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Krishnavilas

A Temple Town in Oblivion



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Introduction: Context, Sources and Significance

The land of Rajasthan preserves a remarkable wealth of temple architecture and art, and among its lesser-known sites is Krishnavilas (Lat. 25°02' N; Long. 76°44' E). Krishnavilas, presently known as Bilasgarh, is situated in the Kishanganj tehsil of the Baran district of Rajasthan. Located approximately 45 km from the main town of Baran, its relative remoteness has limited accessibility and contributed to its remaining largely uncharted. This archaeological site is currently under the jurisdiction and care of Archaeological Survey of India, Jaipur Circle.

This medieval temple site preserves the remains of approximately eight temple complexes that vividly illustrate the architectural idiom of the Hadoti plateau. The settlement is situated along the banks of the Bilasi River, a tributary within the Banas River basin, which endowed the region with fertile land and strategic importance. Historically, the town formed part of the ancient Malwa region and thus reflects the artistic currents of the Paramara, Pratihara, Chaulukya and Chahamana (Chauhan) schools. In the medieval period, it came within the princely domain of Hadoti. According to tradition, the site was successively occupied by the Paramaras, Gaud Brahmins, and the Khichi lineage of Rajputs, whose presence further shaped its cultural and architectural development.

The complex at present houses 11 temple-complex ruins.

- **Char Khambha:** Also called Chaukhambha, this ruin is among the most eloquent vestiges of Krishnavilas. It is named for the four-square pillars that survive, standing as solitary witness to a structure whose upper members have now been lost to time. These pillars once formed the *chatuhsri* of the temple, the central spatial articulation, now largely lost. The remains retain the *sopana*, the stairway that ascends towards the shrine, intimating the elevated plinth on which the temple rose. The remnants suggest that the temple was built on the stellate type ground plan. The massive basal mouldings still anchor the site to the ground, revealing the gravity and magnitude of the original monument. The Char Khambha also retain ruins of four other temples which are now lost to time.



Char Khambha Temple ruins

- **Chhipa Chandni:** Chhipa Chandni is among the larger temples of this once grand sacred town. Today the structure lies largely in ruins, yet its basal mouldings and stretches of the wall remain, preserving the rhythm of the temple's original outline. The central shrine still survives, accompanied by fragments of the doorjamb. These bear Vaishnavite *dvarapalas*, who stand as guardians of the threshold and, by their presence, affirm the temple's dedication to Vishnu. The ruins also suggest the occurrence of subsidiary shrines on either side of the temple. The name "Chhipa Chandni" is bound to the memory of its architecture. It suggests a concealed, canopied ceiling—*chandni*—once veiled within the superstructure, from which the temple appears to have derived its appellation. Though the roof has collapsed and the upper storeys have passed into silence, the remaining elements speak with clarity. The ruin complex also houses remnants of 5 subsidiary shrines.



Chhipa Chandni Temple complex

- **Dev ji ka Dher:** Dev ji ka Dher derives its name from its present state of ruin, where the structure has largely collapsed and survives now as a mound strewn with sculptural fragments. The architectural remains suggest a simple square sanctum, the essential core of a small shrine now almost entirely lost. What endures in greater abundance are the loose sculptures dispersed around the site. Many of these are Vaishnavite in character: images of Vishnu and his emanations, marked by their attributes even in fragmentary condition. It is on the testimony of these sculptures that the identity of the shrine is understood. Though the temple itself is largely lost, the persistence of these images intimates that the deity once enshrined here was Vishnu. Another significant temple stands adjacent to the main temple preserving the *gudamandapa* portion suggesting its lost grandeur.



Dev ji ka Dher Temple complex

- **Shiv ji ka Dher:** Shiv Dher is another prominent temple ruin within the sacred landscape, distinguished by the presence of a large number of Saivite sculptures. The site is now composed largely of loose architectural fragments and sculptural slabs, many of which have been rearranged in recent times. At the centre of the remains survives a large circular Sivalinga, the still point around which the temple once cohered. The unique feature here is the remaining ground plan which provides four different entrances to the central shrine facing four cardinal directions. The front entrance is divided by a narrow trench probably made for release of water from the shrine. Closer analysis suggest that the central shrine was reconstructed in the other direction hence the original plan is now completely lost.



Shiv Dher Temple complex

- **Saat Okhli:** Saat Okhli is a small but evocative shrine, its surviving pillars rising with a quiet assurance that suggests the strength of its original foundations. The name *Saat Okhli* derives from local tradition: it is said that seven mortars (*okhli*) once stood here, and from these vanished objects the place received its enduring appellation. The *mandapa* portion of the temple continues to stand, though in fragments, and its stylistic features indicate that the shrine belonged to the later phase of temple construction at the site. Scattered around the ruin are numerous Sivalingas and *Shadlingas*, their presence speaking clearly of the divinity once enshrined here. Through these surviving emblems the dedication of the temple to Siva may be inferred.



Saat Okhli Temple complex

- **Khai ka Dher:** Khai ka Dher is another temple ruin within the sacred landscape of Krishnavilas. Little of its architectural articulation now survives, and the plan of the temple can only be dimly reconstructed from the scattered remains. Yet among these vestiges, the predominance of Vaishnavite imagery suggests that the temple was once dedicated to Vishnu.



Khai ka Dher Temple complex

- **Jain Temple Complex:** Krishnavilas sustained a richly plural religious landscape in which multiple traditions coexisted; among them, Jainism was especially prominent, flourishing alongside Vaishnavism in a parallel trajectory of growth. The Jain temple complex at Krishnavilas appears to have been architecturally ambitious, consisting of a *sabhamandapa* with eight subsidiary chambers arranged on either side, preceded by an *ardhamandapa* and connected to an *antarala*. Although the greater part of this complex has now collapsed, a few shrines remain standing as witnesses to its former extent. On stylistic grounds—both in sculptural treatment and architectural articulation—the complex is likely to have been funded by a mercantile guild or by royal family since the iconography at Jain temple complex is not occurring independently rather shows syncretism with Brahmanical traditions.



Jain Temple complex

- **Radha-Krishna Temple:** The Radha-Krishna temple constitutes the sole extant shrine within the Krishnavilas complex and thus assumes particular significance in reconstructing the sacred topography of the site. The temple is modest in scale and is conceived on a *pancharatha* plan, with an open *mandapa* articulated at the fore. The present *sikhara* has undergone reconstruction; however, the surviving wall treatment and moulding profiles strongly suggest that the original superstructure belonged to the *Rekha-Nagara* type. The temple's popular designation as the Radha-Krishna temple derives from the presence of Radha and Krishna idols in the sanctum. These images, preserved despite later interventions, anchor the shrine within the Vaishnavite devotional milieu and attest to the continuity of worship traditions even amidst the extensive ruination of the larger Krishnavilas complex. However, it may be noted that the present temple structure has been renovated in late medieval times and originally, the temple was dedicated to Bhagavana Siva.



Radha-Krishna Temple

- **Shamshan Dher:** The temple mound of Shamshan Dher is the most recently identified ruin at Krishnavilas. Although the temple has lost the majority of its basal mouldings, the surviving remains still clearly indicate its original ground plan. The extant structural traces provide valuable insight into the layout and architectural articulation of the shrine.



Shamshan Dher

- **Chauki ka Dher:** The temple mound known as Chauki ka Dher is one of the best-preserved temples within the Krishnavilas complex. The high platform preserved at this site presents a distinctive temple layout. The *jagati* is divided into two sections, with a narrow intervening space that appears to have functioned as a *pranalika* for drainage. The left platform preserves the ground plan of a simple *pancha-ratha* temple. The right platform, however, is particularly noteworthy for preserving subsidiary shrines intended for *parivara devatas*. Although such attendant shrines are typically arranged around the principal shrine in a more integrated manner, their peculiar positioning here suggests a later addition to the original structural scheme.



Chauki ka Dher

- **Jhandawala Dher:** Jhandawala Dher constitutes the most recently identified temple ruins within the Krishnavilas complex and is marked by a substantial assemblage of dressed stone blocks scattered across the site. A significant portion of the original ground plan and structural walls has now been lost, leaving only fragmentary remains that suggest the former scale and layout of the temple.



Jhandawala Dher

The temple ruins are at present spread in a wider area encompassing many miles.

Geographical Landscape

The District Baran is the southeastern extent of Rajasthan and shares boundary with Madhya Pradesh. Historically, Baran was part of the Malwa plateau comprising of Jhalawar, Bundi and Kota as well. This southeastern extent of Rajasthan is known as the Hadoti region characterised by the plateaus and network of perennial rivers such as the Chambal, Kali Sindh, Parvati, and Banas.

The region lies at the junction of the Malwa plateau and the Vindhyan ranges, producing a varied topography of escarpments, forested tracts, and riverine plains. Seasonal monsoon rains render the terrain comparatively lush, encouraging dense settlement patterns and sustained agricultural activity. This ecological richness, coupled with its location along major riverine corridors, historically supported vibrant urban centres and made Hadoti a favourable setting for temple-building activity and artistic patronage.

Another characteristic feature about the Hadoti plateau is its characteristic red sandstone found in abundance. Weathering tends to round and soften its surfaces rather than fracture them, which is why even heavily eroded monuments retain a palpable sculptural mass. The ready local availability of this stone not only shaped the visual character of Hadoti's temple architecture but also facilitated an extensive building tradition across the region.

The temple complex of Krishnavilas is situated on a flat hilltop terrain, with shrines distributed across subtly varied elevations. Near a depression of seasonal stream lies Khai ka Dher, whose position gives the site its name, while the highest point is crowned by the Dev ji ka Dher. This tiered disposition of temples not only responds to the contours of the hill, the complex extends along the banks of the Bilasi River, imbuing the setting with a serene atmosphere. The proximity to this perennial water source underscores the sanctity of the site, aligning with long-standing Sanatani traditions in which the presence of water source sanctifies ritual space and sustains temple settlements.

Historical Landscape

The temple complex at Krishnavilas is believed to have been constructed between the 9th and 13th centuries CE. The broader historical landscape of the Hadoti region, however, remains only partially understood. The question of patronage—who commissioned the temples at Krishnavilas—also remains unresolved, as no major inscriptions or literary references clearly identify the builders. Before the Mauryan period, the region appears to have been inhabited by independent tribal groups until the arrival of the Malavas in the 4th century BCE. The area they settled in came to be known as the Malwa Plateau, and their capital is generally presumed to have been Karkotanagara, or Nagara, located in the present-day Tonk district of Rajasthan.

