

AMITA RAY

# Art of Nepal

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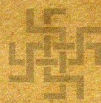


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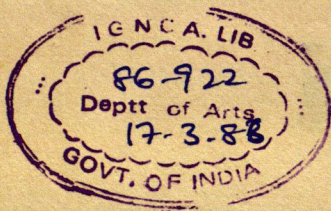
INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS



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*for*  
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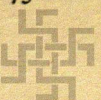
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„	4	fig. 12	fig. 11
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## Preface

Recent years have seen the publication of a few small but knowledgeable and well-produced books on the plastic arts of Nepal, that ancient and picturesque country nesting on the southern slopes of the Central Himalayas, which has been for long a rich treasure house of traditional art and life and a veritable paradise for pilgrims (Hindu and Buddhist), travellers and tourists from far and near. These publications and the increasing number of travellers and tourists visiting the country, have led to a new awakening of general interest in a wider world, in the history and culture of the land but more particularly in her rich art treasures. The cultural and aesthetic significance of this treasure is being realized more and more by a wider public.

The present study has been designed to meet this demand. It is a monograph which purports to be a brief general study aimed at presenting in a somewhat integrated manner, the plastic arts of Nepal in the context of the life of her people, their history and religious culture. It has taken into account the results of upto-date archaeological and historical research in these areas of investigation and is backed





by an on-the-spot study and examination of all the objects referred to and described in the text. Nevertheless, it remains an introductory account and nothing more; it was indeed designed to be so.

For reasons beyond my control or that of the publishers, I had to use a number of photographs and blocks of already published objects of art and iconography, a few of which do not, I am afraid, do justice to the respective originals. I crave the indulgence of my readers for this inadequacy. For the kind loan of a number of blocks I am indebted to the authorities of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta and Tata Services Ltd., Bombay; a list of such blocks is given in the Publisher's acknowledgement.

I am also grateful to my colleagues, Dr. Narendranath Bhattacharya, Dr. Dipakranjan Das, Shri Dilipkumar Chakravarti and Shri Tarapada Chaudhuri for helping me in more ways than one in regard to the preparation and production of this book.

AMITA RAY

*Calcutta University*

*January 1, 1973.*



Indira Gandhi National  
Centre for the Arts



# I

## Background

### 1

Land-locked Nepal has three distinct topographical zones: (a) in the south extends what is called the *Terai*, the southern part of which, at any rate, is geographically a part of the Gangetic plain; (b) the north comprising a dense forest-belt running into the Siwalik mountains; beyond this belt in the north the country flattens into a series of valleys, of which the one round Kathmandu is the largest and historically the most important; (c) and further beyond in the north are the foot-hills of the Himalayas ranging up "in great ridges into the snows, inhabited up to a height of about 8,000 feet and grazed in summer to about 13,000 feet."<sup>1</sup> The *Terai* produces rice, sugar-cane, wheat and jute and can sustain a considerable population on a fairly subsistence level economy. It was in this region that the Licchavis of Kapilavāstu had their small oligarchical kingdom presided over in the sixth century B.C. by King Śuddhodana, the father of Siddhārtha Gautama who eventually came to be known as Śākyamuni, the Buddha. His birth place, the Lumbinīgāma of these days where Aśoka set up a commemorative pillar, is only a few miles from the northern border of the Uttar Pradesh district of Gorakhpur.

But it is not in the *Terai* region that the history and culture of Nepal were made; that was done higher up in the rich valley around Kathmandu, a valley which has a continuous and concentrated history from atleast the third century B.C. to our own times. The Kathmandu valley is indeed the heart of Nepal; this is in fact Nepal to the Nepalese, the rest is either *Terai* or *Pāhād*. All the major scenes and acts of the slow-moving life and culture of the people of Nepal were staged at Kathmandu which had been throughout the centuries the seat of their successive royal dynasties and their governments. The position of the valley is central and it has a natural fortification as it were, one provided by the mountains. The valley is drained by the Bagmati which follows relatively a straight course; mythology says, however, that it originally was a lake which was cut by a single stroke of the sword of Mañjuśrī. The soil of the valley is exceedingly fertile; it is light and is easily



cultivated, provided water is made available. All these combined to attract more and more people belonging to diverse ethnic groups, to the Kathmandu valley and a few other valleys around, from very early times. The material relics of the cultures of these early peoples, representing various levels of achievement, are being laid bare from time to time by the archaeologists' spade. The Kathmandu valley itself is indeed a paradise for the archaeologist and the art-historian. But other valleys too have their own treasures which are only less rich, but nevertheless historically almost as interesting as Kathmandu.

Land-locked Nepal looks on a map somewhat geographically isolated by high mountains from the main land of India on the one hand and of China and Tibet on the other. In reality she is not, and never was. Through the mountains and across the hills there were passes and paths that were being trodden by human feet from immemorial past, and China, Tibet and India lay open to Nepal through the West, South and East. Ethnological evidence clearly indicates that a large segment of the Nepalese people is Tibeto-Nepalese in ethnic origin, the other major ethnic element being Indo-Nepalese, corresponding roughly to the two important linguistic groups, one speaking languages or dialects of the Tibeto-Burman language family and the other, languages or dialects belonging to the Indo-Aryan. Culturally, however—and if one has to go by the evidence of literature and religion, of language, and archaeology—Nepal's contact with India seems to have been much more intimate than either with Tibet or China, though such contacts with the latter countries cannot altogether be ignored. The history of such Indo-Nepalese contacts is more or less well known, but it may not be out of place to mention a few facts to provide a background of the story of the art of Nepal which this monograph purports to sketch in the barest of outlines.

The traditional history of Nepal as given in the *Vamśāvalis*<sup>2</sup> begins with the tribal rule of such tribes as those of the Gopālas and the Ābhīras belonging to the "mixed Austric and Dravidian and probably also Indo-Mongoloid speakers who were in occupation of the Nepal valley prior to a wholesale influx of purer Mongoloids—the Nepal or Newar people"<sup>3</sup>. The Ābhīras seem to have been followed by the Kirātas. The *Vamśāvalis* give us a list of 26 or 29 names of Kirāta kings. Evidently the Kirātas belonged to the Tibeto-Burman speaking family of people who were supposed to have their capital-city at Lalitpur where there still exists a mound called Patukodan which is believed to have been associated with the ruling dynasty.

But these accounts do not seem to have any basis in what is known from archaeology. Recent excavations and archaeological field work at more than one place have provided for us the fact that there was human habitation in the *Terai* region atleast as early as the sixth century B.C.<sup>4</sup> In the third century B.C. Emperor Aśoka raised a commemorative pillar at Lumbinīgāma to mark the birth-place of the Buddha. This seems to indicate that



even at the time of Aśoka Lumbini was nothing more than a village; one may safely assume that there were similar village settlements all along the *Terai* region. Tradition would have it that Aśoka also visited the Kathmandu valley and caused to be built four *stūpas* at Lalitpur. Recent archaeological excavations at Tilaurakot, Banjarahi and Paisia, all in the *Terai* region, seem to indicate a sequence of cultures that can successively be labelled as Mauryan, Śuṅgan, Kushān and Gupta, according to Indian historical and archaeological terminology. Among the few objects of art that have been yielded by the excavations at Banjarahi, a most important one is that of a moulded terracotta head of a woman. Its heavy face with high cheek bones, the pendulous exaggerations of the lower lip and the wide open bulging eyes and heavy ear ornaments mark it out at once as belonging to the familiar art-form of fertility goddesses, so well known in India from the proto-historic period onwards. The excavations at Tilaurakot have yielded a number of terracotta female forms that have the closest similarity with similar Mauryan and Śuṅga-Kushān forms. The excavations at Lumbini have also yielded similar objects besides a number of pottery pieces which are known to Indian archaeology as Northern Black Polish Wares. It is clear, therefore, that the *Terai* region has been continuously within the orbit of Indian history and culture. A few trial excavations have also been carried out in the Kathmandu valley itself, but these have not brought to light any data that can historically be dated in the pre-Licchavi period of Nepalese history.

The first historical ruling dynasty of Nepal was doubtless that of the Licchavis who seemed to have ruled over the country for about two hundred and fifty years from well-nigh the beginning of the fourth century A.D. It was from about this time that Nepal including the Kathmandu valley, seems to have become more and more exposed to Indian cultural and commercial contact. The earliest known record of this dynasty is the inscription of King Mānadeva at the Caṅgu-Nārāyaṇa temple, which bears the date v.s. 386 = A.D. 329<sup>5</sup>. The Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta mentions Nepal as a *pratyantadeśa* or border territory of the eastern frontier of the Gupta empire;<sup>6</sup> this is perhaps the earliest epigraphic mention of Nepal in any historical document, the first literary mention being in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya<sup>7</sup>. Samudragupta's father Candragupta I, is known to have married a Licchavi princess named Kumāradevī. The Licchavis have left a number of epigraphic records inscribed in the so-called Gupta-Brāhmī character. A number of sculptures too, found in the Kathmandu valley, reveal art-forms which are affiliated to those of the Gupta period of Indian history. The Licchavi dynasty seems to have been founded by one Vashadeva, one of whose successor was Mānadeva.

In the seventh century, Nepal seems to have been ruled over by two dynasties of kings occupying two different areas of the country, one, a continuation of the earlier Licchavis and the other known in history as the Ṭhākuri dynasty of kings. The founder of the Ṭhākuris



seems to have been one Amśuvarman who was originally a *mahāsāmanta*, a big feudatory chief of the Licchavis. The Harigaon inscription of A.D. 638 issued from Kailāsakūṭa-bhavana illustrates his concern for his people.<sup>8</sup> Amśuvarman was a contemporary of Harshavardhana Śilāditya of Kanauj and Magadha<sup>9</sup> and it was during his time that Nepal and India seemed to have been drawn closer to each other. At the same time he seems to have entered into diplomatic relations with the Tibetan King Srongtsan-Sgam-Po (A.D. 620-649); indeed Amśuvarman seems to have given in marriage his daughter to the Tibetan king and recognized the sovereignty of the latter.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand Somadeva, a king of the later Licchavi dynasty, married the Maukharī Princess Vatsā Devī, a granddaughter of the later Gupta king Ādityasena. His son, Jayadeva married Princess Rājyamati, daughter of the Kāmarūpa king Harshadeva who has sometimes been identified as Śrī Harsha of the Tejpur plate of Vanamāla. These two matrimonial relations seem to have cemented further the close relation of Nepal with India, particularly with eastern India. It was also during this period that Nepal came closer to Tibet. A contemporary record says that there was an occasion when the Nepali king had to supply forced labour to the king of Tibet.<sup>11</sup> The *Rājatarāṅginī* also seems to suggest that King Jayāpīḍa of the Kārkoṭa dynasty had to fight the Tibetan king when he attacked Nepal.

It was during the first half of seventh century that the celebrated Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited Nepal and left a short account of the country. According to him, the capital of the country "was above 20 li in circuit; the country yielded grain and much fruit, also copper yaks and francolins; copper coins were the medium of exchange; the climate was cold; the people were rude and deceitful; good faith and rectitude were slighted by them; they had no learning but were skilful mechanics; they were ugly and coarse in appearance and they believed both in false and true religion, the Buddhist monasteries and the Deva temples touching each other. There were about 200 Buddhist ecclesiastics who were attached to both vehicles and the number of non-Buddhists, was not ascertained."<sup>12</sup>

The Thākuris continued to rule in Nepal up to the end of the twelfth century, in two branches it seems, one known as the Thākuris of Nayakot and the other, as the Thākuris of Patan. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries Nepal seems to have played a decisive role in bringing India closer to Tibet and China; indeed, she seems to have been the most important transmitter of Indian culture to Tibet and China. The main planks of this culture were Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhism on the one hand and Buddhist art on the other, the most important centres of which during these centuries were Bihar and Bengal.

By about the middle of the twelfth century Nepal seems to have opened herself up to cultural contacts with and influences from another source in India, this time from the Deccan. The Karṇāṭī king Nānyadeva who had founded a dynasty in Mithilā came to have a sway over Nepal as well, and he brought Nepal in closer contact with the Brahmanical



culture of the Dravidian Deccan. Karnāṭī sway over Nepal was a thing of the past by about the end of the fourteenth century, but by that time the Newārs, a mixed Indian and Indo-Mongoloid people speaking a Tibeto-Burman language, who had come to form the core of Nepalese culture, were completely won over by the Brahmanical culture of the Deccan. To what extent the impact of this culture was felt can be seen in a large number of images of Brahmanical deities found in various places in the valleys as well as in the behavioural pattern of Brahmanism, particularly among the Newārs. But Chatterjee goes further and finds a response of such impact in “the presence of a sacred place named Godāvarī in south Nepal as well as the establishment of the shrine of Telujamātā or Telegumā, a Śakti goddess held in high esteem by the Newārs, which later became the tutelary deity of the Mallas”.<sup>13</sup> He thinks that the induction of the Deccani Brāhmaṇas as priests in many temples of Nepal, is also a direct result of this impact.

After the Thākuri rule in Nepal had completely collapsed, a new dynasty of kings, that of the Mallas, found itself as the ruling authority in Nepal who reigned from 1200 to 1768-9.<sup>14</sup> The Newārs came to regard the Mallas as the first national rulers of the land. The three branches of the Mallas, i.e., the original Malla dynasty founded by Arimalla in 1200, the family of Jayabhīmadeva which began to rule in 1258 and Yajashthitimalla who started his career in Bhātgāon in 1382, ruled over Nepal for well nigh four hundred years. Their sway came to an end in the eighteenth century when the Gorkhās, a mixed Mongoloid people with a Brāhmaṇa and Kshatriya upper class, and claiming a Rajput descent, overran the country. During the long regime of the Mallas, Nepal drew still closer to India, both culturally and commercially. It is very interesting to note that throughout the long centuries of close Indo-Nepalese contacts, the relationship of the two countries had practically no political or military undertones, and yet at Dulh, a tiny territory in the centre of Nepal, the king boasted of his descent from the ancient nobility of India.<sup>15</sup> This claim may have had an ethnic or familial base, of perhaps an apocryphal nature.

Tucci in course of his expedition near the Tibetan borders came across an unknown fragment of history at a place called Dulh, the memory of a kingdom of the Mallas, “who not only reigned over western Nepal, but also western Tibet including the salt markets.”<sup>16</sup> The verse of the inscription is in a conventional Indian form, though its link with India, Tucci considers, was very slight. Nevertheless one may find “connection and co-habitation of Hindu cultural tradition and Buddhist symbols.”<sup>17</sup>

Not very much later the greatest of the Malla king Jaya-yakshamalla inflicted a severe blow to Nepal by dividing his kingdom amongst his heirs into three houses, namely, the Mallas of Kathmandu, the Mallas of Patan and the Mallas of Bhātgāon. By about this time an interesting change in the culture of Nepal seems to have taken place: the early records of



the country were all invariably written in Sanskrit, but those written from the time of Jaya-yakshamalla, i.e. from about A.D. 1480 onwards, but more increasingly from the seventeenth century, came to be written in Newārī which eventually became the cultural language of Nepal.

