THE RELIGIOUS IMAGERY
OF
KHAJURAHO

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VII. Puns and Enigmatic Language in Sculpture

INTRODUCTORY

The knowledge of words and their multiple meanings was important to the Khajuraho artists, whether poets or sculptors. They displayed their love of puns or double entendres (śleshā) in both written and visual language. Allegory was also their favourite mode of expression. If we recognize that the Khajuraho artists often expressed themselves through double-meaning language, we may not err in taking them literally, at face value, but try to discover a deeper meaning in their work and design. Perhaps then we will be able to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding erotic and divine sculptures.

Though śleshā was employed at far back as the 2nd century A.D. by the poet Nāgabhūsana, and its profuse use was favoured in the 6th-7th century works of Subandhu and Bāṣa, it is during the 10th-11th century, when the Khajuraho temples were built, that we come across entire poems, śleshā-kāvyas, written in such a way as to read the words with two or more meanings. Two or three stories are simultaneously narrated covering, for instance, themes of Rāma, Kṛishṇa and the ruling monarch. There are also erotic-acutic poems using the device of punning simultaneously to convey love and renunciation. One of the best-known dvi-sandhāna (two-fold) poems is Hemachandra’s Kumārapālācharita, also called Dvīdākṣaya-Kāvyā, a poem with two intentions: (i) presentation of an account of King Kumārapāla of Gūḍrārat and his predecessors, (ii) illustration of the rules of grammar. The study of grammar and words (abodānāsāna) received tremendous importance so as to enable display of Alankāra (figures of speech) in literature. Special works were written on Alankāra, dealing with different figures of speech, including śleshā. We can understand in this context why even a religious treatise like the Agni Purāṇa (c. A.D. 900), which prescribes rules on image making and temple building among its numerous topics, has special chapters on Alankāra and grammar.

PUNS IN INSCRIPTIONS AND SCULPTURES

Against this background it is interesting to read the Laksmanā temple’s inscription (A.D. 954) which specifically mentions (lines 47, 48) that its scribe had studied the Sanskrit language. Its poet Mādhava proudly calls himself the son of a grammarian (paṭākādīvānā-vata). The poet Rāma who composed the eulogy of the Vishvanatha temple (A.D. 999) mentions that his grandfather Nandana was also a poet and he was of the Śābara lineage. The inscriptions of both these major temples of Khajuraho are replete with puns. In fact many verses of the Vishvanatha
185. Surasundar disrobing in account of a scorpion (-kharjuras). Significantly, the word kharjura is also related to the town’s name Kharjiravahaka. On the left is the Dipikaha king with his elephant mount.

temple inscription can be read in two ways. For instance, punning on the word diva = bird = twice-born, i.e. brothmara, the inscription (verse 33) reads:

"Sibi only gave a piece of flesh to the single bird (diva) who begged it, but the king (Yasvarman) bestowed millions on all who asked."

Another verse (43), which C. Sivaramamurti cites as an example of Sheha, reads two ways like the Dvayatra-Kalyana:

"Worshipping Frishna (the joy of Yasolda), than best of men, the pure-famed one, born in a fierce race, the destroyer of the joy of the enemy, waged war", or

"Like Krishna, who respecting Yasolda and Nanda, brought about the destruction of Potans, and who, born in the Vrishai race, annihilated the enemy Kaikan."

In light of the love of puns among the Khajuraho artists and their patrons, it seems that the word “Kharjura-vahaka”, the ancient name of Khajuraho, mentioned for the first time in Dhanagdeo’s Viyanatha temple inscription, had two meanings. The well known meaning of the word “kharjura” is date-palm tree, and “vahaka” means a carrier or bearer. So “kharjura-vahaka” can mean “date-palm bearer”; a later legend noted by Cunningham (ASII, XXI, p. 59) associates the town with two golden kharjura trees at its gate. But the word “kharjura” also means a scorpion, and “kharjura-vahaka” could mean “scorpion reader”. Now, Siva in his Agniro (fierce aspect) wears a garland of scorpions, as described in texts such as the Agastiyapricchita (212, 15) and the Rupamangalas (IV, 6). So “Kharjura-vahaka” can be taken as an epithet of Siva. Often the town and localities are named after the protector deities, for instance, Mumbai (Bombay) from Mumba Devi, Calcutta from Kali, Banamula (Varshamula) from Varsha, etc. We wonder whether the town “Kharjura-vahaka” derived its name from Siva-Khajurao as Kharjura-vahaka or Khetrapala Kharjura-vahaka who guarded the town.

Significantly, there are numerous surasundar as aparaas at Khajuraho with scorpions on their legs (Pl. 185). No other site has so many such surasundar as Khajuraho. These female figures represent a fertility theme in a subtle manner—they expose themselves on the pretext of removing a scorpion. Exposure of nudity was a powerful rain-making charm. At the same time, as the artists were fond of punning, these kharjura-bearing female figures could be associated with the name of the town Kharjura-vahaka.

