel three figures and in each of the others a male and female have been shown seated together. Over these are some mouldings. In front this of an unfinished cave is located above. It has a low rail carved with water jars, separated by two little colonnades.\(^{56}\)

**Cloisters**

The cloisters that surround the main temple are of great interest presenting as they do through the medium of stone. The story of Shiva and other gods of the Hindu pantheon. In the panel of the cloisters. The Hindu mythology springs into life in all its glory. A plethora of Hindu gods full of life and energy depicting all human emotions of love, hate, greed, anger, ecstasy.\(^{57}\)

The demon Ravana sacrificing his heads to God Shiva or God Shiva himself setting out in a chariot driven by Brahma to destroy the triple castles of the Asuras. Vishnu pushing king Bali into the earth, or killing the demon Hiranyakashyapa these and other sculptures fills the walls of the side cloisters.\(^{58}\)

Some of the best panels are the Siva Kalyanasundaramurti. The graceful figure of Parvati at the first touch of her Lord makes her blush coyly. One of the most expressive panels is the powerful dancing pose of Shiva are some of the most

\(^{55}\) Rajan, K. V. Soundara, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
\(^{56}\) Burgess, James, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-38.
\(^{57}\) Qureshi, Dulari, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-165.
\(^{58}\) Rajan, K. V. Soundara, *op. cit.*, 172-175.
memorable sculptures in these cloisters.\textsuperscript{59} The great saga of the past moves before one's eyes and then one gets lost into it. The effect is overwhelming, as it is full of strength, life, vigour and beauty. The architectural effect when the visitor looks at the long rows of columns and the continuous series of sculptural panels from one end of them its most fascinating.\textsuperscript{60}

On the back wall is-1, Ganapati; 2, a female with a child sitting on a wolf; 3, Indrani; 4, Parvati with a bull in front of the seat, and a child destroyed; 5, Vaishnavi and child destroyed, with Garuda below; 6, Kartikeyi, and child crawling on the knee, with a peacock holding a snake as a cognizance; 7, a devi with trisula and a humped bull below; 8, Sarasvati holding a rosary; and 9, another Devi with four arms, holding a shallow vessel.\textsuperscript{61}

On the east wall are three female seated figures. These are sometimes named Sivakali Bhadrakali, and Mahakali. Each holding a chauri, but without the nimbus and cognizance. They are separated from the others by a fat dwarf who sits with his back to the three. Under the west end of the sacrificial hall is a small low cave, the verandah of which is divided from the inner room by an arch springing from two attached pillars. The inside has an altar for some

\textsuperscript{59} Rajan, K. V. Soundara, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 171-182.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid}, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{61} Dhavalikar, M. K., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 65-67.

\textbf{Figure 99}: Panel of Kalyansundarmurti Shiva
\textbf{Courtesy}: Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi
idol. The rock on the right side of the great temple has been excavated in four storeys, none of them quite finished.\textsuperscript{62}

This corridor on the south side measures 118 feet in length. The wall is divided by pilasters into twelve compartments, each containing a large sculpture as follows:\textsuperscript{63}

1. Annapurna, four-armed, holding a water pot, rosary, spike or bud, and wearing her hair in the \textit{jata} style.
2. Siva as Balaji who slew Indrajit, the son of Ravana, four-armed, with club, \textit{discus} or \textit{chakra}, and conch; has a supplicant and a small female in front of his club.
3. Vishnu as Krishna, four-armed, with the \textit{sankha} and sword, holding the seven-hooded snake Kaliya by the tail, and planting his foot on its breast.
4. Varaha, four-armed, with the \textit{chakra}, \textit{sankha}, and the snake under his foot, raising Prithvi.
5. A four-armed Vishnu on Garuda. 6. Vishnu, six-armed, with a long sword, club, shield, \textit{chakra}, and \textit{sankha}, in the Vamana or dwarf incarnation, with his foot uplifted over the head of Bali, holding his pot of jewels.
6. A four-armed Vishnu as Krishna upholding the lintel of a compartment to represent the base of a hill over the flocks of Vraj.
7. Sesha Narayana or Vishnu on the great snake, with Brahma on the lotus springing from his navel, and five fat little figures below.
8. Narasimha, tearing out the entrails of his enemy.
9. A figure with three faces and four arms, trying to pull up the \textit{linga}.
10. Siva, four-armed, with Nandi.
11. Ardhanariswar, four-armed, with Nandi.

