

Symbolical forms of the temples of Khajuraho

A Hindu Temple is a symbol or rather a synthesis of various symbols
(Krisna Deva,Temples of North India, Introduction, pg.1)

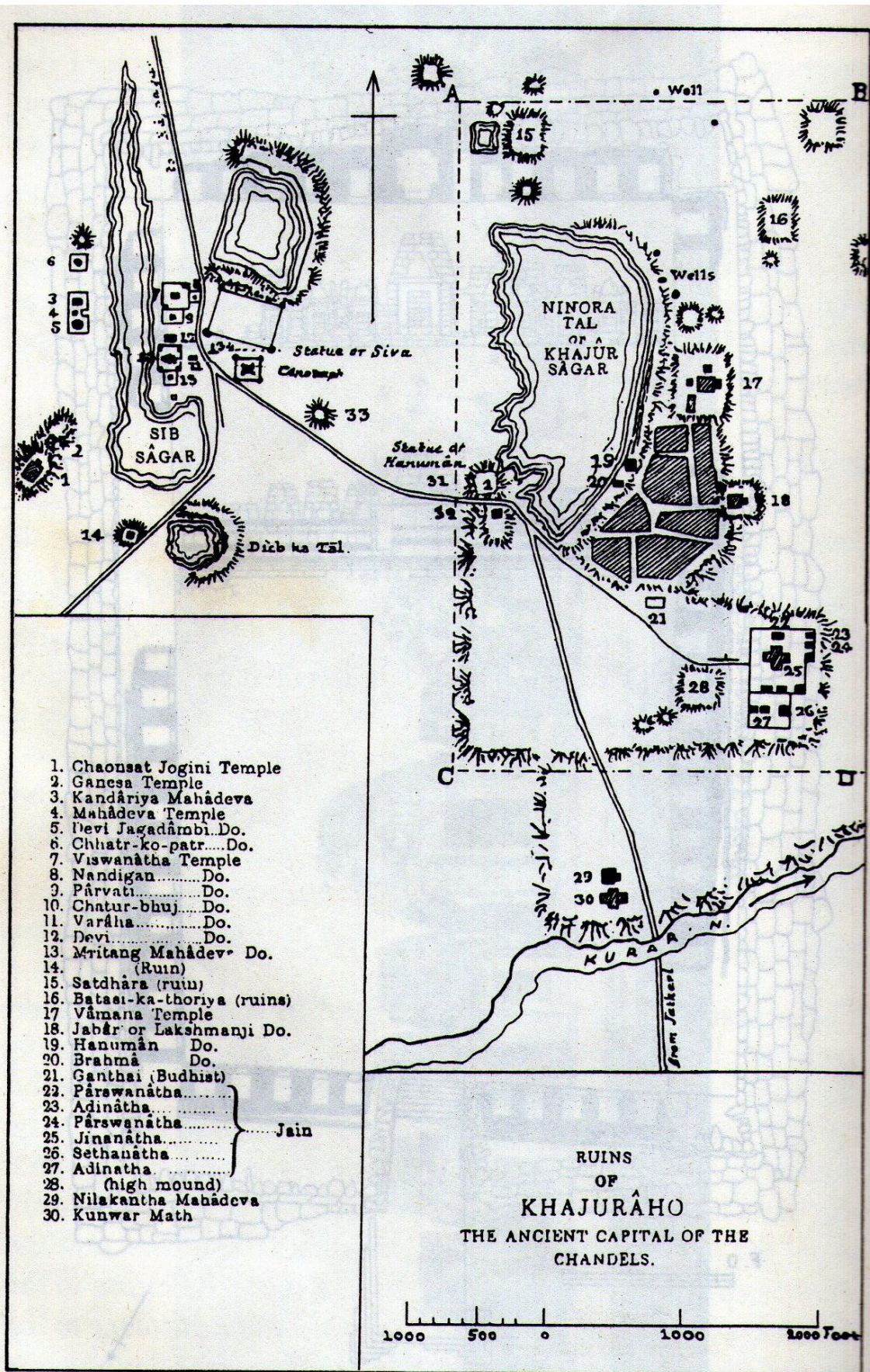


Fig. XI. Khajuraho site plan—1865, prepared by Major Alexander Cunningham

Like every Hindu temple, the temples of Khajuraho are manifestations of the divinity of the world, of the Spirit of God immanent in the world, by different symbolical forms.

- a) The Hindu temple above all is the body of God, having the same parts of the human body ("The names of the various limbs of the human body ...are applied in architectural texts to different parts of the temple structure", Krishna Deva, ibidem, pg. 1).