The pivotal image of Khajuraho’s Siva system as mentioned in Chapter II, is Sadasiva, the manifest-unmanifest (tasakta-nishakta) aspect of Siva who presides over the five elements. Among the Sadasiva images of Khajuraho, two are unique. One has been
placed is an important niche of the Mahamandapa of the Kandaiya Mahadeva temple (Ph. 161), and the other, larger in size, with the name ‘Sadaśiva’ inscribed on it in the Site Museum (Frontispiece, Ph. 57). These Sadaśiva images are unique in having six visible heads topped by a śikhara, twelve arms and four legs – chatushpadas. Two of the legs are in padmasana, and the other two hang down. Iconographically these Sadaśiva images are extraordinary and so far cannot be traced to any texts. The Rājanāmdana (IV, 23–24), a 14th century text from Malvi, has a description that is somewhat similar. However, it too does not mention four legs of Sadaśiva.

But if we recognize a puṇa on chatushpadas (= four legs or four parts), we get a clue to the religion of Khajuraho also. The Śaiva Siddhānta sect prevalent in central and southern India from the 9th century B.C. has its texts divided into four pādas or parts, viz. jñāna-pāda, charyā-pāda, kriyā-pāda and yogo-pāda, dealing respectively with knowledge, daily rituals, methods of worship, and yoga which teaches meditation. The Sarvabhauma Sūryabhauma of the early 14th century, which discusses various philosophical and religious movements of the period, describes this Śaiva system as chatushpadhān maṇḍa tattvam. Thus the four legs of Sadaśiva refer to the four pādas of the Śaiva system. The two legs in padmasana possibly refer to yogo and kriyā pādas, while those hanging down suggest kriyā and charyā pādas.4

Double meanings can be read in the benedictory verse to Śiva in the Vaiṣṇavathā temple inscription of a.D. 1001 (Ep Ind, Vol. I, pp. 145–152): “I bow to the adorable coil of matted hair carried by the handsome Vaiṣṇavathā, (hair) which is irradiated by the expanding terrible heads of a multitude of hissing broad serpents, hair mixed with the half-Moon which is exquisitely shining, most brilliantly than the Sun, and yellowish when in contact with the line of flares of Fire issuing forth from the tremulous eye.” (italics mine)

The reference to the Moon, Sun and Fire points to the Kṣṇadālini symbolism of 160 (agāna-Moon), pārīgata (aparīgata-Sun), and the heat of fire of Kṣṇadālini energy rising in the central saṁśaya (nodal vein) saṁbhūvam. Śiva is called in the inscription Śiva-Eka-Krānava-śata, the Lord who is the Snake. (Europe) Pati (Lord Śiva) is endowed with Śaktās. Kriyā (activity), jñāna (knowledge) and ichchā (will), Sadaśiva, according to the Rājanāmdana (I, xii, 33; xiii, 6v; xiv, 6; is mediated upo, at having jñāna, ichchā and Kriyā Śaktis as his three eyes.

The artist of the Lakhamana temple has employed a puṇa in his interpretation of the moust of the planet Budha (Mercury). This planet is described as sarpaścanda, having a snake as his mount, in the texts Aparjīhayasāchārī (214, 17) and the Rājanāmdana (II, 2). But the artist has shown an elephant as his mount (Ph. 147). This can be understood, if we recognize that he has put on the equivalent word for sarpa, viz. nipa, which means a serpent as well as an elephant.

There is a puṇa on “Ādīnātha” in the sculptural representation of the Devi Jagadambī and Vaiṣṇavathā temples. Also the figures of Śiddha-like saints on the pāḍavacchā row of this temple we find a representation of the ājñā Thīrthikāra Ādīnātha (Ph. 81), the only ājñā image on the Hindu temples. It possibly suggests by way of a puṇa on the word “Ādīnātha”, the first teacher Ādīnātha, the guru of the Mahābhāja Matyendranātha.

A significant puṇa on the word “digambara” in a verse of the Vaiṣṇavathā temple inscription and in the sculptures of the Lakhamana temple gives further insight into the minds of the Khajuraho artists. The word “digambara”, “digambara”, means sky-cloak or naked, which is an epithet of Śiva and also applies to the Jaina Kāhapaśaka moon. The benedictory verse of the inscription is in the form of a humorous dialogue between Śiva and his wife Pārvatī, in which she intentionally confuses “Śiva-Digambara” with “Kāhapaśaka-Digambara”, the nude Jaina monk.

“Who is at the door?” (Pārvatī asks)
“Digambara.” (Śiva replies)
"Why suddenly Kshapa?"
"O god (bala), I am Sodbhava."
"Fire upon this use of the weapon. You deserve to carry barha (peacock-tail feathers)."
"Know me to be Mahesvara (lit. great lord, sovereign)."
"It is obvious (that you are Mahesvara) by the absence of clothes."
"May the laughter of Sambhu who was teased by his beloved, be for your welfare (stubha)."