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{63} Dhavalikar, M. K., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 52-64.
The sculptures from the west end of the twelve corresponding bays on the north side (120 feet in length) are:\(^{64}\)

1. Siva springing from the linga to protect Markandeya from Yama, the god of death.

2. Siva and two worshippers, one of them a huntsman with a bow.

3. Siva and Parvati playing at chausar; below are Nandi and eleven gana.

4. Siva and Parvati, with Narada below playing on some wind instrument.

5. Siva, with Parvati above, her arms twined in Siya's; Ravana is below, but not complete.

6. Rishi Muchhukunda, with two arms and a bag on his left shoulder.

7. Siva and Parvati seated, facing one another.

8. Siva, four-armed, with snake and rosary, and Nandi on the right.

9. Siva and Parvati seated, and Nandi below.

10. The same pair, with a linga altar between them, and Nandi below.

11. Siva with Parvati on his left knee, and a seated and a standing figure below.

12. A linga with nine heads round it, and a kneeling figure of Ravana Upholding the vedi, and cutting off his tenth head in devotion to Siva.\(^{65}\)

The nineteen subjects occupying the compartments in the east corridor (189 feet in length) are:\(^{66}\)

1. Siva as Kala Bhairava, four-armed, with the trisila, and accompanied by Parvati.

---

\(^{64}\) Burgess, Jas, op. cit. pp. 27-32.

\(^{65}\) Ibid, p. 33.

\(^{66}\) Fergusson, James & Burgess, James, op. cit., pp. 456-458.
2. A god stepping out from lotuses, with a small figure of a goddess holding him by the finger.

3. Siva, four-armed, with the *trisula*, beside Parvati.

4. Siva, four-armed, with the *trisula* in one of the left hands, and *gandharvas* above and other attendants below.

5. Siva with a long-shafted *trisula* dancing on a dwarf.

6. Chanda or Bhupala Bhairava, with a ribbon over his thighs, a *trisula* over his left shoulder, a begging bowl in the left hand, and a small drum in the right, with Parvati in front of him.

7. Siva, four-armed, holding a cobra, with Nandi on the right and Parvati on the left.

8. Siva and Nandi.

9. Brahma, three-faced and four-armed, with the ascetic's water-pot and rosary, and his sacred goose.

10. Siva with a cobra and Nandi.

11. Vishnu, four-armed, with *sankh* and lotus; also a worshipper with his hands clasped.

12. Siva holding the *trisula*, with Nandi and a worshipper.

13. Siva, holding a snake, the Ganges flowing from his hair; Parvati is on his left and an elephant on his right; above is Brahma, and overhead a *gandharva*.

14. Siva in a *linga* with Brahma and Varaha.

16. Siva and Parvati, with Nandi below.

17. Siva with six arms, going to war against Tripurasura; Brahma, armed with *trisula*, club, bow, and quiver, drives him in the sun's chariot, with the four Vedas as horses; Nandi is on the top of the club.

18. Virabhadra, six-armed, with *damru*, bowl, and *trisula*, holding up his victim Ratnasura. He is accompanied by Parvati, Kali, a goblin, and a vampire.

19. Siva holding a flower, with Parvati on his left, and Bhringi, his skeleton attendant, waiting below. A door from the north corridor leads into a continuation of it, 57 feet long. This is situated immediately under Lankesvara, and the two front pillars are elegantly ornamented, but there are no sculptures at the back.\(^{67}\)

**Mandapa**

A *mandapa*, 26 feet square and two storeys in height. It has been carved in front of the court. The lower storey of the *mandapa* is solid, and the upper one is connected with the *gopura* and with the temple by bridges cut in the rock. Figures of lions and fat dwarfs are placed on the roofs of the *gopura*, of the Nandi *mandapa*, and of the great hall itself. They stand about 4 feet high, and are executed in the same bold style as the figures of lions and elephants round the base of the temple.\(^{68}\)

The main hall on the first floor is a substantial dimensions measuring 57 by 55. Sixteen beautifully carved pillars support the ceiling. Earlier these pillars and plans have already been discussed. On the ceiling of the central hall is a panel depicting Siva dancing the *Lalitam*.\(^{69}\)

\(^{67}\) *Ibid*, p. 459.

\(^{68}\) Rajan, K. V. Soundara, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-97.

\(^{69}\) Qureshi, Dulari, *op. cit.*, 168-70.
The entrance to the hall is to the left, in front of the Nandi. A low screen wall connects the west line of pillars. The roof is low, and is supported by twenty-seven massive pillars and corresponding pilasters, most of them richly carved and of varied and appropriate design, but of later date than the central temple.70 The arrangement of the sixteen pillars in the centre is identical with that of the greater temple. The central aisle and the central cross aisle are wider. The hall has a more spacious appearance than the porch of the temple. The floor of the central area is somewhat raised above the surrounding aisles.71

**Antechamber:** The vestibule of the shrine is at the east end of the hall. On the left side wall of the antechamber is a big standing Nandi accompanied by Ganesha.72 On the ceiling of the antechamber is a beautifully carved Annapurna, standing on a lotus, with high *jata* head-dress. Brahma squats at her right elbow and probably Vishnu is on her left. *Gandharvas* have been depicted on corners of the sculpture.73 The north wall of the vestibule has the depiction of Siva and Parvati. They are shown playing the *chausur*. On the south, both are on Nandi couchant on a slab supported by four *ganas*, with a fifth at the end. Siva has a child on his right knee and behind him are four attendants.74 The *dvarapalas* on each side of the shrine door is flanked by female *dvarpalas*. One of them is on a *makara*, and the other on a tortoise. These female *dvarpalas* can be identified as Ganga and Yamuna respectively. The shrine is a plain cell, 15 feet square inside, with a large rosette on the roof.

