

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)

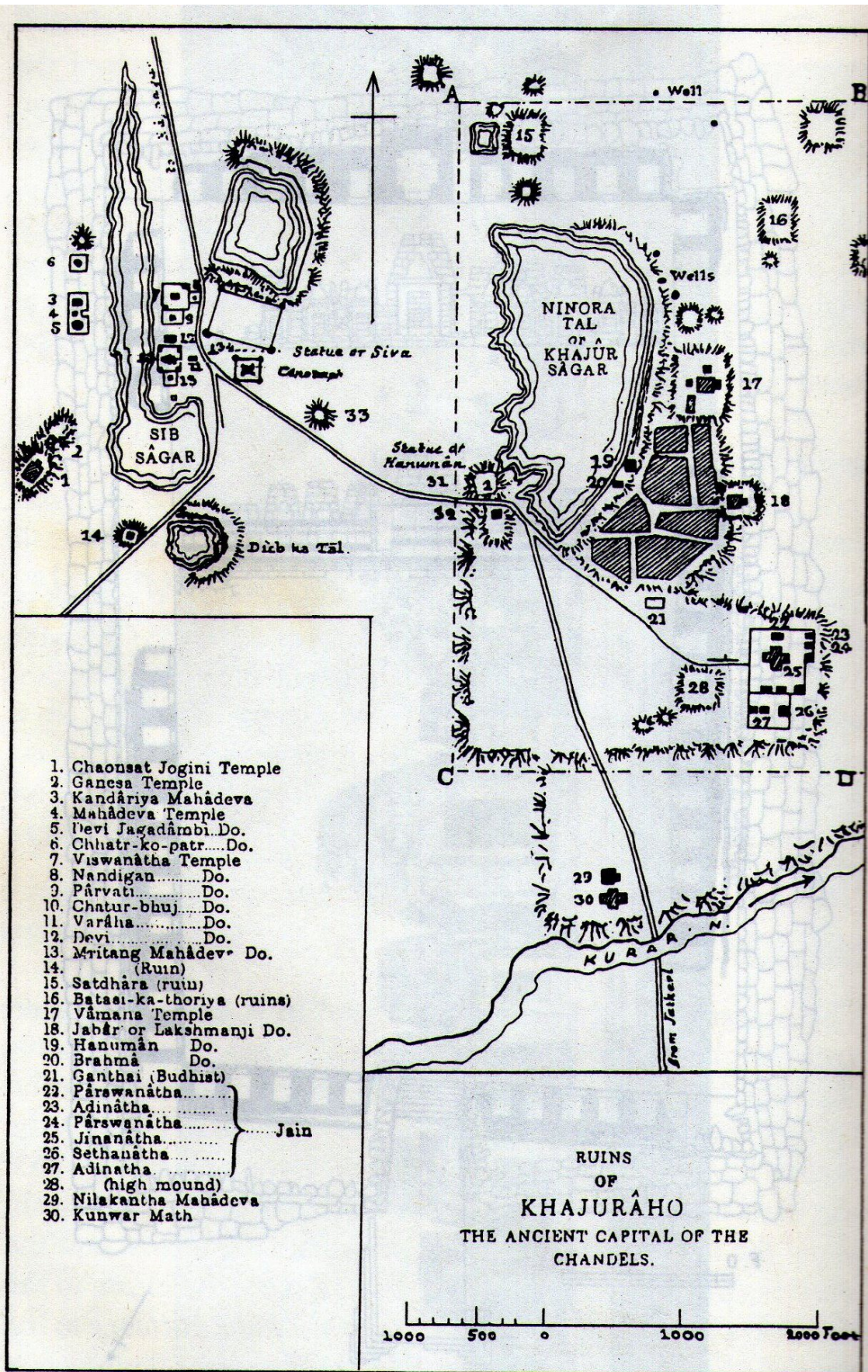


Fig. XI. Khajuraho site plan—1865, prepared by Major Alexander Cunningham

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 from the foot to the hair on the crown of the hearth 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 the cave- womb of the **garbagriha, or inner sanctum**. In the main Hindu temples of Khajuraho (Laksmana, Parshvanatha, Vishvanatha, Kandariya), You can reach in the inner depth the garbagriha, the 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 you can also clockwise turn around the inner sanctum, in a **inner ambulatory, (sandhara), with a second transept**, realizing the religious **pradakshina**.