## 2

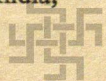
Religious life in Nepal, at any rate on the higher and formal levels of society, follows on the whole, the mainstreams of Buddhism and Brahmanism of the Pālas of India supported by successive waves of immigration from India, though at the folk level the idea of primitive animism was being practised all through. If tradition is to be believed, Buddhism may have been introduced into Nepal by Aśoka and his *mahāmātras*.<sup>18</sup> The introduction of Smārta-Paurāṇik Brahmanism seems to date from the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period of Indian history, that is from about the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era.<sup>19</sup> Since this time, but more specifically from about the eighth century, Nepal's contacts with India on the one hand, specifically eastern India comprising Bihar and Bengal, and through these regions indirectly also Karṇāṭaka, and with Tibet on the other, seem to have been continuous till the end of the mediaeval period. The period witnessed the culmination of the Pauranic religion and hence of Pauranic deities. The numerous grants and inscriptions of the Licchavis and the famous inscription of Harigaon<sup>20</sup> indicate that not only the kings and the members of the royal families but also the ordinary citizens practised orthodox Brahmanical rituals which were in strong agreement with the religious system prevailing in India. An inscription of the Licchavi king Mānadeva, dated A.D. 329, incised on a broken pillar near the temple of Caṅgu-Nārāyaṇa,<sup>21</sup> illustrates Viṣṇu with his *śrīvatsa* mark. Another inscription of Lajanpat, dated A.D. 332<sup>22</sup> records the installation of the image of Viṣṇu by Mānadeva. One Naravarman, by the order of Mānadeva, installed a Śivaliṅga. Guhamitra, a trader, recorded the fact of his having installed an image of Sūrya at Tabahal in the year A.D. 345. Jayavarman, a layman, placed a Liṅga on the northern door of the Paśupatinātha Temple<sup>23</sup> for the welfare of the king and his people. Two inscriptions, one dated A.D. 370 refers to the establishment of an image near the Caṅgu-Nārāyaṇa temple and a Liṅga named Prabhukeśvara in the Deo-Patan area respectively.<sup>24</sup> The composite cult-god Harihara, an image of whom has been found at Deo-Patan, illustrates that the syncretistic process of combining the powerful cult-gods like Sūrya, Śiva and Viṣṇu was already on in A.D. 432.<sup>25</sup>

Buddhism also seems to have gone through a similar evolutionary sequence. In the history of the two religions, i.e., Brahmanism and Buddhism, it is not easy to draw a clear dividing line between them, especially in the later phases of Buddhism when Vajrayāna Buddhism



began to evolve icons showing marked Brahmanical features. Besides, if the Licchavi kings and *mahāsāmanta* Aṁśuvarman of the Ṭhākūrī dynasty were exponents of Brahmanism and Brahmanical cults, they were also at the same time patrons of Buddhism and Buddhist institutions. While recording the donations to temples belonging to various religious sects like Saivism and Vaishnavism, Aṁśuvarman in the Harigaon inscription records donations made to Buddhist establishments as well. During the first half of the seventh century Srongtsan-Sgam-Po, the hero-king of Tibet, married a daughter of Aṁśuvarman who was instrumental for the conversion of Tibet to the Buddhist faith. Indeed, Nepal seems to have become the most important transmitting station for the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet. From about the eighth century to about the end of the twelfth and thirteenth the high tide of cultural contacts between India and Nepal reached its peak. It was during these centuries that countless number of Buddhist monks and their associates including artists and craftsmen must have been going to Nepal and Tibet carrying manuscripts, paintings and small portable icons in metal and stone with them and drawing adherents to their faith and their way of life. Or, otherwise one cannot fully explain such profusion of Buddhist texts, paintings, icons etc. stored in so many Buddhist establishments in both the countries; the fact of the destruction of the monasteries of Nālandā and Vikramaśilā and Oddantapurī by the Turks at one given point of time cannot, I am afraid, explain a social phenomenon which must have been spread over a considerable period of time. It is, therefore, permissible to assume that the active support for Buddhist *saṅghas* and other establishments came not so much from the royalty and the nobility but from the ranks of the trading and commercial communities and from the rich land-owning agriculturists. We know from the T'-ang chronicles that the largest majority of the traders and monks were either Indian or Tibetan.<sup>26</sup>

From very early times Nepal appears to have been actively engaged in the trans-Himalayan trade reaching up to Tibet and Turfan in the north and the plains of India in the south. From the evidence of the T'-ang chronicles of China (in regard to the third mission), it seems that in the seventh and eighth centuries Nepal was already commercially very active, enjoying almost a monopoly of trade, especially transit trade, between Tibet and India. In the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya the word *Nepālakam*, that is, belonging to or originating from Nepal, denotes a special kind of rug made of sheep-wool which was very popular in India.<sup>27</sup> The varieties of trees grown in Nepal had also a great demand in India owing to their strength and durability. Luxury items like gold and precious gems, masks, saffron and yaks' tails formed the chief objects of this long distance trade between India and Tibet. The source of smelted copper was also for quite a long time western Nepal. The same Chinese chronicles state that numerous merchants coming from India, Tibet and China used to congregate in the markets of Nepal.





As has often happened in history, Indian religions seem to have followed the track of such trade and commerce between India on the one hand and Nepal, Tibet and China on the other. There is a story in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*<sup>28</sup> which tells us that some *bhikshus* seeing a troupe of traders who were going to Nepal, wanted to accompany them in order to be able to visit the holy places of that country. But on arrival they found the place very difficult and people very hostile. Next day, therefore, they wanted to return. But the merchants could not do so since they had not yet exchanged their goods. But luckily the *bhikshus* met another troupe of traders who had already finished their business and were prepared to leave. They, therefore, followed them back to their home. The same *Vinaya* gives us another story to the effect that a group of merchants belonging to Śrāvastī were proceeding towards Nepal with their wares and there was a large number of pilgrims who accompanied them.

If monks and priests followed in the wake of traders, artists did so in that of monks and priests. Indeed, there could be no Buddhist or Brahmanical religious establishment without artists who were considered to be important communication agents of any given religion. Simple logic would suggest that Indian artists must have also travelled to Nepal for the propagation of Indian religions through illustrative materials, and this is supported by the evidence not only of the art itself but also of the iconography of a very large number of sculptures and paintings from Nepal, that have come down to us. It is however unfortunate that no names of Indian artists of Nepal have been bequeathed to posterity. It is, therefore, evident that the art and religion of Nepal, especially Buddhism and Buddhist art of the country can only be understood against the background of this active Indo-Nepalese and Tibeto-Nepalese trade contacts. That a part, at any rate, of the climate and behaviour pattern of Nepal was set by the Indian and Tibetan trading settlements and monastic establishments, is difficult to deny. It is thus natural that the content and form of the art of Nepal would be atleast partially determined and conditioned by this climate and behaviour pattern. Nepal's Brahmanical sculptures and paintings, from about the eighth century onwards at any rate, are of East-Indian affiliation, and they are all basically Tantrik in religious character. The above remarks are particularly applicable to them, but these are almost equally valid about those Brahmanical sculptures which are of western Deccanese affiliation. They seem to indicate that there must have been colonies of priests and artists, all originating from the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley and from the Deccan, that had settled down in Nepal and worked for and in the midst of their Nepalese patrons but spelt their religion and art in their own traditional language and style.

The most striking thing about Nepal is that there is not any definite distinction between the culture of the court and that of the people. In fact, what really happened was that the Nepalese people have been absorbing over a long period of their early history, elements



of Indian culture by adjusting them to their peculiar requirements without making them look too different from that of the original form. But in outlying regions things seem to have been quite different. Tucci in the account of his expedition through the "most northernly areas on the confines of Tibet" speaks of different types of people who are "doubtless very ancient, as if they have only just emerged from a *primaeva* simplicity".<sup>28</sup> On his way to Jumla he found some temples belonging to old Bon religion which preceded Buddhism in Tibet. The people spoke Tibetan and still followed the Bon, though certain ideas and practices were borrowed from Buddhism. Hinduism too had penetrated there but in a very superficial form. At Tebrikot on the crest of a spur, there was a temple of Tripurasundarī.<sup>29</sup> But Brahmanism in this part seems to have adapted itself to the indigenous religion. The goddesses though sometimes termed by Hindu or Buddhist names, are, in fact, mere stones, placed at the foot of a tree or just on the road side. The goddess Tripurasundarī just referred to, does not reveal her terrible divinity in an image but is imprisoned in a stone. Tucci found more or less the same thing on his way to Rimi where the goddess is "no longer a presence even though omnipotent, no human eye sees, but a being that has assumed a form... The shrunken legs beneath the immense body accentuate the monstrousness of the image and give greater emphasis to the horrible head from which rises bristling, perhaps flaming hair."<sup>30</sup> Huge wooden images are placed on the roof or in front of houses for protecting the inmates.

Since Nepal, geographically speaking, is a meeting place of India on the one hand and Tibet and China on the other, she rendered the signal service of linking the two great religions of early and medieval Asia: of India and of China-Tibet. Through the process of acceptance of the art and iconography of the images of gods and goddesses from India together with the theory and technique of their manufacture, it played an initiatory and decisive role in the art of Tibet and China. The interesting legend of Princess Bri-Btssum, daughter of Amśuvarman marrying a Tibetan king, throws interesting side light. She is said to have taken with her a miraculous sandal-wood image of Tārā and was thus instrumental in introducing Buddhism into Tibet. Even centuries later, in A.D. 1260, when there was no direct contact between the royalties of Nepal and China, the art of Nepal seems to have been playing its role in China and Tibet through the agency of a skilful artist, a worker in both stone and metal, named A-Ni-Ko.<sup>31</sup> It is said that the monasteries of both the countries were decorated by A-Ni-Ko and his contingent of eighty artists from Nepal. Tradition has it that the art form and style established by this master and his colleagues became the guidelines of the imperial statues of China, and that A-Ni-Ko had the satisfaction of witnessing it even before he died.





The statement that Nepalese art through the centuries revealed contacts with and affinities in art form and iconography of another culture, in this instance, Indian, has indeed no bearing upon its essential originality. The history of this art as known to date begins with the Licchavi period of Nepalese history; even from this beginning the art presupposes an established tradition and shows motifs and symbols that are all its own or on which there is at least a distinct stamp of indigenoussness. This tradition and these symbols and motifs persist from century to century, so much so that it is often difficult if not impossible, to trace the parent motif or symbol. The thread of continuity is seldom lost; rather it tends to indicate directions bearing upon the sources of the impulses that led to the creation of Nepalese art. These motifs and symbols constitute a picture of a community which, we know, was supported by successive waves of immigration from India and Tibet and perhaps also from China.

In a major aspect, however, it is different from India, and this difference is important in respect of the very planning of any Nepalese village or city. The social structure of Nepal was based on tribal pyramids, each with a chieftain at the top. The concept of chieftainship or kingship in Nepal is a cultural phenomenon which seems to have been coeval as it were with the history of the country. To a Nepali, the residence of the King should be in the heart of the city; he is in fact considered as the highest spiritual and temporal reality. The chieftain's house or the king's palace thus came to form the nucleus of the settlement. For the king his capital city was his home and everything in the city led up to him. This is the usual pattern of the Nepali city settlement. Even now in the cities like Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhatgaon, where royal houses of many storeys with long steep roofs and overhanging eaves can be seen forming a complex with the nucleus of a temple dedicated to his Ishtadevatā, one may find the exact replica of an ancient type. The palace complex forms an independent unit, separate from the rest of the buildings. But it is almost impossible at present to disentangle the various elements of the palace and temple complex and find out as to how they were originally planned and organized. The sites being in continuous occupation and built upon again and again, no worthwhile excavation has been possible, not in any meaningful scale at any rate. Besides, the traditional building materials in Nepal, for civil architecture at any rate, have always been, as in traditional India and southeast Asia, of a perishable kind like wood, bamboo, mud, tiles etc., and once a building came down or was burnt down by fire it did not take long for everything turning to dust without leaving any trace behind. From what one sees even today with one's eyes, Nepalese secular architecture must have been of a very high order, but we have no means at our disposal to ascertain what this architecture was like before the seventeenth



century. The only extant example of secular architecture today is the royal palace with its ancillary buildings, but these examples of secular architecture are not earlier than the seventeenth century.

Yet an attempt to reconstruct the secular architecture of Nepal may not be altogether fruitless, if one tries to find out the nuclear types of traditional houses following the well known methods of anthropology. Indeed traditions die hard, more so in countries like Nepal and India where the rural agricultural pattern of social economy persisted through centuries despite political upheavals. In this unchanged situation of material and social life traditional house types, determined and conditioned by the economy and environment, continued to persist. The present situation may thus be an approximate picture of the past.

Settlements in Nepal grew up on millet cultivation in small patches cleared from the forest by fire and axe. Obviously a landscape of this sort tends to contain more of natural and less of cultural features. The homestead pattern seems to have consisted of a few houses built apparently without any preconceived logical plan of their organization. In such a situation one can hardly speak of any morphology. The houses, mostly two storeyed, the ground floor being given to the cattle, are situated very near to each other. Settlements are situated either on the small plains or on isolated hill-tops. Security against wild animals and the nature of the weather have always been the prime considerations in the choice of a site and the nature of the houses. The houses vary in size as well as in shape; they can be circular, square or rectangular, built either in rammed earth-built-walls or of stone inside and mud at the outer. This type of settlement is very common; indeed, it has been existing in Nepal from very early times and almost in pristine primitivity. But there appears to be a significant difference in the settlement pattern in the hills, the valleys and the *Terai*. Whatever the original or natural plan might have been, the valley and the *Terai* seem very early to have developed a different type of life and culture. The present landscape of these regions is almost wholly the creation of this changed life, partly by the Newāris, a mixed Indo-Mongoloid people, and partly by the immigrants from India. Displacement of the original or natural culture from this region was but inevitable not only because of the superior technology of the Indian immigrants fast spreading over but also because of the stronger political power of the Licchavis, the Thākuris and the Mallas. Presumably there were conflicts among the original settlers, the Newāris and the Indian immigrants, but all such conflicts must have been resolved in the process of adoption and adaptation of superior and more efficient productive methods. The material culture which thus eventually came to be manifested in this cultural landscape did not depict only the place in which they all came to live, but also the places where the superior and more efficient productive methods had come from,



that is, from India. It is obvious, therefore, that the villages and towns of the *Terai* and the valleys have acquired the traits of some places of India, mostly of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Cultural changes in Nepal have been very slow because of its rural agricultural pattern of social economy which persisted through centuries despite political upheavals. One may, therefore, try to reconstruct the history of Nepal's secular architecture from the persistent type of architectural forms, their materials and construction as are present even today and as have been conditioned by the agricultural social economy which sustains them.

The settlements of the Chetris and Pārvatīyās are laid out along low regions and hill slopes. The houses are made of mud and clay and roofed by thatch or tiles and stand isolated from each other. There are often buildings on different levels of hill slopes and are usually surrounded by kitchen-gardens. It may seem strange but it is true that there is no modification of this basic settlement pattern even in the villages where live large number of middle-class Chetrī or Pārvatīyā families deriving the wherewithal of their lives from Kathmandu and other cities.

The Newārs, by far the most numerous of the total population of the Nepal Valley, seem to have a different type of settlement pattern. They have been considered as the founders of the cities and the large compact villages of Nepal. These villages and towns are closely-packed clusters of houses, surrounded in most cases by stretches of irrigated rice and wheat fields.

The houses of the poor Newārs may sometimes be built of mud or clay with thatch or tile roof, but the houses of the relatively richer are usually provided with more than one storey, varying from two to three. Bigger houses have open courts which are surrounded by rows of chambers running along the four sides of the walls and thereby making the courts available to all. The rows of chambers face the courtyard which seems to have been a common refuge-ground. The windows of the ground floor rooms which are usually occupied by dependants, take the form of a slit, but those of the upper storeys have larger openings and ornate designs. The Newārs are indeed credited with having been the builders of the urban civilization of the ancient cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, which were each at one time or other a centre of Newār settlements. The cities as we see them today, seem to have been built on a more or less regular plan with a large square in the centre. The main roads radiate from this centre and go in different directions of the city and cut each other at various points; in-between there is a net-work of narrow lanes.