The central fane is raised on a solid basement of rock 27 feet high. Under the bridge connecting the temple with the *mandapa* are two large sculptures,—the one on the west being Siva as Kala Bhairava in a state of frantic excitement. He

---

70 *Ibid*, p. 29.
71 Dhavalikar, M. K., *op. cit.*, pp. 56-64.
72 Burgess, James, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-35.
has been depicted with flaming eyes. The Saptamatras have been depicted on his feet. On the east side, Siva is shown as Mahayogi.\textsuperscript{75}

The whole of the temple was plastered over and painted, and hence its name Rang Mahal or the painted palace. The painting was renewed again and again, and some bits of old fresco-paintings of two or three successive coatings, still remain on the roof of the porch of the upper temple.\textsuperscript{76}

![Figure 100: Dancing Shiva in Rangmandapa](image)

\textbf{Figure 100:} Dancing Shiva in Rangmandapa  
\textbf{Courtesy:} Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi

![Figure 101: Pillar in the mandapa](image)

\textbf{Figure 101:} Pillar in the mandapa  
\textbf{Courtesy:} Lalit Kala Akademy, New Delhi

A door leads to the main hall of the temple. It is 57 side and 55 deep. There are sixteen pillars, somewhat in the style of the four great central columns. The door at each end of the cross aisle leads out into a side balcony with two richly carved pillars in front. The massiveness of the sixteen great square pillars gives a solidity and grandeur to the hall. These pillars represents the dynamism in the history of Indian architecture.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{75} Burgess, James, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 28-32.  
\textsuperscript{76} Fergusson, James & Burgess, James, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 450-52.  
\textsuperscript{77} Brown, Percy, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 74-76.
These pillars are arranged in groups of four, one in each quarter, leaving a big central nave and two huge procession paths. One from the door to the vestibule which leads to the cellar and the other to the two side balconies. The whole arrangement according to Dr. Gupta is that of a navarangamandapa. In this the navaranga are as follows:78

(i) The central square
(ii) The space between the two groups of northern pillars
(iii) The space between the eastern pillars
(iv) The space between the southern pillars
(v) The space between the western pillars
(vi) The space between four north western pillars
(vii) The space between four north eastern pillars
(viii) The space between four south eastern pillars
(ix) The space between four south western pillars

Two doors on the eastern side of the mahamandapa open into the open terrace behind.

The door is guarded by gigantic Saiva dvarapalas, leaning on heavy maces. It has wide central and cross aisles. The four massive square columns in each corner are supporting the roof.

---

Figure 102: Naga-hooded figures

Courtesy: American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon

---

Qureshi, Dulari, op. cit., pp. 165-170.
The four pillars round the central area are of one pattern, differing only in the details of their sculpture. The remaining twelve are also of general type.79

Among the details worth noting are the windows and panels. There are six windows, two in front and two on each side, of which one on the south-east is very much broken. Three of them are arabesques of very rich but entirely different designs, and the other two are a combination of animal and vegetable forms.80

**Rati: the goddess of sensuousness**

In the next panel to the Mashishmardini Durga, Rati is depicted significantly with Kamadev (Pradyumna).81 They are represented standing side by side holding the sugar-cane stalk which represents the rasa- essence of life.82 As per her beauty and sensuality she is pictured here as a maiden who holds the power to enchant the god of passion. When Shiva burnt her husband to ashes, it was Rati, whose penance leads to the promise of Kamadeva's resurrection.83 Often, this resurrection occurs when Kamadev is reborn as Pradyumna, the son of Krishna. Another depiction of Rati with Kamadev can be observed along the inside aspect of the front enclosure wall. Kamadeva is shown having an arrow in his hand and Ikshukhanda has been depicted in between the twosome. Rati is shown standing in *abhanga* pose.84

**Uma/ Parvati**

The earliest reference of Uma Himavati is found in the Kena Upnshad where she looks to remove ignorance arisen due to egotism.85 Hence, she appears a goddess of knowledge.

---

80 Ibid, p. 60.
81 Ibid, pp. 74-75.
82 Rajan, K. V. Soundra, *op. cit.*, p.100
83 Ibid, p.101
84 Ibid, p. 102
A rare iconic sculpture of Parvati is depicted along the gateway complex (gopura dvara) which is surmounted by Shala shikhara where she becomes part of the triad. In the niche Shiva is shown carrying the linga on his shoulders and Brahma and Vishnu are depicted in the lateral part of Shala Shikhra.