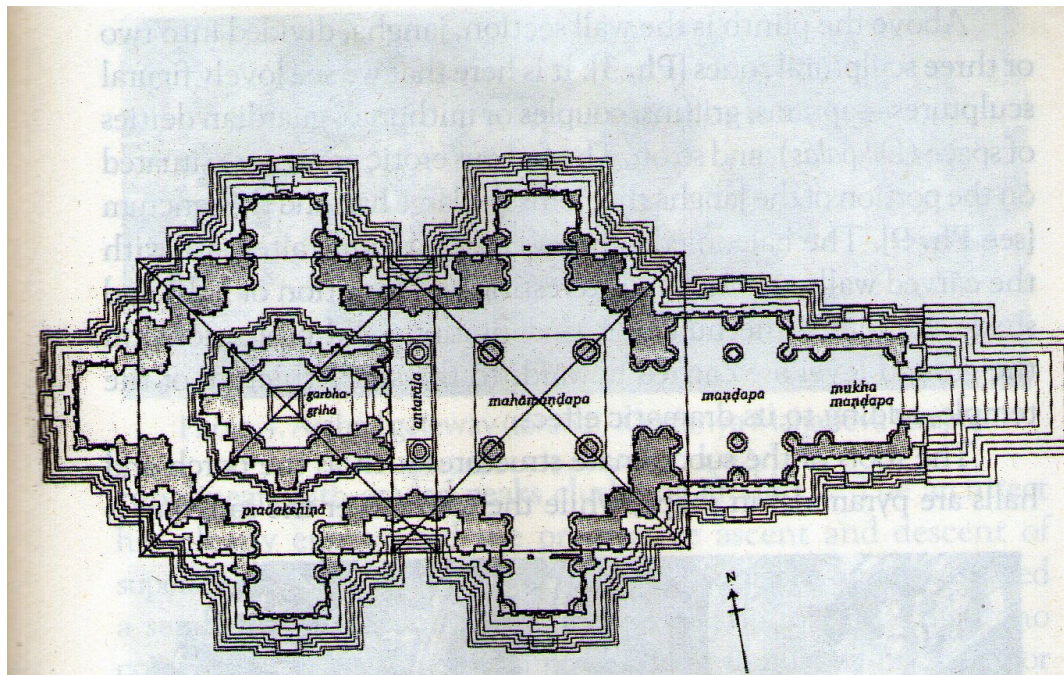


Fig. III. Plan of the Kandariya Mahadeva temple with inner ambulatory (*sandhara*)