The better class of houses in the cities are elaborately decorated with plaster and painting; in general they are provided with projecting balconies and windows which are all richly



carved. A Chinese travel-diary based on the report of Hiuen-Tse, of A.D. 657, states that the Nepalese houses, whether of the kings or nobles or of the ordinary people, were made of wood, and walls were decorated with carvings and paintings. The carvings consist usually of intricate designs of peacock with outspread tail, groups of figures of gods, men, griffins, birds etc. and not unoften *mithuna* couples in various stages of sexual union. The local belief is that *mithuna* figures protect the buildings from lightning. The roofs of the palaces, *darbars* and other royal houses are entirely of brass and gilt copper. The central peak is on the main roof. The door is solidly made of very hard and heavy wood and metal beams. The upper floor is often projected over the façade resting on brackets and provided with very decoratively carved wooden screens. For their very rich, decorative carvings in wood, gorgeous colours, variety of shapes and forms, and their impressive heights, the secular architecture of Nepal provides a very interesting chapter in the history of architecture in the East. Unfortunately this chapter is yet to be written. The most interesting feature of all Newārī settlement in Nepal is their characteristic compactness. Indeed the Newār settlements give the impression of small fortified towns of the medieval period, and are distinct from the settlement patterns of the other communities of Nepal like those of the Chetris and Pārvatiyās, which are mostly of the dispersed types.

The Kathmandu valley which cradles the cities, may be characterized as urban from the point of view of planning and architectural form and style, while the rest of Nepal is a land of villages. The slow but continual process of social and economic change in the valley due to the influx of other peoples and cultures in the wake of religion and trade and commerce, was perhaps primarily responsible for the relative complexity of life in the cities of the valley. These cities may be said to represent a new magnitude in human settlement and presuppose an economic situation characterized somewhat by specialized and localized crafts and industries and mobile trading communities. This change in the social economy and hence change in the pattern of life have been, it seems, primarily due to the Newārs who are a people professionally given to trade and commerce and craft and industry in the main, if not exclusively. They are also a people who seem to have maintained through the centuries a consistent regard for and patronage of art and good life.

The group of buildings which grew up around the *darbar* square formed the nucleus of the Nepalese cities. The most important of these buildings was the royal palace with paved open space in front for ceremonial occasions. Around the square were the administrative buildings, and in the centre, the temple. The same travel-diary of the Chinese historian referred to above, provides a description which will suit any of the three big cities of Nepal. "In the middle of the palace there is a tower of seven storeys



roofed with copper tiles; its *bolsters*, grilles, columns, beams, and everything therein, are set about with fine and precious stones. At the base there are golden dragons which spout forth water." From this focal point streets radiate in different directions leading to the different quarters known as *tolas* or *paṭṭis*, as in many old cities of India.

A very remarkable aspect of the Nepalese culture is that the entire historical process through which the people and the country have been moving along, seems to have been concentrated in Kathmandu which also includes Bhatgaon and Patan. It is literally and figuratively the heart of the valley. Its situation has an immense geo-political significance. Indeed, from every point of view it was just such a site as might be expected to appeal to the Licchavis, the Ṭhākuriś, the Mallas and the Shahs through the centuries. What they needed most was certainly considerable space of level ground surrounded by high defensive hills with but few secure passes for negotiation with other countries and peoples. Kathmandu answered to these needs.

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- <sup>1</sup> Spate, O.H.K. *India and Pakistan: A general and regional geography*, p. 466.
- <sup>2</sup> Lévi, S. *Le Nepal* 1, pp. 72-73, 74.
- <sup>3</sup> Chatterji, S.K. *Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti*, p. 38.
- <sup>4</sup> Mitra, D. Unpublished report on the excavation of Tilaura Kot; Banerjee, N.R. "Some Archaeological Finds of Nepal" *Pratnatattva*, Vol. 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Indrajī, B. No. 1; Basak, R.G. *History of North-Eastern India*, p. 242.
- <sup>6</sup> Fleet, G. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1.22.
- <sup>7</sup> Kauṭilya. *Arthaśāstra* (ed. Ganapati Sastri) Book II, Chapter XI, p. 193.
- <sup>8</sup> Lévi, S. No. XIV; Basak, R. D. *op. cit.*, p. 254.
- <sup>9</sup> Basak, R. G. *op. cit.*, p. 295.
- <sup>10</sup> Chatterji, S.K. *Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti* p. 39.
- <sup>11</sup> Indrajī, B; No. 12; Basak, R.D. *op. cit.*, p. 265, 301.
- <sup>12</sup> Watters, T. *On Yuan Chwang's Travels*, Vol. II, pp. 83-84.
- <sup>13</sup> Chatterji, S.K. *op.cit.* pp. 41-42.
- <sup>14</sup> Petech, L. *Medieval History of Nepal*, p. 81.
- <sup>15</sup> Tucci, G. *The Discovery of the Mallas*, p. 58.
- <sup>16</sup> Tucci, G. *op.cit.* pp. 62-65.
- <sup>17</sup> Tucci, G. *op.cit.*
- <sup>18</sup> Wright, D. *History of Nepal*, pp. 110-111.
- <sup>19</sup> Ray, A. "Paspupatinath temple of Nepal," *Man in India*, Vol. 49, No. 1, January-March, 1969, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>20</sup> Gnoli, R. *op.cit.* XI.
- <sup>21</sup> Indrajī, B. No. 1; Gnoli, No. 1.
- <sup>22</sup> Lévi, S. *op.cit.* No. II; Gnoli, *op.cit.*, No. III.
- <sup>23</sup> Gnoli, G. *op.cit.* No. VIII.
- <sup>24</sup> Gnoli, G. *op.cit.* No. X.
- <sup>25</sup> Gnoli, G. *op.cit.* No. XX.
- <sup>26</sup> Mission of Wang, Fragment IV; drawn from Pa-Yonen-Techon-Ur, Chapter XVI, p. 154 col. 7, Tao-cha, XXXVI. 1, p. 5a.
- <sup>27</sup> Kauṭilya. *Arthaśāstra* (ed. Ganapati Sastri), Book II, Chapter XI, p. 193.
- <sup>28</sup> *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, XVII, 4, III. Tokyo edition, Chapter 1, p. 21.
- <sup>29</sup> Tucci, G. *op.cit.* p. 54.
- <sup>30</sup> Tucci, G. *op.cit.* pp. 52-53.
- <sup>31</sup> Petech. L. *op.cit.* pp. 99-101.



The tradition relating to A-Ni-Ko refers itself to the days of Kublai Khan. It is said that the renown of the Nepalese craftsmen was such that when Kublai Khan asked his spiritual leader, the Śākya abbot 'P'ags-Pa, to erect a golden *stūpa* in Tibet, the abbot could not think of better craftsmen than those of Nepal. On request the Nepalese King Jayabhimadeva selected a young relation of his, Valabāhu (1245-1306), whom the Tibetans called A-Ni-Ko, to lead a contingent of eighty Nepalese craftsmen. The tradition of A-Ni-Ko has continued for a long time, and even in a late iconometric treatise, the *Tsao-hsiang-tu-liang-ching*, one finds it mentioned in the introduction.





## II

# Architecture

## 1

A most interesting fact of the cultural life of Nepal is that the two great religions, Buddhism and Brahmanism, have been co-existing here side by side in a most intimate manner and from relatively early times, acting and reacting upon each other without being conscious of it even. Indeed, on the behavioural level it is difficult to point out the lines of demarcation, so integrally are the two religions woven into the texture of Nepalese life. This is most pronounced in the religious architecture of the country, except perhaps for certain motifs and symbols that are peculiar to either Buddhism or Brahmanism.

The architectural monuments of Nepal are all concentrated within an area of less than two hundred and fifty square miles, and they are all situated in the valley itself. Of early civil architecture we have no extant remains, since they were all made presumably of perishable materials like wood, reed, mud, thatch, burnt and unburnt brick and the like. The monuments that still stand before our eyes are in any case all religious, and they are all affiliated to either Buddhism or Brahmanism. Religionwise and also typologically these monuments belong as they do in northern India, to three different categories: (i) Buddhist *stūpas*; (ii) Buddhist *caitya-vihāras*, and (iii) Brahmanical temples of the *Nāgara*, that is, of the well known north Indian type in their different variations of form. The first two of these types, both Buddhist in religious affiliation, are accommodated in Nepal in one single unit of establishment.

By far the largest number of Buddhist establishments is found to be situated within the city walls. There is however one notable exception, the Svayambhūnātha, which is situated in a quiet site at some distance from the walled city. More than two hundred Buddhist establishments are located at Kathmandu and Patan. The *vihāras* which are not unoften double-storeyed follow in general the usual ground-plan of the Buddhist monasteries of India; they consist of a square block formed by four rows of cells arranged along the four sides of an inner quadrangle. But since in Nepal Buddhist monks do not observe



celibacy and lead ordinary family life, this basic plan not unoften suffers from changes introduced by structures added to it from time to time because of the enlargement of the families of the monks. Most of the *vihāras* besides having *stūpa-caityas*, have also within their precincts, temples with roofs of receding tiers, so that the general *ensemble* of a *vihāra* in Nepal is somewhat different from that of *vihāras* in India.

Traditionally the oldest *stūpas* in Nepal are the so called Aśoka *stūpas* at Patan. The general shape and form of the base and the dome of these *stūpas* are not very much different from what can be reconstructed from the ruins of the *stūpas* in India, that are usually attributed to the initiative and patronage of that great Maurya monarch. In fact, the Patan *stūpas* in their original form (fig. 1) did not perhaps differ materially from the Asokan *stūpas* at Piphrawa or Sanchi. Due to the accumulation of new architectural elements, designs and ornaments in course of more than two millennia, it is not possible to visualize today the original form of these so called Aśokan *stūpas*.

The same comment is perhaps applicable to the existing shrine of Svayambhūnātha (fig. 2) and to another, dedicated to Mañjuśrī and situated in Sangu, which is traditionally believed to be the oldest site in the Kathmandu valley. The latter shrine is interesting from the religious point of view since Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī has here been identified with his Brahmanical counterpart Sarasvatī, a female divinity. This *stūpa* is, therefore, worshipped by both Buddhists and Brahmanical Hindus. But the shrine, as one sees it today, lies buried beneath the hill-top, and it is difficult to determine what its original architectural form was like. The plan of Svayambhūnātha is that of the usual *stūpa* characteristic of the valley. It is a square temple over which rises an up-turned saucer-like tumulus surmounted by a solid square box-like construction responding evidently to the Buddhist *harmikā*. On the four cardinal sides of the *harmikā* are four enormous human eyes looking out into the outer world as it were. This decoration on the four cardinal sides of the *harmikā* seems to be a characteristic feature of the Nepalese *stūpa* shrines. The *harmikā* is superimposed by a sharp pyramidal structure corresponding perhaps to the shape of the receding *chatras*, which in its turn, is surmounted by a finial that supports the *kalasa*. The original *stūpa* seems to have undergone a number of later additions and alterations; it is, therefore, difficult to visualize its original form. The main approach to the *stūpa* is from the east, by a long flight of steps guarded by figures of *garuḍas*, peacocks, elephants and lions. The base of the dome is ringed by a set of continuous rows of small wheels and four tiers of little lamp-stands, which is evidently of Tibetan inspiration; indeed Tibetan influence in this shrine is pronounced in the ritualistic practices as well. The entire gilded ornamentation above the drum and the magnificent finial seem, however, to be the products of indigenous workmanship.

The great Bodhanātha shrine (fig. 3), ascribed to the patronage of the Licchavi king



Mānadeva (sixth century), seems to have a typical Nepalese *stūpa* form. The monument consists of three step-pyramidal platforms rising to a total height of fortyfive feet; on the topmost platform rests the huge dome of the *stūpa* rising to a height of another fortyfive feet and with a diameter which is exactly the double of its height, that is, ninety feet. The lower portion of the drum is encircled by a continuous line of niches, each sheltering a deity of the Vajrayāna pantheon. The enormous eyes that have already been referred to, are characteristic features here as well.

Besides these few important *stūpas*, there are numerous others scattered all over the country. Many of the important *vihāras* also shelter *stūpas* within their precincts, for example, the Atha-baha and Jatkha-baha *vihāras* at Kathmandu and the Woku-baha and the Gueta-baha *vihāras* at Patan. There are also a few important *caityas*, the most important of which is the *Gelandya* shrine, situated at the southern end of the Kirtipur hill. Another large *caitya* which consists either of four seated Buddhas around a *stūpa* facing the four cardinal directions, or of a single one seated on a lotus throne which, curiously enough, rests on a *yonī*. The obvious indication is that the *stūpa* form here is being interpreted as that of the *Linga*, in which a Tantric significance cannot perhaps be ruled out altogether.

The *vihāras* in Nepal are usually walled on all the four sides, pierced on the entrance side for the provision of the main gate. They are all self-contained and have a more or less uniform plan. In the centre of the walled square enclosure, on a square platform is a *stūpa*, the dome of which rests on a high drum; above the dome is the square *harmikā* decorated on the four sides with one pair of large, all seeing eyes on each side. A pair of such eyes are sometimes to be found above the main entrance of some of the monasteries. All around the *stūpa*, in the large open space there are a number of cells for various cult images and a larger number of small votive *stūpas*. Along the surrounding walls on the four sides are arranged the residential cells meant for the monks, cells for serving as kitchen, refectory or service hall, meeting hall etc. and a *maṇḍapa* all facing the closed courtyard. All precautions seem to have been taken in this closed yard to screen the inmates and their religious practices from public gaze, obviously because of their esoteric character and the secrecy of ritualistic behaviour that was enjoined on the monks.

This then was the usual pattern of Nepalese Buddhist monasteries, and there was not much of a change in this pattern. But in certain later monasteries one would find that the elevation of the foundation-platform has been broken into three receding terraces, and the dome, which was originally hemispherical, has been given a more or less saucer-like form.





With the exception of the great Paśupatinātha and a few other minor ones all Brahmanical temples in Nepal are situated in public squares, large and small. These temples represent varied forms and types which are generally comparable with well-known types and forms of Brahmanical temples in India.

The most characteristic form of Nepalese religious architecture, whether Brahmanical or Buddhist, is to be found in the wood and/or brick temples and *vihāras* provided with slanted roofs rising upwards like a tower in a number of receding tiers. This is indeed the most typical Nepalese architectural form.

Yet at the same time it is difficult not to recognize in this form an adoption or adaptation of an archetype in wood or/and brick, that may have been lost in India. Indian technical treatises on art and architecture refer to a class of edifices with sixteen *pañjaras*, eight *śālās* and eight *kūṭas* or towers.<sup>1</sup> Hiuen Tsang speaks of lofty towers of the *mahāvihāra* of Nālanda and Purushapura.<sup>2</sup> It is however difficult to say what these *kūṭas* and towers were like in form and construction since we do not have any extant remains of these before our eyes. But on a number of sculptured reliefs and manuscript paintings of Bihar and Bengal of the tenth to the twelfth centuries and on some of the sculptured reliefs of the eleventh century Ananda Temple at Pagan in Burma, one finds representations of a temple type,<sup>3</sup> evidently built in wood, and in wood and brick with slanted roofs rising upwards like a tower in a number of receding stages, very much like those of Nepal. In Burma and Thailand the type seems to have become very popular, especially in wooden construction, and persisted until very recent times in Buddhist monastic architecture as well as in elaborate civil dwellings like royal palaces. Northern and Deccanese India does not seem to have favoured the type since we do not have any evidence of its persistence after the twelfth century anywhere in these regions, not even in eastern India. But in south-western Mysore, that is, in the Kaṇṇaḍa-speaking region and in Kerala one finds a fairly good number of temples as well as civil buildings with similar roofs rising like a tower in a series of receding stages or tiers, and these edifices are all built in wood or in wood and brick.