By the 9th century CE, the region experienced unstable and overlapping control by the Paramaras and the Pratiharas. With their gradual disintegration toward the end of the 12th century, new powers emerged. This created the context for the Rajputs, along with communities such as the Minas and Bhils, as well as the Chauhans, to move into and integrate the Hadoti region.

The political consolidation of Hadoti was one of the primary factors that encouraged extensive temple building in the area. The region around present-day Baran and Kishanganj came under the rule of

the Khichi Rajputs, a branch of the Chauhan clan. A popular local legend is associated with this area. It is said that the Muslim ruler of Ranthambhore became enamoured with a princess of the Khichi dynasty, the daughter of Raja Bhainshah I. Unwilling to submit, the princess leapt into the waters of the Bilasi River, giving the site its name “Kanya-dah.” This episode is remembered as one of the earliest instances of *jal-jauhar*—self-immolation by drowning—in regional tradition.

Sacred and Religious Sites

The Hadoti corridor, starting from Krishnavilas and extending into Kota, Jhalawar, and Baran, has been a seat of continuous religious activity since at least the Gupta period (fifth century CE). Over time, it became a dense clustering of multi-religious sacred sites, today largely protected by state or central authorities. The important temple sites are described below:

Kota District

This region has been home to religious centres for Brahminical, Jain as well as Buddhist faiths since the Gupta age, with temples and monasteries asserting its sacred landscape.

- **Darra (Bhimchauri):** About forty-five km from Kota, at Darra, a Gupta-period temple called Bhimchauri is situated. The temple is the oldest among the standing temples in Rajasthan and is dedicated to Bhagavana Siva. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Charchauma:** Another Gupta-period Siva temple, twenty-five km from Kota. An inscription in Gupta Brahmi on the temple walls proves its existence from about the fifth century. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Kansua:** The eighth-century Siva temple built by a vassal of the Mauryan dynasty is considered as a masterpiece of the period by Meister and Dhaky. The temple contains an inscription datable to 738 CE. An image of Lakulisa stands before the *mandapa*, and outside the temple is a three-feet-tall Sahasra Sivalinga and a six-feet-tall life-size statue of Batuka Bhairava. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Aavan (Sangod tehsil):** A group of temples dated to the ninth–twelfth century, belonging to the Pratihara period. The prominent temple appears to be dedicated to Bhagavana Siva due to the presence of Uma-Mahesvara, Karttikeya, Andhakasuravadha, Kalyanasundara, and Saivite monks carved on the walls. The site is a State Protected Monument under the Rajasthan Department of Archaeology.
- **Chandresal (Sangod tehsil):** On the same tract as Charchauma, Atru, and Chandrabhanga, near the Parvati River, a ninth-tenth century Saivite monastery of the Giri sect is located here, associated with Tantric worship. The site is a State Protected Monument under the Rajasthan Department of Archaeology.

Jhalawar District

This region, from the early fifth century, flourished as a major centre of Siva, Sakti, Vaishnava, and Jain worship.

- **Chandrabhanga Group of Temples (Chandravati):** Located on the banks of the Chandrabhanga River. A seventh-century inscription records the construction of a Siva temple during the reign of Durgagana. The complex consists of three Siva temples (the most prominent being Sitaesvara), a Vishnu Temple, a Mahishasuramardini/Navadurga Temple, and a four-pillared Ganesa *mandapa*. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.
- **Sat Saheli Temple:** Originally a Siva temple, later converted into a Vaishnava shrine.
- **Nava Durga Temple (Gangdhar):** Mentioned in an inscription of 423 CE, this site was a centre of Sakti worship and Tantric rituals.
- **Jhalrapatan (Shah Pipa):** Santinatha Digambara octagonal Jain temple, built in 1046 CE.
- **Keshorayapatan:** A pedestal of a *tirthankara* idol dated 607 CE (664 V.S.), identified as the earliest Jain idol and epigraphic evidence of Rajasthan. The site houses a complex of medieval temples. The town comes under the Bundi District.
- **Baroli Complex:** The tenth-century Ghateshwar Mahadev Temple lies on the Malwa–Hadoti–Mewar trade route. At present it comes under Chittorgarh District. In the sanctum, five *lingas* are carved on the *Yoni-patta*. The group comprises nine shrines: Ghateshwar Mahadev, Trimurti Temple, Mahishasuramardini Temple, Vamana Temple, a *Matrika* shrine, and smaller Siva shrines. Temple No. 2 contained a Seshasayi Vishnu idol (now in the State Museum, Kota). Temple No. 6 is dedicated to Mahishasuramardini. The site is a Centrally Protected Monument under ASI.

Baran District

From the tenth century onwards, Baran became a prominent seat of Saivism as well as Jainism, enriched by Pratihara, Paramara, and later dynastic patronage.

- **Ramgarh (Bhandevra):** The temple is dedicated to Siva. Due to the abundance of sculptural richness, the temple site is locally called 'Mini Khajuraho'. An inscription records its construction by a Nagavamsi King Malaya Varma of Malwa, dedicated to Siva to commemorate victory over his enemy. It was renovated in 1162 CE by the Medavamsi King Trisasavarma.
- **Kakoni Group of Temples (Chhipa Barod tehsil):** Situated on the Parvan River near Sarathal, these ninth–twelfth century temples reflect patronage under the Parmaras, Pratiharas, and Chauhans. A three-and-a-half-feet-tall Sahasra Sivalinga of six feet circumference is installed here.
- **Atru:** Located on the Bina-Baran line, Atru is another temple town located in the Baran district. It houses the famous Gadgach Mandir, credited to be built by Raja Bhimashah in the 10th century AD.
- **Bichhalas:** A twelfth-century roadside Siva temple, restored except for the sanctum sanctorum.



A circular geometric pattern

Rock Art at Krishnavilas:

Multiple specimens of rock art have been found in and around the geographical extent of Krishnavilas. The earliest documentation was conducted by the ASI, in the 1960s, after which they have not been studied extensively. The majority of them are pictographs, meaning that they are paintings made using red ochre and white clay. These depictions mostly contain animal and human figures along with geometric patterns and a few handprints. They illustrate scenes of everyday activities, subsistence practices, and other themes such as warfare. The earliest paintings date from the prehistoric time, possibly Mesolithic period and the rock paintings continued till the historical period, possibly Medieval times. The paintings have a lot of overlapping and superimpositions.



Human Figures



Everyday Subsistence Practices Depiction

Religious Landscape

Vaishnavism

The region of Krishnavilas is believed to have been ruled by Gaud Brahmins and was likely a significant seat of the Khichi Rajputs of the Chauhan dynasty. With their rise to power, Vaishnavism appears to have gained a prominent position within the religious landscape of the area. This is strongly supported by the large number of Vaishnava sculptures recovered from the site. The majority of sculptures depict Vishnu and his various incarnations, suggesting the centrality of his worship. Owing to the predominance of Vishnu imagery—especially that of Krishna—the site is thought to have derived its name “*Krishnavilas*,” meaning “the abode of Krishna.”

One of the most frequently occurring image is the Vishnu panel, in which the deity occupies the central position and the backrest is carved with representations of his *dasavataras*. Independent images of these incarnations are also found in abundance, with Ugra-Narasimha, Prahaladavarada Narasimha, and Bhu-Varaha being the most common. Surviving door lintels often feature a form of Vishnu at the *lalatabimba*, indicating that many of the temples within the complex were likely dedicated to Vishnu. Other forms—such as Krishna, Yoga-Narayana, and Seshasayi Vishnu—are also represented in considerable numbers, further emphasising the strong Vaishnava character of Krishnavilas.

Jainism

Jainism was another major religion that flourished at Krishnavilas. A substantial number of sculptures depicting *tirthankaras* have been collected from the site, and an entire separate temple complex appears to have been dedicated to Jain deities. The Jain images at Krishnavilas are particularly interesting because they occur in two distinct forms. The first consists of independent Jain sculptures, portraying *tirthankaras* accompanied by *sasanadevatas*. The second category reflects a syncretic interaction with Brahmanical traditions: in many cases, Jain *tirthankaras* occupy the central position, while the apex and pedestal feature Brahmanical deities.

This religious interaction is also visible in the Brahmanical sculptures themselves, which often display stylistic and symbolic influences derived from Jain art. Another noteworthy feature of Jainism at Krishnavilas is that many of the *tirthankara* images are devoid of identifying *lanchhanas* (emblems). As a result, assigning specific identities to individual deities is often not possible.

Saivism

The Hadoti region witnessed considerable religious dynamism, shaped by the coexistence and interaction of multiple faiths. As part of the wider Malwa plateau, it experienced a marked growth of Saivism, particularly of the Pasupata sect, alongside associated tantric traditions. At Krishnavilas, the most frequently encountered Saiva image is the Uma-Mahesvara panel. These compositions generally follow the conventional iconographic scheme, depicting not only Siva and Parvati but also accompanying figures such as Bhringi, Nandi, Ganesa, and Karttikeya.

Another strong indicator of the robust presence of Saivism at the site is the large number of independent Sivalingas. These occur in multiple forms, including *panchalingas* and *shadlingas*. Images of

Parvati are also common, particularly in her ascetic *Tapasvini* aspect. Other forms of Siva, such as Nilakantha and Bhairava, are likewise represented. Collectively, this evidence suggests that Saivism was not merely present but actively practiced and intellectually elaborated at Krishnavilas.

Saktism

The religious milieu of Krishnavilas was not exclusively Vaishnava or Saiva; traces of Sakta worship are also clearly discernible. Sculptural remains attest to the presence of the Sakta tradition through recurrent depictions of the *Saptamatrikas*, as well as independent representations of goddesses such as Mahesvari, Chamunda, and others. A striking iconographic peculiarity at Krishnavilas is the substitution of Brahmani in the conventional position occupied by Brahma within the *Matrika* ensemble. This deviation appears deliberate rather than accidental, suggesting a conscious theological emphasis on the feminine principle. Among the goddess figures, Maheshvari occurs with particular frequency, underscoring the vitality of Sakta traditions within the broader religious fabric of the site.

Architectural Style

The art and architecture of Krishnavilas appear to have developed in two broad phases.