The Hindu Temple is the body of God by His presence in the cave- womb of the *garbhagriha*, or **inner sanctum**. In the Hindu temples of Khajuraho you can reach the inner depth of the *garbhagriha*, hearth of the temple and of the world, where is the statue of the central God, by **entrance porch, mandapa (hall), mahamandapa (great hall with transept), antarala (vestibule)**. In the main temples of Khajuraho (Laksmana, Parshvanatha, Vishvanatha, Kandariya,) you can also clockwise turn around it, in a **inner ambulatory, (sandhara), with a**

second transept, realizing the religious *pradakshina*)

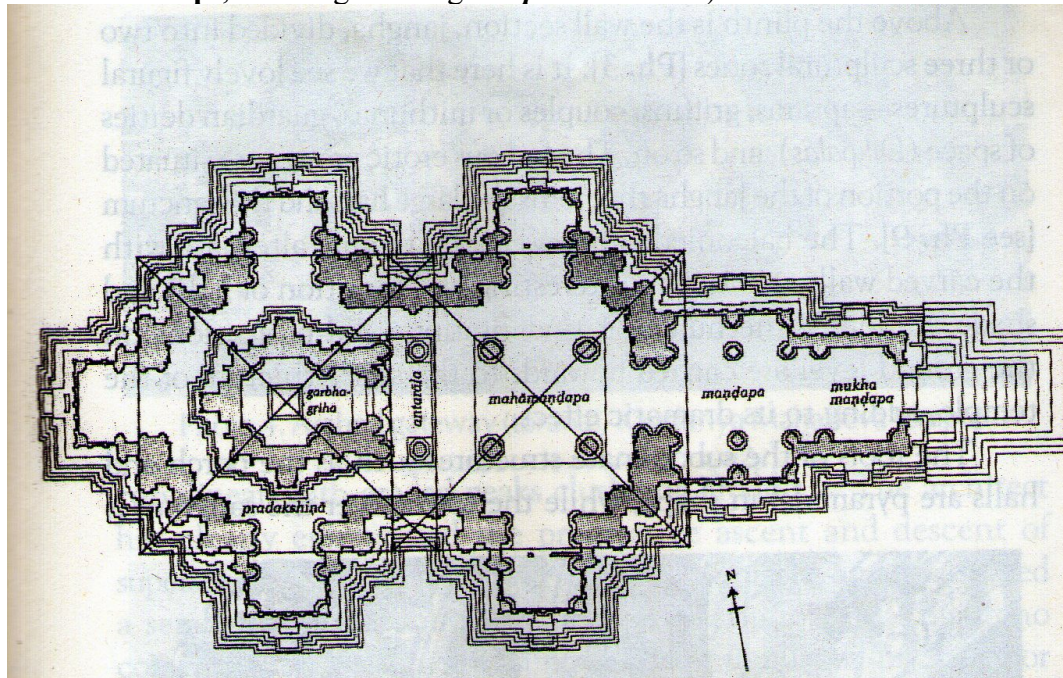


Fig. III. Plan of the Kandariya Mahadeva temple with inner ambulatory (*sandhara*)

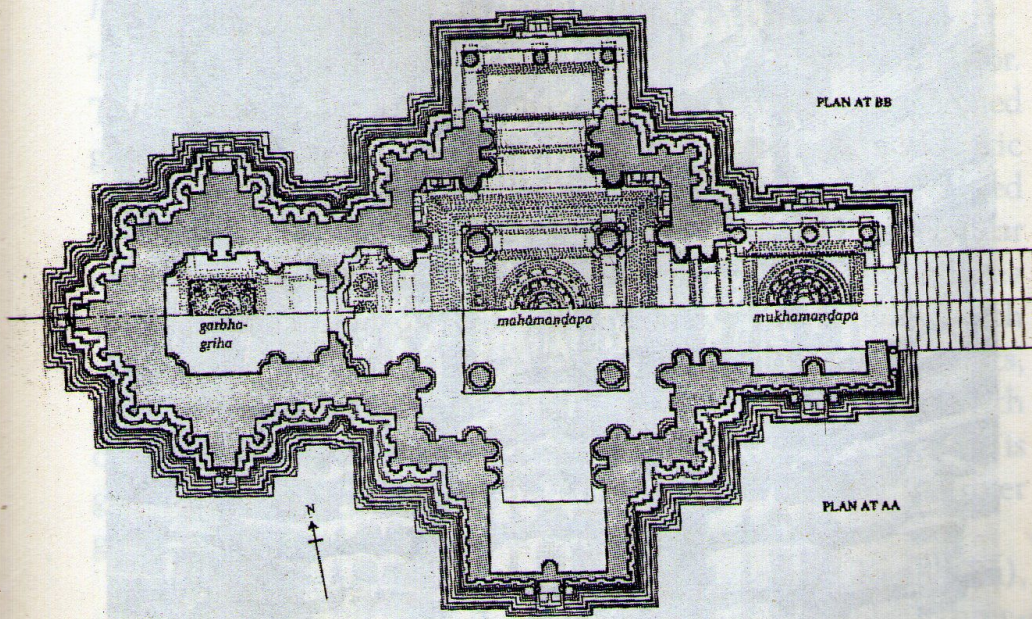


Fig. IV. Plan of the Devi Jagadamba temple without inner ambulatory (*nirandhara*)