Along the inside look of front enclosure wall, Parvati is depicted in Uma-sahita Shiva panel. She is depicted seated in ardhaprayanka pose. In the same panel, the female seated cross-legged in a mood of indecision and male is with is legs placed forward and arms in protestation, seemingly pulling the female to make the next move. The upper torso of the female is plain. This incident corresponds to the narrative that of Uma and garrulous Brahmachari form taken by Shiva took to test Uma.

**Mahishasurmardini Durga:**

After holy bath at river goddess shrine, the sculpted panel of Durga as Mahishasurmardini can be noticed in the south-west corner of the northern flank of the courtyard. Durga is depicted here as a dynamic force of Prakriti (nature) as a destroyer of the evil. In the panel Durga is shown trampling Mahishasur which is represented both with the animal head as well as the human body emerging of the neck of the human form of the demon. On both sides, one each is depicted fighting with Durga. It may be a synoptic view showing all the three demon figures probably being the

---

87 Rajan, K. V. Sounda, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
Mahishasur⁹⁰. The appearance of Durga is quite interesting. She appears or made to appear by Vishnu and Shiva at the request of Brahma⁹¹. She appears from the fire came out as an anger from the mouth of Vishnu and Shiva with inexpressible beauty⁹². A beautiful and vigorous representation of Mahishasurmardini Durga can also be seen on the inner face of the front enclosure wall. Durga is shown seated on the lion is an ardhapryankasana pose in fight with Mahishasur. She is holding a bow in one of her hands with the other hand, she is discharging the arrows. The bend of the bow denotes the full stretch in discharge of the arrows. The remaining of her eight arms carries different weapons like Sula (trident), Khadaga (sword) and Khetak (shield)⁹³.

The front of the mandapa, to the north of the entrance, has a panel with Siva, four-armed, standing on the back of a kneeling figure, with Parvati by his side. He holds with one of his hands a long lock of hair out of the top of his head-dress.⁹⁴

**Ravanagnaghmurti**

The sculptures of the lofty basement of the temple commence from behind these bas-reliefs, and continue in an unbroken line, but not on the south side, which had a bridge, since fallen down, from the balcony of the temple to a cave in the scarp. Beneath this is a fine sculpture of Ravana under Kailaśa.⁹⁵

---

⁹¹ Kapoor, Subodh pp. 74-75.
⁹⁴ Huntington, Susan L., pp. 342-345.
The Ravana-anugrahurti panel represents the majestic three dimensional sculpture. In the panel, the upper half depicts Parvati restlessly clutches Shiva. Ravana is depicted multi-armed who is shaking the Mount Kailasha where Shiva is shown seated in repose, and the pride of Ravana is trampled by just the pressure of the toe of Shiva. Parvati represents the aristocratic strain of the feminine is easily observable. There are also many others panel in the eastern and northern cloister wall representing various narratives such as- Shiva rescued from the lotus pond, Shiva as a mendicant, Shiva playing Chaupad game with Parvati, Vinadhara Shiva and Shiva seated with Parvati.

Gangadhra Shiva Panel

The Gangadhara panel on the northerly side of the mandapa (porch) represents Shiva, stands one side of the dialog box on the back of Ghana (attendant) in abhanga pose. Parvati is depicted standing cross-legged resting on lotuses and right arm is holding the left arm of Shiva. Here the artisan very nicely expressed the mutual understanding of the fact that the origin of the Ganga and acceptance by Shiva shows rivalry in her territory. The bashful, aristocratically Parvati appears again in a well curved tribhanga pose in Gangadharashiva panel. Heinrich Zimmer says ‘The Perfect serenity and timeless harmony of the couple is emphasized in this relief by their response to an attempt of a demon to shake their Olympus from below.’ In the antrala (vestibule), on the

---

96 Datta, Bimal Kumar *Introduction to Indian Art*, p. 70.
left, Shiva and Parvati are shown in *akshakrida*, the eternal game of creation from the union of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. And on the right side is *Uma-sahita Skandamurti* Shiva\(^98\). Near the Gangadhara Shiva panel facing south is shown further in the corner panel of *Ardhanarishwara* (an androgynous form of Shiva). It exhibits the feminine outline on the left side of the body also including left part of the head. Though maximum parts of hands, whole of the head and legs are lost. The remaining part such as the shoulder of Shiva and curved shoulder of Uma and smoothly rounded breast along with a hand resting on the well-formed hips are a singular representation of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. The fertility aspect of the nature is well represented here. It seems an attempt of making a conciliation between the Shiva and Shakti cults signifying the fusion of the two to make a composite cult.\(^99\)

**Privardevata Shrine**

On three sides of the terrace and at the two back corners, there are five sub-shrines. These are mounted over prominent projections of the tall base and have their own *adhisthana*. The terrace itself forms the base of the spire, which rises to a height of 96 feet from the court below. Below, between pilasters are a number of Shiva and Vishnu panels. Above these are some interesting flying figures carved in various postures of front, back and sides. Over these begin the horizontal mouldings of the *sikhara*.\(^100\)

**Moulding on adhistahna**

A door in each of the back corners of the hall leads to the terrace behind, and a wide path goes round the outside of the shrine, which forms the base of the *sikhara* or spire. The *pradakshina* for circumambulation is provided for by the doors in the east wall leading on to the terrace, on which are also five small shrines. These have little carving on their walls, beyond the *dvarapalas* at the

\(^{98}\) M. N. Deshpande, *op. cit.*, p. 245.