Phase I (c. 9th–10th century CE)

The earliest phase is associated with the ascendancy of the Khichi Rajputs. In this period, nearby temple centres such as Atru are known to have received patronage from rulers like Raja Bhimashah. The sculptural style of this horizon is marked by high-relief carving, careful spatial organisation within panels, and aesthetically refined, independent images. A limited number of such sculptures are also identifiable at Krishnavilas—temples like Chhipa Chandni may be assigned to this formative phase.

Phase II (c. 10th–13th century CE)

The subsequent phase extends from approximately the tenth to the thirteenth century CE and is characterised by a perceptible shift in quality and execution. Sculptures of this period are generally more schematic and rendered in lower relief. This change may reflect the decline of direct royal patronage and the increasing role of local guilds or community sponsorship in temple construction. Temples and images belonging to this phase are typified by comparatively crude workmanship and simplified iconographic treatment.

Together, these two phases chart the transition from courtly, patron-supported temple production to more localised and economically constrained artistic activity at Krishnavilas.

Here are some of the images depicting different art pantheons at Krishnavilas:

Vishnu

Vishnu is regarded as one of the primordial deities of the Hindu pantheon and the cosmic preserver who resides in the celestial abode of Vaikuntha. In the Vedic corpus, however, Vishnu is associated with the solar sphere and is counted among the *Dvadasadityas*. Over time, particularly in the Puranic tradition, the deity assumes a more prominent theological position as one of the members of the *Trimurti*. Within this framework, Vishnu is believed to have manifested on earth through a series of incarnations in order to

restore cosmic balance and protect the world from calamities and demonic forces. Traditionally, nine such *avataras* are believed to have appeared in the past.

Presented below are some sculptural representations of Vishnu from Krishnavilas.



KVH 191 Vishnu

Description- The architectural member depicts a male deity enshrined within a niche. The niche is flanked on either side by simple pilasters, each marked by ribbed discs arranged at regular intervals however the crowning element is now missing. The deity is *chaturbhuja* in which his lowermost right hand holds an *akshamala*, the upper right bears a *gada*; in his upper left is a *chakra* and in his lower left, a *sankha*. The figure is richly adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, *karnakundala*, several *hara*, *kada*, *keyura* and *nupura*. At the base of the image appears a diminutive figure. On the left corner of the *manchika* (base moulding) is a *padma alankarana*, while on the right corner a small figure, wearing *karnakundala*, is shown in an attitude of veneration toward the central deity.

The principal figure can be identified as Vishnu, and the small figure at the base as Garuda, his *vahana*. The figure to the left may represent Narada shown in reverence before the god.



KVH 81 Nritya Vishnu

Description- The architectural member depicts a male deity standing in somewhat *lalitasana* pose. The figure is *chaturbhuja* in which his natural right hand is raised in *varadamudra*, his upper right hand holds a *gada*, his upper left hand holds a *sankha*, and his natural left hand holds a *chakra*. The deity is richly adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, multiple *hara*, *keyura*, *kankana*, a *katisutra*, *nupura*, and *vanamala*.

The figure can be identified as Vishnu, though his stance which is somewhat dancing, is unique.



KVH 163 Narasimha

Description- The architectural member features a male anthropomorphic deity with the head of a *simha* and the body of a human. He stands in *alidha* posture, his left leg firmly placed upon the pedestal. A human figure lies across his lap, the abdomen violently dismembered. The deity is *ashtabhuj*a with his natural hands engaged in tearing apart the victim's abdomen. The pair of hands above grasps the figure by the leg and hair. The next pair is shown in *abhaya mudra*, while the uppermost pair holds a long, multi-stringed garland of intestines. The deity is framed within two slender pilasters. The backrest carries the characteristic *vyala* motif:

a seated *gaja* raising its trunk, upon which a *simha* stands poised.

Based on these iconographic attributes, the central deity is identifiable as Ugra Narasimha, and the figure across his lap as the demon king Hiranyakasipu.



SO-93 Lakshmi-Narayana

Description- The architectural member features a *sthanaka* divine couple positioned between two circular pilasters embellished with engraved designs. The male deity is depicted as *chaturbhuj*a, with both his natural hands resting upon the bust of the female deity. The upper right hand holds a *gada*, while the upper left hand is no longer discernible. The female deity is *dvibhuj*a, with the right hand resting on the male deity's right shoulder and the left hand holding a *padma*. The male figure is adorned with a *kirita mukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *kankana*, *uttariya*, *urudama*, *nivi*, and *mala*, and bears a *srivatsa* symbol at the centre of the chest. The female deity's hair is arranged in *dhammilla*, and she wears *karnakundalas*, a torque, *uttariya*, *nivi*, and *urudama*. On iconographic grounds, the couple can be identified as Lakshmi-Narayana.



CC-113 Bhavaraha

Description- The architectural member depicts an anthropomorphic male deity standing within a niche framed by two circular pilasters. The deity possesses the head of a boar and a human body. He is shown standing in *alidha* posture, signifying an aggressive stance and martial vigor. His left foot rests upon a pedestal decorated with a coiled *padma* stalk, the rear end of which terminates in two diminutive figures. The deity is *chaturbhuj*. His natural right hand rests on his thigh, the upper right hand holds a *gada*, the upper left hand is folded toward the chest holding a *sankha*, and the natural left hand holds a *chakra*. He is ornamented with a *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, *urudama*, *mala*, and *nupura*. A diminutive female figure is shown seated upon his tusk in *namaskara mudra*.

On the basis of these attributes, the figure may be identified as Bhu-Varaha, the third incarnation of Vishnu, depicted rescuing Bhudevi from the demon Hiranyaksha. The sculpture is richly ornamented, with a *padma* stalk encircling the deity and culminating above in the form of a large lotus, beneath whose canopy the central figure stands.



KVH 492 Vamana Avatara

Description- The architectural member features a large sculptural panel with a central deity and an elaborate backrest populated with subsidiary deities. The central deity is depicted standing on a *padmasana*, with two female *gandharva* figures seated at the rear ends in *namaskara mudra*. The head of the central idol is broken; however, a finely carved *padma prabhavali* is clearly visible behind the head region. The deity is depicted as *dvibhuj*, though both hands are now mutilated. The ornamentation scheme is highly elaborate, comprising a *hara*, *keyura*, *uttariya*, a richly decorated *yajnopavita*, *nivi*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nupura*, and a *vaijayanti mala*. The overall proportions of the deity are not idealised and appear deliberately dwarfish. Based on these attributes, the central figure can be identified as Vamana-*avatara*, the dwarf incarnation of Bhagavana Vishnu.

The left side of the backrest features three minute figures standing in *tribhanga* pose, depicted as attendants. At the extreme left stands a male figure holding a *sankha* with both hands. His ornamentation scheme closely resembles that of the central deity, with the addition of an ornate tapered *mukuta* and *karnakundalas*. The middle figure is a female standing cross-legged and holding a *chamara* in her left hand, while the right hand grasps a portion of her drapery. To her right stands another similarly composed female figure, though her head is mutilated. Both female figures share an identical ornamentation scheme, with hair tied in elegant buns and adorned with jewellery, including *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, and *mala*. These figures can be identified as Sankhapurusha accompanied by two *chamaradharinis*. The right profile of the backrest mirrors this composition with three minute figures standing in *tribhanga* pose. The leftmost figure is a male holding a *chakra* with both hands. Though his head is mutilated, his ornamentation scheme closely matches that of the Sankhapurusha on the opposite side. The central figure is another *chamaradharini*, similarly composed, though her head is also damaged. At the extreme right stands a male figure with his hands in *namaskara mudra*; the remaining attributes are too mutilated for precise identification.

The middle register of the backrest presents a symmetrical and mirrored composition on either side, featuring beautifully carved female figures standing cross-legged in *tribhanga* pose. One hand holds a *chamara*, while the other rests on the thigh. Their hair is styled in elegant side buns, and they are adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, and *nivi*. These figures stand beneath elaborate *padma alamkarana* and are identifiable as *chamaradharinis*, completing the iconographic scheme of the panel. They are flanked by the characteristic Krishnavilas *vyala* motif, depicting a *simha* standing atop a seated *gaja*.

The top register features two niches flanked on either side by *makaravyalas* with gaping mouths. The left niche houses a male pot-bellied deity seated in *lalitasana* pose. He is depicted as *chaturbhuja*, with his natural right hand in *abhaya mudra*, the upper right hand holding a *sruka*, the upper left hand holding a *pustaka*, and the natural left hand holding a *kamandalu*. His hair is arranged in an elaborate *jatamukuta*, and he is adorned with *karnakundalas*, a beard, *hara*, *uttariya*, *yajnopavita*, *kankana*, and *nivi*. Based on these attributes, the deity can be identified as Brahma, the creator. The right niche features another male *chaturbhuja* deity seated in *lalitasana* pose. His natural right hand is in *abhaya mudra*, the upper right hand holds a *sarpa*, the upper left hand holds a *trisula*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. His hair is arranged in a *jatamukuta*, and he is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *yajnopavita*, and *nivi*. Based on these attributes, the deity is identifiable as Siva, the cosmic destroyer.

The apex of the panel is crowned by an arch adorned with *maladharis*. Overall, the sculptural panel represents the Vamana-*avatara*, the fifth incarnation of Bhagavana Vishnu, depicted as a dwarf Brahmin, executed within a rich and complex iconographic programme.



KVH 465 Yoga-Narayana

Description- The architectural member features a large sculptural panel with a centrally seated deity, flanked by multiple subsidiary figures arranged on the backrest. The central deity is depicted seated in *padmasana* upon a lotus pedestal. At the lower corners of the seat are two minute figures seated in *namaskara mudra*, gazing upward toward the principal deity in an attitude of veneration. This sequence is followed on either side by attendant figures standing in *katyavalambita* pose.

On the left side of the central deity are two male attendant figures. The figure immediately adjacent to the deity is more elaborately ornamented, comparable to the central figure, and is shown holding a *chamara*. This is followed by another male attendant who is comparatively less ornate. The right-side mirrors this arrangement, though it comprises a male figure on the left and a female figure on the right. Due to the obstruction caused by the extended leg of the central deity, the precise attributes of these figures are difficult to discern; however, based on their placement and posture, they can be identified as attendant figures

completing the compositional scheme. The central deity is depicted *chaturbhuja*. His natural pair of hands are engaged in *dhyana mudra*, signifying meditative absorption. The upper right hand holds a *padma*, while the upper left hand holds a *sankha*. He wears an ornate, jewel-studded *kiritamukuta*, along with *karnakundalas*, multiple *hara*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *yajnopavita*, *uttariya*, *nivi*, *vaijayanti mala*, and *nupura*. A finely executed *prabhavali* in the characteristic Krishnavilas style forms the backdrop, enhancing the visual and symbolic grandeur of the sculpture. The facial expression of the deity is serene, with closed eyes conveying a state of deep meditation and spiritual tranquillity. Based on iconographic attributes and posture, the central deity can be identified as Yoga-Narayana, the contemplative aspect of Vishnu.