- b) The Temples of Khajuraho symbolize the Ranges of the Mont Meru, the residence of the Gods, or of the mount Kailash, citadel of Shiva. The mount Meru is at the same time **the abode of the Gods and the axe of the world**). In the Mahabharata (XIII, 4862) this mountain, the Meru, is round as the morning sun and seems a flam without smog. It is

84.000 *yojana* (350.000 miles) high and it has the same depth .The sun, the moon and the wind (Vayu) turn without a halt around this mount. Its gardens are full of fruits and flowers. Everywhere there are gilded palaces. Courts of Gods, celestial musicians (*gandharva*), anti-gods (*asura*), and demons (*raksasa*) play with the nymphs (*apsara*). This meeting and pleasure place of the Gods is the highest mountain, the mountain of North, sometimes identified with the highest peak of the Himalaya, between the Malayavat and the Gandhamadana (“Mahabharata I, 1098 e 11; XII, 12, 986). The upper part of Mont Meru is covered by forests. Amongst the trees, covered of sweet-smelling flowers and giant *jambu*, the melodious voices of the sky ladies singers, the *kinnari*, are always resounding. (from Jean Danielou, Mythes et Dieux de l’Inde)



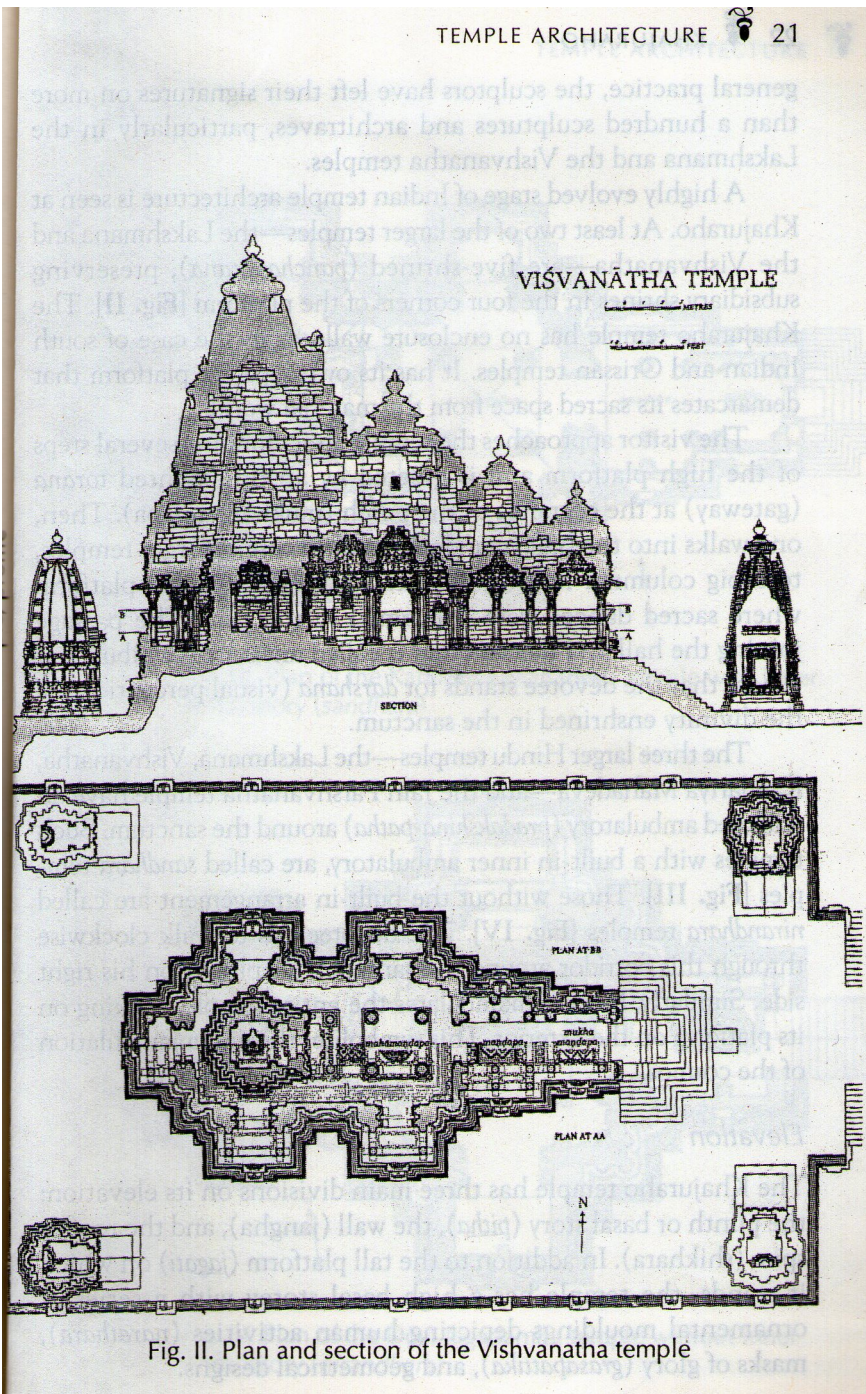


Fig. II. Plan and section of the Vishvanatha temple

- c) The symbolical dimension of the Hindu temple like the Mont Meru of the celestial Gods can be visualized turning outside around the temples. In the same way the *Sapta matrikas* (Seven Goddesses) in the order of their statues are turning with us around the central God,