JUNCTURES AND DOUBLE MEANINGS

The satradhâtras (architects) of the Kajuraho temples saw an apt place for punning in the architectural part called the kapîli (sandhi-khetra, koliká), which joins the mahâmandapa (large hall) with the gathbagha (womb-house, sanctum), particularly of the sandhâra temples. The Kajuraho temples can be divided into two broad groups on the basis of their plans: (1) sandhâra, with a built-in circumambulation path around the gathbagha (Fig. 17), and (2) nirandhâra, without this ambulatory (Fig. 18). Of the four sandhâra temples at Kajuraho, three are Hindu, and one Jaina. When we examine the ground plans of the three Hindu sandhâra temples, viz. the Lakshamana (c. a.d. 954), the Vivranath (c. a.d. 999) and the Kandariya (about a.d. 1030), we can see that the two equal squares of the hall and the sanctum are interlocked, forming a common portion in the kapîli or juncture wall. However, the Jaina sandhâra temple, viz. Parshwanath (c. a.d. 950-970), has a different ground plan in which there is no interlocking of two equal squares of the hall and the sanctum. The architect has placed one couple on each side, north and south, of the juncture of superstructures of the hall and the sanctum (Ph. 186). Similarly, the nirandhâra temples such as the Devi Jagadamba, Chiter-gupta and Vamana do not have two equal squares of the hall and sanctum interlocking to form a common wall portion in the kapîli. Here the architect has not displayed human couples but has placed single images of deities (Ph. 187).

So it becomes clear that it is only the juncture wall of the three major Hindu sandhâra temples where two equal squares of the hall and the sanctum overlap, which can be taken from the side of the hall as well as from the side of the sanctum (as in a pun), "which is here also and there also", that the Kajuraho architects found an appropriate place for employing puns and double-meaning language (Ph. 186). Referring to junctures of time and space Bettina Baumert writes: "These junctures are sensitive and important moments or spaces of transition, taking characteristics from both sides, at the same time separating, thus differentiating, the two and uniting them, partly overlapping." 10

On architectural junctures the Kajuraho architects have employed puns (shetha) by placing human figures in conjunction. It is important for us to note that the dictionary meaning of the Sanskrit word shetha, apart from puns, is "clinging or adhering to, connection, juncture, union (also applied to sexual union), embracing." Michael Meister, drawing attention to the punning on the juncture wall (kapîli) of

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Fig. 17. Plan of the shodhara temple, (Kandariya mahadeva), Khajuraho (After ASI)

Fig. 18. Plan of the nirandibas temple, (Devi Jagdamba), Khajuraho (Courtesy ASI)
Khajuraho temples, says: "It may seem facetious to suggest that placement of scenes of ritual copulation on walls which functionally are walls of architectural conjunction was an intentional pun, yet the iconography of certain images both at Khajuraho and on earlier temples would suggest that such a conjoining of meanings was indeed the case." Meister brings to our notice an earlier example at Chittodgarh, where architects have placed the kapilī conjoint images of deities, viz. Śiva-Parvati (Arđhanārīśvara), and Śiva-Viśnu (Hari-Hare) on double lotuses "one for each foot and therefore one for each of the two deities conjoined." This is not to say that the depiction of erotic figures was restricted to the kapilī walls of the temples. The Khajuraho architects have assigned various places in the temple's sculptural scheme to the erotic motif, considered to be auspicious and magico-protective: the door-jamb of the shrine (Pls. 1, 5), nārathāra row of the plinth, small niches flanking the Mātrikā on the vedikandha of the two Śiva temples (Ph. 177), projections and recesses of the jatīgha (Pls. 2, 151, 169), niches of the sikhara, and so forth. But hardly any punning can be noticed in their depiction of the erotic motif in these parts of the temples. It is the juncture, sandhi-kshetra, of the hall and the
sanctum of the śāndhāra temples that seems to have been considered an appropriate space for the employment of ātr-śāndhāra or two-fold language.

Juncture Wall of the Laksmana Temple

The architect of the Laksmana temple has very consciously expressed on the juncture wall the union of the sanctum and the hall by actually replicating in miniature form the joining of the two units, one with curvilinear śikara representing the sanctum and the other with a pyramidal roof, standing for the hall, (Phs. 169, 190). He has placed on the south side of the juncture a four-armed ascetic god with jata, and on the north side a two-armed ascetic with jata. To these crucial figures we shall return later.

The idea of placing conjoint figures on architectural junctures was first conceived at Khajuraho by the architect of the Laksmana temple. The temple is dedicated to Vaikuntha-Vishnu, a conjoint form of Varaha, Narasimha, Saumya (placid) and Kapila aspects of Vishnu. The inscription of the temple states in its verse that Vaikuntha assumed the conjoint form to kill the three terrible asuras (demons) “who possessed one body” and were difficult to destroy. They could be killed only by an identical conjoint form. This verse embodies the belief in the magical power of conjoint bodies. A similar belief is also associated with Narasimha, who kills the demon-king Hiranyakasipu with the conjoint body of man and lion on the throne which is “neither here nor there” and at the time when there was “neither day nor night”, that is sandhyā, twilight.

The Laksmana temple’s architect not only puts conjoint (sandhi) figures, i.e. erotic figures (Phs. 191, 192) and puns thereby, but he also puns on “digambara” by placing the sculptural figure of a naked Kaphanaaka monk with pichchhada (peacock-feathered stick) in his hand exactly on the row bearing Siva images on the butteries. By placing a Digambara-Kaphanaaka figure on the row associated with Siva, the artist is referring to Siva’s epithet “digambara”, quoted by us earlier from the Viśvanātha temple inscription.

He has represented a Digambara figure on both the south and north juncture walls of the temple.

