

# 4

## Temple Art and Sculpture

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

Indian sculpture was mostly meant for temple ornamentation in the ancient and medieval period. The regular building of structural temples in bricks and dressed stone began in the Gupta age, although there is some evidence of small shrines before the Guptas. During the 8th C.A.D there was prolific building activities throughout India. The Palas in the east, Cholas and Pallavas in the South, Rastrakutas and Chandellas in the central part of India, built beautiful temples, embellished with sculpture from 8th to 10th C.A.D. The tradition of temple sculpture flourished even after that in some areas like Vijaynagar, Mysore, Rajasthan, Bengal and Orissa till 12th C.A.D.

An introduction will be given to some selected temple sculptures in this lesson.

The following are the enlisted artworks in some famous temples of India.

- (a) Trimurti at Elephanta (Near Mumbai)
- (b) Mahisasura Mardini at Ellora (Maharashtra)
- (c) Kandariya Mahadeva temple at Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh)

### 4.1 OBJECTIVES:

After studying this lesson the learner will be able to:-

- (a) explain in brief the enlisted temples and sculptures;
- (b) state the name of enlisted temples and sculptures;
- (c) mention pattern, materials, architect, period, site and style of these temple sculptures;
- (d) identify the period of enlisted sculptures;
- (e) tell the main characteristics of enlisted temples.



*Mahishasurmardini*

## Sculpture of Devi at Ellora

## 4.2 MAHISHASURMARDINI

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Mahishasurmardini</i>
<i>Place</i>	-	<i>Kailash Temple, Ellora, Maharashtra</i>
<i>Period</i>	-	<i>8th century A.D.</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Rock-cut</i>
<i>Style</i>	-	<i>Rastrakuta</i>

The sculpture is of Devi Durga slaying Mahisasura, the buffalo demon. The 8th century Hindu rock-cut Kailash temple of Ellora in Western India is a remarkable piece of work. This sculpture adorns wall of the Kailash temple which was dedicated to the worshipers of Shiva. This relief panel treats battle scenes in which the deity is engaged in destroying the demon. The sculpture, particularly the scene depicting Devi's great battle, represents a high point in the development of Hindu iconography. Its treatment in narrative sculpture as well as human figure is commendable. This composition is one of the most dramatic treatments in the history of Indian monumental sculpture. The theme of Durga destroying the buffalo demon or Mahishasura Mardini is very popular in sculpture of India. Finally it is the combination of grace, beauty and power of expression, and dramatic composition that makes the Durga of Ellora a remarkable relief sculpture.

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### INTEXT QUESTIONS. (4.2)

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Fill up the blanks

- (a) The Mahisasura Mardini sculpture shows Devi Durga slaying \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (b) This sculpture is in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (c) This belong to the \_\_\_\_\_ style of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D.
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*Trimurti*

### 4.3 TRIMURTI

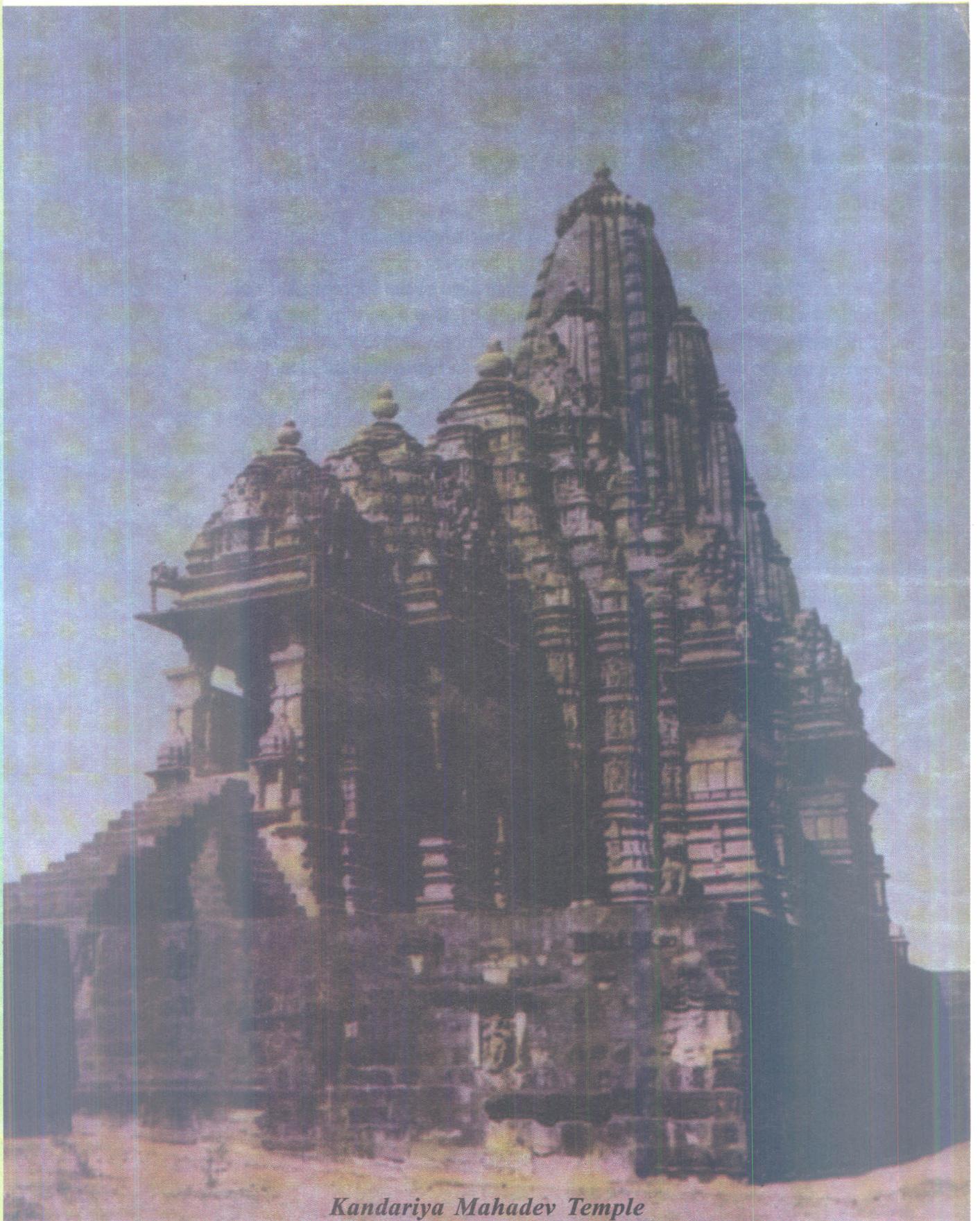
<i>Title</i> -	<i>Trimurti (Three headed Mahesha)</i>
<i>Medium-</i>	<i>Rock cut</i>
<i>Size</i> -	<i>5.20 meters Height</i>
<i>Period</i> -	<i>8th Century AD.</i>
<i>Place</i> -	<i>Elephanta Mumbai, Maharashtra</i>