This is an architectural phenomenon in South and Southeast Asia which has not yet received sufficient attention from scholars. It seems however that the type may have been conditioned, partly at any rate, by climatic considerations; the dispersal of the type seems to point to the fact that rice-growing regions with abundant rainfall favoured this type of slanting roofs rising like a tower in receding stages. Such an assumption seems to have some support in another fact, namely, that all edifices in Nepal, civil or religious, are raised on fairly high plinths, evidently because of the high level of subsoil



water in the valley. The same is the situation in Southeast Asia where wooden civil buildings and monastic edifices are all raised on stilts.

However, the tower type of Nepalese temples consists of a square cella set within a bigger square which is roofed, as already pointed out, by a tower rising upwards in two to five diminishing tiers. The ground-floor seems to be the most important one since the upper storeys are usually blind, being non-functional and are built in the form of casements of intricately but delicately carved wooden architectural features and decorations. The shadows cast by the long over-hanging eaves that are supposed to support the glistening roofs, produce a most pleasing aesthetic effect.

It is not unlikely that the type was evolved out of the ordinary domestic architecture of Nepal; the same must have been the case in eastern and southern India and in Southeast Asia. So far as Nepal is concerned, an ordinary homestead in the valley has a similar but simpler ground plan and elevation, except that it has at the most two slanting roofs in diminishing stages, a form which is still so common in the villages of Bihar and Bengal, in Burma and Thailand and in Kerala. There is an old temple at Kathmandu called the Yatkha-baha, the projecting struts of the casement of which are adorned with *yakshi* figures. The roof of the temple surmounted by a small finial gives one the impression of an average dwelling house in the valley but for its ornamental door-way. Another temple at the Darbar Square at Kathmandu, dedicated to Śiva and Pārvatī, happens to be a two-storeyed building which too, gives the impression of a delightful piece of domestic architecture with Śiva and Pārvatī looking down from the window above.

Whatever may have been the origin of this type of civil and religious structures the fact remains that the Nepalese architects and craftsmen adopted and nurtured it through the centuries, making it a distinctive architectural form by a very successful blending of the two building materials of wood and brick. But for a thousand years that are spread out before our eyes, the type remains a static one, showing no evolution and no change except in sizes and proportions.

A tenth century Chinese travel-diary contains an entry which purports to describe very briefly, a building presumably of this type: "In the capital of Nepal there is a building of many stages which is more than 200 *chih* in height; it is 400 *chih* in circumference and is divided into three terraces, each terrace divided again into seven stages."<sup>4</sup>

The most interesting features of this type of structures, whether secular or religious, are the carved wooden panels, doors, windows, eaves and struts. The entire weight of the wooden superstructure consisting of the slanting roofs and the tower itself seems to be carried by the pillars, bracket capitals and radiating rafters which are all very richly carved. The profusely ornamented brackets with conventional designs and graceful but vigorous figures in relief lend a peculiar charm to these edifices. The projecting



lower end of the radiating rafter beams is joined with a horizontal beam which transfers the load to the struts resting on the projecting bracket. The decorations on the struts consist mostly of symbolic icons of various divinities. These wood-carvings are but analogous in form and style of contemporary stone sculptures of Nepal. The history of Nepalese wood-carving is nowhere so clearly and elaborately written than in the wooden pillars, rafters and struts of this type of Kathmandu temples. Not a few of these figures have been rendered in terms of amazing vitality and grace. Of bracket lintels the most interesting device seems to be the clever integration of human figures with conventional designs of flowers and foliage having a *kīrtimukha* or a curling *makara* in the centre. These bracket lintels which serve an important architectural purpose show very clearly how decorative carving, figural sculpture and architecture can be integrated into one formal entity (fig. 23).

Windows of these structures seem to receive a most careful and elaborate treatment. It is not unlikely that the model and inspiration came from the main land of India since the forms and methods are very much the same as in earlier Indian examples that one sees on the early Buddhist narrative reliefs from Barhut to Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda as well as in rock-cut *chaityas* of ancient India. In Buddhist and Jain texts too, one often reads of *siha-pañjaras*, *jāla-vātāpanas*, *vedikā-vātāpanas*, *śalākā-vātāpanas* etc. in connection with palaces and palatial buildings.<sup>5</sup> These were all evidently latticed windows of various forms and designs.

But in Nepal there seems to have been a much greater variety of forms and designs of such latticed windows; this was achieved mainly by dovetailing small pieces of wood and integrating them with moulded brick and modelled terracotta. A very attractive decorative device of a window screen is that of a peacock which forms the centre from which radiates the entire design (fig. 24). Another is that of the Sun-god who is surrounded either by a circle of human skulls, as in the Kumāri temple, or flanked by the goddesses Ūshā and Pratyūshā, or driving in a chariot of seven horses. Still there is another which shows Kṛṣṇa dallying with the *gopinīs*. Indeed, endless is the variety of such devices and the lattice designs. The patterns are usually geometrical though scrolls too are not infrequent. The walls are decorated with pilasters which frame tall vertical recesses; these are all richly carved in foliated relief. The pillars, square or cylindrical or tapering, support the stone lintels; they too are richly carved in ornamental reliefs. The main entrance door leading to the sanctum, is flanked by brick or stone pilasters; its uprights and leaves too, are very richly carved with floral and foliage decorations.





All the extant shrines of this type belong to the period of the later Mallas who with the help of the Newārs, established a most effective relation with India through trade and commerce. The ancient towns of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, each one of which was at one time or other, an important centre of Newār settlement, seem to have been reared up as direct products of this relation. In town-planning and architectural forms these towns retain to this day almost their old traditional character which presumably was conditioned and determined to a very large extent by their intimate contacts with India, and which also perhaps explain the rearing up of the countless number of shrines in the valley, both Buddhist and Brahmanical. These two religions seem to have made a great impression on the people of Nepal at all levels. The quarters of these three cities mentioned above, have each its own presiding deity along with a number of other associate, subordinate and attendant deities; they are seen installed in public shrines and private houses, and worshipped regularly as a matter of daily ritual. The public shrines are of various kinds besides the usual temples; they include tanks and fountains, platforms and tree-shrines, and of course wayside icons as well, all installed not so much by the royalty and the court as by rich individuals and relatively affluent religious establishments, but worship is offered by people belonging to all levels of society.

Seen from the air, Kathmandu is an egg-shaped valley consisting of three contiguous towns: Kathmandu itself, Patan and Bhatgaon. The valley is popularly known as the "land of temples". Indeed there is a countless number of big and small temples concentrated within the valley itself. The mounds of the so-called Aśoka *chaityas* of Patan and the present shrines at Caṅgu and Sengu may be taken to be *in situ*, standing exactly where the original shrines may have stood. Kailāsakūṭa, behind the present temple of Paśupatinātha, might have been the original place of Paśupati's main shrine. But these are assumptions which are yet to be proved archaeologically. Many of these, however old their foundations may be, are not older than the eleventh or twelfth century; quite a few could not have assumed their present form before the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Here and there an inscription on the door jamb of a shrine or on the pedestal of an image or on the wall of a temple may take one further back, as for instance, one on the *torāṇa* in the Woku-baha is dated 1391 and another on the Mahākāl temple in Guitabaha in 1500 A.D. There are also quite a few inscribed stone images of earlier dates but they cannot be related to their respective shrines.

Brahmanical temples of Nepal seem to have preserved a method of construction that is not to be seen in the construction of temples in India proper, all extant temples in India of the past being either built entirely of stone or/and brick. This method of construction



consists in the foundation and the lower part of the walls being laid and built in stone or brick and the entire structural frame in wood, the filling in being done by pieces of stones and bricks kept together by mud mortar. The method is, however, common, even today, in secular buildings in certain parts of India, particularly along the sub-Himalayan regions.

Such temples in Nepal fall generally into three more or less well-defined types. The first type consists of a square cella which shelters the *sanctum sanctorum*, surrounded by a *pradakṣiṇa* or circumambulatory path running between the walls of the inner square cella and those of the large outer square. These two squares are covered by a roof which rises in the manner of a low pyramid composed of horizontal courses diminishing in size and terminating in a finial (figs. 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8). The second type happens to be a frank adaptation of the common North Indian *śikhara* temples. Here too, the sanctum is accommodated in an inner square which, in the fully developed form of the type, is surrounded by a pillared *verandah* that serves as the *pradakṣiṇāpatha*. The inner square and the *verandah* are raised on a high, terraced plinth, and the *śikhara*-spire rests on the walls of the inner square, which together lend to the temples the impression of a dignified height. The spire itself is not one single architectural unit but is a composition consisting of a group of members, which give the impression of the body of the spire being formed by a system of turrets (figs. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). It is curious that this type is not provided with any *maṇḍapa* projection in front which is an invariable feature in the developed *śikhara* temples in India. There is still a third type, a very simple one, which consists of a square cella roofed by a bulbous dome topped by a finial (figs. 21 and 22). Of the first type the earliest known temple seems to be what is called the temple of Kumbheśvara in Patan. There is a temple of the same type at Cangu-Nārāyaṇa. An inscription on a pillar surmounted by what is certainly a Viṣṇu-Cakra, records a donation by Queen Rājyavati in commemoration of the victory of King Mānadeva in A.D. 496. But the structure as one sees it today, does not seem to date earlier than the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century; the inscribed pillar must have formed part of a much earlier structure at the site or even elsewhere. The temple is situated on the top of a steep hill which lies eight miles east of Kathmandu across the Manchra river (fig. 7). It is placed in the centre of a square courtyard which is lined on all sides by rows of small cells, meant presumably for devotees and pilgrims. The central pyramidal tower, wrongly described as *pagoda* by most writers, "is one mass of hammered brass, beaten up into angels and devils, reptiles and fishes, winged creatures and floral motifs." <sup>6</sup> All available space including that of the pillars, has indeed been covered with elaborate and sumptuous decorations consisting of conventional representations of Vaishṇava icons, legends and symbols like the *padma*, the *śaṅkha* and the *cakra*. The three doors of wood that

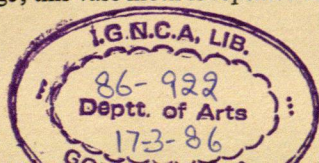


mark the front and the sides, are also very sumptuously decorated. The roof consists of two storeys which are functionally blind, but are enriched with mouldings, balconied windows, turrets and other architectural motifs.

If the Caṅgu-Nārāyaṇa is the richest of the type, the Nyapola temple at Bhatgaon (figs. 8 and 9) is perhaps the most dignified one. It is raised on a high plinth consisting of five receding terraces and roofed by a pyramid of five steps, covered all over by beaten brass of the colour of glistening gold. The inner square of the sanctum that enshrines the goddess Bhairavī, is reached by a long flight of steps that cut across the five terraces of the plinth, each terrace-platform being guarded by two colossal figures, evidently *dvārapālas*.

Around the city-squares of Kathmandu, Bhatgaon and Patan there are many other temples of this type, some simple in form, some more elaborate. The Paśupatinātha temple on the Bagmati river, a simple two storeyed shrine placed on a square platform, is one of the simpler variety. The Matsyendranātha or Machchhendranātha temple at Patan, built, according to an inscription, in 1408, is somewhat more elaborate (fig. 6). It was originally a Buddhist temple dedicated to Padmapāṇi, but was at a later date converted to a Brahmanical one. But the most typical and relatively more important ones seem to be the three Taleju temples at Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, all datable in the eighteenth century. Apart from the rich carvings and sumptuous decorations that characterize all the temples of this type, there is an architectural feature which deserves notice: the series of compressed storeys of the pyramidal roof are kept in position by slanting struts locked in the transverse beams above. This feature serves a functional purpose in the main, but it has also an aesthetic significance.

The second type of the North Indian *śikhara* variety consists of a single square cella which houses the sanctum. The simpler forms of this type have no projecting porch; in the more elaborate ones even this porch is a very nominal one. The high and slim *śikhara* or the spire rests on the four walls of the square cella, the entrance side alone of the walls being pierced by a high door with a semi-circular arch. The plain walls of the square cella are divided horizontally into two parts by two ribbed mouldings, which however do not seem to serve any functional purpose. It is on these four walls that the roof of the square cella and the sides of the *śikhara* tower rest; the tower rises straight in a perpendicular manner to roughly half the height when it takes a slow curvilinear form until it reaches a stage where it is superimposed by an architectural element which must have been derived from the traditional *āmalakaśilā*. This element is not as round as an *āmalakaśilā* is, but is formed in re-entrant angles that follow the lines of the square cella and the tower. On this *āmalaka* is a short series of cornice mouldings upon which rests a vase with foliage; this vase motif is repeated more than once in increasingly smaller





sizes. A typical example of this *śikhara* type is the temple of Śiva at Kathmandu. In its architectural form and proportions the type is a very simple one, but a dignified one nevertheless (fig 20).

Elaboration of this type can be seen, for example, in a miniature temple (fig. 12) near Sondhera in the Deo Patan area, and further elaborations in the Jagat-Nārāyaṇa temple at Patan (fig. 13), the Vatsalā temple at Bhaktapur (fig. 14) and in Hariśaṅkara temple, again at Patan (fig. 15). In the Jagat-Nārāyaṇa there is the addition of an *ardhamanḍapa* which seems to be an integral part of the construction of the sanctum but is roofed separately. This roof which runs all around is slanting and its corners are given a concave curve. The form of the *ardhamanḍapa* is repeated on each side of the *śikhara* tower, where it is superimposed by a miniature *śikhara*. The tower of the main *śikhara* is thus broken up by other architectural elements which cluster around its body. This type seems to have been further elaborated in the Vatsalā and Hariśaṅkara temples. The lintels of the doors and the facades of the *ardhamanḍapa* simulations around the body of the *śikhara*, are all decorated with intricate carvings of competent workmanship, representing the activities of gods and goddesses in complex positions and attitudes. This clustering of the *ardhamanḍapas* around the body of the *śikhara* tower and the breaking up of the tower itself by projecting horizontal bands, impart to the main *śikhara* a heavy and somewhat stunted appearance.

A temple of the same type but with a projection at the main entrance, can be seen in the Durgā temple at the Darbar Square at Bhaktapur. Here the large square cella is placed on the elevation of a series of diminishing plinths (fig. 16). The cella is reached by a series of elaborate steps with seated human and animal figures flanking each flight of steps of which there are as many as seven. The tower itself takes the form of compressed storeys. The elevation thus seems to suffer somewhat in its verticality; it is considerably disturbed not only by the turrets at the base but also by the dominance of the horizontal lines and the rich elaboration of the niches around the storeys.

The Kṛṣṇa temple at the Palace Square at Patan, datable presumably c. 1700, seems to be in the same line of evolution (fig. 17). The temple consisting of a small square cella within a larger one, is raised on a high plinth of diminishing tiers. The *śikhara* tower rises up in three arcaded storeys, each provided with an open colonaded balcony which runs all around. At each stage it has a series of turrets except at the topmost one which has five. At the corners of each stage there is a miniature temple as well, standing on four pillars. These non-functional features have imparted to the temple a decorative elaboration without doubt, but these have affected the clarity and dignity of the *śikhara* tower.

Of the sharp-edged *śikhara* form the Mahābodhi temple at Patan (fig. 18) which is said to have been built by Abhayarāja Vajrācārya, some time during the



seventeenth century, is perhaps the best and the most well known. Built entirely of brick its model must have been the famous Mahābodhi temple at Bodhgaya, but in form and proportions the Patan monument is somewhat different from the original. Its sanctum square which like most other Nepalese temples has no porch or *ardhamanḍapa* projection except at the entrance side, rises straight upto a height of about thirty feet, when it assumes the form of a sharp-edged and elongated pyramidal spire with corbelled niches decorating the entire elevation on the front side. The shrine rests, like all other temples in Nepal, on a high plinth which is usually a square, as in this instance. At each corner of the square plinth there is a miniature temple of the same form as that of the main one.