The right profile of the backrest presents a vertical sequence of multiple images. At the apex is a niche housing an anthropomorphic *chaturbhuja* deity with the head of a *simha* and a human body, depicted in a ferocious act of slaying a human figure seated upon his lap. Based on this iconography, the figure is identifiable as Narasimha in his *ugra* aspect, the fourth fierce *avatara* of Vishnu. This niche is flanked by a *makara-vyala* with its mouth rendered open, surmounted by a *makara-purusha*.

The lower register on this side features the characteristic Krishnavilas *vyala* motif, comprising a seated *gaja* with a *simha* positioned atop it. Beneath this is a figure of a male deity riding a horse, identifiable as Kalki, the final divine *avatara* of Vishnu.

The left profile of the backrest follows a similar compositional framework but with different iconographic representations. The upper niche depicts Varaha, the third divine *avatara* of Vishnu. The arrangement of flanking motifs remains consistent with the opposite side. The lowest register features a diminutive male figure seated in *lalitasana* pose, identifiable as Vamana, the fifth *avatara* of Vishnu.



KD-17 Vishnu Panel

Description- The architectural member is a sculptural panel featuring a central male deity surrounded by multiple subsidiary representations. The central figure is *chaturbhuja*, with the natural right hand holding a *gada*, the upper right hand holding a *chakra*, the upper left hand carrying a *padma*, and the natural left hand holding a *sankha*. The deity is richly adorned, wearing a *kiritamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, multiple *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nivi*, *vanamala*, and *nupura*. Behind the figure is a two-layered intricately carved *prabhavali*. Based on these iconographic attributes, the central deity can be identified as Vishnu. At the base of the pedestal are two diminutive female figures venerating the central idol. At the base, on the extreme right, is a male anthropomorphic deity with a human body and the head of a *simha*, holding another figure in his lap. As the figure is being embraced rather than dismembered, this representation may be identified as Prahalada-Varada Narasimha. To his left stands a female figure attending Vishnu, shown in *katyavalambita* pose and identified as Gadadevi. On the extreme left appears the Varaha incarnation of Vishnu, depicted with the head of a boar and a human body.

Adjacent to him stands another male attendant figure, identified as Chakrapurusha. At the level of the deity's arms, a tortoise is depicted on the right and a fish on the left, symbolising Vishnu's Kurma and Matsya incarnations respectively. At the shoulder level, two seated male deities are shown flanking Vishnu. On his right, the figure holds a *parasu* in the left hand and displays *abhaya mudra* with the right, possibly representing the Parasurama *avatara*. The corresponding figure on the left mirrors this composition, though the *parasu* is replaced by different object, identified as Vamana *avatara*. At the uppermost register, two male deities are depicted in *lalitasana* pose. On the right, the *chaturbhuja* figure has his natural right hand in *abhaya mudra*, upper right hand holding a *trisula*, upper left hand carrying a *sarpa*, and the natural left hand holding a *kamandalu*—attributes identifying him as Siva. On the left, another *chaturbhuja* male deity is seen, with the natural right hand in *abhaya mudra*, the upper right hand holding a *sruka*, the upper left hand carrying a *pustaka*, and the natural left hand holding a

kamandalu. The presence of a beard, potbelly, and associated *ayudhas* indicates that this figure represents Brahma. In the central register is a seated divine male figure, with the natural right hand in *abhaya mudra*, upper right hand holding a *gada*, upper left hand carrying a *chakra*, and the natural left hand holding a *sankha*. He is flanked by two male attendants bearing *chamaras*, representing *chamaradharis*. The deity here can again be identified as Vishnu. At the base of their pedestal are two semi-divine male figures holding garlands, identified as *maladharis*. On either side of the *chamaradharis* appear two diminutive depictions, possibly representing Vishnu's incarnations. On the right is a male figure riding on a horse depicting Kalki *avatara*, while on the left is a male figure seated in *lalitasana*, with the right hand in *abhaya mudra* and the left holding an indistinct object, possibly representing Buddha.

The entire panel is densely populated with figures, carved in a somewhat crude yet expressive manner. While several representations are identifiable through iconographic conventions, a few remain uncertain due to the stylised and fragmentary nature of the sculptural execution.

Siva

Siva is regarded as one of the most primordial deities of the Hindu pantheon, forming the sacred *Trimurti* alongside Vishnu and Brahma. Within this cosmic triad, he embodies the principle of dissolution and transformation, representing the element of *Tamas*. At the same time, Siva is venerated as the supreme ascetic eternally immersed in deep meditation, symbolising detachment, spiritual discipline, and the transcendence of worldly existence.

Some Saivite images from Krishnavilas are as follows:



KVH-145 Siva

Description- The architectural member features a *chaturbhuja* male deity flanked by slender pilasters on either side. His natural right hand is in *varada mudra* holding a rosary, his upper right hand holds a *trisula*, his upper left hand bears a three-hooded *sarpa*, and his natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. The deity is richly embellished with a *jatamukuta*, *karnakundala*, *hara*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *yajnopavita*, *uttariya*, *katibandha*, *urudama*, *nivi*, *vanamala*, and *nupura*. At the base, the central deity is attended by two male figures standing in *katyavalambita* pose, each with one hand resting on the waist and the other raised, holding an indiscernible object.

Based on the attributes, the principal figure can be identified as Siva, though the presence of *yajnopavita* and long *mala* introduces noteworthy iconographic complexity.



DT-6 Saiva Ascetic

Description- The architectural member features a male ascetic figure seated upon a pedestal, accompanied by a female attendant standing beside him. The ascetic is adorned with a turban, *karnakundalas*, a beaded *mala*, *yajnopavita*, *keyura*, and *kaupina*. He bears a moustache, beard and a noticeable pot belly. His right hand is placed in *varada mudra* also holding a rosary, while his left hand holds what appears to be a *kharatala*. The female attendant stands in *namaskara mudra*, her posture slightly inclined towards the ascetic in a gesture of reverence. Her hair is braided, and she is ornamented with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *keyura*, multiple *kankana*, *uttariya*, *nivi*, and *nupura*.

The prominent figure may be identified as a Saiva Kapalika ascetic being attended by a lady.



DT-19 Uma-Mahesvara

Description- The architectural member presents a finely conceived composition of the divine couple seated upon their mount, represented as a bull. The male deity occupies the central position, seated in *lalitasana*, and is depicted as *chaturbhuja*. His natural right hand holds a *sripphala*; the upper right hand bears a *trisula*; the upper left hand carries a three-hooded *sarpa*; while the natural left hand embraces his consort in an intimate gesture of union. The female deity is seated upon his lap, also in *lalitasana*. She is *dvibhuja*: her right hand is placed upon the male deity's right shoulder, drawing him into a close embrace, and her left hand holds a now-broken *darpana*. The male deity is adorned with an elaborate *jatamukuta*, *sarpakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*, and bears the *srivatsa* on his chest. The female counterpart is ornamented in a complementary scheme, her hair arranged in a topknot and her body embellished with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *stanahara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. Below the divine pair, a diminutive *gana* figure is carved in attendance.

Based on the iconographic features, the composition is identifiable as Uma-Mahesvara enthroned upon their mount, Nandi. Flanking the lower register are two subsidiary deities. To the right sits a pot-bellied, anthropomorphic figure identified as Ganesa, while to the left appears Karttikeya, holding a spear in his right hand and a water pot in his left. Both are shown in *lalitasana* pose. The backrest of the composition rises into two apex niches, each housing a seated male deity in *lalitasana*. The figure on the

right is *chaturbhuja*: his natural right hand is in *abhaya mudra*; the upper right hand holds a *padma*; the upper left hand carries a *chakra*; and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. These attributes identify him as Vishnu. The left niche contains another *chaturbhuja* deity, his natural right hand in *abhaya mudra*, the upper right hand holding a *sruka*, the upper left hand a *pustaka*, and the natural left hand a *kamandalu*. His beard and slight pot-belly suggest the identification as Brahma. Both are ornamented in harmonious accordance with the larger sculptural scheme. At the centre of the backrest appears the characteristic Krishnavilas *vyala* arrangement: a *simha* standing atop a *gaja*.



DT-31 Lakulisa

Description- The architectural member is a wall fragment comprising an upper moulding and a niche positioned below it, supported by a lattice-patterned panel. The upper moulding is of the *grasapattika* type, featuring two *kirtimukhas* with an intervening decorative motif. Beneath this, the niche is framed by two slender pilasters crowned with a *makaratorana* and a surmounting arch embellished with a *jala* pattern. The niche enshrines a male *chaturbhuja* deity seated in *padmasana*. His natural right hand holds a *sriphala*, while his upper right hand carries an *akshamala* and is arranged in *jnana mudra*. The upper left hand grasps a *danda* encircled by a serpent, and his natural left hand holds a *pustaka*. The deity's hair is coiled, with elongated ears and pronounced, furrowed eyebrows. The presence of an *urdhvalinga* emphasises the doctrine of the energetic principle of *urdhvaretas*, symbolising his ascetic discipline and celibacy.

Based on these iconographic features, the figure may be identified as Lakulisa in a preaching posture.



Andhakasuravadhamurti, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member depicts a dynamic sculptural panel representing a male deity standing in *alidha* posture while slaying a human figure beneath him. The deity's left leg rests upon a diminutive male figure seated at the base in *virasana* pose, reinforcing the dramatic narrative of subjugation. The figure is depicted as *shadbhuja* (six-armed). His natural pair of hands hold a *trisula*, with which he pierces the fallen figure, although the right portion of this hand is now broken. The middle right hand holds a *khatvanga*, while the upper right hand is mutilated and the attribute it once bore is now lost. The upper left hand holds a *sarpa*, and the middle-left hand holds a *kapalapatra*, intended to collect the drops of blood dripping from the slain figure. The deity is richly adorned with an ornate *jatamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nivi*, *nupura*, and *mala*.

Based on these attributes and the narrative composition, the figure can be identified as Siva in the form of Andhakasuravadha, depicting the episode in which he slays the demon Andhakasura, who possessed the power to multiply from every drop of his spilled blood.



