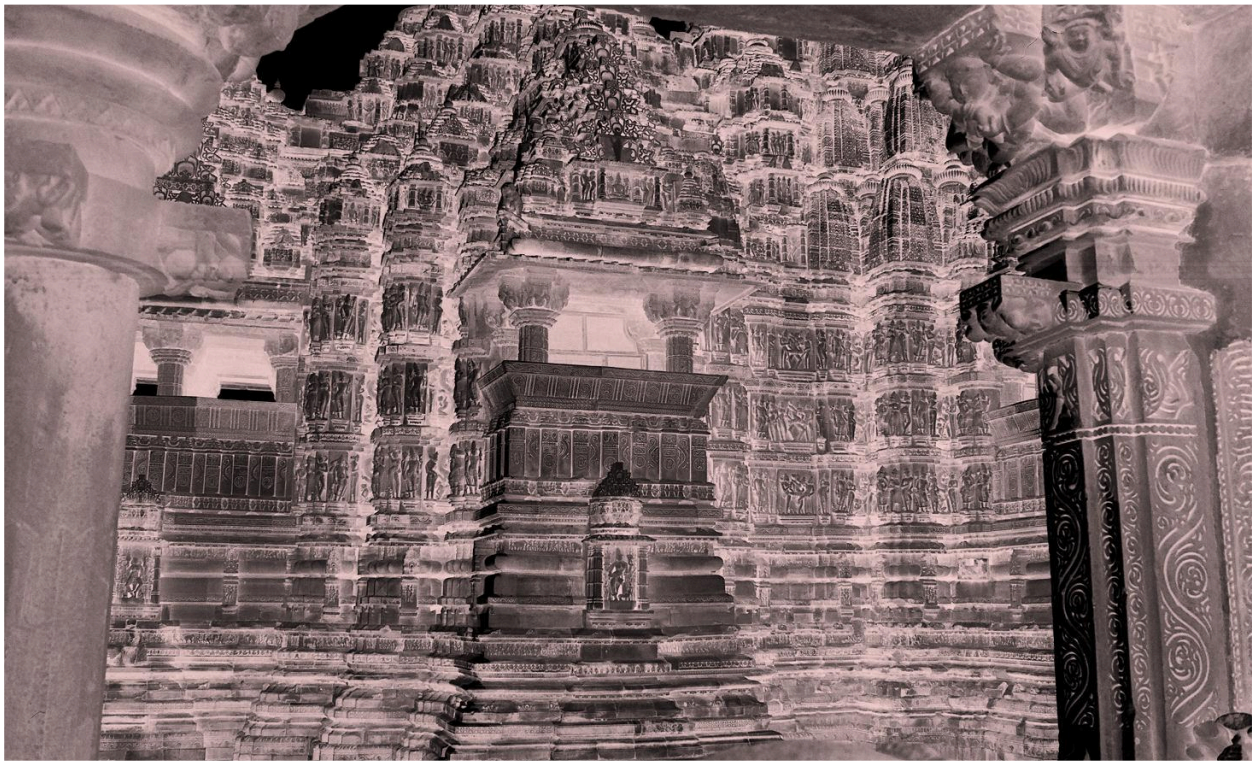
FreedomYug

THE NEW ERA OF COMPUTING

STRIKE A NEW POSE

WHY KHAJURAHO NEEDS GNU/LINUX

PLUS: FORGOTTEN VERSES FROM THE DIGITAL SUTRA OF INDIA



Make Khajuraho More Sexy

Do you want to taste freedom? Then visit Khajuraho, the small village in the middle of absolute nowhere, in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The true liberation and freedom of the Indian body, mind, and soul is captured in hundreds of the most stunning and erotic sculptures in exquisite details. The temples in stone are the silent embodiement of the highest peaks of consciousness India has experienced in the past one thousand years. What I find even more amazing, is that these temples survived the moghul invasions, and even hundreds of years of the prudish British Empire. They have also survived earthquakes and other calamaties that have struck the coun-