The Mahesha or Shiva Trimurti is a dramatic representation of the supreme form of Shiva as the central face, Shiva as a destroyer is on the left and on the right is the gracious feminine deity. The Gods who were most commonly represented in Hindu pantheon were Shiva, the destroyer and Vishnu, the preserver while the third great God of the Hindu trinity was Brahma the creator. One of the most powerful rendering of this multiple nature of the deity is seen at Elephanta, where Shiva is seen as the three headed Mahadeva. The heads represent three different aspects of the God, the center one is his creative self or Sadasiva, the left his destructive nature or aghora and the right is the gracious feminine manifestation of the beauty of nature or Vamadeva.

#### INTEXT QUESTIONS (4.3)

Choose the right answer

- (a) The statue of Mahesha is of
- (i) Bramha                      (ii) Krisna                      (iii) Shiva
- (b) The central head of the Trimurti represents
- (i) Rudra                      (ii) Nataraja                      (iii) Sadasiva
- (c) The destructive aspect of Mahesha murti in the left head is called
- (i) Aghora                      (ii) Vamadeva                      (iii) Mahadeva.



*Kandariya Mahadev Temple*

#### 4.4 KANDARIYA MAHADEV TEMPLE

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Kandariya Mahadev Temple</i>
<i>Period</i>	-	<i>Chandella dynasty, 10th century A.D.</i>
<i>Height</i>	-	<i>Height 101.9"</i>
<i>Material</i>	-	<i>Sandstone</i>
<i>Place</i>	-	<i>Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh</i>

The Kandariya Mahadev Temple is the most magnificent and the biggest temple of the Khajuraho school of architecture. It is a temple of perfect proportions and rich ornamentation. It is one of the finest achievements of Indian temple architecture in Vesara style. The temple was built of sand stone.

There are three bands of sculptures on the Jangha of the temple. There are quite a number of erotic figures, along with usual sculptures of Hindu pantheon, all carved to perfection.

The base of the temple is filled with diverse sculptures. Inside the temple it is plain and dark, where one can meditate peacefully.

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#### INTEXT QUESTIONS (4.4)

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Fill up the blanks

1. It is one of the finest achievements of Indian temple architecture in the \_\_\_\_\_ style.
  2. There are three \_\_\_\_\_ of sculpture on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the temple.
  3. Inside of the temple is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
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#### 4.5 SUMMARY

In the post Gupta period it is almost impossible to consider sculpture apart from architecture, it is so much a part of the temples which it serve to decorate. All the three distinct architectural styles of temples, Viz, Nagara (of the North) Dravida (of the South) and Vesara (of the central) are treasures of Indian Sculpture. The temple sculpture of India is to be found all over India in various styles and forms.

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#### 4.6 MODEL QUESTIONS

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1. What are the characteristics of Mahishasurmardini at Kailash temple of Ellora.
2. Write in brief the main features of Trimurti at Elephanta near Mumbai.
3. Why is the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh famous?

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#### 4.7 ANSWER OF INEXT QUESTIONS

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- 4.2 (a) Buffalo demon      (b) Ellora      (iii) Rastrakuta, 8th century
- 4.3 (a) (iii) Shiva      (b) (iii) Sadasiva      (c) Aghora.
- 4.4 (i) Vesara,      (b) Bands, Jangha, (c) Plain, Dark

#### 4.8 TERMINOLOGY

ashrama:	monastic retreat
apsars:	celestial dancing girls
avatar:	incarnation
bhakti:	reverance
bahmin:	priestly caste
caitya:	place of worship of the Buddishts
cakra:	Wheel
dharma:	law, doctrine, righteousness
Garbha Griha:	literally 'womb chamber', inner sanctum of temple
Gopuram:	Gate house of temple Dravide temple
Kalasha:	Water pitcher, vase
Kumbha:	bulbous water pot
Linga:	phallus, most common symbol of Shiva
Mandapa:	hall or pillared pavilion
Puja:	worship
Ratha:	temple chariot
Sabha:	assembly
Stupa:	memorial of Buddhist saint
Tirth:	place of spiritual regeneration
Vastu:	residence,
Vihara:	residential quarter of monastery
Yoni:	female reproductive organ.