Interpretation in the Light of the Prabodbhachandrodaya

But in addition to the use of the pun (śleśha), the architect of the Laksmana temple seems to have presented the characters of an allegory, the play Prabodbhachandrodoya or its prototype (see Appendix C) on the juncture wall. To put it briefly, the Prabodbhachandrodoya (Moon-rise of True Knowledge), written by Krishpa Mitra, is a philosophic allegory in six acts combining the Advaita doctrine and Vishnu Bhakti (Devotion to Vishnu). In the play the forces of orthodox religion based on Vedic order unite to re-establish the ancient order against those non-Vedic heretical forces which had earlier gained ascendancy. This theme has been presented in the play in the form of a contest between the royal forces (ōjakulas) of King Viveka (Discrimination) and King Mahāmohā (Great Delusion) (see Table V). The battleground is the town of Vaiśāsā where King Mahāmohā has spread his influence through his allies, namely the Kapālika, the materialist Chaṭvaka, the Jaina Kaphanaaka, the Buddhist Bhakṣa of the Vaijayātana sect, and through personified mental tendencies such as Dāmīha (Deceit), Abhakātra (Egoism), Mithyādikātā (Heresy), etc. King Viveka’s allies are Mati (Reason), Śani (Peace), Sarasvati (Goddess of Learning), Vishu-Bhakti, etc. Those allies seek to bring about the union of Viveka and his estranged wife Upanishad—a union which leads to the birth of Praboda (Awakening) and Vidyā (Knowledge). Vidyā, conceived of as a Yogini, dissolves the forces of Mahāmohā. Purusha who was deluded by the powers of Mahāmohā and had forgotten his identity with Paramatmā (Supreme Being) becomes aware of his true self with the birth of Praboda.

The architect of this temple has a well-planned scheme of two sculptural bands, the lower with images of Śiva on the butteries and similarly the upper with images of Vishu. On the lower band of kapālī wall he has placed a royal pair in an erotic attitude and a Kaphanaaka.
199. Special of Ph. 188. Miniature representation of the joining of the two units: the
Aṣṇacauh having curvilinear roof and the hall having pyramidal roof. Above the water
chute we see garudaoms Vishnu, and below at the wall level a figure of Agni.
180. Matching design on the north jamb, Lakshmi temple. The placement of couples, dancing figure, Kalāmukha, and other decorative motifs correspond to their southern counterpart of Ph. 181. Shiva, positioned above the water-cowl, is paired with gandhakuta Vittala, and Mina (ascetic) with Agni of the south jamb. Today, with the aid of photography we can discern the almost exact complementary patterns of the south and north jambes which the architect has so meticulously and intentionally worked out.
### Table V

**Characters of the Allegorical Play Prabodhachandrodya**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purusha (Man)</strong></td>
<td>Akṣāya (Illusion) (Wife of Purusha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manas (Mind)</strong></td>
<td>(Son of Purusha and Maya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praśrīti (Activity)</strong></td>
<td>(Wife of Manas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nivrūti (Repose)</strong></td>
<td>(Wife of Manas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Māma (Delusion)</strong></td>
<td>(Son of Manas and Praśrīti)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Viveka (Discrimination)</strong></td>
<td>(Son of Manas and Nivrūti)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mithyādṛṣṭī (Heresy)</strong></td>
<td>(Wife of Māma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mati (Reason)</strong></td>
<td>(Wife of Viveka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upānishad (Sacred Lore)</strong></td>
<td>(Wife of Viveka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vidyā (Knowledge)</strong></td>
<td>(Daughters of Viveka and Upānishad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prabodhachandra</strong></td>
<td>(The Moon of Awakening) (Son of Viveka and Upānishad)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Allies:**
- Kāma, Rati (Pleasure),
- Krodha (Anger), Ahamkāra (Egoism),
- Chatrāka (Materialist), Kapalika,
- Digambara-Kshāpanaka, Vaiṣṇava,
- Bhrigu

**Allies:**
- Vishnu-Bhakti, Sarasvati,
- Śanti (Peace) Vāstu-viṣaya (Investigation into Truth),
- Kshama (Patience), Maitri (Friendship)

A monk on the left (Pls. 191, 192). This group reminds us of King Mahāmaha and his beloved Mīthyaḍrśti who are shown in an intimate embracing posture which is similar to the description in Act II, verse 35, of the Prabodhachandrodya. Mahāmaha tells Mīthyaḍrśti to sit on his knee and embrace him, imitating the spot of Pārvati seated on the lap of Śaṅkara. The scene on the north junction wall particularly fits in with the above-noted verse of the play (Pl. 192). Nearby is shown the Digambara-Kshāpanaka who is their ally in the play.

The architect has contrasted this group by placing on the upper row a dignified Rājaśīti (ascetic king) and consort, representing as if they were King Viveka and his wife Upānishad. King Viveka had practised penance in order to gain reunion with Upānishad. Their union is celebrated by two female figures playing music (Pl. 193); on the left, the figure playing a vina might well represent Sarasvati who assisted Vishnu-Bhakti in bringing about the union of King Viveka and his estranged wife Upānishad.
It is not merely the contrasting features of the two groups associated respectively with śiva's and Vishnu's rows that strike one as representing the two royal forces of the play. The identification is further supported by two secondary rows on the side buttresses. The one near the erotic group on the lower row is arranging her necklace or the upper garment by raising her arm (pl. 194). There is an almost similar depiction of Mithyasadhistī in the Prabodhachandragāthikā (II, 34) where King Mahāmaha describes her as one who "exhibits spuriously rows of nail-marks on her bosom as the pretext of keeping in place the garland (māli) which has slipped from its place." In sculpture the artist has actually shown...
The upper panel, south juncture wall, Lakshmimara temple. The surasundari on the right illustrates the motif of Karptaramajjati known to Vedic texts. A hatha (goose) drinks water dripping from her wet hair. The hatha is said to discriminate between water and milk, nira-kshira-viveka. The figure is placed near the dignified royal pair (Ph. 191).