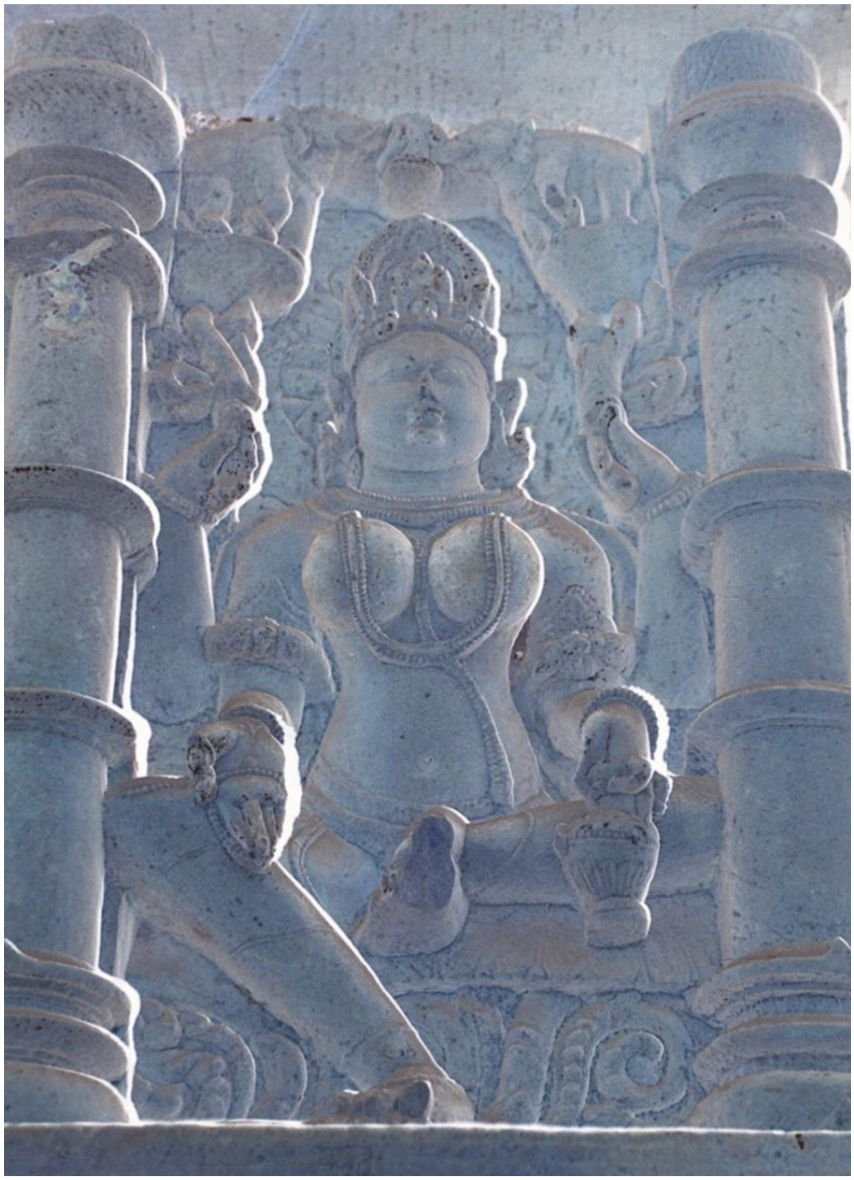
try. But alas! The small historic site, now a major dot on the world tourism map, has not survived the onslaught of proprietory software that snatch away everybody's digital freedoms.

The Naked Truth

As you exit the gates of the western group of temples, you are confronted by rows and rows of small hotels, restaurants, STD booths, and other kind of tourist-oriented shops. The one thing that immediately stands out is the number of internet cafes in this village. The place has one of the highest density of internet cafes I've seen so far in India. A modest Rs 25 to Rs 30 buys you thirty minutes of surfing. Small shacks, running cheap assembled PCs, connect to the remot town of Jhansi by a slow, pokey dial-up connection. Jhansi is atleast four hours away by road, so you can imagine how far out Khajuraho really is in the heartland of India. Even more interesting, I discovered children from the villages saving and spending money to surf the net. One look at the monitors in one cybercafe made me turn away in disgust. No, they were not surfing for pornography (this is Khajuraho, remember) but because they were using what was seemingly a non-authorised copy of a thoroughly proprietory operating system and software. These children do not know what software freedom is, neither do the cybercafe owners. I suspect even the village authorities wouldn't know. I just marveled at how slowly, unwittingly, a whole village will grow up and acquire skills on proprietory software, and find one day that they may just have to pay more than

Left
View of one of the temples.

Below
A sculpture of one of the dieties carved on the outer wall of a temple.



Inspired by the vision of Osho.
Niyam Bhushan is a leading technology writer, editor, columnist, with a background in graphic design. He consults and trains in digital imagery. He has been using computers across several platforms since 1982, and loves the freedom and power offered by GnuLinux.
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they could have ever earned from those cafes. Assuming a hypothetical situation where eveyone is forced to pay up for all authorised software, the surfing charges would suddenly jump to double or triple the existing rate. The villagers may just find that even then the money does not go into their pockets, but in paying for steep licensing fees for upgrades, new releases, and the usual problems you and I already understand. More importantly, I doubt those village children would ever be able to afford those kind of exorbitant access charges anymore.

One cybercafe owner I talked to was already complaining bitterly about how they lose money on cafes. Apparantly, a slew of the latest viruses had just rendered almost all systems in the village mostly unusable. Competent PC tech support is only possible from Jhansi. Only one or two local people have some basic knowledge of troubleshooting and are much in demand. Thus, customers who pay for time find themselves straddled with a virus-infected, decaying OS, crash and bug-prone PC that also frequently disconnects or just reboots.