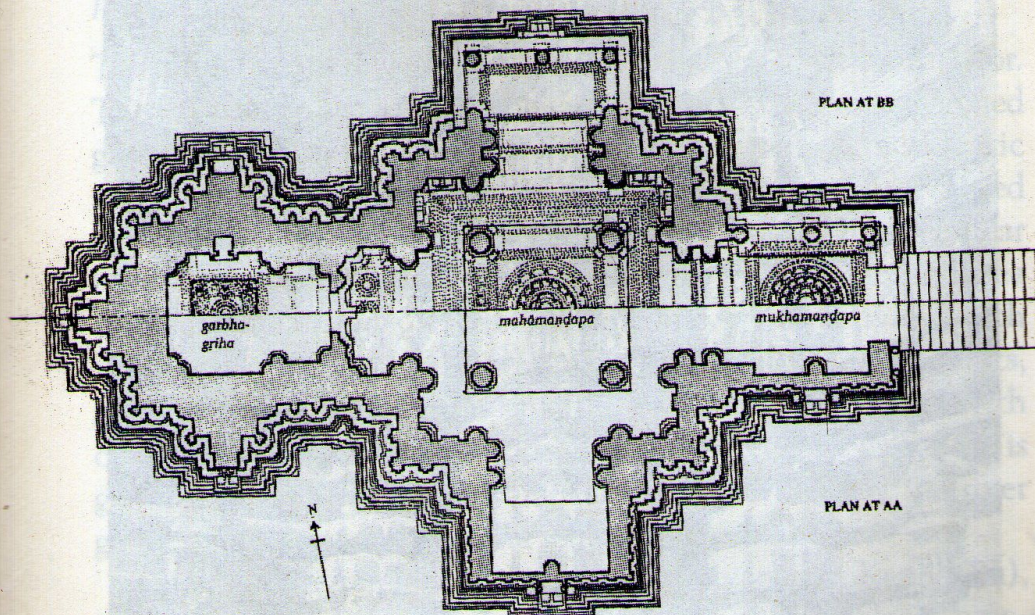


Fig. IV. Plan of the Devi Jagadamba temple without inner ambulatory (*nirandhara*)

b)) The Temples of Khajuraho are **the Ranges of the Mont Meru**, 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**. “ *The 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 1, 108 and 114., XII, 12, 986). In the Mahabharata (XIII, 4862) this mountain, the Meru mont, 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 dept....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 (gandharvas), anti-gods (asura), and demons (raksasa) play with the nymphs (apsara). 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, resound.” (from Alain Danielou, Mythes et Dieux de l’Inde)



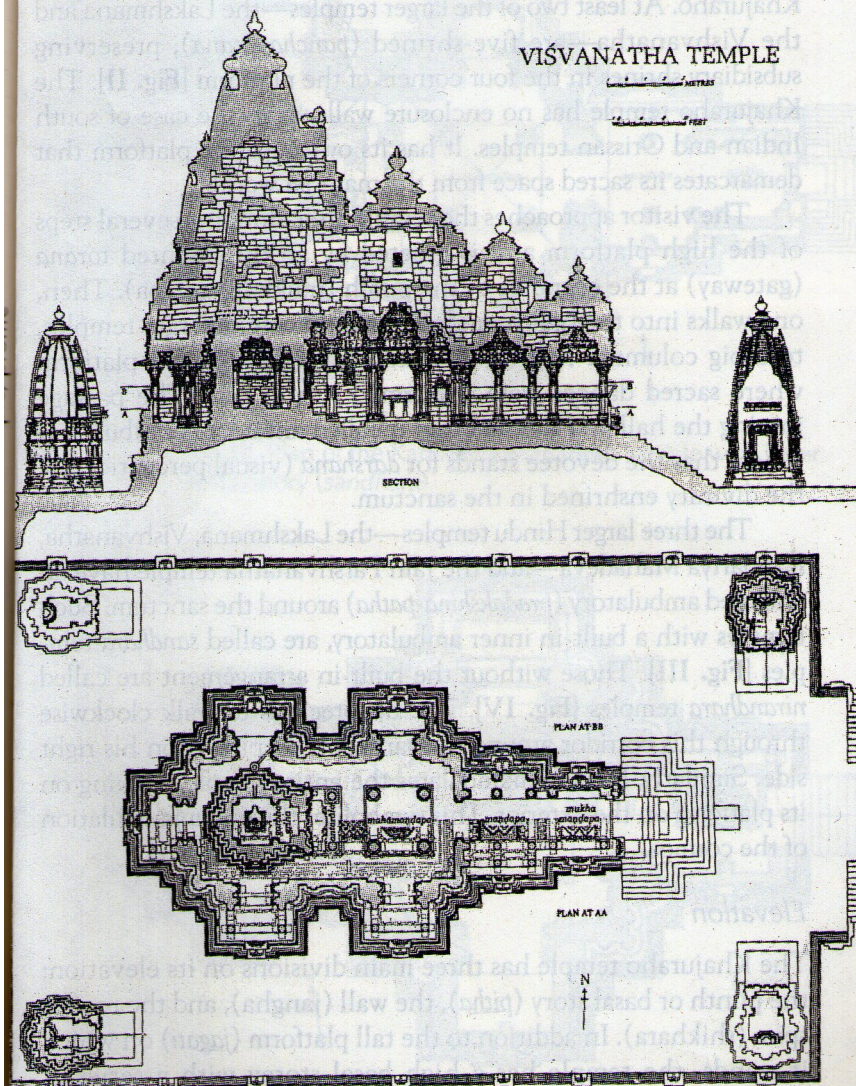


Fig. II. Plan and section of the Vishvanatha temple

- c) You can visualize this symbolical dimension, the Hindu temple as the Mont Meru of the celestial Gods, turning **outside** around the temples, like the Sapta matrikas (Seven Goddesses), in the order of their statues, are turning around the central God, Shiva, in the