Shiva, in the Vishvanatha and in the Kandariya Mahadeva Temples

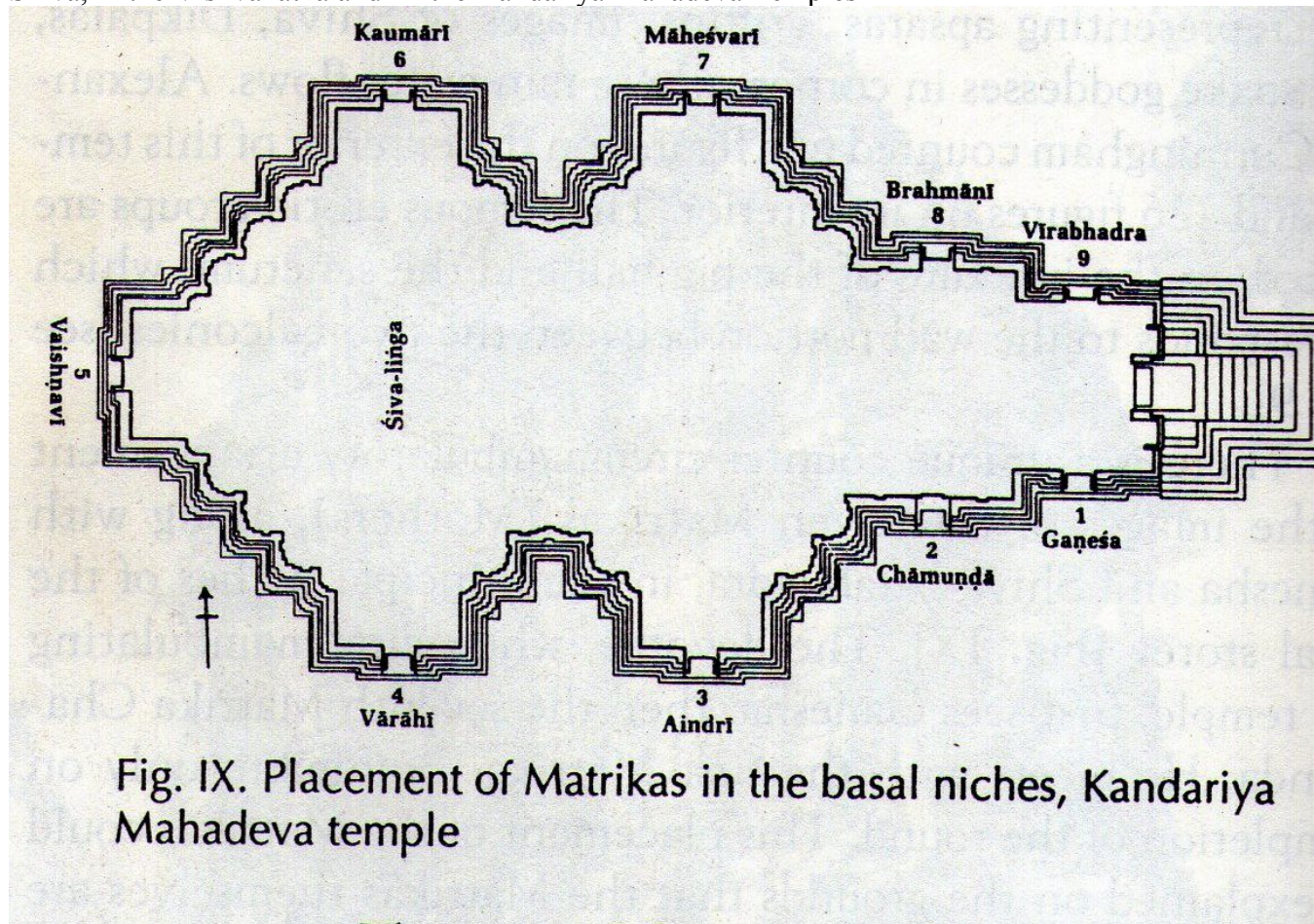


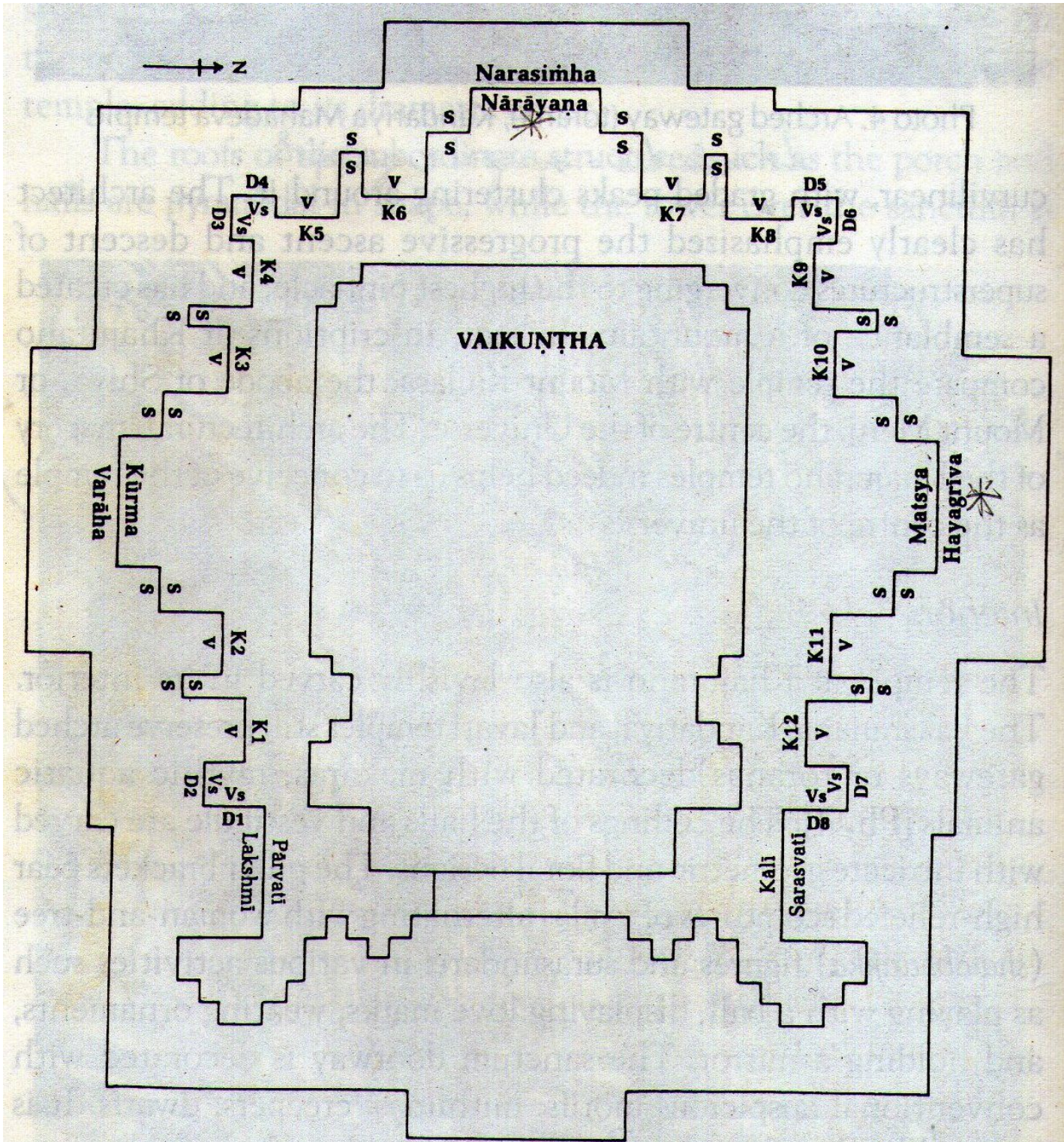
Fig. IX. Placement of Matrikas in the basal niches, Kandariya Mahadeva temple

or the Nine planets (*Nava graha*) statues are turning around Vishnu Vaikunta in the Laksmana temple.