Liberate Khajuraho

How I wish I had just packed my trusty CD of Knoppix, or even RedHat and other distros! One night, as I softly gazed at the splendour of the clear, night sky vaulting above the temples, I suddenly realized that across this great sub-continent, smaller towns, villages, and remote places are gradually waking up to computers, the internet, and the digital world. Without the awareness of muft and mukt software. Something needs to be done. Anybody near Khajuraho, or visiting it soon? Please carry some GnuLinux Cds. I talked to some of the cafe owners about it, and they were thrilled. You could charge them a modest Rs 250 or Rs 350 per installation, or you could barter for some free access. But this story is not just about Khajuraho. Every cybercafe opening near you, or in your home town or village, needs to have a dual-boot machine, if not a GnuLinux-only PC. I wish the local governments would have a tough policy stand on this. In the meantime, you and I could start a new revolution, one PC, one cybercafe at a time. All we have to do is copy, share, and install our GnuLinux Cds for the above fees or barter. Then orient people, and encourage them to copy and share further. Imagine the tremendous employment and work opportunities across India as this movement catches fire. The wealth generated will stay here in India. What could be more sexy than that?

Getting There

Khajuraho is 590 kms south of the Indian capital of New Delhi.

By Air
The airport is at Khajuraho.

By Rail
Jhansi (172 kms) and Satna (117 kms) are the major railheads. The road from Jhansi to Khajuraho is rough, though picturesque. Try to get bookings for airconditioned tourist buses.

By Road
Khajuraho is 590 kms from Delhi via Gwalior and Jhansi.

Best time to visit
October to March. Check for dates of the annual 'Khajuraho Festival.'

MIGRATING FROM WINDOWS TO GNULINUX. FOR THE NON-TECHIE IN A HURRY

SEVEN STEPS TO SOFTWARE SAMADHI

STEP 01

Get a CD of GnuWin II. This disc contains free, as in muft and mukt, software alternatives that run under Windows. Choose OpenOffice to replace MSOffice, Mozilla for web-browsing, an email client, chat software, and alternatives to your other mainstream software.

STEP 02

Get your first tongue-tip taste of GnuLinux. Boot your PC with Knoppix, a flavour of GnuLinux that boots off a live CD without installing or even touching your existing hard disk. Find all your GnuWin software under Knoppix. When done, remove the CD and reboot to go back to drudging old Windows. You can even save your work created under Knoppix on your hard disk, if you wish.

STEP 03

Install a version of GnuLinux that runs under your Windows' Start menu. Try MonkeyLinux, or DragonLinux. If you can't find these, consider installing Knoppix straight to your hard-disk. Read the simple instructions on their site for more details. You could even skip this step if you wish and go straight to step 04.

STEP 04

Grab a book on GnuLinux for reference. Partition your hard-disk and install a GnuLinux distribution such as Fedora, Debian, Mandrake, or Knoppix. Whenever you start your PC, you will be asked to choose between working with GnuLinux or Windows.

STEP 05

Connect to your network of Windows and other PCs, from your GnuLinux PC. Seamlessly Configure and use printers, scanners, modems, and digital cameras. Sync your cellphone and your PDA. Natively access your Windows partition under GnuLinux.

STEP 06

Find alternatives to specialized software not shipping with your installed distribution. Search at sourceforge.net, savannah.org, freshmeat.net. Select a muft and mukt software. Hire someone or a company to customise it further. For software with no alternative, try running it under a windows emulator.

STEP 07

One day, you'll find you don't need to boot into Windows. Congratulations, you have migrated. The seventh step: reformat your windows partition. Then go and share your migration experience with others.

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Guerrilla Warfare For Gyaan

HOW TO BRING FREE SOFTWARE IN EDUCATION. DESPITE EVERYTHING

Why is free software, that is both muft and mukt, not being adopted so widely and rapidly in schools and colleges across India? Please do a google-search for the phrase 'project shiksha and linux'. You will discover a fascinating saga of what is actually happening in thousands of schools across the sub-continent. Go ahead, do it.

Hope that google-search explains why this document is titled 'Guerrilla-warfare for Gyaan.' In Hindi, 'Gyaan' means 'Knowledge' but the word has roots in sanskrit, where it also is the root for both knowledge and meditative-awareness. Interestingly the same sanskrit word travelled to Japan, some believe in the days of Bodhidharma, and became the word 'Zen'.

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As I write this, 52% of Indians are in the age-group of 15 to 25, while 33.7% of the population is under the age of 15. The country has a population of 1.03 billion people. Only 50% of the children in India enter schools. 4.1% of GDP is the country's public expenditure on education. Of this, 39.4% is spent on pre-primary and primary education, 40.5% on secondary, and 20.1% on tertiary education. Less than 5% schools have access to PCs.

Which is sad, because muft and mukt software can create a revolution in education today. It significantly lowers the entry-level price, thereby bridging the huge digital divide in India. IT students can learn how software truly works, as they have the freedom to study its source. A growing collection of muft and mukt software is available for all disciplines of education, at all levels. This helps further knowledge without penalizing educators and students. Most importantly, FLOSS in education ushers in a new value system in society: of building communities, creating and sharing wealth and knowledge. Indeed, FLOSS brings freedom to knowledge.

You can do something. You can create the gestalt change. Here are simple steps that any ordinary person like you and me can do. Today.

Short excerpts from the document 'Guerrilla Warfare For Gyaan' By Niyam Bhushan, which is published under the FDL. The original may be found on www.niyam.com, linux-delhi.org in the downloads section, and elsewhere via a web-search. The graphic on the left is from the clip-art section of sodipodi.org, published under the Public Domain license of creative commons.