There are numerous other examples of this type, scattered all over Nepal. A recent exploration conducted by the Department of Culture, Tribhuvan University, brought to light a number of temples of this type in Western Nepal. Built of large-size stone or brick, on low foundations, these temples consist each of a sanctum, on the walls of which a *śikhara* with sharp edges, rises somewhat abruptly. As is usual in most temples in Nepal, there is no opening or projection except at the entrance; no provision is made for any *manḍapa* either, except in a few cases. Even where such a provision exists, the *manḍapa* is a very small one. At least one single variation of this temple type can be found in the Latikaili temple which in ground plan, is a rectangle and not a square. It is covered by a roof of the curvilinear hut-type of temples of medieval Bengal, and as in the latter, is also provided with a rectangular *verandah* in front. An inscription in the *lalāṭavimba* of the temple, indicates that the architect came from Kāśī.

Incidental mention may here be made of certain free-standing columns which are sometimes seen in front of some of temples (fig. 19). One of the best examples of such columns can be seen in front of the main temple at the Darbar square, Kathmandu. Such columns are usually surmounted by the kneeling figure of the king or the donor, or by the figure of the *vāhana* Garuḍa or Nandī, depending on the temple being respectively one of Viṣṇu or Śiva. Built in segments of round or fluted and slightly tapering shafts, these columns or *stambhas* must be the lineal descendants of the *dhvajastambhas* of the Indian tradition.

A new type of religious architecture seems to have come into vogue in Nepal from the time of the Shah kings (figs. 21 and 22). Since its form is characterized by the superimposition at the top of bulbuous domes, it has been suggested that the type may have partly at any rate, been inspired by the domes of Islamic architecture. While one may not altogether deny such a possibility, it can also be argued that these domes may have been an adaptation of the traditional Buddhist *stūpa* form. But be that as it may, one of the best examples of this type is to be seen in the Śiva temple at Hanumandhoka, Kathmandu or in a Bhairava temple in the same city. In ground plan the temple is a square with re-entrant angles and



with a pillared porch at the entrance side. Elevation-wise, the entire structure is raised on a high platform which lends to it some amount of dignity; this is further emphasised by the high walls of the square shrine itself, the tall pillars and the heavy architecture of the porch, the series of cornice mouldings and the slanting roof-sides and finally by two domes, a smaller bulbous one superimposed on the roof of the porch, and a larger hemispherical one resting on a high circular drum and superimposed on the roof of the main square hall below. Simple and dignified in its proportions, the different parts and elements of this construction have indeed been welded into an unified architectural composition.

But the most typical religious architecture of doubtless and distinctive Nepalese origin are the shrines of the ancestral gods (*degu-dya*) and local gods (*luka-mondya*). The Lumari-Ajuma temple at Tundikhel and the Ajima temple on the platform of the great Svayambhū *caitya* are two interesting examples of this type. The ground plan is a simple square with a box-like cella serving as the sanctum, around which runs a pillared corridor, and over which rises a high pyramidal tower with a receding series of sloping roofs, usually five, supported by wooden brackets. These brackets and the door lintels are all richly carved with foliate motifs, *makaras* and *kīrtimukhas*; certain motifs are also of Tibetan and Chinese origins. Like almost all Nepalese temples these shrines also rest on a high step-pyramidal platform. Of special interest is the temple of Litakot dedicated to the goddess Mai, which Tucci found on the road leading to Jumla-Chelkha. The enshrined goddess Mai is nothing but a shapeless stone; leaning against the walls of the temple are a few wooden figures which are supposed to be those of the donors and builders of the temple. That this form of architecture was derived from the older traditional secular buildings in wood, there cannot perhaps be any doubt.

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<sup>1</sup>*Mānasāra*, ed. by P.K. Acharya.

<sup>2</sup>Beal, S. *Buddhist Records*, Vol. II, pp. 173-74.

<sup>3</sup>Saraswati, S.K. "Temples at Pagan" in *Journal of the Greater India Society*, Vol. IX, pp. 5-28; Ray, Niharranjan, *Architecture in Burma*, an unpublished dissertation, University of Calcutta.

<sup>4</sup>Landon, P. *op. cit.* Vol. II, pp. 260-62.

<sup>5</sup>Ray, Amita. *Villages, Towns and Secular Buildings in Ancient India*, pp. 105-107.

<sup>6</sup>Deo, S.B. "Glimpses of Nepal Woodwork", in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, N.S., Vol. II, pp. 11-14.

<sup>7</sup>Tucci, G. *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, p. 38.





### III

## Sculptures and Bronzes

### 1

Sculpture in Nepal shows an obvious dependence on and close relationship with the plastic tradition of India, for understandable reasons, without doubt. The two major religions of the country, Buddhism and Brahmanism, which shaped and formed the ideological, imaginative and the behavioural world of the Nepalis, of the Newārs in particular who were the dominant cultural group, were both of Indian origin; the gods and goddesses, the myths and legends, the motifs and symbols etc., that have been current in Nepal for centuries, belong to these two religions. With this rich repository of thematic content of the two religions came also the respective forms of art and iconography that articulated this content in visual form and the theories and techniques that were associated with these forms from time to time. Different traits and traditions of art belonging to different times and different regions of India, depending on their contact with Nepal, thus entered the country and conditioned the vicissitudes of her sculptural art. The relative seclusion of the valley seems to have given the Nepalese people more favourable environs for working on the Indian models by strict observance of the Indian forms and canonical systems of proportion etc. There can be no doubt that by far the largest number of sculptures and bronzes were worked out locally in Nepal; a few alone may have been imported, more particularly, the smaller stone sculptures and the bronzes, but not necessarily. It is most likely that Indian artists who came along with the monks and priests, traders and merchantmen etc., were employed by local patrons to supply their religious needs and requirements, and it is equally likely that in course of time a local professional class of stone-carvers, metal-casters, painters, wood-carvers and architects must have also grown up, first as apprentices of Indian professionals and later, as independent artists and artisans working on their own. But what is curious to note is that even at a later date, say, by about the ninth-tenth-eleventh centuries when one would legitimately expect to find a considerable amount of localization of the imported forms and styles, one does not actually do so. Even the ethnic



types and facial and physiognomical forms remain throughout unmistakably Indian and no elements of local environs make themselves felt anywhere. The character of plastic treatment, the stances and gestures etc. rely almost exclusively on those of Indian art forms of different periods and regions. Definitely recognizable Nepalese characteristics are indeed very few and far between.

Recent archaeological finds at Tilaurakot, Banjarahī and Paisia to which reference has already been made, show very clearly how early sculptural art-forms are closely related to those of the time of the Mauryas, the Śuṅgas and the Kushāṇs of Indian history. But these finds are from isolated pockets and are not substantial enough to enable one to build up a connected sequence. Indeed, a connected history of the sculptural art of Nepal is not possible before the advent of the Licchavis in the third century A.D. This dynasty of kings ruled over Nepal for several centuries, and during their regime Nepal and India came into very intimate contact through more than one channel : religious missions, trade and commerce, political and diplomatic relations and matrimonial alliances. These centuries, that is, from about the fourth to about the seventh, witnessed in India a great and glorious cultural efflorescence under the rule of the Guptas, the Vākāṭakas, the Pushabhūti and the early Cālukyas of Vātāpi. This glory finds itself reflected in the forms and styles of objects of art recovered from various places in Nepal; indeed, these objects are frankly reminiscent of and are presumably related to the contemporary art traditions of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley on the one hand and that of western Deccan on the other. Here one finds a Vākāṭaka tradition too, which we shall consider in greater detail at a later stage; but even at this stage one may note that it was a force to reckon with during the Licchavi regime. The disintegrated image of Garuḍa crowning the victory pillar of Mānadeva at Caṅgu, the image of Varāha at Dhum Varāhi, of Virūpāksha at Aryaghat, of Gaurī and Yamunā in the Paśupati temple area and a number of Buddha-Bodhisattva figures including a relief representing the story of the Temptation of the Buddha, are some of the finest examples that register the impress of this tradition. There is another very important Indian trend of art at work in Nepal from about the ninth century; this is the so-called Pāla and Sena school of art of Eastern India. Indeed, during the rule of the Malla dynasty Nepal developed very close relations with Magadha and other areas of this region. A few of the objects of art in bronze, found in Nepal may have been imported from the main land, but a large majority must have been made locally. Changes were of course effected slowly towards gradual Nepalisation, especially in cast-metal icons, but the art form did not undergo any major transformation except in the introduction of a very few local elements. This has been a continuing process ever since to this day.





Chance finds and systematic surveys are fast bringing to light a profusion of examples of sculptural art from all over the valley. It is now clear that during the long centuries covered by the rule of the kings of the Licchavi and Malla dynasties there was an intense activity in Nepal in the field of sculptural art. The chronological framework is also more or less clear so that a few representative specimens may now be reviewed by way of a survey of the art.

The most important and perhaps the earliest piece of sculpture of Nepal<sup>1</sup> is a huge ( $3' 1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1' 6\frac{1}{2}''$ ), heavy, frontal and free-standing image of what seems to be a Buddha-Bodhisattva figure in buff-colour sand-stone, recently recovered from Hadigaon, Kathmandu (fig. 25). The earthy heaviness of the figure, its frank frontality with an emphasis on the second dimension, the style of wearing the *dhoti*, its plastic treatment and its general character of form and iconography would suggest at once that it is affiliated to the art-form and style as registered in the over-life size, earthy and heavy, freestanding Buddha-Bodhisattva images of the Mathura school of the first century A.D. Indeed, but for the material the Hadigaon image could be regarded as a first cousin of the three well-known Buddha-Bodhisattva images installed by Friar Bala at Mathura, Sarnath and Sravasti, and perhaps also a fourth at Kausambi. Unfortunately at the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to explain archaeologically and historically the background of the appearance of this art-form and style in the very heart of the Kathmandu valley unless one assumes that even at that distant date the valley was in direct communication with these important centres of art and culture in northern India at any rate, which was very likely in the context of the Aśokan tradition in Nepal, nor can we connect this form and style in a historical sequence with what we know of the art of the realm in later periods.

But perhaps in one stray example of what seems to have been an essay in royal portraiture one may detect a physiognomical form which is earthy and heavy in proportion, expansive and broad and somewhat rigid in its frank frontality. Made in grey limestone, the free-standing, crowned statue of the one who must have been recognized as a king is still preserved in the Gorakshanātha monastery at Mṛgasthali, Paśupatinātha (fig. 26). The *prabhāmaṇḍala* round the head seems to attribute divinity to the figure and the broad expansiveness of the shoulders, the chest and the arms are doubtless efforts at articulation of power, energy, authority and dignity to the figure, which is sought to be heightened further by the manner of standing firmly with the feet planted somewhat apart. Formally speaking, the figure which may tentatively be dated stylistically in the third or fourth century A.D., is strongly reminiscent of the Kushāṇa form of Buddha-Bodhisattva on the one hand and of the royal statues on the other, of the first two centuries of the Christian era.



Strongly reminiscent of the Mathura-Kushāṇ heritage but in a somewhat later manifestation, is the seated figure of what seems to be that of a Kirāta king. Behind the head is a round, spoked nimbus, a symbol of divinity. Seated in a regal attitude, the figure is a spread-out one, heavy and strong, very earthy in form and appearance (fig. 28). Indeed, its formal characteristics remind one of Kushāṇ royal portraits though the plastic treatment is somewhat softer.

Certainly later in date by at least a century or more and very much different in its plastic formulation is the rounded figure of a devotee in kneeling, squatting position in front of a way-side temple at Kathmandu (fig. 41). The character of the plastic treatment of its rounded volumes, the expression of the face and of the more than half-closed eyes and the wig-like treatment of its long hair mark it out as one registering some of the values of classical Indian art. But at the same time one has also to take note of the general heaviness of the figure and the broad expansiveness of the chest and the shoulders which seem to hark back to its Kushāṇ-Mathura heritage.

How this Kushāṇ based Gupta tradition was at work in Nepal can perhaps be seen in a couple of sculptured pieces, one in sandstone showing a *kumbha* or water-pitcher surmounted by the head and face of a woman protected by the spread-out hoods of a *nāga* (fig. 28), and the other in bluish grey limestone representing the nativity scene of the Buddha, at the Sundara Fountain at Deo Patan (fig. 29). The first one is iconographically a unique piece. It is well known that the water-filled *kumbha* is a fertility symbol, the *kumbha* being equated with the woman's womb; indeed the *Kathāsaritsāgara*<sup>2</sup> equates it with the female uterus. The ruins of Nagarjunikonda have yielded the figure of a female nude sitting with her legs doubled up and placed wide apart, showing the vaginal door wide open; at the same time the belly of the woman has been given the shape of a *Kumbha*. The *nāga* shown as protecting the woman is also a fertility symbol, while the *maṇi* or jewel held by one of the two hands of the woman projected over the rim of the *kumbha*, is a symbol of plenty. That the woman and the *kumbha* shown in this piece of sculpture constitute, therefore, a fertility symbol, there can be no doubt. Its appearance in India and Nepal in almost identical forms connects the two cultures in their biological roots as it were.

Formally and plastically, if one has to go by Indian formulations, this piece cannot perhaps be dated before the fifth or sixth century, but in its fulness of facial form, its heavy, rounded lower lip and the shape of the face the woman seems to carry the distant memory of some of the feminine figures of third-fourth century Mathura. This memory seems to be still potent in the nativity scene relief (fig. 29) which cannot perhaps be dated before the seventh century, if again one has to judge by Indian formulations in formal and plastic terms. The style and idiom of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley of the sixth-seventh century are



very clear on a specimen of this kind, and yet a certain Mathuraesque flavour seems to linger on the face, the hips and the thighs of Māyādevī. She stands in a well known graceful *bhaṅga* with both her raised hands softly clutching the yielding branch of a tree to support herself. The delicate bends of her physical frame rendered in sensitive lines, seem to find place for two other isolated components and yet to bind all separate parts of the composition into one single whole, and the contrast between the vertical column of the tree on the one hand and the soft, rhythmic linearity of the curves of the body on the other, gives to the whole piece a lyrical charm. In specimens like this (figs. 30, 32 and 33) one can see how faithful an interpretation of an Indian art-form could be in the Nepalese context and how such an interpretation could be locally accepted as of the soil itself.

### 3

These undated examples help us acquire an idea and a feel of the nature of the sculptural art of Nepal. But Nepal provides us with a number of dated and easily datable examples of art which would enable one to formulate a reliable chronological framework and follow the course of evolution of the art.

The earliest of such examples are two inscribed and dated images of Viṣṇu (both 467 A.D.), one from the Mṛgasthali and another from the Lajimpat area of Kathmandu, both depicting Viṣṇu in his *Trivikrama* form (figs. 34 and 35). In the compositional scheme of both, in the forward thrust of the figures and their powerful gestures, the oblique sweep of their bodies and their powerful yet sensitive modelling, they are strongly reminiscent of contemporary west-Deccanese sculptures of the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period. The heavy consistency of the modelling and concentrated roundness of the sturdy physical frame of these figures and of the Varāhāvatāra figure from Dhumvarahi (fig. 37) are unmistakable evidence of a close contact of Nepal with the Gupta-Vākāṭaka tradition. Historical evidence of such contacts is not altogether lacking. Qualitatively perhaps on a lower level but equally interesting is another sculpture of Viṣṇu-Trivikrama from Caṅgu Nārāyaṇa area showing the impress of the same tradition (fig. 36). This piece is somewhat descriptive and hence loaded with iconographic details, but the quality of plastic treatment and the sturdy linear movement of the figure, despite a somewhat stiffening of plasticity, leave no doubt as to its original inspiration.