d) The temples of Khajuraho by the presence of God in the womb of the cave of the sanctum, or *garbhagriha*, are the expanding projections and the elevation of his manifestations, from which all is originated

1) in vertical along the axe of the tower, the *sikkara*, until to the bowl, or *kalasa*, and the pinnacle, the final point without extension, or *bindhu*, of the reabsorption of all the beings in his divine un-manifest Unity,

2) in horizontal, in the niches of the inner wall of the garbhagriha,, and in the niches and in the other projections of the outer walls of the temple (showing the incarnations of Vishnu or the lila or deeds of Lord Shiva, if the temple is Vishnuite or Shivaite mandir), between celestial divine couples (Shiva and Parvati, Vishnu and Laxmi, and more), demigods, nymphs (apsaras), celestial couples, minstrels (gandharvas), bearers of garlands (vidyadharas) in the other projections, and demons having animal mixed forms of griffins (*sardulas* or *vyalas*), and human couples of lowers in the recesses.



D = Dikpāla;

D1 = Indra; D2 = Agni; D3 = Yama; D4 = Nirṛiti;

D5 = Varuṇa; D6 = Vāyu; D7 = Kubera; D8 = Īśāna.

K = Kṛishṇa-līlā;

S = surasundarī.

V = vyāla.

Vs = Vasu.