Vishvanatha and in the Kandariya Mahadeva Temples,

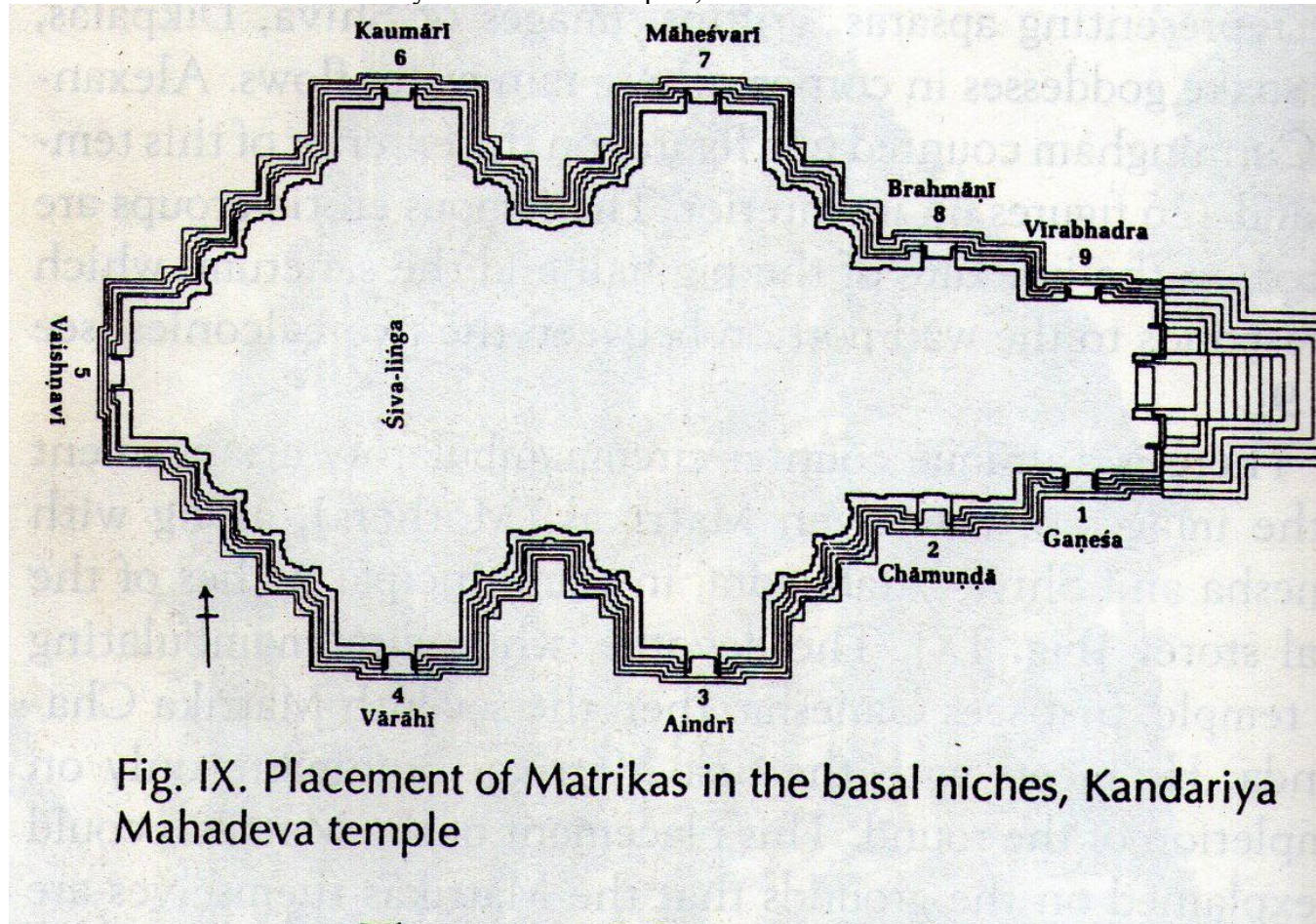


Fig. IX. Placement of Matrikas in the basal niches, Kandariya Mahadeva temple

or like the **Nine planets** in the order of their statues are turning around Vishnu Vaikunta in the Lakshmana temple.