Belonging to a slightly later period but to the same affiliation are the images of Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi and Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi from Dhvaka-Baha where the figures stand in niches between pilasters facing the four directions. To the same affiliation seem to belong the image of Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara near Patan (fig. 43), and a



Brahmanical relief representing Kṛṣṇa subjugating the serpent Kāliya at the Vasanta-pur Palace, Kathmandu. The composition of these pieces, the sturdy physiognomy and the powerful movement of the figures, their architectural setting and their plastic treatment cannot but remind one of the reliefs of the caves of Udayagiri (Bhilsa, fifth century) on the one hand and of Aurangabad and early Ellora of the time of the early Chālukyas of Vātāpī, on the other (seventh century).

To a slightly later period should perhaps be ascribed the images of Kṛṣṇa or Balarāma (fig. 40). In its almost three dimensional ponderosity and the manner of the treatment of the different planes of the body the figure seems to have a very close similarity with some of the similar figures of the Aurangabad caves. Belonging to more or less the same West Deccanese tradition is an image of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa and another of Viṣṇu-Viśvarūpa, and still a third, of Narasimhāvatāra from the Caṅgu-Nārāyaṇa area, the latter qualitatively of a lower level than the other one (figs. 38, 39 and 42). The figures are full of the vibrant sap of life, allowing their forms swelling as it were from within. Indeed, the nature of human figuration, the character of formal composition and the effect of rock-texture of these reliefs cannot but remind one of the rock-cut reliefs of the Pallavas and the Chālukyas of the seventh century.

A group of Ekamukha and Caturmukha Liṅgas may be worth mentioning in this connection. Not all the images belong to the same aesthetic form; nor do they all belong to the same time. At least two (figs. 44 and 45) which are found near the Paśupatinātha Temple, resemble the well-known Mukhaliṅgam of the Nachna Kuthara Temple of the early Gupta days. Its stylistic affiliation with the Gupta-Vākāṭaka sculptural tradition is unmistakable. Similar Caturmukha Liṅgas from the same and other areas in Nepal can also be dated in the late classical culture period of the Deccan, that is, in about the seventh-eighth century.

## 4

It is now clear that from already about the fifth century Nepal started listening to the reverberations of the Indian art forms, mainly from two sources, it seems, one being that of the Deccan and other of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley. But, in respect of the latter, Nepal seems to carry on the tradition of Mathura more than that of Sarnath, on the one hand and of Eastern India on the other. Broad masculine chest and shoulders and a firm body-form expressive of enormous energy happen to be the special contribution of Mathura in this tradition. Examples of the impress of this tradition in Nepal are indeed too many to refer to, and they are all, if not exclusively, cult images. Gupta classical grace and proportions, poise and elegance seem to have been given full value in a number of images. The earliest of these is the Umā-Maheśvara image from Sikhu-Baha, Lalitpur,



which bears an inscription with a date equivalent to A.D. 550, which is perhaps the earliest Umā-Maheśvara icon from Nepal. The art and iconographic form of the composition follows the usual Indian model, but the broad and vigorous sturdiness of the physical type seem to be an inheritance from Mathura, but this has been understood and interpreted here in a different context (fig. 46).

A sixth century sculptural panel in limestone depicting the story of Māra's Temptation (fig. 30) seems to cling honestly to the eastern version of the Gupta classical tradition. The plastic character of the female figures has all the grace and poise and warm sensuousness and human charm of the nāgīnī of Maniyar Math, Rajgir. Yet, in the same relief when one looks at the figures of Māra's army presented in their actively violent gestures and movements which are rendered not only in full volumes and depths but also very realistically, one is made to feel that other art traditions were also perhaps at work in Nepal at the same time. The grace and charm of the temptress girls are indeed in very sharp contrast with the violent gestures and movements of Māra's hosts.

A very interesting piece of sculptured relief of this trend comes from Nagaltole (figs. 32 and 33). Presumably narrating the legend of the *Kumarasambhavam* the relief actually purports to present a very sweetly sensuous domestic scene with loving care and tenderness. The soft sensitivity of the plastic treatment, the vibrant composition, the tender curvaceousness of the line, the graceful movement of the figures and the fine and subtle display of light and shade make it a most interesting human document. The rhythm of the sweeping curves adds a peculiar charm which is unmistakably informed by the warmth of the senses. Here is thus reflected the same classical tradition which expresses itself most effectively in a number of Buddha images (figs. 31 and 56). The vibrant and youthful physiognomical form of the figures, the refined sensitivity of the plastic modelling, the flowing linear rhythm not only of the outline but also of the contour, the soft compassionate expression of the face and the attitude of calm composure that characterise the best of these sculptures, are but echoes of what was being worked out in the contemporary Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley. The contact of the artists in Nepal with those of Eastern India was reinforced in the centuries that followed, especially during the regime of the Pālas and the Senas. With the passing of time the Gupta legacy came to be interpreted differently in Eastern India in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. The stages are all reflected in the contemporary relief sculptures of Nepal in more or less details. Reference may be made in this connection to a number of cult images of Śiva-Pārvati and Lakshmi-Nārāyaṇa (figs. 48, 49 and 52). The compositions are all executed in high and bold relief, but the plastic treatment despite roundity of form, is somewhat hard, and poses and attitudes, mannered and stiff, despite adherence to graceful *bhaṅgas* and *bhaṅgīs* prescribed by iconography. The reliefs are all somewhat over-decorative and figures are profusely ornamented. The Kathmandu



relief (fig. 52) is an instance in point; the figure of Vishṇu besides being heavily ornamented, follows the iconographic prescriptions in every little detail. The grammar, diction and idiom of the sculptural art of Eastern India seem to have got fixed in Nepal and all but absolutely standardised for the next well-nigh one millennium. It leads one to assume that craftsmen from different centres of Bihar and Bengal may have migrated to Nepal during the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries and in larger numbers immediately after the Turkish conquest, and there they and their descendants continued to work in the same tradition as they had been used to back at home centuries before.

From about the thirteenth century onward, the compositional scheme of the reliefs, their plastic treatment and architectural features, the ornaments and decorations of the figures and their physiognomical form etc. that meet the eye on countless number of reliefs are all directly attributable to the contemporary life of Nepal as had been conditioned for centuries by Indian life and culture. Icons dating from this period follow increasingly the prescriptions as laid down in the Brahmanical or Buddhist Tantric texts. At the same time, one comes to notice an increasing localization of the facial type and features of the figures, namely, elements of a racial type with slanting eyes and slightly high cheek-bones which are the obvious cognizances of the ethnic types of Nepal. Also one begins to notice in the reliefs some patternised versions of the endless repetitions of the same body-form and facial type, standard poses and attitudes and similar treatment of dress and ornaments. Whether it is a Buddhist icon or a Brahmanical divinity, the body is always held within a stiffened outline. The modelling seems to be hard and petrified; yet there is a soft treatment of the flesh, at least in the upper portion of the body. The physiognomical type has a conventional charm which is repeated from figure to figure. Any definite chronological sequence is therefore difficult to establish. The various forms and styles of Indian art that had entered Nepal from time to time continued to persist and co-exist side by side with whatever localization these were subjected to.

A very significant and interesting example of an attempt at localization of the eastern tradition is furnished by a fine image of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi (fig. 47), elegantly ornamented and crowned. There can hardly be any doubt that this image is strongly reminiscent of the classical tradition of Indian art as articulated in early medieval Buddha images of Eastern India, particularly of the tenth and the eleventh centuries. The facial form and features and the plastic treatment are very characteristic in this regard. But in the broad forehead, the high cheek bones, the slanting eye-brows and the general sharpness of the facial features, there is perhaps an attempt at imparting to the face a certain local ethnic character.

Art in Nepal from now onwards came also to be marked by increasing hierarchization which was due presumably to the stabilisation of the Tibetan Lamaistic Buddhism in



Nepalese religious ideas and practices. Thus, art slowly and inevitably became degenerated into stereotyped cultic forms; increasingly the iconic forms came to be regarded as *yantras* or magical patterns, and they were produced in countless numbers. It is not, therefore, surprising that today one comes across a countless number of images of Vishṇu, Śiva, Umā-Maheśvara, Gaṇeśa, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī, Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Tārās and various other aspects of Buddha-Śaktis etc. being recovered from every nook and corner of the valley. Most varied and complicated icons of all such divinities rest on the fixed foundations of a regulated and canonised structure of form, with hardly any deviation anywhere. In the midst of such lifeless monotony, one does not really expect any art activity of creative significance except in very rare instances.

By about the beginning of the thirteenth century, the whole of North India was overrun by the iconoclastic forces of Islam. Cut off thus from her age-old sources of inspiration and activity, Nepal was forced to fall back upon whatever resources she had been able to build up during the long centuries of her contact with India. She was thus forced by history to evolve an art-language of her own, slowly but eventually. Already, towards the end of the Malla period, local accents in the form of facial type, physiognomy, drapery etc. were becoming more and more pronounced. But, in general, sculptural art of Nepal, even at this stage, remained somewhat a prolongation of the East Indian forms and styles, which was perhaps inevitable. Nepal because of its cloistered existence was somewhat obliged to cling to what was already an established tradition. But even so, definite Nepali traits, for instance, the arched brow, pointed nose and high cheek, broad chin and short stocky body-form, impart to the art of this phase a pronouncedly Nepali character. A number of cult images in the Sundari Chak, Patan, belong to this phase. The local *jaladhārā* is semi-circle in form having a number of niches all around the arch; at the centre is a *makaradhārā*. The central figure (fig. 53) is that of Vishṇu seated with Lakshmī, mounted on *Garuḍa*. The niches separated from each other by a rich foliage pattern, are each occupied by an icon. All the figures, though different in iconographic form, have nevertheless the same physiognomical and facial forms and features. The composition is limited to a set of standardized scheme. Figures of mythical animals and *groteques*, of Mahākālā or Bhairava in their terrific aspects seem to have a grip on popular imagination and these are repeated again and again in these reliefs of the *jaladhārā*.

Not unoften the art of sculpture in Nepal offers surprising examples which cannot be explained fully in terms of the Indian tradition. One such sculpture (fig. 55) seems to be that of a torso of a male figure wearing its hair in the form of a wig and having heavy earrings and a rope-patterned waist-band in double moulds. Its facial and physiognomical form is heavy and expansive; the plastic treatment is flat and stiff. Its wide open eyes, thick lower lip and the heavy nose seem perhaps to reveal a tribal ethnic type which may not



have been of local origin, though it has been described in the records of the Archaeological Survey of India as that of a Kirāta. It is *in situ* at Aryaghat within the precincts of the Paśupatinātha Temple. Physiognomically and from the point of view of the plastic treatment, the torso affords a Mathuraesque feeling, yet in its general form and appearance, it seems to have some connection with the reliefs of the Western Deccan. It is, therefore, very difficult to fix such a sculpture more or less definitely in date or in form and style.

A still more intriguing piece of bold relief is that of a dwarf supporting a water-spout, located at Sondhera at Deo Patan. As if heavily weighed under the weight of the water-spout, the giant dwarf squats in a difficult position which has been very ably managed in a meaningful composition within a rectangle. The almost geometrical forms that frame the giant, to the right and left, are very ingeniously shaped and formulated. The wavy treatment of the hair and the beard in masses, the boldly rounded and modelled physiognomical form and facial features and the balanced display of light and shade and the distribution of the masses, lend to the figure a severe dignity and a grand solidity of texture and feel. It is indeed one of the finest pieces of sculpture that Nepali art has to offer and it is not easy to explain it in terms of Indian art exclusively.

## 5

As in stone sculpture, so in bronzes too, Nepal's dependence on Indian forms, styles and techniques is equally obvious. It is equally obvious that eventually Nepal made a successful venture towards the formation of a Nepali style. The first lessons were presumably learnt from the Indian masters, but the artists of Nepal tried to improve upon it and kept up their practice without let or hindrance; this allowed the tradition a much longer lease of life than it was possible anywhere in the east except in Tibet and Burma. The most important centres of bronzes in Eastern India, it is well known, were Chausa, Nalanda and Kurkihar in Bihar, Varendra and Jhewari in Bengal, for instance. Literary and archaeological evidence points to the fact that from the beginning of the fifth and sixth centuries, but more particularly from the eighth, countless number of monks and priests went from the monastic and priestly establishments of Bihar and Bengal to Nepal and Tibet, among other regions to the north and southeast. Stone sculptures were heavy and hence difficult to carry on one's back, but not so manuscripts and bronzes which were easily carried to Nepal. Quite a number of them must have been borne on the shoulders of Buddhist monks and Brahmanical priests. It seems from the examples that have come down to us, that a large number of such images were imported, evidently in answer to the increasing demands of standard cult requirements. With steady widening of the sway of various cults of Buddhism and Brahmanism and an increasing clientele, the demand for



such small size bronzes seems to have been ever on the increase, and very soon small scale foundries for casting such images may have also come into existence for meeting the increasing demand, part of which must have been coming from individual householders' desire to be supplied with their *grha-devatās*. Indian images must have provided them the models, which presupposes that Indian masters must have been present there to train them not only in the lessons of form and iconography, but also in the very intricate and difficult processes and techniques of bronze-casting.

Indian cast metal icons seem to have reached Nepal during the later Gupta culture period. But the appreciable influx of the metal-casters must have taken place from Magadha and Bengal during the rule of the Pālas and Senas. Tāranāth in 1608 mentions about two artists, Dhīmān and Bīṭpolo of Varendra or Nalendra, who belonged to the time of Devapāla. The school they founded in Eastern India seems to have influenced the art of metal-casting in Nepal. In fact cast-metal images in Nepal followed closely the tradition and technique of metal casting in India.

The most favoured technique in Nepal, was the method which is technically known as *retardataire*. The *cire-perdue* or lost wax method was also known to the Nepali artists. Since the methods have often been described and are well known, no description is called for. Besides, these are still widely practised in Nepal where there is still a demand for such images.

Since the iconography and art form of most of these images were more or less fixed, the images turned out by the local foundries were in most cases, like products manufactured on a mass scale, that is, more or less mechanically, and in a stereotyped form from the point of view of art though they served in full their cult purposes. Yet on the whole, one must admit that despite a general fixation of the art form, Nepal through the centuries maintained a relatively high standard throughout.

Summarily speaking the female figures maintain throughout a slender and elegant physiognomical form, an almost oval facial type with slightly pointed chin and almond shaped eyes and a pair of slightly hardened and tight breasts. Male forms are fleshier and relatively short-statured. They have a broader face with a slightly longish and pointed nose. But male or female, both forms are characterized by a tense rigidity of pose and attitude. Both tend to look like ideal types that offer no clue to their mental disposition, emotional mood or ethnic identity.

But here and there in the early stages of the art, one can come across examples where there is considerable slackening of this tense rigidity. In such instance (fig. 61) that belongs to the sixth-seventh-eighth centuries one notices a tall, slender physiognomical form upheld by the steadied lines and curves of the high and narrow waists. The soft sensitivity of the lines and of the plastic treatment of the body clearly affiliate these



images to the late Gupta tradition; their poise and grace, their stances, and attitudes, their general proportions, and even their facial features including their thick lower lip, are all strongly reminiscent of the classical Indian heritage. The earliest of such images of Nepal seems to be that of a standing four-handed Vishṇu (fig. 57) which is now in the Boston Museum. At a somewhat later stage a certain localization of the imported form and style seems to have taken place. This is noticeable particularly in the treatment of the eyes and the oblique angular cut of the eyebrows.

