

Jiwaji University,Gwalior (Copyright material)

AIHC and Archaeology, Course No.403, Unit 4

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### **Central Indian Architecture (Gwalior)**

Gwalior emerged as a centre of **Nagara** style of temples in about 7<sup>th</sup> cent. ACE which spread in the entire northern Madhya Pradesh with its main centers' like Mahua, Terahi, Kadwaha (Dist. Ashok Nagar), Amrol (Dist.Gwalior), Naresar and Batesar (Dist.Morena). The **nagara** formula was introduced and developed on the soil of Gwalior region which first interacted with the **mandapika** mode throughout Central India. Mahua is credited to introduce the nucleus of **nagara** style which gradually evolved in Gwalior (ancient **Gopadri**) and appeared in different forms from the 8<sup>th</sup> cent.ACE to 11<sup>th</sup> cent.ACE continuously. The representative examples of these temples are situated atop the hill fort of Gwalior. The main architectural features of these temples are described here under-

#### **Teli Ka Mandir**

This temple is an excellent creation of architecture with its exceptional plan and design. On plan, it consists of a rectangular sanctum, measuring 30x16ft internally, an **antarala** and an enormous doorway (35ft. high) approached by a flight of steps. The exterior wall of the

**antarala** (vestibule) is projected prominently which form a bold **kapili** inside. Some scholars have opined that this temple had a **mandapa**(porch) in front, which is now lost, but the ground plan with its axis does not support to this possibility. On the basis of its gigantic super structure (**valabhi sikhara**) of wagon-vault shape(90ft.high) over the sanctum which commonly adorn the south Indian temples, the present appellation **Teli** or **Telangana** became popular. In fact, a merchant guild named **tailika-shreni** nurtured this monument in 9<sup>th</sup> cent.ACE and thus, the temple got its name as Teli ka mandir.

The plinth (**adhishthana**) of the temple rests on three plain courses in which a heavy molding (**bandhana**) is adjusted. This molding has an **antarpatta** (recess) divided into two parts. The lower part is carved with about 113 small niches containing figures of deities like Brahma,Vishnu,Surya,Vayu,Agni,Kubera,Ganesa,Karttikeya and various forms of Siva, demigods, sages and attendants.

The upper part is carved with the mythical animals, **kirttimukhas**, **kinnaras**, **ihamrigas**, birds and peacocks with scroll tails. The **adhishthana** is crowned by the usual **kapota** cornice resting on two rows of rafter-ends (**tulapitha**) decorated with floral pattern.

The **jangha** rises above the **adhithana** which has three projections on the shorter sides i.e. north and south and five projections(**rathas**) on the longer west side (back wall of the sanctum). The central projections (**bhadra rathas**) on the three sides are provided with a large niche (now empty) marked by a replica of door way. The **kapili** projections (**rathas**) are also marked by a large niche having a complete doorframe adorned with the ornate vertical bands (**sakhas**). These feigned door frames are highly ornate and capped by the **udgama** pediment composed of miniature **chaitya** designs. The part of **jangha** is marked by chain and bell design surmounted by a **kapotika** and the **padma** molding. These moldings form the **varandika** whence the **sikhara** rises upward.

The **sikhara** rising above **varandika** consists of two storeys. It is a normal **nagara sikhara** showing a set of **bhumi-amalaka** and surmounted by a **valabhi** roof. This **valabhi** (wagon-vault roof ) is in two stages. On both the shorter sides(north-south), it has a beautiful **chaitya** dormer bearing an image of eight armed **Simhavahini Durga** in south and a figure of four armed seated image in **utkutikasana** with an **akshamala** and **yagapatta** tied round the knees representing **Lakulisa** in north. These **chaitya** dormers are surmounted by a set of bigger **gavaksha** arches crowned by a sun window. The

longer sides (east-west) of the **valabhi** roof are decorated with a row of small **chaitya** designs.

The grand main doorway on the east is originally composed of five **sakhas**. Its lintel (**sira dala**) bears a figure of **Garuda** at the centre. The base of the door jambs shows the figure of river goddesses (**Ganga-Yamuna**) flanked by female attendants and **saiva** door guardians (**Nandi-Mahakala**). A figure of **lakulisa** is also shown preaching his five disciples at the right side of the **udumbara** (base stone slab of the door).

The initial part of a metrical hymn inscribed on the wall of southern **kapili** projection cogently refers to the iconography of **Durga**. The rectangular sanctum of the temple and another inscription of a famous Gurjara-Pratihara king from Gwalior speaks of founding a grand **Nava-Durga** temple on **Gopagiri**. These evidences aver this temple to be dedicated to Goddess-**Durga**.

On the basis of palaeography of aforesaid one lined inscription in the temple and another inscription mentioned above, art style and architectural features, this temple may safely be assigned to the first quarter of 9<sup>th</sup> cent. ACE.