Nilakantha Siva

Description- The architectural member is a niche housing a male deity seated in *lalitasana* pose. He is *chaturbhuja*: the natural right hand holds a dagger, the upper right hand holds a *damru*, the upper left hand holds a *vishapatra* from which the deity is shown drinking poison, while the object originally held in the natural left hand is now broken. The deity is depicted with *urdhvakesa* and is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*.

On the basis of these iconographic attributes, the figure can be identified as Nilakantha Siva, representing the episode of *Samudra Manthana*, during which Siva consumes the *kalakuta* poison and acquires the epithet *Nilakantha*. To the deity's left stands a male attendant figure shown drinking *bhang* from a *patra* held in his right hand, while the left hand appears to hold a *padma*. He is depicted in an inebriated state and shown nude. On the deity's right is another male attendant figure holding a dagger in his right hand, while a *sarpa* coils around his neck and rests upon his chest; he too is represented unclothed.



KVH-458 Gajasurasamharamurti

Description- The architectural member features a male divine figure standing amidst two slender circular pilasters. The male deity is depicted in a dynamic dancing stance, with a bull figure seated on the left side of the pedestal, shown as his *vahana*. The deity is represented as *shadbhuja*. His natural right hand is shown in a peculiar *mudra*, the middle right hand holds a *damaru*, while the upper pair of hands hold a long string arranged as a *prabhamandala* around the deity's head. The middle-left hand holds a *khatvanga*, and the natural left hand is depicted in a dancing *mudra*. The figure is heavily mutilated due to lime accretion; however, remnants of a *gaja*'s head visible at the top left corner suggest that the long string represents the flayed skin of the *gaja*. The deity is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*.

Based on these attributes, the deity can be identified as Siva depicting the scene of Gajasurasamhara, the fierce aspect of the Bhagavana Siva as the destroyer of the Elephant Demon Gajasura. This figural representation is a unique occurrence in Malwa art and highlights Krishnavilas as an important artistic school.

Brahma:

The deity Brahma does not appear in the *Rigveda* in a clearly defined form. Although the concept of a cosmic creator is present, it is primarily associated with Visvakarma. The *Rigveda* also mentions Prajapati as the creator figure, and it is likely that when Brahma later gained prominence, he came to be identified with Prajapati. It is only in the *Puranas* that Brahma is firmly established as the primordial creator of the universe.

Some images of Brahma from Krishnavilas:



KVH 71 Brahma

Description- The architectural member is a finely executed sculpture of a male deity enshrined within a niche. The niche is flanked by two simple pilasters, each divided into three equal shafts by plain disc like elements. It is surmounted by a moulding and crowned with a *chandrasala* motif, above which appears a band of *kirttimukhas*, commonly referred to as *grasapattika*. Based on these architectural features, it may be inferred that this element once formed part of a pillar belonging to a *mukhamandapa*. The central figure represents a male deity, depicted as *chaturbhuja*. His natural right hand holds an indistinct object, the upper right bears a *sruka* (sacrificial ladle), his upper left holds a *pustaka* (manuscript), and his natural left carries a *kamandalu* (water-pot). The deity is adorned with a *jatamukuta* and exhibits three visible heads. His facial expression is serene and composed, exuding a sense of divine calm. The deity is well-ornate, adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *keyuras*, *nivi*, *uttariya*, *nupuras* and *vanamala*. At the right corner of the panel appears a *padma*

alamkarana motif. The deity can be identified as Brahma, the cosmic creator.



Brahma with consorts

Description- The architectural member is a frieze depicting a central male deity accompanied by two consort deities. They are shown seated beneath a canopy rendered in a stylised *pushpadala* scheme, composed of multiple concentric floral petals. Within this canopy, a semi-divine male figure is depicted flying above, holding what appears to be a *gada*. At the central level sits a male deity in *lalitasana* upon a lotus pedestal. He is *chaturbhuja*: the natural right hand holds an *akshamala*, the upper right hand carries a *sruka*, the upper left hand supports a *pustaka*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. The deity is *trimukha*, with a *jatamukuta*, long beard, and a pronounced pot belly. He is ornamented with *hara*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *uttariya*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. Based

on these attributes, the figure can be identified as Brahma. On either side, Brahma is flanked by two identical female deities seated in *lalitasana* on coiled *mrinala* stalks. Both are *dvibhuja*: their right hand is

in *abhaya mudra*, while the left holds a *kamandalu*. Their hair is arranged in a topknot, and they are adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. These figures represent Sarasvati and Gayatri, the two consorts of Brahma. At the base of the fragment runs a *ratnapattika* moulding. Directly below Brahma sit two diminutive female figures in a posture of veneration, looking upward towards the deity.

The portrayal of Brahma flanked by both Sarasvati and Gayatri is notably rare in sculptural tradition. At Krishna Vilas, this unique treatment is further accentuated by the rendering of his consorts without their independent iconographic identifiers, presenting them instead simply as attendant wives.

Sakti

Sakti represents the divine feminine principle and the primordial cosmic energy that permeates the universe. In Hindu philosophical thought, this energy is regarded as the dynamic power that enables creation, preservation, and transformation. Sakti is perceived as the personification of universal energy; without her cooperation, *Brahman*—the absolute cosmic reality—remains inactive and unable to manifest creation. Thus, Sakti embodies the active force through which the cosmos is animated and sustained.



DT-22 Mahesvari

Description- The architectural member features a female deity seated on a pedestal in *lalitasana*. She is framed on either side by plain pilasters divided into equal shafts by a circular ring. Although her head and upper pair of hands are broken, the natural hands are preserved: the right holds an *akshamala*, while the left carries a *kamandalu*. She is adorned in a conventional scheme of ornaments, including *karnakundalas*, *stanahara*, *kanthahara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. At the left side of the pedestal, a small bull figure is depicted in a seated posture with its neck lifted upward.

On the basis of attributes, this much-mutilated sculpture can still be identified as Matrika Mahesvari.



DT-24 Sitalamata

Description- The architectural member features a female deity seated upon a donkey. She is *dvibhuja*; her right hand is shown in *varada mudra* also holding an *akshamala*, while her left hand holds a *kamandalu*. Her hair is arranged in an elegant side bun, and she is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. She is identifiable as Sitalamata.



DT-39 Sarasvati

Description- The architectural member features a female *chaturbhuja* deity seated in *lalitasana* pose upon a pedestal. The natural right hand holds an *akshamala* while in *varadamudra*, the upper right hand holds a coiled *padma* by its *mrinala*, the upper left hand holds a *pustaka*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. She wears a *karandamukuta*, along with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*.

Based on the iconographic attributes, the deity can be identified as Sarasvati.



KVH-156 Chamunda

Description- The architectural member features a female deity enclosed within simple pilasters on either side. The goddess is *dasabhuji*, in which her natural right hand holds a *katara*. Her upper right hands hold a *trisula*, *khadga*, *pasa*, and one hand is in *varada mudra*. Her left hands carry a *khatvanga*, *damaru*, *kapalapatra*, and *naramunda*. Her natural left-hand rests on her chin, with her little finger placed inside her mouth in a whistling gesture. The deity is emaciated, with a shrunken body, contracted abdomen, elongated breasts, sunken facial features, and visible bones. She is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *karnakundala*, *keyura*, *kankana*, and *mala*. She stands atop a corpse serving as her *naravahana*. Based on the iconographic attributes, the goddess can be identified as Chamunda.



KD-11 Devi

Description- The architectural member features a female deity standing in *alidha* posture. She holds a *mala*, possibly a *mundamala*, raised in a manner suggestive of self-coronation. Her hair is arranged in a topknot, and she is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *kankana*, *uttariya*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, and *urudama*. Her left foot rests upon an indistinct object, now heavily weathered. At the base on either side are two seated female attendant figures. Each appears to have one hand in *abhaya mudra*, while the other hand holds an indistinct attribute. Their features are eroded, yet their supporting role within the composition remains evident.



MBC-106 Skandamata

Description- The architectural member features a divine female figure in a seated posture with a child on her lap. She is *dvibhuja*, in which the right hand holds a *sriphala* and the left hand supports the child sitting on her lap. The child can be seen reaching for his mother's breast. The female deity wears a *karanda mukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *kanthahara*, *stanahara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *mala*. The child figure is similarly composed, but his face is now mutilated. On the right side is a circular pilaster, which is now lost on the left side.

The deity can be identified as a *Matrika* with her child sitting on her lap. Since the child seems to be a toddler, slightly grown up than an infant, the deity may in fact be Skandamata.



CC-74 Parvati

Description- The architectural member depicts a *sthanaka chaturbhuja* female deity standing within a space enclosed by two slender circular pilasters. Her natural right hand is held in *varada mudra*; the upper right hand holds a *trisula*, the upper left hand holds a *sarpa*, and the natural left hand grasps an indistinct object. She wears a tapered *mukuta* and is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *mala*. A bull figure is visible at the lower left corner, while an *alamkarana* appears at the right corner.

On the basis of these attributes, the deity may be identified as Parvati. To the right stands a female attendant figure in *katyavalambita* pose, with her right hand resting on her thigh and the left holding a *chamara*. She is shown attending to a central deity that is now lost from the fragment.



Saptamatrika Panel

Description- The architectural member is a sculptural panel depicting four female divinities, possibly in a dancing stance. From left to right: the first figure represents a *chaturbhuja* deity with *trimukha* (tricephalic). Her natural right hand is in *abhaya mudra* holding an *akshamala*, upper right hand holds a *sruka* (sacrificial ladle), upper left hand holds a *pustaka* (manuscript), and natural left hand is in a peculiar dancing pose. The goddess is adorned with a *muktavali*, *nivi*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, and *nupura*. A bird, possibly a

swan is carved at the base near her left leg. The second deity, likewise *chaturbhuja*, displays her natural right hand in *abhaya mudra*, upper right hand holding a *trisula*, upper left hand grasping a *sarpa* (snake), and her natural left hand in a peculiar dancing stance as the first *Matrika*. She is adorned with a *jatamukuta* and the same ornamental scheme as the preceding deity. A seated bull is depicted at the base near her left leg. The third figure, similarly ornamented and crowned with a *karandamukuta*, is also *chaturbhuja*; her natural right hand is in *abhaya mudra*, upper right hand holds a *sakti*, upper left hand carries some indistinct object, possibly a bird and her natural left hand is in the peculiar dancing *mudra*. A bird, in all probability a peacock is carved at the base near her left leg. The fourth figure is again *chaturbhuja*, whose natural right hand holds a *sankha* (conch), upper right hand holds a *gada* (mace), upper left hand holds a *chakra* (disc), and her natural left hand is positioned in the peculiar dancing *mudra*. Her facial features are mutilated, and a small, defaced figure is discernible near the base of her left leg which might be identified as Garuda. The facial features of all four goddesses exhibit stylistic uniformity and all four wear a *jatamukuta* and upper drapery (*uttariya*).