\(^{100}\) Ibid, p. 58.
door; and there are altars in all of them for images, but the shrine on the south side has also a bench round the back and ends.101

In an advanced recess in the corner of the temple facing the shrine in the north side is an image of Ganapati. On the facade above is a figure with its face to the wall. The image in the corresponding recess on the south-west of the temple is perhaps Vishnu.102

The base is in panels, six on each side and five on the back. These panels contain the various forms of Shiva, Durga, and Vishnu, standing on fat dwarfs and accompanied by other attendants. At the upper corners of the panels are conventionalised figures of peacocks with long tails. A Devi is shown seated cross-legged over each panel. The wall above contains flying figures, and over them are the horizontal mouldings of the sikhara.103

**Gopura and Nandi Shrine**

The entrance of the hall is connected by a bridge outside the porch, to a pavilion with four doors and a broken Nandi. Several chambers are located to the west, over the entrance porch. There is access to the roof of the small chambers that form the screen in front of the court. The screen is covered with mythological sculptures in recessed panels, and is crowned on the outer side by a defended parapet.104 Each parapet has been carved with three balls, and below them is a string of small figures in high relief, on foot, on horseback, in carts and fighting. There are twenty-five large panels. The south of the screen is a rock-cut cistern 22 feet by 19 feet. On each side of the entrance to the porch is a sitting figure with one foot up. On the front of the inner jamb on each side a female with umbrella and chauri overhead has been depicted. She is accompanied by a small attendant.105

---

101 Fergusson, James & Burgess, James, *op. cit.*, pp. 455-65
102 Burgess, Jas, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34.
103 *Ibid*, p. 35.
104 Burgess, James, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-38.
Dwarf figures have been carved blowing *sankhs* over the *gopura*. The passage of *gopura* has been decorated with many sculptures. On the outer side of the north wall is the large Mahishasurmardini. The return wall of the court is embellished with figures. To the north of this is an unfinished cave in the screen, with four short stout pillars having thick compressed cushion-shaped capitals. There are several sculptures on the south side of the entrance and partly on the west wall. Next to this is an unfinished excavation in the south end of the screen, apparently intended for a small open room or shrine.\(^{106}\)

**Lankeshwara shrine**

An important part of the Kailasha temple is the Lankesvara shrine. It has been excavated on the northern side of it. It can be approached by a flight of steps in the left corridor. On ascending the steps in imposing temple is seen. The mere sight of the shrine overwhelms the visitor. A front corridor runs east and west. Right in front of the small Nandi shrine carved in the back wall is the shrine proper. The Nandi is seated on an elevated platform looking majestic.\(^{107}\)

The temple is raised on a platform with is beautiful polished floor. It is surrounded on two sides by an imposing plinth. The plinth has been carved with a number of couples to enhance the structure extremely beautiful. The size of 123 feet deep and 60 feet wide size of raised platform gives an imposing architectural effect. The plinth, the floor and the pillars become decorative elements to be added.\(^{108}\)

\(^{106}\) Dhavalikar, M. K., *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

\(^{107}\) Dhavalikar, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

Dhwajastambhas

On two sides of the Nandi shrine, of the first floor in the two courtyards, are two huge elephants and two dhwajastambhas. This gave an air of majesty to the entire temple. The elephants are life size. The dhwajastambhas are 45 feet high. They are perfect pieces of art and lend great dignity to the temple. The trisula which once decorated the capitals of these pillars is gone.\textsuperscript{109}

The pillars are of the Dravidian order the characteristics of which are cushion member over a constricted neck. A development of this combination produced the Dravidian order of which these monolithic columns are an interpretation, the constricted neck having been transformed into that sloping shape below the cushion cap a contraction of the outline which is unmistakable.\textsuperscript{110}

On either side of the main temple on the exterior wall behind the dhwajastambhas are two interesting panels of scenes from Mahabharata and Ramayana.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{109} Brown, Percy, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 73-75.
\textsuperscript{110} Dhavlikar, M. K., \textit{op. cit.} pp. 56.
Panels of Ramayana and Mahabharata

On the northern wall of the *sabha-mandapa* has been carved with the scenes from Mahabharata. These panels are in seven rows. The lower two rows depict the childhood exploits of Krishna and the above five rows scenes of Arjuna's penance, the Kirata-Arjuna fight, and episodes from the Mahabharata war.