The identification of King Viveka can be further supported by the surasundari with hatha (goose) on the right buttertubs (Ph. 193). This beautiful damsel represents the motif of Karptaramajjati, freshly bathed and arranging her hair. The name “Karptaramajjati” is given to this type of female figure in the labels of the Kistianath at Galtodagadh and in the 11th-century western Indian text Kshirasimha. The water dripping from her hair is drunk by a hatha seen near her left foot. The hatha in Indian culture is symbolic of the quality of discrimination (viveka). It can discriminate between water and milk (nira-kshira-viveka).

The artist has thus sublimely made a suggestion (dhvani) through the figures of Mithyadrishhti and Karptaramajjati. These surasundaris as well as mithunas observed independently of their context are motifs of Indian temple art. They are suspicious alankaran (ornaments) familiar to Indian artists from the 2nd century A.D. onwards. But perceived in configuration and in the context of other sculptural figures they may be seen as part of the plot of the play.
On the top panel on the south, the architect has placed a hieratic image of an ascetic god with beard, standing in samabhanga who holds clockwise from lower left: (1) rosary along with varora (boon-giving gesture), (2) sacrificial ladle, (3) manuscript, (4) water-pot (Ph. 196). He represents Agni as suggested by R. Awethi. There is a similar figure (Ph. 196) in the Site Museum with a subsidiary image of Brahma in its purikara, which rules out the main figure’s identification as Brahma, but reaffirms its identity with Agni. It may be noted that two images of Agni on either side—south and north kapili walls—are represented on the Kakannath temple at Suhania (c. A.D. 1025) near Gwalior (Ph. 197). The ascetic god Agni on the Lakshman temple’s kapili wears rudraksha (?)

185. The ascetic god Agni, top panel, south jucture, Lakshman temple. Unlike the kapitik Agni, the ascetic god does not have a ram-mace. He wears kautuka, sandals, and rudraksha-like beads. He is surrounded by lean ascetics. Significantly Agni occupies a crucial position on the jucture walls of the Shakti temples at Suhania and Modhera.

186. The ascetic god Agni, surrounded by Hermits with donda (staff). He wears sandals, like Agni of the Lakshman temple. Brahma and Siva can be seen as subsidiary figures near the sambusa, indicating the Varahan aspect of the principal figure.
beads on arms and neck and wooden sandals on his feet unlike the Dikpalas Agni images, adorned with rich jewellery and standing at ease generally in tribhanga along with their ram vahana. Agni is the priest of gods, as well as the god of priests. He is flanked by four Tridandi ascetics holding three sticks (danda) in one hand. In the other hand, one of these ascetics holds a sacrificial ladle, another displays masya-curn-varada, while the other two make a gesture of preaching. These Tridandi ascetics are supposed to have command over mind, speech and body.

The group could, at one level, stand for the Vedic order which is upheld in the inscription of the Lakshmna temple and also in the play Prabodhachandrodaya. At another level, Agni could also represent Sants Jyoti, Nitya Prakshya (Tranquil Light, Eternal Luminosity) mentioned in the play in connection with the state of self-realization by Purusha (VI, 27).

187. JUNCTURE WALL, NORTH, LAKSHMAN TEMPLE, SADHANA, C. A.D. 1025. It is significant that Agni is paired on two sides of the goddess Sveti. The southern juncture wall of the temple also has the same theme of two Agni figures flanking the goddess. At Khojarnath we see the reverse — Agni is flanked by two female divinities (Ph. 200).
The top panel on the north juncture wall (Ph. 192) represents a two-armed ascetic (muni), with jata and beard. standing confidently in savitaranga with an expression of repose on his face. The lotus-designed halo surrounding his head deities him. His right hand holding a rosary is in the gesture of abhaya (fearlessness) and his left hand carries a water-pot.18 In the Prabodhachandrodaja when Purusha (Man) has realized his identity with Paramatma on the birth of Prabodha (Awakening), he says (VI, 31), "Now I shall be a sage (muni) who is in a house only at night, who is not attached to anything, who does not ask for anything, who wanders in any direction without aiming at any fruit, tranquil, few from fear, sorrow, impurities and delusion."

The identity of Purusha and Paramatma (Man and Supreme Being), the central concept of the philosophical play, has been suggested through the figure of the ascetic. Like the figures in conjunction (mithuna), the figure of the ascetic in the context of the play represents the fusion of the human and the divine, and is placed by the imaginative architect on the juncture which joins the hall for devotees and the womb-house of divinity.

