

Khajuraho

Explore :

In the temple architecture of India, the Khajuraho complex remains unique. One thousand years ago, under the generous and artistic patronage of the Chandela Rajput kings of Central India, 85 temples, magnificent in form and richly carved, came up on one site, near the village of Khajuraho. The amazingly short span of 100 years, from 950 AD - 1050 AD, saw the completion of all the temples, in an inspired burst of creativity. Today, of the original 85, only 22 have survived the ravages of time; these remain as a collective paean to life, to joy and to creativity; to the ultimate fusion of man with his creator. Why did the Chandelas choose Khajuraho - garden of dates, as it was known then - as the site for their stupendous creations? Even in those days it was no more than a small village. It is possible given the eclectic patronage of the Chandelas and the wide variety of beliefs represented in the temples, that they had the concept of forming a seat of religion and learning at Khajuraho. It is possible that the Chandelas were also believers in the powers of Tantrism; the cult which believes that the gratification of earthly desires is a step closer to the attainment of the infinite. It is certain however, that the temples represent the expression of a highly matured civilization. Yet another theory is that the erotica of Khajuraho, and indeed of other temples, had a specific purpose. In those days when boys lived in hermitages, following the Hindu law of being "brahmacharis" until they attained manhood, the only way they could prepare themselves for the worldly role of 'householder' was through the study of these sculptures and the earthly passions they depicted.

Facts / Did you know?

The creators of Khajuraho claimed descent from the moon. The legend that describes the origin of this great dynasty is a fascinating one: Hemavati, the beautiful young daughter of a Brahmin priest was seduced by the moon god while bathing in the Rati one evening. The child born of this union between a mortal and a god was a son, Chandravarman. Harassed by society, the unwed mother sought refuge in the dense forest of Central India where she was both mother and guru to her young son. The boy grew up to found the great Chandela dynasty. When he was established as a ruler, he had a dream-visitation from his mother, who implored him to build temples that would reveal human passions, and in doing so bring about a realization of the emptiness of human desire. Chandravarman began the construction of the first of the temples, successive rulers added to the fast growing complex.

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