Of the earlier phase the Bodhisattva image, now in the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek collection, Los Angeles, bears a close formal relationship with some of the stone sculptures of the Licchavi period, which are strongly reminiscent of the contemporary Deccanese tradition of the seventh-eighth century. But the four-handed Śiva (fig. 60) standing in slight contra-post bears a close stylistic resemblance to the classical Gupta form of the sixth century. The images of Tārā, one standing in a graceful *bhaṅga* and another seated in *sukhāsana* (fig. 58), seem to be a continuation of this style. In the fulness of its warm and voluptuous physiognomical form and in its sensuously relaxed and languorous attitude, the seated Tārā figure carries on the characteristic style of the late classical form as realised by the East Indian artists of about the eighth-ninth century. The four-handed image of Vishṇu standing in *samapādasthāna* and holding his usual attributes (fig. 57) reflects in its plastic treatment a chaste and abstract quality which too, is of classical Gupta inspiration. To this phase and character also belong the figures of Tārā, Bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, Dharmadhātā Vāgīśvārī (figs. 61, 62, 63, and 64). Neatly cast, these are indeed fine examples of Nepalese metal sculpture. It is this style which formed the basis of the cast-metal images of Nepal till the fourteenth-fifteenth century.

But from the fourteenth century onward, with increasing hierarchization of the cults one notices an increasing hieratic stylisation of forms. The figures become more and more loaded with a profusion of jewellery, and meaningless flexions of their bodies tend to make them rigid and petrified; a show of feverish energy and ecstatic happiness render them violent and aggressive, which is particularly noticeable in the Tāntrik images. But one can hardly deny that a vast amount of experience of bronze-casting and a very high standard of efficient craftsmanship must have gone into making of such images. To be convinced of this one has only to have a look at such images as those of Bhairava, Vajravārāhī, Vṛishasamhāra, Hevajra, Heruka, the Ḍākinī and a host of other Tāntrik Buddhist and Brahmanical gods, goddesses and semi-divine beings. The endless stream gilt-copper images depicting Tāntrik Buddhist and Brahmanical gods and goddesses of varying sizes and proportions, are certainly of great iconographic importance but they have very little to offer to a student of art.



These cast metal images can broadly be divided into two categories, which have no chronological significance. Indeed, they seem to have been fashioned simultaneously through the centuries. The first category includes the gods and goddesses of the Vajrayāna Buddhist pantheon; these icons, formally speaking, happen to be a continuation of the Pāla art of Eastern India in an increasingly stylized version. The second category is also an outcome or extension of the first, but the icons of gods and goddesses that belong to this category are pronouncedly of Tāntrik inspiration, and in their art and iconographic form they seem to have a Tibetan Lamaistic accent.

The first category would include such examples as are provided by the figures of the Bodhisattvas, of Tārā, and of Śiva and Viṣṇu already referred to. The standing bronze image of Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi (fig. 62) and that of Khadiravanī Tārā (fig. 61) are both stylistically suggestive of the post-Gupta tradition of Eastern India. Their elongated body form and its refined and elegant outline, the chaste abstract plastic treatment of the rounded volumes, the treatment of the garment and the neat and precise work of the rich jewellery are all clearly indicative of their source of inspiration which must have been the early Pāla art of Eastern India. But it is in the largeness of the size and the quality of casting that the artists of Nepal seem to have given evidence of the boldness of their conception and their superior technical skill. The other images referred to above, though not all of the same quality, belong nevertheless to this category. They are all fine examples of exquisite craftsmanship.

A solidly cast gilt-copper image of Tārā is an interesting example (fig. 65) of the last phase of this category of icons. Its mannered and conventional *tribhaṅga*, the schematic treatment of her physiognomy, the three-quarter face, the sharp pointed nose and rounded chin are all reminiscent of Pāla form, but a form which has registered the impress of a great deal of localization.

To the second category belong those dynamic compositions of gods and goddesses of definite Tāntrik inspiration, into which have been introduced a great deal of Tibetan demonology. These are generally of very intricate craftsmanship and are very precisely worked out in elaborate details. Indeed, these icons are mostly visual symbols of Tāntrik experience, in the making of which the Nepalese metal-casters seem to have achieved a very high proficiency.

Figure 66 is an excellent example of what has just been said. The linking of the two figures, both in a state of fury in the act of becoming one, without making them appear to lose their balance, is a compositional marvel and a feat in technical cleverness and efficiency. Examples of this kind can be seen in many figures of later periods where the god is locked in close embrace with his Śakti holding a skull-cup and a *kartri* in her two hands.





Besides the Tāntrik icons of such description, images of Brahmanical gods and goddesses were also turned out in large numbers from workshops established for this purpose. In such instances the traditional East Indian influence remains constant, although certain Mongoloid features can be noticed in the facial features, especially in the bow-shaped curve of the slightly elongated eye-lids, the sharp nose, the small mouth with tight lips and the slightly hardened rounded chins. The local character may be seen in the surface of the face which is smooth and tends to flatness.

During this period Nepal produced a number of portraits of kings, queens and priests in bronze, but they are 'portraits' because they are claimed as such since one hardly detects in these examples any attempt at individualization of features, which is the mark of portraiture, strictly speaking. Rigid formularisation of form that characterizes the cult images, is very much in evidence here as well; conventional and highly stylised, these so-called portraits have no life of their own.

Kramrisch reproduces in her *Art of Nepal* the figure of a bronze bull in slow gallop. The soft plasticity of treatment of the fully rounded form and the vision of dynamic naturalism that informs and inspires it, make this object of art a delight to the eye and the mind. There must have been produced by the foundries of Nepal similar other objects of such high quality or at least nearing the same standard, but unfortunately one comes across them but very rarely.

<sup>1</sup> Banerjee, N.R. "Three Early Sculptures in Stone from the Nepal Museum in Kathmandu", in *Ancient India*, No. 4, July 1968; pp. 37-38.

<sup>2</sup> Penzer, T. (ed. & trans.) *Kathāsaritsāgara*, 70, 112.





## IV

# Wood-Carvings and Terracottas

### 1

The art of wood-carving is indeed the pride of Nepal. Both in secular and religious buildings wood, beautifully shaped and formed and carved in intricate patterns and designs, was extensively used in door-frames, door-leaves, windows, cornices, brackets, lintels, struts, pillars, pilasters and architraves, in fact in all available surfaces of wood as it were. Apart from vegetal and geometrical forms of all conceivable varieties, human and animal forms of life and myth too enrich the repertory of these wood-carvings which is still a live art in Nepal. The wood that was used in the old temples and palaces of Kathmandu, Patan, Bhatgaon and Vasantpur, for instance, was locally known as *dhumsi* which means 'strong', or as *chasi* which means 'as strong as tiger'. Contemporary builders use *śāl*, *agrat* and *chapa* which are all available in plenty at and around Kathmandu. *Sankhu* wood is, however, considered to be the best.

But unfortunately no wood-carving that can be dated before the thirteenth century, has come down to us, nor any systematic attempt seems to have been made to study the art of the wood-carver so as to enable us to define the forms and phases of the art. But certain things are very clear from even a very casual analysis of the very large number of examples that are still extant. Temples, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, had their surfaces covered with carvings of figures of divine and semi-divine significance. Unlike similar figures in stone or bronze, these figures, relatively speaking, are less bound down by rigid iconographic injunctions, and not unoften they breathe a secular air even (fig. 71). But stylistically they belong to the same norm that controls the bronzes and the stone sculptures. This is clear in the quality and character of modelling, the descriptive detail of the contours and the emphasis on their harmonious amplitude (figs. 67 and 68). As one proceeds along the arrow line of time, one sees a certain slackening of the contours, and then the figures seem to exhale an intimate warmth and delicacy of feel and atmosphere that are unknown to the last phases of stone sculptures and bronzes. One cannot also afford to miss the carvings in

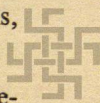


relief representing myths and legends from the Indian epics, which the common people were more familiar with. This is a feature worth taking notice of, since the Nepali artists do not in general seem to have been very much at home in narrative art forms, their whole attention being devoted to the representation of gods and goddesses in their respective iconographic forms. However, in wood-carving the method of narration closely follows that of the *pata-citras*, that is, one rectangle is given to each legend or part thereof, which is separated from the next by a vertical or horizontal line.

Some of the figure-carvings on the struts are remarkable for their exquisite craftsmanship and compositional skill, the ascending lines of the sinuous volume are gracefully balanced and responded to by descending lines, and they create a fine rhythmic movement in most of them (figs. 69 and 70). These figures are in most cases iconic, representing gods and goddesses like Lokeśvara, Śiva and Pārvatī, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Indra and Indrānī and others belonging to the Tāntric pantheon (figs. 71 and 72). Some of the figures are mythical and semi-religious like those of the epic hero Bhīmasena and of *śālabhañjikās*, for instance. Quite a few of these figures are easily identifiable since they are provided with writings either in Newārī or Sanskrit, giving their names, as one finds in the Caturvarṇa mahāvihāra at Bhatgaon and Chaussyabahal and Musyabahal shrines at Kathmandu. Secular themes like those of dancing men and women, mother and child, barber shaving his customer (Hanuman Dhoka), amorous couples, frankly erotic scenes, animals in processions etc. also abound, the last being fine studies in poise and balance, sensuous charm and disciplined grace. That the artists experienced sort of a sensuous delight to carve these decorative themes is made clearly manifest in their fine workmanship and free play of imagination. If and when they had no specific theme to work upon they would just make a serpentine design or a floral scroll with a *kīrtimukha* at the centre, that would unwind playfully over whatever space was available at their disposal.

Narrative scenes do not always seem to come off; in fact, compared to the purely decorative they are weaker in movement and grace as well as in their narrative significance. Even a cursory look at the representations of the life of the Buddha at the Marustal shrine at Kathmandu, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* stories at the Kṛṣṇa temple at Patan (fig. 73), and the story of Prahlāda being driven away from the royal palace on the eave-board of more than one temple in the valley, would prove the point. Carvings of vegetal and geometrical designs often include human figures integrated into the composition. These figures too, do not always come off. Besides, not unoften in such cases the entire design is held within bounds by a heavy border above and below, and this border is repeated within the design itself, to conform to the architectonic scheme, it seems, making the design appear heavy and devoid of any movement.

The innate, playful love for finely balanced and colourful design seems to have been re-





served for the window-screens and bracket lintels. The windows—square, conical, circular, almond or oval shaped, either with cusped or arched top—are all decorated with traditional *nāga-bandha* (serpent motifs) or *vallī-bandha* (floral and foliage motifs) designs, *gavāksha* (cow-eye) or *kuñjarāksha* (elephant-eye) designs, *svastika* or *nandyāvarta* (geometrical) designs, to cite only a few of these examples. Very characteristic is the design of the peacock which is admirably spaced and stylized as a decorative ornament (fig. 24). The *jālī* (net-patterned screen) windows exhibit a large variety of designs which are doubtless adaptations of traditional Indian *jālavātāpanas*, *śalākā-vātāpanas* etc. of early Pāli and Prākṛt texts. The bracket lintels are mostly decorated with flying figures of *vidyādharas*, *kinmaras*, *gandharvas* and *kimpurushas*; these semi-divine beings play an important part in the Buddhist and Brahmanical myths of Nepal as they do in India. Whatever the scale these figures are always well-proportioned, well-balanced and executed with skill and refinement. Many of the buildings are provided with epigraphs which record the dates of their building and consecration. A rough chronology of the edifices can thus be built up on the strength of these records.

13th century: Rudravarṇa mahāvihāra, Patan.

14th century: Chusyabahal and Musyabahal monasteries.

15th century : Banepa temple and Bhuvaneśvara temple, near the great Paśupati-nātha, Kathmandu.

16th century : Kirtipur temple, the Patan Palace and the Bhatgaon Palace.

17th/18th century: Nyapola at Bhatgaon, Basantapur Palace and the Hanuman-Dhoka at Kathmandu.<sup>1</sup>

These records help us not only to follow the course of the evolution of the respective types of these structures but also to build up a connected history of the art of wood-carving in Nepal.

But this history as spread out before our eyes from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, does not seem to have any evolution. When the art comes to view in the thirteenth century it is already a fully evolved one, all but fortified by tradition and continuous practice. Themes are more or less fixed, patterns and designs conventionalized and forms standardized. These themes, patterns, designs and forms are retained and repeated century after century, in an endless number of permutations and combinations. Indeed, these wood-carvings afford one more instance of the strength of tradition and of its tenacious persistence.

## 2

Recent archaeological excavations in different areas of Nepal have yielded a considerable number of terracottas representing human and animal figures, datable from about the



third or second century B.C. to a very late period in history.<sup>2</sup> Human figures include a number of human heads, *yakshas* and *yakshiṇīs* which reveal the unmistakable impact of Maurya, Śuṅga and Kushāṇ forms and characteristics; in fact, these frankly belong to the contemporary Indian denominator in regard to the art of terracotta. Latest excavations at Kapilavāstu have provided additional proof in favour of this hypothesis. A terracotta head from Panjrahi (fig. 74) shows a crudely modelled face, an elaborate head-dress and rich ear and neck-ornaments, which are strongly reminiscent of Maurya-Śuṅga-Kushāṇ-Gupta tradition in terracottas of India. Animal figures include a number of toy horses (fig. 75), elephants, bulls etc., all of modelled variety. Of the moulded type a considerable number came out of the excavations of Dhum Varahi; they represent human and animal figures of a variety of forms. Stratigraphically and from associated objects these terracottas seem to belong to the Licchavi period of the history of Nepal. Despite their slightly heavy proportions the execution and treatment of the figures exhibit a certain quality of sophisticated craftsmanship. The medieval temples of Nepal were mostly built in brick, and the high tide of building in brick seems to have been reached in the sixteenth through to the eighteenth century. Different forms and types of terracotta figures representing cult icons, demi-gods, *apsarās*, *kinnaras* etc. decorate these temples. Invariably painted in bright colours these terracottas, fine examples of which can be seen in the Kumāri Mandir at Kathmandu, for example, lend a peculiar charm and gaiety to these temples. A fixed and rigid iconography makes the cult and semi-divine figures look somewhat stiff and conventional, but the skilled craftsmanship is unmistakable. The terracotta images of gods like Śiva, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, Bhairava, Pārvatī, Lakshmī and the Matṛkās, closely follow, stylistically speaking, the lines and principles of their counterparts in stone.

The terracotta forms of Vajrasphota Bhairava, Virūpāksha, Gaṇeśa and Chāmuṇḍā (figs. 76 and 77) were all made for cult purposes; their well-modelled volumes link them frankly with similar figures made in stone. Like the stone sculptures and cast-metal figures, these images seem to have been but remotely related to the socio-cultural life of the common people of Nepal.

As against this type there are certain terracottas of the modelled type, which may be assigned to that variety which Kramrisch calls “timeless”, that is their forms are constant and are not conditioned by variations of time and space. But such examples are so rare in Nepal that no meaningful comment is possible on such insufficient data.

<sup>1</sup> Deo, S.B. *Glimpses of Nepal Wood Work*, op.cit. pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Mitra, D. Unpublished report on the Excavations at Tilaurakot, op.cit.





## V Paintings

### 1

Judging from examples that have come down to us, painting in Nepal, when it comes to view for the first time, is already a highly evolved art, whether it is in the form of miniatures used in illustrating texts written in Sanskrit or Newārī or on that of scrolls or wooden book-covers or in that of a special form which, in the absence of a better term, may be called *maṇḍala-paṭa* painting of magico-religious significance. This art like the art of sculpture in Nepal is essentially and almost exclusively religious, and is controlled and conditioned by a hieratic, sometimes even esoteric, religious order. This is evident not only in its thematic content but also in its spirit and atmosphere, irrespective of whether the religion is Buddhist or Brahmanical, Buddhism in its Vajrayāna and Tāntrayāna versions holding the sway in the main. An interesting point to note is that in the manuscripts the paintings do not actually illustrate the text; indeed they are illustrations of the gods and goddesses of the Buddhist pantheon, in their various manifestations. It has been suggested that the main purpose of these paintings was ritualistic or magical. It seems to be a valid hypothesis not only in respect of the manuscript illustrations but in that of the paintings in Nepal in general except for certain later narrative ones.