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

- 1) in vertical along the axe of the tower **sikkara**, until to the bowl, or **kalasha**, and the pinnacle, the final point, 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 garbagriha 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), between celestial divine couples (Shiva and Parvati, Vishnu and Laxmi, and more), and demigods, nymphs (apsaras), celestial couples, minstrels (gandharvas), bearers of garlands *(vidyadharas) in the other projections, demons having animal the mixed forms of griffins (sardula or vyalas, and human couples of lovers in the recesses.

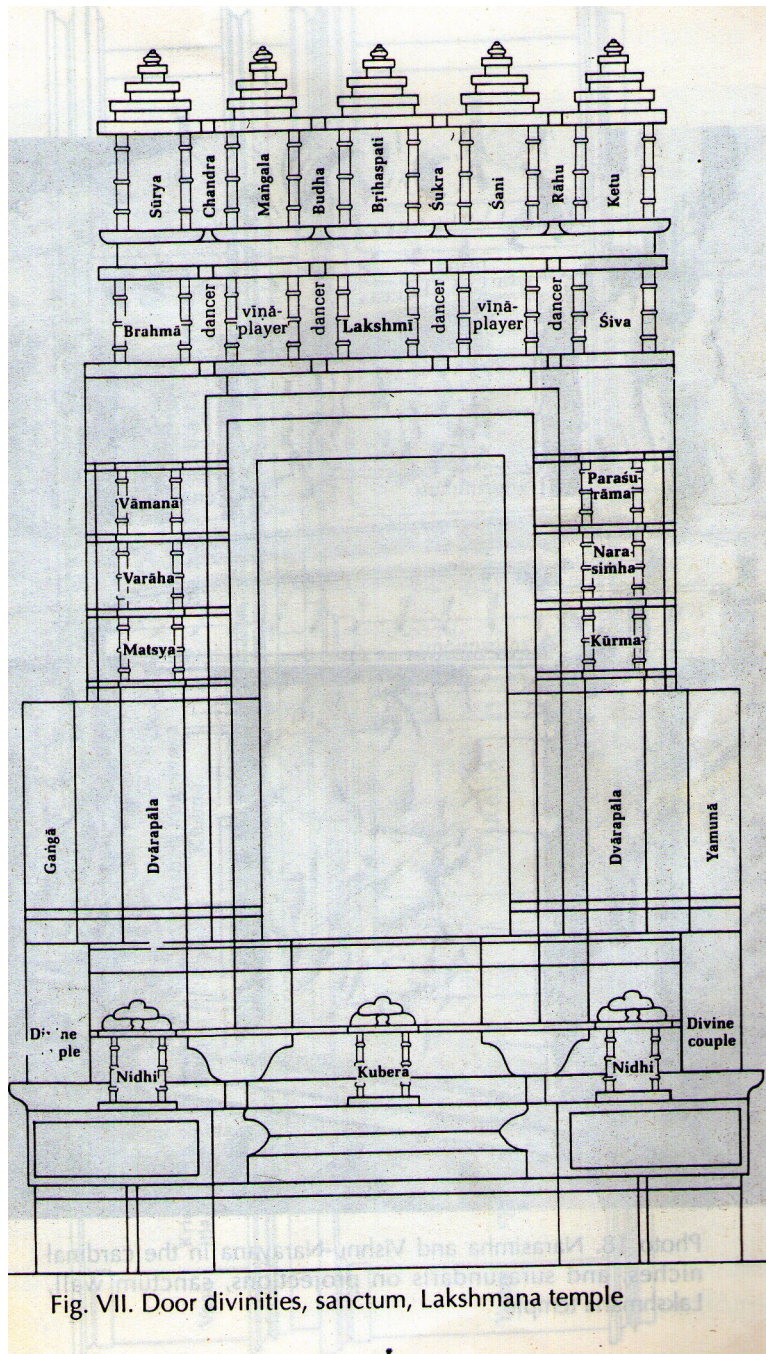


Fig. VII. Door divinities, sanctum, Lakshmana temple

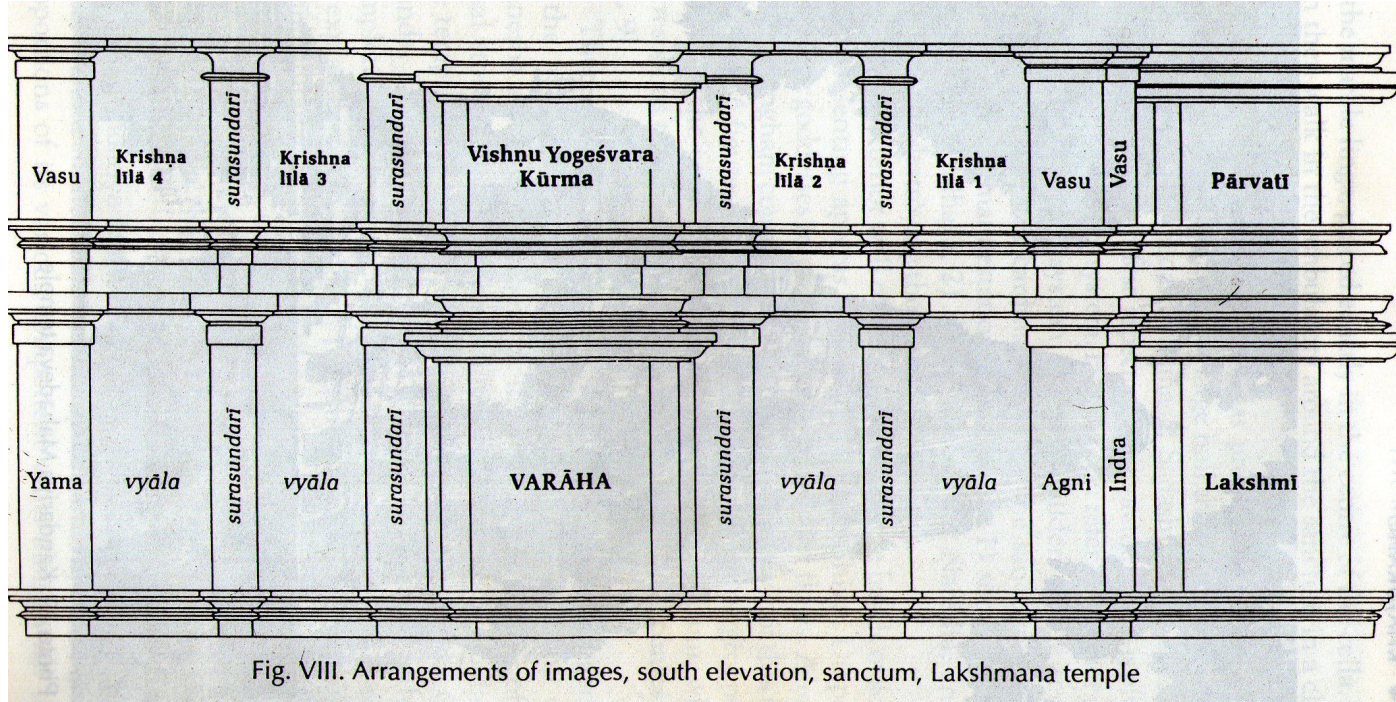