Fig. V. Placement of images on the sanctum wall, Lakshmana temple

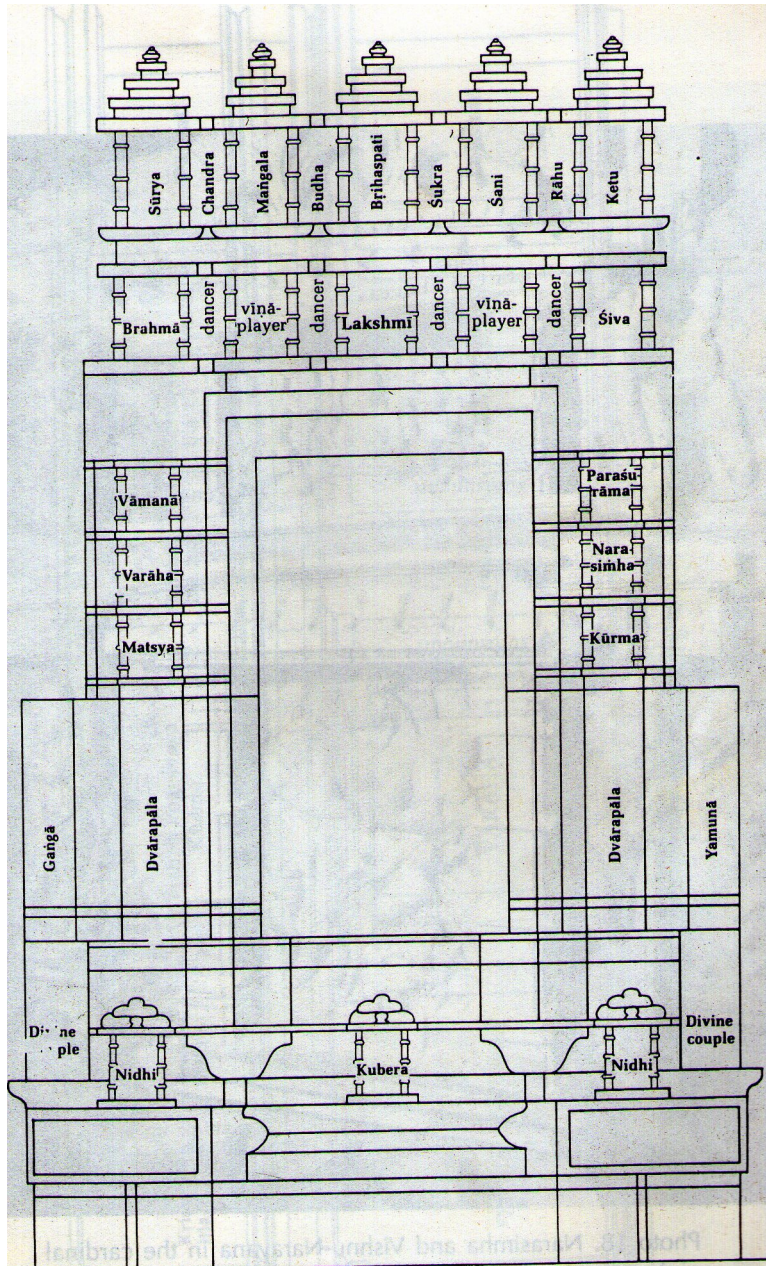


Fig. VII. Door divinities, sanctum, Lakshmana temple

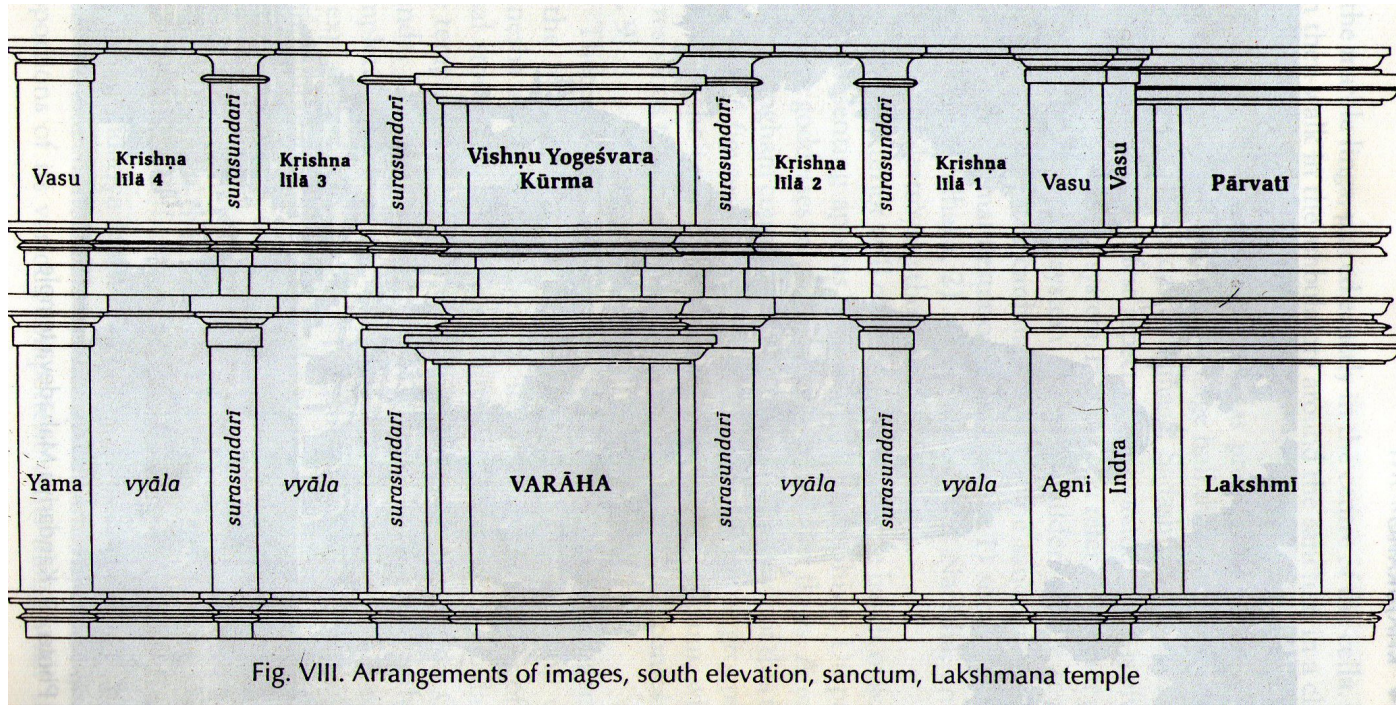
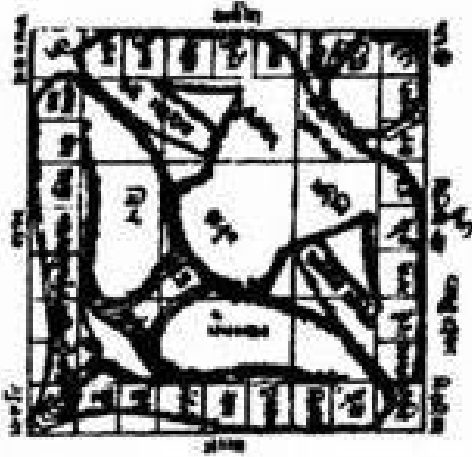


Fig. VIII. Arrangements of images, south elevation, sanctum, Lakshmana temple

e) In the Hindu temples You are in the divine order of the world, because it is inscribed in the **yantra** or diagram (graphic symbol) of the order that the Gods give to the Chaos of the primordial Energy of the world, the **Vastupurushamandala**, in which, following the Hindu treatises of the **Shilpashastras**, or **Vastushastras**, the demon of this destroying primordial energy is subdued to



the Gods, becoming beneficent propitious protection of the Guardian Gods of the cardinal points, that favour determinate qualities (**gunas**), propensities and activities, and oppose or remove evil or harmful associated influences.