Based on iconographic attributes, the deities can be identified respectively as Brahmi, Mahesvari, Kaumari and Vaishnavi.



Matrika Panel, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member is a sculptural panel depicting three *sthanaka* female divine figures shown in dynamic dancing postures. The deity on the left is an anthropomorphic figure with the head of a boar and the body of a human. She is depicted as *chaturbhuja*, in which her natural right hand is broken; the upper right hand holds an indistinct object, the upper left hand holds a *chakra*, and the natural left hand is rendered in a dancing *mudra*. The central deity is likewise represented as *chaturbhuja*. Her natural right hand holds a *vajra*,

the upper right hand an *akshamala*, and the upper left hand an *ankusa* (goad), while the natural left hand is displayed in a dancing gesture. The figure on the right is markedly distinct in iconography and

physique. She is represented with an emaciated body marked by protruding bones, a sunken stomach, hollow cheeks, elongated breasts, and a contracted abdomen. She too is depicted as *chaturbhuja*, in which her natural right hand holds a dagger, the upper right hand holds a *damaru*, the upper left hand carries a *khatvanga*, and the natural left hand is raised near her chin in a gesture suggestive of whistling. The ornamentation scheme of all three deities is largely uniform, comprising a *jatamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nivi*, and *nupura*.

Based on these attributes, the three figures may be identified respectively as Varahi, Indrani, and Chamunda. The surviving sequence indicates that the panel originally formed part of a larger *Saptamatrika* composition, of which the first four *Matrikas* are now lost.



Navagraha and Matrika Panel

Description- The architectural member is a horizontal sculptural panel depicting a sequence of nine male *sthanaka* deities, followed by seven female *sthanaka* deities, and concluding with a small male anthropomorphic figure. Beginning from the left, the first figure is a *dvibhuja* male deity holding a *padma* in both hands and is identifiable as Surya. This is followed by three *dvibhuja sthanaka* male deities, each composed in an identical scheme, with the right hand held in *abhaya mudra* and the left hand holding a *kamandalu*. These figures are identified respectively as Soma, Mangala, and Budha. Next is a *sthanaka chaturbhuja* male deity. The natural right hand holds an *akshamala*, the upper right hand holds a *sruga*, the upper left hand carries a *pustaka*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. The figure is flanked by a bird on one side and a lotus bud on the other and can be identified as Brihaspati. The following male deity is *dvibhuja* and stands in *tribhanga* posture, with the right hand in *abhaya mudra* and the left hand holding a *kamandalu*. This figure is identifiable as Sukra. He is followed by another *dvibhuja* male deity depicted with crossed legs, the right hand held in *abhaya mudra* and the left hand carrying a *kamandalu*. A crow is shown near his legs on the right side, allowing identification of the figure as Sani. Subsequently appears a composite representation of two figures: the upper figure stands with joined hands beneath a serpent hood, while the lower figure appears beneath him with bust only. This composite iconography represents Ketu and Rahu. All male deities of the *Navagraha* group are adorned in a broadly similar ornamental scheme, including elaborate *mukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, *urudama*, and *mala*. An exception is Surya, who is depicted in his conventional iconographic attire, wearing a *kirita mukuta* and boots, while otherwise sharing comparable ornamentation. Together, these figures form a complete *Navagraha* panel. The peculiar feature about this sequence is representation of Brihaspati. He is represented as Brahma with same attributes and has the place of importance here.

Following the *Navagraha* group are seven female *sthanaka* deities, all depicted in *tribhanga* posture and rendered as *dvibhuja*. The first female deity holds her right hand in *abhaya mudra* while the left hand carries a *kamandalu*. She wears an elaborate *jatamukuta* and is identified as Brahmani. She is followed by three similarly composed deities, identified as Mahesvari, Kaumari, and Vaishnavi. Next is an anthropomorphic female deity with the head of a boar and a human body. She holds her right hand in *abhaya mudra* and the left hand a *kamandalu*, and is identified as Varahi. This is followed by another female deity similar in composition, identified as Indrani. The final female figure is depicted with an emaciated body, elongated breasts, and prominently visible bones, allowing identification as Chamunda. The female deities share a largely uniform ornamental scheme, with certain variations. Most wear a tapered *mukuta*, except Varahi, who is shown without a *mukuta*, and Chamunda, who is depicted with *urdhvakesa*. Their ornaments include *karnakundalas*, *kanthahara*, *stanahara* (except Mahesvari), *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, *urudama*, *mala*, and *nupura*. A distinctive feature of this *Saptamatrika* panel is the presence of different birds accompanying each deity; these birds do not appear to have direct iconographic associations with the respective goddesses.

At the extreme right of the panel is a male anthropomorphic deity with the head of a *gaja* and a human body. He is depicted in child form and can be identified as Bala-Ganesa.

A notable compositional feature of this panel is the differential spatial treatment of the figures. Deities positioned in the foreground are provided with a *prabhavali* behind their heads, whereas those positioned in the background lack this feature, creating a layered visual hierarchy within the sculptural arrangement.



KVH-462 Tapasvini Parvati

Description- The architectural member is a sculptural panel featuring a female *chaturbhuja sthanaka* deity. Her natural right hand holds an *akshamala*, while the upper right hand holds a coiled *padma* with a Sivalinga at its centre. The upper left hand holds a similar coiled *padma*, but at its centre resides an anthropomorphic, pot-bellied male deity with the head of a *gaja*, identifiable as Ganesa. The natural left hand is broken. The deity wears an ornate *jatamukuta*, beautiful *karnakundalas*, *kanthahara*, *stanahara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nivi*, and a *mala*. Two fires are carved behind her hands. The base features four female attendant figures. Positioned slightly forward, two female figures can be seen holding a *mala* on either side, flanking the central deity. These are followed by another female figure on each side standing in *katyavalambita* pose. The ornamentation scheme of all four figures is identical: hair styled in *dhammilla*, along with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *nivi*, and *mala*.

Based on these attributes, the central deity can be identified as Tapasvini Parvati, accompanied by *maladharinis* and attendants. The apex of the backrest features three niches housing three male *chaturbhuja* deities seated in *lalitasana* pose. The entire scheme is heavily weathered; hence, precise identification is difficult. However, based on their placement, they may be identified as the Trimurti.

Ashtadikpala:

In Hindu mythology, the eight cardinal and inter-cardinal directions are safeguarded by the *Ashtadikpalas*, the directional guardians who occupy a prominent position within the cosmological framework of *Vastusastra*. Their presence is not merely symbolic but architecturally codified, finding systematic placement within temple plans and sculptural programmes.

Indra: Among the pantheon, Indra occupies a pre-eminent position as the *Devaraja*—the king of the *devas*. Counted among the *Dvadasadityas* in the earliest textual traditions, he later assumes the defined role of *dikpala* of the eastern direction. His principal attribute is the *vajra* (thunderbolt) symbolically presiding over rain and storms.



KVH (89) Indra

Description- The architectural member features a male deity standing in a graceful *tribhanga* pose. The figure is *chaturbhuja*, with both his right hands now broken; his upper left hand holds a *vajra* whereas his natural left hand carries a *kamandalu*. Although the facial features are mutilated, the deity is evidently adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *keyura*, *katibandha*, *nivi*, *nupura*, and a *mala*. At the right base, the remnants of an elephant figure still survive.

Based on the iconographic attributes, the figure can be identified as Indra, the *dikapala* of east direction.

Yama: In Hindu cosmology, Yama is the deity presiding over death and the moral adjudication of souls in the afterlife. Within the directional schema of the *Ashtadikpalas*, he is established as the *dikpala* of the southern direction. His principal attributes include the *danda* (staff), and in certain iconographic traditions, the rooster.



SO-49 Yama

Description- The architectural member depicts a male *chaturbhuja* *sthanka* deity. The natural right hand holds an *akshamala*, while the upper right hand is broken which would have held a *danda*. The upper left hand preserves the remnants of a rooster, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. The hair is arranged in *urdhvakesa*. The deity is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nivi*, *mala*, and *nupura*. On the left side of the pedestal, a *mahisha* figure is depicted.

Based on these attributes, the deity can be identified as the directional god Yama, the guardian of the southern direction.

Varuna: Among the primary list of the *Dvadasadityas*, Varuna occupies a position of considerable prominence alongside Indra. In early Vedic thought, he is invested with kingship and sovereignty, functioning as the supreme upholder of *Rita*—the cosmic moral order that sustains the universe. Within the directional schema of the *Ashtadikpalas*, Varuna is established as the *dikpala* of the western direction. His primary attribute is the *pasa* (noose), symbolising his power to bind those who transgress moral law. His *vahana* is the *makara*, a mythic aquatic creature. Iconographically, he is personified as the god of water and the cosmic ocean.



KVH-146 Varuna

Description- The architectural member features a male deity standing on a pedestal in *abhayanga* pose. The crowning element consists of a *grasapattika* adorned with two *kirttimukhas*. The deity is *chaturbhuja*, in which his natural right hand holds an *akshamala* (rosary) with *varadamudra*, his upper right hand bears a *pasa*, his upper left hand once held a *padma* (now broken), and his natural left hand carries a *kamandalu*. He is adorned with a *mukuta*, *karnakundala*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *uttariya*, *nivi*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *mala*, and *nupuras*. An obliterated figure is visible near his feet which might have been of a *makara*.

Based on attributes, the deity is identifiable as Varuna. The architectural member was originally found in three fragments but has since been reconstructed.

Vayu: The deity Vayu is prominently mentioned in the *Rigveda* as the divine personification of wind. In early Vedic hymns, he is closely associated with Indra and is often invoked alongside him. Within the directional schema of the *Ashtadikpalas*, Vayu is designated as the *dikpala* of the northwest direction. His principal attributes include the *ankusa* (goad), a banner, and an inflated garment that visually conveys the movement of wind. His divine mount (*vahana*) is the stag.