The narrative mode in presenting the allegorical play is different from that used in presenting myths and legends. Indian artists, at least from the 6th century sites of Pattadakal and Ellora, seem conscious of the distinction that is to be made when myths are narrated in cosmic time and when stories are related in linear time. The Khajuraho artists of the 10th-11th centuries, unlike their contemporaries in the South (Chola and Chalukya artists), were not engaged in projecting stories in linear time. They were more concerned with the symbolic presentation of an idea or concept, influenced as they were by the views on Dhvani (overtone of meaning) discussed by Anandavardhana and others, which gave importance to the "suggestive expression" rather than to direct or ordinary meaning of a work of art.19 The sarasundara (originally fertility figures) can represent Karpuradhari, Lilavati, Darpana, etc., mentioned in the Sipra texts. But viewed in the configuration of other sculptures of the Lakshmana temple, each seemingly discrete figure or motif can be transformed into a character of the play. This is a unique mode of narration in which instead of a long frieze format or a vertical format we see the discrete figures as on a game-board, forming two opposite groups of the allegorical play, whose goal is seen in the self-realized Purusha standing above the rest like a muni.

At another level, as in the Dvaitaveyam-Khyaya which can be read two ways, the two figures—ascetic god and ascetic—who form a pair, can be interpreted as Nara and Siva,20 the two eminent ascetics of Indian mythology, who practised severe penance in the Himalayas. They are regarded as manifestations of Vishnu in the Patcharatra literature and the Bhagavata Purana.21 They are depicted together seated under the Badari tree at Devagadh and Abichchhatra in the 6th century A.D. In the Vishnuadharmottara Purana (III, 76, 1-8) Nara is described as having two hands and Narakasara as having four hands. Both of them carry rosary, wear black antelope skins, and have jata and moksha lots over their heads. It is significant for us to note that the word "Nara" means Man, the Supreme Spirit, Purusha. The ascetic figure (muni) of the northern kampil can be interpreted as sage Nara = Purusha = Man of the play Prabodhachandrodaja.22

Junctures of Walls of the Višvarūpa and Kandariya Mahadeva Temples

The logic seen in the hierarchical placement of panels and deities on the juncture wall of the Lakshmana temple cannot easily be followed on the two sāndhāna Śiva temples. Perhaps it has been "intentionally" mixed up to misguide non-initiates.

On the two Śiva śāndhāna temples, the Viśvarūpa and the Kandariya Mahadeva, there is a progressive replacement of divine figures by erotic human figures on the juncture walls. The exterior walls of these two Śiva temples are divided in their elevation into three sculptural zones, giving the artists a total of six compartments on the kampil walls of the south and north sides (see Table VI). The divinities
associated with the top and bottom rows of the Lakshmana temple, that is, Agni and Śiva, are fused in one figure on the lower register of the south wall of the Vīṣṇavātā temple (Phs. 198, 199); the deity wears jata-mukuta, stands in samabhāraṅga and has varāda-cum-roseary and a trident in his right hands, and a manuscript and water-pot in his left hands, combining the attributes of Śiva and Agni. A Pandy bull sits on the Śiva’s right side. Two female figures, almost of the same size as the deity, holding a chauri and lotus stalk are seen flanking the god.

On the north wall, the lower register represents a similar but slightly different deity with four arms, standing in samabhāraṅga, wearing jata-mukuta and displaying varāda.

199. Three zones on the junction wall, north, Vīṣṇavātā temple. The upper two rows display erotic groups, and the lower has a composite image of Agni-Śiva (see Ph. 198).

sacrificial spoon, manuscript, and in the low left hand possibly a water-pot (Ph. 201, left). In the southern kopaṭī figure, this god does not have a vahana, but has a seated devotee on his lap; the chauri and lotus stalk as on the south register, flank the god. Though he has no beast, by his attributes he seems to be Agni. But he is not Agni surrounded by ascetics as we see in the Lakshmana temple (Ph. 195). The Purāṇa mention 49 Agnis. The Agni or the juncūr here seems to represent Vaiṣṇava fire, ve united (sātvatikā) with the two in-going as out-going breaths - prana and apāna - aspine both in all sentient beings. The well-known verse of the Bhagavad Gītā (XV. 1) reversed the Vaiṣṇava Agni. The term “Vaiṣṇava” seems to be ingeniously suggested by the artist of the temple through word-play placing on the right the motif of pravānumi woman teased by a monkey (vaihara).

While Agni is associated with the concept the Vedic yājñā on the Lakshmana tent Agni or Agni-Śiva on the Vīṣṇavātā temple is symbol of Kuḍakalāi. In the text Jñapodabha (33), for instance, Śivasū is the mouth of Kuḍakalā. What we may call Śiva’s row erotic depiction on the Lakshmana temple is been substituted on the Vīṣṇavātā by Agni Śiva and Agni (Vaiṣṇavātā), and the prayer occupied by Agni on the Lakshmana temple replaced by an erotic group on the Vīṣṇavātā. On the Kandaraya Mahadeva temple, built about 30 years later, erotic groups replace divi-figures on all the compartments of the kāya wall (Ph. 204). Interestingly the figures of Agni and Indra as guardians of directions (Dikṣā) are placed on the left and right of the kāya.