This subjection assures the

f) God in the world, is manifested by the same order at every level of the reality. For this reason the hindu temples of Khajuraho are **fractal** in his architecture, and many forms, the **sikkara**, the

pyramidal roofs of the halls (*mandapa*) are replicated in small forms, graded and clustering.



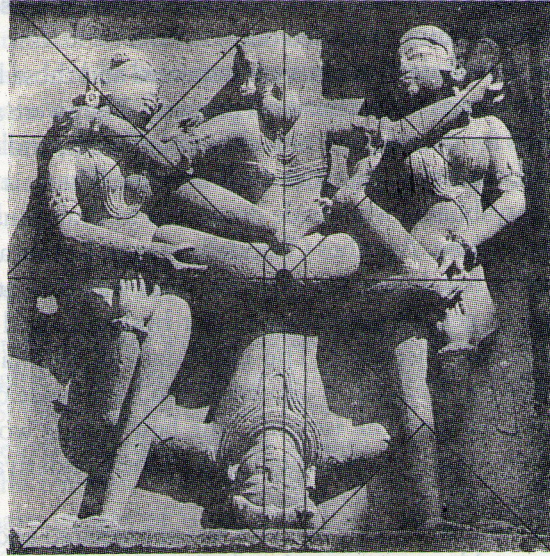


Photo 10. Head-down posture, with lines of the Kamakala-Yantra superimposed

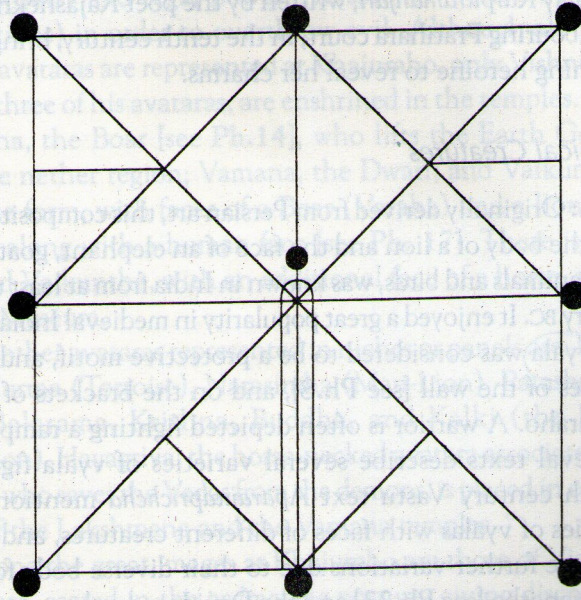


Fig. VI. Lines of the Kamakala-Yantra (After *Shilpa Prakasha*)

Symbolical numbers : 4, 5

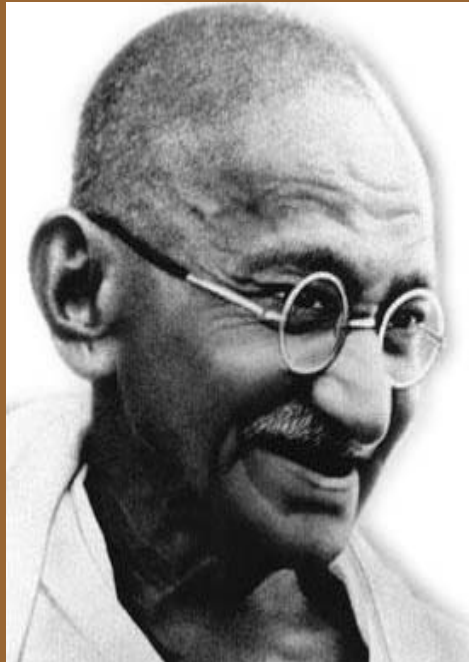
Four are the pinnacles and the bowls (*kalasa*) of the temples, as four are the aims of the life: pleasure (*Kama*), successful prosperity, (*artha*), the order of the moral law (*dharma*) and the liberation (*moksha*) by the union (the *yoga*) with God, principle of the reality and the life. Of this liberation the temple is one *tirtha*, or pass.

In the *panchayatana* temples, like the Laksmana, the complex is five-shrined, the main temple having four subsidiary shrines, as **five** are the elements of the reality of the manifest e word, *akasha* (the ether of the empty space), *fire*, *hair-wind*, *water*, *hearth*.

And more: the purifying water is evocated by the transit (*tirtha*) below the gateway of the **torana** exiting from the mouth of marine monsters (the *makara*), and by the paired statues of the river Goddesses Ganga and Yamuna, at the jambs of the doorway of the *garbhagriha*

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