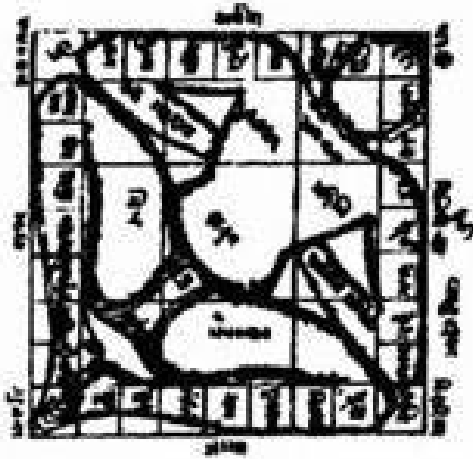


Fig. VIII. Arrangements of images, south elevation, sanctum, Lakshmana temple

e) If in the Hindu temples You are in the divine order of the world, it's because the Hindu temple 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

This subjection assures the propitious protection of the Guardian Gods of every direction, that favours determinate qualities (**gunas**), propensities and activities, and oppose or remove evil or harmful associated influences.



f) God in the world, is manifested by **the same order at every level of the reality**. For this reason the hindu temple is **fractal** in his architecture, and many forms, the **sikkara**, the pyramidal roofs of the halls (mandapa) are replicated in small forms, graded or clustering.