Examining the theme of erotic scenes on the junction walls of these two Śiva temples, Vīṣṇavātā and the Kandaraya Mahadeva,” notes that except for one scene on the so wall of the Vīṣṇavātā temple depicting “sky-chd” ascetics, all other scenes on the temples represent an ergotic group in which the ascetics, while helping the caryā aristocratic couple, are also themselves part the erotic activity. The presence of the m
Table VI

Juncture Wall Panels

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Royal Couple

| Royal Couple |
| Erotic | Erotic |
| Erotic | Erotic |

| Lakshmana Temple | Višvanatha Temple | Kandariya Temple |

Attendants indicates that the scenes do not represent antahpūra (bīrem), where only female and eunuch attendants could be admitted. Moreover, a preceptor is shown seated in one panel (south wall, Viśvanatha) as if chanting mantras and conducting an istic ceremony. The scenes seem to represent religious rituals in which kings and Tantric ascetics participated, accounts of which are given by Kshemendra, Somadeva, Kalhaṇḍa, and so on.

But should we merely take the scenes literally, at face value? We have to be cautious of interpretation, particularly when the panels are placed on the kapāli or sandhi wall, where double-entendres had already been used by the artists of the earlier Lakshmana temple.

We have seen that the hierarchy of arranging Śiva-Viṣṇu-Agni in ascending levels on the Lakshmana temple was not followed in the two Śiva temples. However, the conjoint image of Agni-Siva (Ph. 109) on the lower register of the south wall of the Viśvanatha temple gives us some clue to the arrangement of the other two rows.

How does Agni-Siva help us to solve the riddle? It will be recalled that Sadaśiva (Frontispiece), manifest-usamahifest, is the pivotal image of Kajjaraja Āśiṣvism. In the meditation formulae (aṭṭhōṇa-mantras) of Sadaśiva as given in the Śiva Siddhânta text birāviraśva-paraśaṭhai (III, 13th patasta, 65-66), we read that Brahmā presides over the bimbha (disc or sphere) of Śūrya (Sūra), Viṣṇu presides over the bimbha of Chandra (Mona), and Rudra (Siva) presides over the bimbha of Agni (Pīra).

Brahmā presides over Śūrya.
Viṣṇu presides over Chandra.
Rudra (Siva) presides over Agni.

As we have Agni-Siva on the lower row of the Viśvanatha temple, the other two rows could be that of (Brahma) Śūrya and (Viṣṇu) Chandra. But does this make any sense to us?
199. The composite god Agni Śiva or Rudra-Agni stands in samabhaga flanked by goddesses, on the south jambati wall, Vitūvatthu temple. The Nandi is seen near his right leg. The god displays vandsa and trisula in his right hands, a book and water-pot in his left hands. combining the attributes of Śiva (Rudra) and Agni.

200. Agni stands in samabhaga, on northern jambati wall, Vitūvatthu temple. A sacrificial spoon in his upper right hand, as also the absence of Nandi, distinguishes this figure from his counterpart on the southern wall. Remarkably, it is a female divinity, almost of the same size, and not ascetics, who attend on him with chauris.
“Sírya” and “Chandra” have hidden meanings in the enigmatic language used by the Tantrikas. Genuine Tantrikas never express their doctrines and practices to the general public but use sandhya-bhasha, weight intentional language which has more than one meaning. If taken literally the language may sound absurd like some acrobatic sexual poses. This enigmatic language is used by them not only to conceal their doctrines from the non-initiate, “but chiefly to project the yogin into the ‘paradoxical situation’ indispensable to his training,” Intentional language forms an integral part of sandhub. As Mircea Eliade says, “In this ‘intentional language’, any erotic phenomenon can express a Hatha-yogic exercise or a stage of meditation, just as any symbol, any ‘state of felicity’, can be given an erotic meaning. We arrive at the result that a tantric text can be read with a number of keys: liturgical, yogic, tantric, etc. The commentators especially stress the two last. To read a text with the ‘yogic key’ is to decipher the various stages of meditation to which it refers. The tantric meaning is usually erotic, but it is difficult to decide whether the reference is to a concrete act or to a symbolic situation.”

Sandhya-bhasha has been used by Tantras at least since the 5th century A.D. The Saktisanagana Tantra, devoted to the shat-chakra-bhasha penetrates the six chakras in the subtle body employs “as extremely concrete vocabulary to describe spiritual exertion.” For example, the ascent of Kundalini energy through the Yogi’s body is compared with the dance of a washerwoman (dombi). “With the Dombi on his neck, the Yogi passes the night in gross bliss.” If taken literally, this sounds erotic. But the Tantra intends to suggest that “Dombi”, which is an equivalent worn for Kundalini in Tantric sandhya-bhasha, has ascended to the fifth chakra, the Vitalida chakra in the neck. 5:5 Dasgupta has drawn attention to several enigmatic metaphors in the songs of Cakrakirtinath and of the Sabhapari saint Kanyakapada. For instance, “She has killed the mother-in-law (aas), and sisters-in-law (manjari) of the house, and killing the mother (aas) has become a Kapali.” This does not mean that he actually was a Kapali, but he makes a symbolic use of language and words to refer to the arrest of the vital winds and the control of the mind.