CC-166 Vayu

Description- The front profile of the architectural member features a *sthanaka* male *chaturbhuj*a deity. His natural right hand is shown in *varada mudra*, the upper right hand holds a banner, the upper left hand holds a *padma*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. A deer is depicted seated near his right leg. He is adorned with a *mukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, *mala*, and *nupura*.

Based on these attributes, the deity can be identified as Vayu, the directional deity of the northwest.

Kubera: The deity Kubera emerges prominently within the Hindu mythological landscape during the Puranic period. Therein, he is described as the king of the celestial beings known as *Yakshas* and subsequently attains elevated status as the God of Wealth and guardian of earthly treasures. Within the directional schema of the *Ashtadikpalas*, Kubera is traditionally designated as the *dikpala* of the northern direction. His primary attributes include the *nakula* (mongoose), and the *madira patra* (wine cup), signifying affluence and enjoyment.



SD-114 Kubera

Description- The architectural member is a niche located on a plain wall fragment. The niche is composed of two circular pilasters and is topped by a *gavaksha* motif. Within the niche sits a male, pot-bellied figure. He is depicted as *dvibhuj*a, with his right hand holding a fruit, probably a citron, and his left hand holding a *nakula*. His hair is tied in an elegant updo, and he is shown wearing *karnakundala*, *hara*, *uttariya*, and *nivi*. Based on these attributes, the deity can be identified as Kubera.

Agni: Agni occupies an eminent position in the Vedic corpus, as attested by the numerous hymns of the *Rigveda* dedicated to him. As the divine embodiment of fire, Agni functions as the sacred intermediary between humans and gods, for it is through him that ritual offerings are conveyed to the celestial realm. However, in the later Puranic age, his independent stature gradually diminished as devotional currents increasingly focused on other major deities. Nevertheless, Agni continued to retain theological relevance and was at times conceptually aligned with Rudra, particularly in relation to the element of destruction inherent in fire. Within the canonical schema of the *Ashtadikpalas*, Agni is established as the guardian (*dikpala*) of the south-east direction. His principal attributes include the spear and the *pustaka* (manuscript). Iconographically, Agni is frequently depicted with tongues of flame rising behind his head. His divine mount (*vahana*) is the ram, an animal closely linked to sacrificial rites.



Agni, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member features a *sthanaka* male divine figure standing in *dvibhanga* pose. The deity is depicted *chaturbhuj*, in which his three hands are broken except the natural left hand which holds a *kamandalu*. He wears an intricate *kiritamukuta* along with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *keyura*, *yajnopavita*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, *urudama*, *mala*, and *nupura*. A ram can be seen on the left side of the pedestal, depicted as his divine mount. The deity's halo is ornamented with flames rendered as curved projections arranged in bands inside a *padmaprabhaval*. A flying semi-divine figures holding a *mala* can be seen above the deity's head on the right side. Two male attendant figures standing in *tribhanga* pose can be seen on either side of the base. Their hair is arranged in *urdhvakesa* and they are adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *keyura*, *uttariya*, *yajnopavita*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nivi*, *nupura*, and *mala*. Both attendants are shown holding a staff in their hands. A ram is depicted seated on the left side of the base, representing the divine mount (*vahana*) of the central deity. Based on these attributes, the deity may be identified as Agni, accompanied by attendants and flanked by *maladharis*.

Isana: Isana is considered a form of Siva. He is counted among the *Ekadasa Rudras* and the *Ashtabhairavas*. Very little information is known about his early origin, but he is regarded as the *dikpala* of the north-east direction. His iconographic attributes are similar to those associated with Siva and Bhairava.



Isana, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member features a *sthanaka* male deity standing in *tribhanga* pose within a niche. He is depicted *chaturbhuja*, in which his natural right hand is in *varada mudra*, the upper right hand holds a *trisula*, the upper left hand holds a *sarpa*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. The niche is flanked by a simple *vyala* scheme featuring a *simha* standing atop a *gaja*, with a *gana* figure at the base. Based on the attributes, the deity can be identified as Isana, the *dikpala* of the north-east direction.

Nairrita: Nairrita is a Hindu deity who personifies death, decay, and sorrow. In early Hindu scriptures, Nairriti is described as a goddess associated with inauspiciousness and the realm of the dead. In later Hindu tradition, Nairrita is conceived as a male deity and is regarded as the *dikpala* of the south-west.



SD 43 Nairrita

Description- The architectural member features a male *dvibhuja* figure standing in *katyavalambita* pose. A square *ghatapallava* pilaster is visible on the left side, indicating that the figure was originally housed within a niche, the right profile of which is now broken. The male figure holds a *khadga* in his right hand, while the left hand rests on his thigh. His hair is tied in a side top-bun, and he is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, *kankana*, *mala*, and *nupura*. On the left side of the pedestal, a *khara* (donkey), is depicted as his *vahana*.

Based on these attributes, the deity can be identified as Nairrita, the guardian deity of the south-west direction.

Tantric:

Tantricism represents an esoteric stream of worship that emphasizes *yoga* and ritual-oriented practices as a means to attain spiritual liberation and supernatural powers. The underlying philosophy rests upon the union of Saiva and Sakti principles, where the dynamic cosmic energy of Sakti complements the transcendent consciousness of Siva. Through the use of *tantras*, *mantras*, and elaborate ritual procedures, practitioners sought to harness divine energies for both spiritual realisation and worldly attainments.

This tradition gained considerable prominence in the Malwa region between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE, a development that is clearly reflected in the sculptural and iconographic repertoire of the period.

Some such *tantric* images from Krishnavilas include:



Vishadevi

Description- The architectural member features a female sculpture in a standing posture. Her right hand is raised, while the left hand is curled in a *mudra* near her chest, simultaneously holding a *sarpa*. A scorpion is depicted emerging from her *yoni*. She is adorned with *karnakundalass*, *kanthahara*, *keyura*, and *kankana*. Her garments are difficult to ascertain, though faint remnants are visible near her left knee. The pedestal on which she stands bears a two-line inscription in Nagari script, which can be read as:

विजयी[य]दात्री । ४। दले ल_कंठा_

लिखेला पोथी कीया[धा]

Translation: विजय देने वाली। ८। ...कंठ वाली
पोथी लिखी गई।

The sculpture is particularly unique because it diverges from the conventional *surasundari* motif associated with a scorpion. In the typical representation, a scorpion is shown on the *surasundari*'s thigh, prompting her to loosen or remove her lower garment in an attempt to rid herself of the creature—a theme commonly encountered in medieval Malwa temple art. In contrast, the present depiction is markedly different and therefore exceptionally rare. The figure on the basis of inscription and attributes is identifiable as a Vishadevi who is being propitiated to attain victory in a war.



CC-54 Pisachini

Description- The architectural member depicts an emaciated female figure standing against a simple square pillar surmounted by a *purna kalasa*. She is shown in a dynamic dancing posture, holding a dagger in her right hand and appearing to drink from a *kapalapatra* held in her left. The figure's skeletal body is rendered with prominently articulated bones, elongated breasts, and ferocious facial features, accentuating her fearsome appearance. She is depicted with *urdhvakesa* along with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, and *nivi*. Based on these distinctive iconographic features, the figure can be identified as a *Pisachini*.



Yogini, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member features a female figure with an emaciated body seated upon a pedestal. Her contracted abdomen, visible rib cage, and elongated breasts emphasise a skeletal appearance, while her bulging eyes further intensify the austere expression of the figure. Her vaginal opening has been intentionally indicated. Her right-hand rests upon the pedestal, while the left hand is placed upon her knee. Based on these attributes, the figure may plausibly be identified as a Yogini, possibly engaged in a form of tantric practice.

Surasundari

Surasundaris are celestial maidens celebrated for their youthful grace and sensuous beauty, embodying fertility, prosperity, and divine vitality. In temple architecture, they are frequently represented in a variety of elegant poses on exterior walls, pillars, and architectural projections, though they are typically absent from the *garbhagriha*, the sanctum that houses the principal deity. Through their refined ornamentation and dynamic postures, *surasundaris* contribute not only to the aesthetic enrichment of the monument but also to its symbolic program, reinforcing themes of prosperity and cosmic harmony.

Some *Surasundaris* from Krishnavilas are:

Description- The architectural member features a female figure standing in *katyavalambita* pose. To her right is a slender circular pilaster. Her hair is arranged in an elegant side updo, and she is adorned with *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*.

Her right-hand rests gracefully upon her thigh, while the left hand holds a *darpana*, identifying her as a *darpanasundari*, though crudely made.



Darpana, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member is a broken wall fragment belonging to the *kakshasana* wall. Within the left *salilantara* spaces stand two beautifully composed female figures depicted in a cross-legged stance, each holding a mirror in one hand while the other hand is engaged in arranging her hair and ornaments. Their bodies are rendered with voluptuous grace. Their hair is arranged in an elegant side bun, and they are adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, a flowing *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. Based on their attributes and gesture of self-adornment, the figures may be identified as *Darpanasundaris*.



Markatacheshta Surasundari, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member depicts a *surasundari* accompanied by a diminutive *markata* attempting to climb upon her. In response, the female figure raises her right hand in a gesture of striking the creature, while her left hand gathers her lower drapery, which the *markata* has mischievously tugged downward. The composition captures a lively moment of playful interaction, infusing the sculpture with movement and narrative charm. This representation of *Markatacheshta* is a distinctive motif observed in the sculptural tradition of Malwa.



Nupurapadika, Kota Museum

Description- The architectural member depicts a *surasundari* gracefully bending to fasten a *nupura* (anklet) on her left leg. The figure is accompanied by a diminutive *mridangavadaka* seated on the right side of the pedestal, adding a musical dimension to the scene and enhancing the sense of performative preparation. The female figure is richly adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *keyura*, *uttariya*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. Based on this characteristic gesture, she may be identified as the *Nupurapadika surasundari*.

Syncretic:

Hindu literature is often characterised by a tradition of shared narratives and intertextuality, where ideas and motifs are reiterated and reinterpreted across various texts. This phenomenon is also reflected in the iconographic schemes of deities. Composite images represent this synthesis, depicting attributes of multiple deities unified within a single figure. Such representations embody the theological idea of the essential unity underlying diverse divine manifestations.