![Figure 107: A panel depicting Scenes from Ramayana on the southern side of the porch](image)

*Courtesy: American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon*

The Ramayana panel in the southern wall of the *sabha-mandapa* is portrayed a number of scenes again in seven rows. The scenes of Rama's departure from Ayodhya, Bharata trying to persuade him to return.\(^\text{112}\) In continuation, the forest scenes of Shurpanakha, depiction of abduction of Sita by Ravana. Rama meeting Hanumana, Hanumana crossing the ocean to reach Lanka, the *Ashokavana*, the scene in the court of Ravana, and the last row the monkey army building a bridge of stones to reach Lanka.\(^\text{113}\)

\(^{111}\) *Ibid*, 57.
\(^{112}\) Burgess, James, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.
\(^{113}\) *Ibid*, 34.
Sacrificial Hall (Yajnashala)

A cave is below, under the scarp on the south side, and measures 37 feet by 15 feet. It is consist of two square pillars and pilasters in front. Each pillar has a tall female warder with hair hanging in loose folds towards her left shoulder. There are two dwarf attendants behind and the pillar is a low square pedestal.\(^{114}\)

The mothers of creation are sculptured round the three inner sides of this sacrificial hall. The first being Wagheshvari is on the west. She has been depicted four-armed, holding a *trisula*, and with the tiger under her feet. The second is a somewhat similar figure. The third is Kala, a grinning skeleton, with Kali and another skeleton companion behind. Kala has been adorned with a cobra girdle and necklace. He is shown seated on two dying men, and a wolf gnaws the leg of one.\(^{115}\)

Second Storey

The veranda of the second storey is 61 feet by 22 feet, inclusive of the two pillars in front, and leads into a dark hall 55 feet by 34 feet, with four heavy plain pillars. A staircase at the west end of the veranda leads to a third storey. It is almost identical in dimensions and arrangements, and with a similar veranda and hall. The provision of sunlight has been provided by a door and two windows.\(^{116}\)

The fronts of the second and third storeys are protected by thick eaves. These are quadrantial on the outer surface and the inner sides carved in imitation of wooden ribs. It a bears a rafter running horizontally through them. In the third storey, the four pillars which support the roof are connected by something like arches. The roof of the area within the pillars is considerably raised by a deep cornice.\(^{117}\)

---

\(^{114}\) Ibid, p. 66.

\(^{115}\) Ibid, p. 67.

\(^{116}\) Fergusson, James & Burgess, James, *op. cit.*, pp. 452-459.

\(^{117}\) Ibid, p. 460.
The roof is similarly elevated by a double architrave surrounding it. The pillars are about three diameters in height, and this proportion is suited for rock-cut architecture than any other that has been adopted in India. They have bold capitals and brackets. The inner side of each of the pillars on the south face is connected by a low screen. The western entrance is adorned with sculpture.\textsuperscript{118}

The right side of the entrance to the \textit{pradakshina} has Siva and Parvati, with Ravana below, and a maid running off. The same gods are in the north entrance playing at \textit{chausar}. A tree is behind them, and the Nandi and \textit{gana} are shown below. A female is on each side of the shrine, one standing on a \textit{makara}, and the other on a tortoise. The \textit{salunkha} inside the shrine has been destroyed.\textsuperscript{119}

The back wall has a grotesque Trimurti, or Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva in very low relief, each four-armed. Brahma has three faces, and the goose as his \textit{vahana} or vehicle and Sarasvati his consort are by the side of him. The central figure is Siva holding up his \textit{trisula}. A snake with Nandi and an attendant are by his side. The third is Vishnu, with the discus and a great club, attended by a male and a female.\textsuperscript{120}

\textbf{Saptamatrikas:}

Saptamatrika worship probably symbolically began as early as the Harappan period. However, Saptamatrikas takes its final form in the \textit{Puranic} period\textsuperscript{121}. They have significantly been mentioned in classical Sanskrit literature such as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid}, p. 461.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid}, p. 76.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Huntington, Susan L., \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 341-48.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} MCP Srivastava, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 201.
\end{itemize}
Daridra Charudatta by Bhasa, Mrichhakatka of Shudraka, Harshcharita and Kadambari of Banabhatta.\textsuperscript{122}

The chapel of Saptamtrikas is located on the south west corner of the temple complex. The Puranas as well as the epics furnishes enough material. Saptamatrakas are the Shaivite goddess because they are flanked the Shaiva deities Ganesha and Virabhadra. The seven mother-goddesses are: Brahmi holds a rosary and a water pot, 2. Maheshwari is seated on a bull, holds a trident, and wears serpent bracelet and adorned with the crescent moon, 3. Kumari: created from Karttikeya, rides a peacock and holds a spear, 4. Vaishnavi: is seated on Garuda and holds a conch, wheel, mace, bow and sword, 5. Varahi: has a boar from 6. Narsimhi is lion-woman, 7. Aindri: holds a thunderbolt and is seated on a charging elephant\textsuperscript{123}. These divinities consist of six Deva Shaktis and one Devi Shakti\textsuperscript{124}. In each of these Matrikas, the attributes of male deities can easily be noticed. The Matrikas are armed with the same weapons as their respective gods and also have the same mounts.\textsuperscript{125}