Mircea Eliade has given equivalents and homologies of several words used in the ciphered texts. We mention below the
202. Juncure well, south, Kandariya Mahadeva temple. All three zones of the image display figures in conjunction. Agni, who plays a significant role in the kapiti imagery of other temples, is not visible here except as a regent of space.
203. Going beyond the erotic, the head-down pose, south junction wall, Kandariya Mahadeva temple. The Kamandalu Yantara is superimposed here to show the possibility of this sculpture as composed on the lines of the yantara. The Silpa Prakasha enjoins the sculpting of erotic figures on the lines of the Kamandalu Yantara in order to hide the actual yantara from the eyes of the uninitiated and to give delight to deities. The head-down pose also seems to embody, through enigmatic saundarya-lakshmi, the yogi-philosophic symbolism of the unification of the two breaths, the polar opposites, in the middle path of the sushumna in order to lead the yogi beyond the phenomenal world.
equivalents of some words which may perhaps help us in deciphering the hidden meanings, or at least make us aware of the possibility of the use of figurative or intentional language behind the physical acts portrayed on the Khajuraho temples. For the three important nādir (subtle veins) in Kādānīlī Yoga, namely ān̄ga, pātās, and sushumna, we get a series of equivalents:

ित्र = left nostril = chandra (moon) = apaṇa = niyāna = praṅkriti = tamas (one of the three guṇas) = ān̄ga, etc.

पिताल = right nostril = śiva (sun) = rajas of woman = rajas of the three guṇas = purusha = ān̄ga = apāna = Yamarāja, etc.

सुशुमन = avadhūti = female ascetic = nirvātā = smṛtā = sāmkā (cremation ground), etc.

The above code language may reveal the hidden meanings behind the physical act portrayed on the jambhula wall scenes of Khajuraho temples or at least make us aware of the possibility of the use of some secret or intentional language. For instance, the female figure with her finger beads on the north-west face on the north wall of the Visvānātha temple is an ascetic (Ph. 201), that is, avadhūti, and perhaps could have been portrayed to refer symbolically to sushumna, as per the homologies given above. She could perhaps symbolize ṣaṃcāra, which literally means cremation ground, but in Taṇḍrī saṃdhīya-bhāṣā refers to the state of body when it rests on the two movements of vital air = nīvṛtti = night = ān̄ga. The depiction of the “sky-clad” ascetics and the unwilling woman with her eyes closed (on the middle row) may symbolize some stage in yogic śākhā, just as “Kapah” of Kānhabāla’s song does. “When the Yogins become free from the influence of illusion (avidyā), he is called naked.”

The point of this excursion is to suggest that there may be a deeper signification or meaning, different from the outer sthūla (gross) appearance of the erotic scenes. The erotic imagery on the jambhula wall of the Khajuraho temples seems to be metaphoric and only the mūlaḥs (dull, stupid, as the Tantric texts would say) would interpret it in a literal sense.

Some yontra-like geometry seems to underlie the head-down poses of the Viśvānātha and the Kāndriya Mahādeva temples, as the lines of their compositions would suggest (Ph. 203). This reminds us of the Kāmakaḷa Yantra given in the Cisaman text Silpa Prakāda, assigned to the period between the 9th and 12th centuries A.D. The text points to the magico-protective and propitiatory aspects of sexual symbolism underlying this yantra. The Kāmakaḷa Yantra is offered pīṭa for success in Śakti saṅkarā. The aṣṭi spirits “will fly far away at once sight of the yantra...In the best temples dedicated to Śakti and to Rudra, this yantra must certainly be placed. Then the monument will stand unmoved forever...This yantra is utterly secret, it should not be shown to everyone. For this reason, a love-scene (mithunā-mārti) has to be carved on the lines of this yantra...The kālokandha is placed there to give delight to people.” Thus, the portrayal of human sexual poses, kānakandhas, according to this Tantric Śiṣṭadeva, was for giving “delight to people” from whom actual yantra symbolism was to be hidden.

In the light of this, it seems that the sex-yogic scene of the Kāndriya Mahādeva as well as the Viśvānātha temple had multiple functions: (1) it was meant to be magico-defensive, protecting the monument, by its placement on the jambhula which is the most vulnerable part of the temple where the corners of the hall and the shrine meet. (2) it probably conceals a yantra, similar to the Kāmakaḷa Yantra which could have been offered worship. (3) it could give “delight to people”, the lay devotees or non-initiated who visited the temple. (4) But over and above these, the erotic scene embodies through saṃdhīya-bhāṣā some yogic-philosophic concepts. One wonders whether in terms of Yoga it symbolically represents the process of unification of the two breaths, pāṭaṇa and apaṇa, pītaḷ and ida, the opposites Sun-Moon, into the central iṇādi sushumna. It is believed that by this process of combining the polar opposites and unifying them in the sushumna, the Yogi...
can transcend the human condition and go beyond the phenomenal world and pass into “that non-conditioned and timeless state in which there is neither day nor night.”

On the *sāndhī* juncture of the hall for devotees (jīvā) and the womb house of the divinity (Śiva), on the juncture of the phenomenal and transcendental worlds, the juncture “which is neither here nor there,” where the opposites energies of two architectural yāntras meet, the architect-priest of the grand Kedarnath Mahadeva temple has imaginatively and intentionally placed the sense of physical union to project the non-communicable experience of the Non-dual state through the hemologies and equivalents of *sāndhyā-bhūta*. 