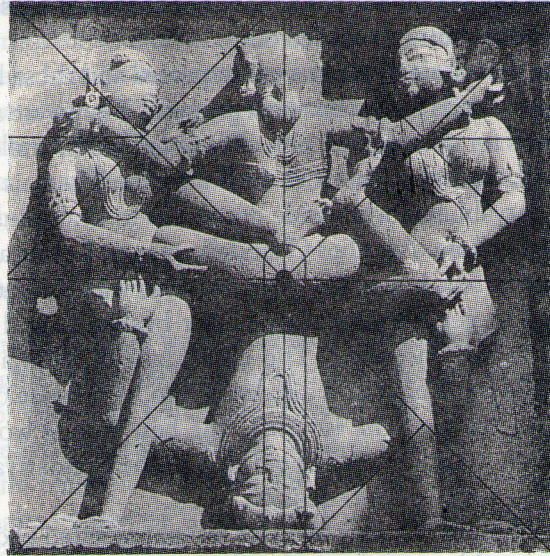


Photo 10. Head-down posture, with lines of the Kamakala-Yantra superimposed

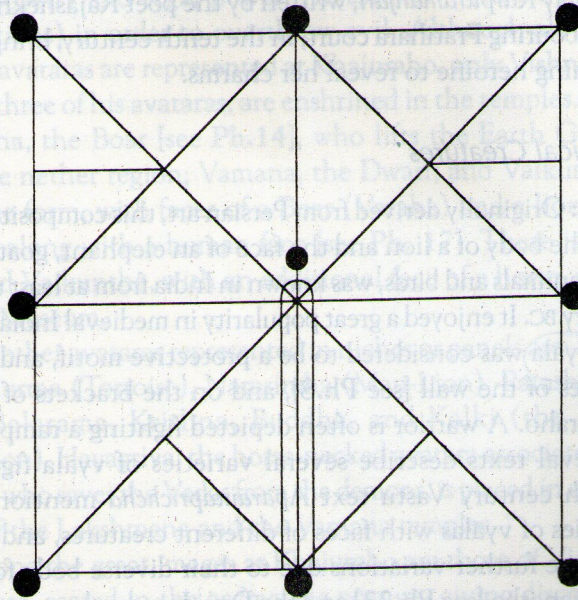


Fig. VI. Lines of the Kamakala-Yantra (After *Shilpa Prakasha*)

Symbolical numbers : 4, 5

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

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

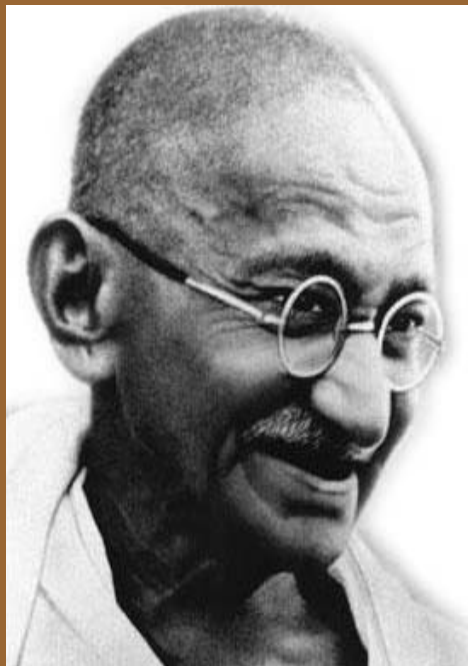
And more: the **purifying water** is evoked by the transit (**tirtha**) below the gateway of the **torana** exiting from the mouths of marine monsters (the **makara**) and by the access to the sanctum being

flanked by the paired statues of the river Goddesses Ganga and Yamuna , at the jambs of the doorway of the garbagriha.

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