It has been mentioned in folk narratives that after defeating the demons they resume back into the great goddess Devi. The associated myth states that male gods create Shaktis or female counterparts of themselves to help the Devi on the battlefields. Saptmatrikas have significantly been mentioned in classical Sanskrit literature such as Daridra Charudatta by Bhasa, Mrichhakatka of Shudraka, Harshcharita and Kadambari of Banabhatta.\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{122} Shivaji K. Panikkar, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 22-23.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Margaret Stutley, \textit{The illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography}, p. 124.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Ibid, p. 170.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 124.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Shivaji K. Panikkar, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 22-23.
\end{itemize}
Several scholars had given various suggestions including Dhavalikar who had specifically dealt with his view of the *modus operandi*, which opts for a facial attack in stepped phases, to put it briefly. It is inevitable that the excavation of the magnitude of the 'Kailash' should evoke not merely wonder and confusion but also attempts at the possible reconstruction of the technique and methodology. However, Soundara Rajan\textsuperscript{127} has pointed the fact that “*temple building had certainly revealed certain first principles of architecture, of its own which could not but have been brought into play in such enlarged endeavour, through the knowledge of the sthapati and his knowledgeable associates.*” The manifested familiarity with the measurable geometric and symmetric principles of massing, besides the necessary principles of down-cutting are evident the process of carving.\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{raggedright}
\textsuperscript{127} Rajan, Soundara K. V., *op. cit.*, pp. 192-93.
\textsuperscript{128} Brown, Percy, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
\end{raggedright}
It is can be surmised from the part of the sculpted architecture and the uniform common level that firstly the rock should have been cut down in three parts. These parts contain the primary part of the *Vimana* up to the porch of the *sabhamandapa* and the *nandimandapa*, and the secondary part of the entrance with its *dvara-sala* tower.\(^{129}\)

\[^{129}\text{Burgess, Jas, op. cit., pp. 27-28.}\]
It is also inherent from the part of the sculpted architecture and the uniform common level to which the primary part, of the Vimana upto the porch of the sabhamamndapa and the isolated nandimandapa, and the secondary part of the entrance with its dvara-sala tower, that they should have been separated into three successive blocks before setting about shaping them into the required individual organic and traditional temple parts, with a solid surbase in the case of the main first phase and with hollow under-passages for the remaining axial parts.\textsuperscript{130}

In the first step, either a possible eroded rain gully cutting or on deliberately provided from the front. The excavation was conducted 300 feet by 175 feet to create an isolated piece of 200 feet by 100 feet. On either flank for access to the transportation of men and materials. It should have been worked out to the level at which the architects and artisans had to work for a reasonably long first phase. At the upper most surface of the hill also would have been cut out. The corresponding deep shaft which would broadly have been as wide as the outer circumambulatory open court between the cloister and the main complex should also have been cut at the same time.\textsuperscript{131}

Further, towards the west, a ramp cum steps would have been cut down to the outer front entrance. On that area, the scarp would have been vertically cut and the base part of the front hill eliminated to form an open ground level-front court to the complex. Thus, a marginal shaft all around the intended monolithic design area would have been provided. It might have been done precisely and effectively reduced to the ultimate layout.\textsuperscript{132}

The actual work of the cutting down might not have been undertaken at the same time. Indeed the 'fixed points' of each solid mass required for the proposed

\textsuperscript{130} Burgess, Jas, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 27-28.  
\textsuperscript{132} Fergusson, James & Burgess James, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 452-456.
design of the temple. It would have done by taking a series of datum lines on
the hill top. After it had been cleared of its defects and slopes in the area which
would verily be the architectural zone. This process would be based on the same
principles as of a structural temple, horizontally and vertically for the required
basal plinth area, which would have marked out on the cleared hill slope.\textsuperscript{133}

This downward cutting thereafter would also have been \textit{tala by tala} and to start
with for executing the \textit{sikhara}, \textit{griva} and the entablature of the uppermost \textit{tala}
proposed. Axially, this work would go for the main \textit{vimana} separately and the
\textit{sabhamandapa} with its triple projecting porches. Similarly separately for the
\textit{nandi mandapa} block and the \textit{Dvara gopura} roof level parts. However, all the
datum lines fixed in a series and work simultaneously overseen for proper level
and component correlations.\textsuperscript{134}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{kailash_temple_ellora}
\caption{View from South West, Kailash Temple Ellora}
\textbf{Courtesy:} Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{133} Mahajan, Malti, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 92-94.
\textsuperscript{134} Rajan, K. V. Soundara, \textit{op. cit.}, 192-93.
It means that the level of the upper axial series from the main shrine to the gopura roof level was kept at a firm horizontal datum. Almost until this entire work was completed. For this the horizontal level would place the projecting porches or the sambhamandapa would have been at the same plan as the Lankesvara cave temple on the northern flank (upper level) of Kailaśa complex. Similarly the cornice and vedi of the ground floor of the triple storeyed cave on the southern flank, however been conceived of towards the later stage of completion of the monolith.  