Here are some syncretic images from Krishnavilas:



KVH 494 Hari-Hara-Prajapati-Hiranyagarbha

Description- The architectural member features a male deity seated in *utkutikasana* within a niche. He is seated upon an exquisitely carved *padmasana*. The figure represents an extraordinary specimen of Hindu syncretism, merging attributes of the principal male deities of the Hindu pantheon. The deity is depicted as *shadbhuja*. His natural pair of hands hold a stylised *padma*, an identifying attribute of Surya. The middle right hand holds a *chakra*, an attribute of Vishnu, while the upper right hand holds a *sruva*, an object associated with Brahma. The upper left hand holds a *trisula*, the signature attribute of Siva, while the middle-left hand holds a *sankha*, another object held by Vishnu. The deity is depicted as *trimukha* (tricephalic), with the central face wearing a *kiritamukuta*, while the two flanking heads wear *jatamukuta*. The figure is richly adorned with *karnakundalas*, *kanakana*, *uttariya*, *varma* (armour), *avyanga* (waist girdle), *nivi*, and most importantly *upanaha* (boots), a characteristic feature of Surya.

The image represents the primary solar deity Surya or Hiranyagarbha, assimilating elements of Hari (Vishnu), Hara (Siva), and Prajapati (Brahma), thereby embodying a rare and significant iconographic synthesis.

Other Deities:

The Hindu pantheon, beyond the *Trimurti*, encompasses a wide array of divine figures drawn from diverse mythological traditions such as the epics, *Puranas*, and regional folk narratives. Many of these deities emerge from the major religious streams of the Saiva, Vaishnava, and Sakta traditions, gradually attaining prominence as independent idols of worship. Over time, their cults developed distinct iconographic and ritual identities, which found expression in temple art and architecture across different regions of the subcontinent. Some such sculptural representations are preserved among the remains at Krishnavilas:



KVH 63 Samkarshana/Balarama

Description- This architectural fragment consists of two sections, a latticed window to the left and a niche carved inside twin pilasters to the right. The two pilasters are separated by a diamond-shaped floral motif. The niche houses a deity having a seven-hooded snake canopy, and holding a plough in his left hand and a wine-cup in his right hand. He is adorned with a *nivi*, *graiveyaka*, *vanamala*, *karnakundalas*, *kankanas*, *keyuras*, *nupuras* and a beautiful hair coiffure. He is identifiable as Seshavatara Balarama.



KVH 70 Nagadeva

Description- The architectural member depicts a male deity standing beneath the canopy of a seven-hooded serpent. The figure is adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *keyura*, *nivi*, *uttariya*, *nupuras* and *vanamala*. The deity is *dvibhuj*, however, both arms are broken, rendering the identification of the attributes indiscernible.

Based on the iconographic features, particularly the *kiritamukuta* and *vanamala*, the central figure may be identified as Vishnu, while the serpent canopy and the coils in the back represent Seshanaga. In case this identification is not correct, the figure can simply be termed as Nagadeva.



KVH 178 Ganesa with consort

Description- The architectural member depicts a male anthropomorphic deity seated in *lalitasana* alongside his consort. The deity possesses the head of a *gaja* and the body of a human. He is portrayed as *dvibhuj*, wherein his left hand holds a *padma* and his right hand is shown gently resting upon the bust of his consort, suggesting intimacy and divine affection. The figures are seated upon a simple oval pedestal, now weathered. Due to the eroded surface, the ornamentation scheme of the male deity is not entirely

discernible; however, remnants of *nupura* are visible on his feet. His consort, seated gracefully in *lalitasana* upon his lap, mirrors his posture. Her right-hand rests upon her thigh, while her left hand is placed affectionately upon the deity's right shoulder in peculiar fashion as opposed to being wrapped

around and resting on deity's left shoulder. Despite the sculpture's worn condition, she is identifiable by her adornments, including *karnakundalas*, *hara*, and *nupura*.

Based on the iconographic attributes and compositional style, the depiction represents Ganesa with his consort, a rare and exceptional iconographic form.



CC 61 Ganesa with his consorts

Description- The architectural member depicts an anthropomorphic deity with the head of a *gaja* and the body of a human, identifiable as Ganesa. He is shown seated in *lalitasana* on a pedestal, accompanied by two female figures seated on his lap on either side, signifying his consorts. The deity is represented as *chaturbhuja*: his natural right-hand rests on the waist of the consort seated to his right, the upper right hand holds a battle axe, the upper left hand holds a *padma*, and the natural left-hand rests on the waist of the consort seated to his

left. Both female figures hold a *sriphala* in their rear hands, while their other hands are indistinct due to damage. Ganesa is adorned with *hara*, *nivi*, and *nupura*, and bears a *Shrivatsa* mark at the center of his chest. The ornamentation scheme of his consorts mirrors that of the deity and includes *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. A *padmalamakarana* motif is carved on either side of the pedestal.

On iconographic grounds, the two female figures may be identified as Riddhi and Siddhi. This representation is particularly noteworthy, as depictions of Ganesa accompanied by his consorts are relatively rare, with the deity more commonly portrayed in solitary form within the sculptural repertoire.



CC- 86 Front profile



CC-86 Right profile

Vasus

Description- The architectural member features two male anthropomorphic deities with bovine heads and human bodies. Both figures are depicted seated in *lalitasana* posture. They are represented as

chaturbhuja, with the natural right hand holding an *akshamala*, the upper two hands holding *padma*, and the natural left hand holding a *kamandalu*. The figures are adorned with *uttariya*, *kankana*, and *nivi*.

Based on these attributes, the deities can be identified as Vasus, likely forming part of a now-lost panel depicting the Ashtavasus.



CC 167 Brahmani, Surya and Siva

Description- The architectural member under discussion is a frieze featuring a central niche flanked by two subsidiary niches, each surmounted by a *kalasakumbha* moulding. The central niche houses a male *dvibhuja* deity seated in *padmasana* posture, holding a stylized *padma* in both hands. He is flanked on either side by female attendant figures,

each holding a *chamara* in the front hand, while the rear hand rests upon the thigh. The central deity may be identified as Surya, accompanied by *chamaradharinis* on either side. The right subsidiary niche contains a *sthanaka* male *chaturbhuja* deity depicted in *tribhanga* posture. His natural right hand is in *varada mudra*, the upper right hand holds a *trisula*, the upper left hand carries a *sarpa*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*. Based on these iconographic attributes, the deity can be identified as Siva. The left subsidiary niche accommodates a *sthanaka* female *chaturbhuja* deity, also shown in *tribhanga* posture. Her natural right-hand displays *varada mudra*, the upper right hand holds either a *sruka* or a *padma*, the upper left hand carries a *pustaka*, and the natural left hand holds a *kamandalu*.

On the basis of these attributes, the deity may be identified as Brahmani. A distinctive feature of this sculptural frieze is that, in place of Brahma, the iconographic composition is completed by his female counterpart, Brahmani. This substitution is relatively uncommon and may reflect a localised or sectarian sculptural convention.



KVH 79 Bhairava

Description- The architectural member features a male deity standing upon a pedestal. The deity is *chaturbhuja* in which his natural right hand once held a *kapalapatra*, his upper right hand holds a *khadga*, his upper left hand holds a *khetaka*, and his natural left hand holds a *naramunda*. The figure is characterised by *pingalorddhakesa* and a prominent beard and moustache. He is adorned with a *sarpa* necklace, *karnakundala*, *keyura*, *nupura*, and a long *mala*. His genitals are intentionally carved.

Based on the iconographic attributes, the deity can be identified either as Nairrita or Bhairava, both terrific forms of Bhagavana Siva



KVH 85 Nritya Bhairava

Description- The architectural member consists a niche housing a male deity. The niche is flanked by two pilasters articulated with intervening disc motifs with the crowning part missing. The central figure is *chaturbhuj*a, with his natural hands positioned in a dancing pose, while his upper right hand holds a *khatvanga* and his upper left hand holds a *damaru*. The deity sits/stands in a dynamic posture. He is adorned with coiled hair, *karnakundala*, *hara*, *katibandha*, *nivi*, *keyura*, *nupura*, and a *mala*. On the right side of the backrest appears a male flute player, similarly ornamented and participating in the

compositional scheme. The deity stands upon a male figure, possibly a corpse lying at the base, identifiable by his elongated ears. The deity is identifiable as Nritya-Bhairava.



KVH 480 Rama-Sita

Description- The architectural member is a broken fragment of a much larger sculptural panel. It features a *sthanaka* male and female divine couple. The right side of the panel depicts the female figure, shown holding a portion of her drapery in her right hand, while the left hand is now mutilated. Her hair is arranged in an elegant updo and she is richly adorned with *karnakundalas*, torque, *uttariya*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, *urudama*, and *mala*. On the left side stands the accompanying male figure. His right hand holds a *bana* (arrow), while the left hand holds a *dhanusha* (bow). His hair is matted and arranged atop the head, and he is ornamented with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *kankana*, *uttariya*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, and *mala*.

Based on the iconographic attributes, the divine couple can be identified as Rama, the seventh *avatara* of Vishnu, accompanied by his consort Sita, the divine *avatara* of Lakshmi. The representation of Rama-Sita in medieval sculptural art is relatively rare, and its occurrence within the Malwa region is particularly significant, underscoring the distinct regional iconographic preferences and devotional emphasis of the Malwa artistic tradition. The broken sculpture possibly formed part of a larger Vaishnavite image.

Conservation Works at Krishnavilas Temple complex

Krishnavilas is such a vast site with scattered temple remains that it requires a lot of conservation and restoration efforts. The Jaipur Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India has carried out a number of conservation and restoration works at various temple groups of the complex, particularly between 2022 and 2026. The majority of works include exposing the remains, taking out and shifting of fallen architectural members of temple, Earth work, Lime concrete, red sand stone flooring, R.R. stone masonry, Recess pointing & other minor repair work etc. along with jungle clearance.

Conservation and restoration of shrines at Char Khambha complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of shrines at Char Khambha complex



Before



During



After

Conservation and restoration of shrines at Char Khambha complex



Before



After

onservation and restoration of shrines at Char Khambha complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of shrines at Char Khambha complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of shrines at Char Khambha complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of the outer wall of Chhipa ki Chandni complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Dev ji ka Dher complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Dev ji ka Dher complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Dev ji ka Dher complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Jain Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of adjoining structure at Khai ka Dher Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of shrines at Khai ka Dher complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Khai ka Dher Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Khai ka Dher Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Saat Okhli Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Saat Okhli Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Saat Okhli Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher



Before



During



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher Temple complex



Before



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher



Before



During



After

Conservation and restoration of Shiv Dher Temple complex (Baori)



Before



After

Further readings:

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