The earlier of these two would have involved only the main circumambulation sanctum, its linga and Mahesa panel on the sanctum rear wall. The vestibule ends one bay more into a south-facing veranda façade. It faces possibly into an access that had been taken out from the western part of the hill. At one time of the main temple down-cutting, it would have been linked with the Lankesvara shrine. Most possibly, in the same way as we find a link bridge vestiges on the south side of the projecting porch. At that stage, the façade of the main Kailash complex, fixing out the boundary wall and entrance point would have been organized so that the clear axial orientation of the temple complex could be constantly before the eye of the artisans. 

It is relevant at this juncture to note that: (a) in the entire range of Rashtrakuta cave temples or others at Ellora, Lankesvara alone shows a cella with

---

135 Burgess, James, op. cit., pp. 32-36.  
137 Brown, Percy, op. cit., pp. 74-75.  
138 Ibid, p. 76.
circumambulation, all the others being nirandhara; (b) similarly, in no Rashtrakuta creations at Ellora, a square linga pitha has been seen, all the others being of circular type; (c) the innermost wall flank leading from the antarala of Lankesvara towards the edge of the outer prakara court pit of Kailaśa, contains a large Tandava Siva panel. It is distinctively different in style from all the rest of the inner northern wall panels flanking the sabhamandapa of the present Lankesvara layout. It can be said coeval in style in the latter with the inner pillars vedi carvings. The nandi also at the western end in a scooped chamber.\textsuperscript{139}

The shrine would have then been nirandhara, the lingapitha circular if the main Lankesvara cave had been carved in one continuous effort much later to the completion of the Kailaśa monolithic. All the above features, (a) to (c) would not have obtained or been even stylistically relevant. It would not have had the Mahesa panel. Also, the carvings would have all been of the same type as the tale carvings around Kailash complex.\textsuperscript{140}

The Siva tandava mentioned is indeed equivalent in style to the Narasimha panel on the outer prakara wall of Kailaśa entrance exterior. It shows that this single

\textbf{Figure 110:} Upper view from south west

\textit{Courtesy:} Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi

\textsuperscript{139} Rajan, K. V. Soundara, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 192-93.

\textsuperscript{140} Fergusson, James & Burgess, James \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 452-58.
Siva Tandava panel on the edge of the floor had been executed when the main temple cutting had been operating in that level, in the porch of the sabhamandapa. Hence, it was part of the central stage of Kailasa execution and the garbhagriha and antarala of Lankesvara had then been pre-existing.\textsuperscript{141}

All these factors are sufficient to draw the inference that the main Lankesvara cella and antarala were early Rashtrakuta or perhaps even pre-Rashtrakuta. The rest of Lankesvara might have been contingent upon the completed Kailasa complex. It can be deduced that the stairway, the nandi mandapa and the sabhamandapa were all of a piece in a much later addition. On the other hand, the fact that the cloister showing some remarkable range of ritual iconography. It has been commenced from the very point of the ground floor periphery where the Lankesvara cave sanctum above is located, showing that the latter was pre-existing.\textsuperscript{142}

Once the work of the main temple had been completed at the upper level horizontal plan held at the axial line. The rest of the part would have commenced of down-cutting further to the level of the present courtyard pit. While cutting the massive sub-base or upapitha up to the point of the main upper level porch, the ground floor level below the nandi mandapa and the Dvara gopura have been carved below the lower than the prakara court.\textsuperscript{143}

The under passages for the above two axial units were designed. It could also provide solid north-south screen walls for display of the magnificent Gajalakshmi panel. The provision of the covered flights of steps one on the north and south leading to the porch of upper entrance. Its side walls were ultimately to be embellished with the narrative story-telling rows of miniature panels from Ramayana and Mahabharata.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{141} Burgess, Jas, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 28-36.
\textsuperscript{142} Brown, Percy, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 73-75.
\textsuperscript{143} Burgess, James, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 32-36.
\textsuperscript{144} Rajan, K. V. Soundara, \textit{op. cit.}, 193-94.
Thus, the main upper complex of temple parts was cut down and finished in three stages:

Firstly, for the main vimana proper which was designed as an astha-parivara scheme. After that the sabhamandapa with its three porch projections and subsequently for the nandi mandapa and the dvara gopura. It must have been commenced and mostly carried out during the time of Krishna I, uncle of Dantidurga. Most probably was completed by the time of Govinda in the 9th century AD.\textsuperscript{145} Hence, it can be surmised that, the Kailash monolithic complex was most plausibly cut downwards. It was certainly not a stepped progression but the execution was a fully pre-mediated strategy of action by architects.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, p. 195.