Since painting in Nepal was almost exclusively iconic and strictly controlled by monks and priests in the seclusion of temples and monasteries, it does not, generally speaking, lend itself to having an evolving life of its own. It had a derivative beginning, drawing its artistic and iconographic forms, styles, and idioms from the manuscript paintings of Eastern India, and these forms, styles and idioms once adopted, soon tended to become standardized and conventionalized. These standard and conventional forms continued for centuries, and do continue even today but for the fact that at later dates Nepal experienced the impact of Tibetan painting on the one hand and of Rājasthānī and Pāhāḍī painting on the other; in a considerable number of later paintings these facts find themselves registered. Yet for better understanding it is worthwhile to follow the course of the art chronologically



so far as it is possible with the help of dated manuscripts and stylistically datable paintings. The earliest examples belong all to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and they are to be found in a manuscript of the *Ashṭāsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* dated in Nepal Samvat 135=1015 A.D. (Cambridge University Library); two wooden-covers of another *Ashṭāsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript dated 1028 (collection of Mr. S. K. Saraswati of Calcutta); a manuscript of the *Pañcarakshā* dated 1105 (Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University); and a third *Ashṭāsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript dated in 1148 (Asiatic Society, Calcutta). There are a few illustrated but undated manuscripts in the Darbar Library at Kathmandu, the *Piṅgala Mata* and the *Devī-māhātmya*, for instance; on stylistic grounds they may also be assigned to about the twelfth century. All these paintings belong frankly to the East Indian tradition of manuscript painting of the tenth through to the thirteenth century. During these centuries, it is well-known, a countless number of Buddhist monks and Brahmanical priests along with artisans and craftsmen, crossed over to Nepal with their small loads of portable gods and goddesses and manuscripts. The manuscripts referred to above were certainly copied in the Nepalese temples and monasteries, but the style and character of the paintings are so characteristically East Indian that it is more than likely that they were executed by the immigrant artists from Bihar and Bengal. Slowly but surely the form and style of the painted gods and goddesses were accepted and adopted by the local artisans themselves, and the practice continues to this day. Indeed, paintings like those of the gods and goddesses of the *Pañcarakshā* manuscript referred to above, are still to be found in most houses in Nepal. To any student of sociology it would seem interesting to note how this form and style of art and iconography persisted without any appreciable change for such a long period of time.

The composition of these paintings follow certain fixed canons and principles of balance, proportion and rhythm. The main divinity, usually a Bodhisattva or the Buddha or a Brahmanical divinity like Śiva, is placed right in the centre against an architectural background or semi-round aureole, and is flanked by divinities of lesser importance. Vacant spaces are usually filled in by flying figures or by floral or other decorative motifs. The modelled mass of human and other figures, is usually controlled by sinuous lines, somewhat modelled, and flowing in a rhythmical sway that underline the sensitivity of the lines and curves. The best specimen of this style can however be seen in any manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitā* or in any other manuscript now extant in Nepal, but the one in the custody of Professor Saraswati and the other in that of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, are perhaps the best. The colours that are generally used are a variety of golden yellow, white of chalk, black of *kajjal*, vermilion red, Indian red, and green, all mineral colours in some form or other. But one must not forget that colour in Nepalese painting follows the prescriptions of iconography as they do in Tibetan paintings. In many instances the modelling



quality of colour is very much below that of the line. This is very clear in the illustrations of the manuscript dated in the Nepalese era and now in the possession of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. Contour colour here is denuded of any modelling quality and is laid out in an absolutely flat, two dimensional manner. Ray observes in this connection that paintings of this phase and form "seem to have distinct Nepalese flavour and idiom which are marked by the absence of any modelling in the coloured surfaces and by the upward stiffening of pale, erect bodies".<sup>1</sup> A similar form and style can also be detected in the banner and *paṭa* paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, evidently as reminiscences of an earlier and established tradition. Any hieratic art is conservative by nature; it involves copying of iconographic types and hence persistence of similar types in a more or less fixed form through the ages. This conservative attitude in art and iconography would explain the persistence of an art form of the eleventh century till as late as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, in the earlier instances the lines are more rounded and sweeping and colour has almost a modelling effect. Consider, for example, an illustrated book-cover representing queen Māyā in the Lumbini forest (fig. 78), or another book-cover representing Brahmā offering homage to the Buddha (fig. 79), or a third depicting monkeys offering fruits to the Buddha (fig. 80), which have equivalence in the illuminated manuscripts from Eastern India ranging from the tenth to about the end of the twelfth century. One can notice here the modelled mass controlled within definite outlines and the flowing curve in the contour of the body.

Towards the beginning of the twelfth century the roundly modelled line and its sensitivity tend to become more and more sketchy and schematic. The bold, sensuous and rounded flexibility of the earlier tradition has in the twelfth century examples been replaced by sharp and acute lines that have all but lost their modelling quality. The facial features have now a tendency of becoming linearised and the colour modelling stereotyped and hardened if not faint. Besides as Ray points out "from about the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with increasing hierarchization stabilization of artistic form set in".<sup>2</sup> In the three paintings from an illustrated palm-leaf of the twelfth century one representing the Buddha in Tushita heaven attended by Brahmā and Indra (fig. 81), the second, the Buddha subduing the elephant Nālagiri (fig. 82), and a third showing the seated figure of Padmapāṇi (fig. 83), one can clearly see how the East Indian tradition was slowly being worked upon and transformed by local Nepalese and Tibetan art forms and practices. Yet a careful analysis of facial physiognomical features, stances and attitudes as well as of the jewelleries and garments would reveal the close family-likeness of these paintings with those of the Eastern school. The eyes, for instance, take bow-like elegant curves when half closed; when open they are not very much different from the closed ones; both tendencies are directly borrowed from the Eastern Indian tradition. The line is still round and continuous,



but it has lost its modelling quality; in the fourteenth and fifteenth century examples, modelling of colour is altogether absent. This is evident in such paintings as those of Prince Siddhārtha of the *Lakshachaitya paṭa* (fig. 84), Vāsudeva Kamalaja (fig. 85), and quite a number of other illustrated manuscripts belonging from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. In all these examples, a slow and gradual suppression of plastic conception by the linear is clearly noticeable. With the passage of time this tendency was ever on the increase. But this was in no way a process of Nepalization since in Nepal it was nothing but an echo of what was exactly going on in India during these centuries. For sometime these two tendencies ran a parallel course till finally the earlier tradition was superseded by the latter.

From what one sees in the paintings like that of the *rathajātrā* scroll dated 1617, representing a king seated with his ministers or a maiden plucking flowers (figs. 87 and 88), it is clear at once that the pivot of all such paintings is the line which has a sensitivity and a graceful and melodious lyricism as well, but which is laid in a flat and sharp manner; in other words, it has no modelling quality though it is still being drawn in one continuous flux. Extended curves in fine or broad draws of the brush are also being used to denote the roundness of mass and its plasticity. But with the sharp flattening of the line the round three dimensional form too, is somewhat flattened out, which results in the faces being shown in flattened profile with a beak-like nose. Simultaneously, a tendency towards the use of loud colours in sharp contrasts and without any attempt at tonality is also manifest. All these mean that the art of painting in Nepal came at this time to experience an aesthetic and formal phenomenon which Indian painting had been experiencing, clearly, manifestly and in a large scale, from the eleventh-twelfth century onwards, particularly but not exclusively, in Western India. Yet, here and there, in rare instances, as in the figure of Lakshmi in a *Vishṇupaṭa* of the seventeenth century (fig. 89), despite its over-decorativeness, one may still find “a tempered lyricism making the line appear more sensitive and less sharp, more melodious and less flaming.”<sup>3</sup>

## 2

In early Nepalese banner-paintings one can still see the round modelled line controlling the round mass modelled in colour. But soon broad expanse and tight and solid outline begin to show less substance. The line tends to be brittle and modelling dessicated; increasingly the figures are shown in flat profile or flat frontality, and sharp lines and acute angles tend to characterize them. At a still somewhat later date, that is, by about the later half of the eighteenth century certain elements of contemporary Pāhāḍī painting from the



Western Himalayas, seem to have made themselves felt in Nepalese painting. This is clearly illustrated in a painting depicting the Buddhist legend of Sudhanakumāra (figs. 90,91 and 92). The character of the line and of the application of colour, the facial and physiognomical forms of the figures, the dress and manners and attitudes, the architectural setting and the total compositional character are all strongly reminiscent of Pāhāḍī painting in general. There is much in the paintings of this kind that would remind one of elements from West Indian, Mughal and Rajasthani paintings, but whatever such elements are, and there are many, these seem to have entered into the fabric of Nepalese painting not directly but through the Pāhāḍī schools that had already imbibed these elements.

In a number of manuscript and scroll paintings from Nepal impact of Rajasthani, Mughal and Pāhāḍī paintings is clearly discernible in the sharply outlined elongated face, large petal-shaped eyes and general costumes consisting of long *jāmāhs*, tight *curidār pyjāmāhs*, *komarbandhs*, *dopāṭṭās*, and turbans of several types of male human figures. The skirt, bodice and *chādar* of women also recall Rajput - Mughal - Pāhāḍī idioms. In certain others the Pāhāḍī idioms, particularly of Basohli and of the earliest Rajasthani paintings, seem to be manifest in the small mouth, receding chin, large eyes and the general colour scheme.

Art and religion in Nepal have always been very conservative in character, and it is very difficult to fix the date of an undated manuscript painting or a scroll just on formal and stylistic consideration. But generally speaking all such paintings that show the impact of Rajasthani - Mughal - Pāhāḍī paintings belong to a date not earlier than the middle of the seventeenth century. In fact the majority of them seems to be dateable in the eighteenth century. An indication for dating is contained in one of the scrolls where one can detect a representation of king Bhūpatīndramalla (1681-1721), and it is more or less well known that this type of painting was practised in Nepal mostly during the regime of the Mallas.

### 3

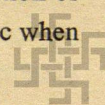
Tibetan elements begin to enter Nepalese painting from about the seventeenth century; a good early example is a scroll that shows the penance of the Buddha. But much more Tibetan in feeling and atmosphere is a class of Nepalese paintings that portray malevolent demons and gods and goddesses in a most dynamic form, almost surrealistically. Horrifying in their thematic content as well as in their presentation these paintings are strictly two-dimensional; the lines are laid flat and there is no modelling of colour at all. But the drawing is always firm and clear and the preference for designs and patterns very pronounced. Rich use is made of luscious green and yellow.



Besides these *paṭa* and *taṅkā* or *prabhā* paintings, there is another kind that illustrates *maṇḍalas*. Maṇḍala is the “externalization of a process of an inner picture formation and its absorption on the basis of, and with reference to, a state of pointed concentration”.<sup>4</sup> Visually speaking, geometry is the basis of these *maṇḍala* paintings and magic is the core of their thematic content.

The growth of the symbol of *maṇḍala* round the Śākta conception of the Devi as the primordial energy, brought forth in Nepal and Tibet a special mode and form of painting purporting to give support to ritualistic meditation. A circle within a circle enclosed by further concentric circles and squares divided by diagonals into four triangles that constitute the composition of a *maṇḍala* are nothing but magical fortifications, instruments or *yantra* for fulfilling certain magico-religious purposes. Evidently this is Tāntrik in essence and character, and Tantra is all pervasive in Nepal irrespective of whether one is a Buddhist, or a Śaiva, or a Śākta or a Vaishṇava. A highly speculative atomic theory, time-space relationship, astronomical calculations etc. go into the making of *maṇḍalas* which are but visual counterparts in the sign-language of geometry, of a highly abstract and speculative conception.

A considerable number of these painted *maṇḍalas* are used even today in daily rituals, their real inner significance being confined to the initiated alone. In fact there is hardly any distinction made in Nepal, and in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan as well, between ritualistic practice and this kind of painting, the latter too, being considered as ritual. But aesthetically and pictorially also these *maṇḍala-paṭa* paintings have a meaning and significance which need not be ignored. Their composition though arranged in rigid symmetry, have an arresting quality. Starting with the pivotal central square which shelters the main deity of the particular cult, it fans out in all directions in compartments of squares and triangles, all held in widening circles, each compartment sheltering minor divinities of the cult (fig. 96). But in some of the *maṇḍala-paṭas* the main deity in the central square, like that of Mahākāla or Vajradhara (fig. 97) is so large and overpowering that it pushes out to the fringes as it were, all other minor divinities. The formal treatment of space, and that of colour, mainly deep Indian red, deep and mellow blue, green with a patch here and there of glowing yellow and white, impart a fine pictorial quality to these paintings which are usually executed on coarse cotton, the ground being prepared by glue and chalk. Kramrisch while discussing the inner vision and plastic urge of *maṇḍala* paintings, observes that “the plastic urge and its dynamic form belong to the seemingly endless, because of inexhaustible compulsion of life. Plastic form is the balance between the unformed and the formless”.<sup>5</sup> The form in its symmetrical composition of colour and line seems to be formularised, but it becomes most active and dynamic when it is initiated with life by the *sādhaka*, so it is claimed at any rate.





Towards the latter part of the seventeenth century *maṇḍala-paṭa* painting in Nepal seems to have integrated a large amount of Tibetan and Chinese elements. Kramrisch observes in this connection that “whereas Nepali masters were the teachers of Tibetan artists in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Tibetan style had found their way to Nepal by the middle of the seventeenth century”,<sup>6</sup> and she cites two paintings, now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, to drive home her point. In these two paintings, the images, are set against a flat opaque and the composition is arranged in a new perspective which Kramrisch attributes to the spatial illusion of the Rājasthānī miniatures. Indeed, Rājasthānī tradition in painting, it has been pointed out already, seems to have played an important role in Nepalese painting in more than one phase and aspect of it.

#### 4

A few remains of mural paintings from Nepal are also known. They are all tempera paintings on walls over a ground prepared with clay, hemp and a sort of molass. The colours used are the same as in the miniatures, namely orpiment, vermillion, indigo, chalk or conch-shell white and black. Mural paintings of Nepal belong to the distinct West Himalayan tradition of late medieval times and though executed on the smooth and flat surfaces of mud walls prepared for the purpose, these paintings are in fact miniatures and scroll paintings transferred on to the walls in somewhat larger dimensions. Here and there in some of these wall-paintings one can detect slight attempts at modelling with the help of subdued tones of colour, but generally speaking, the treatment is flat, and colours that strike the eyes are red and gold, and the compositions are measured out in rectangular panels with thick borders that separate one scene from another. A most important and interesting series of murals can be seen in the palace of Bhūpatindra Malla at Bhaktapur, and another which is equally interesting, in the Kumārī temple at Kathmandu. The physiognomical type of the figures, their movements, slightly modelled outlines, longish and bearded faces and the architectural motifs are all such as to recall very strongly the tradition of mural paintings in the Western Himalayas.

It is quite likely that the earliest mural paintings which are still extant, were executed during the time of king Jayasthimalla (1382-95), his son Jyotirmalla (1408-28) and his grand son Yakshamalla (1428-82). A few of the paintings of the Taleju Bhavānī temple at Bhatgaon appear to have been done under the patronage of these rulers. Technically these are murals without doubt since they have been drawn and painted on flat walls, but formally and stylistically they are but miniatures drawn in a somewhat larger scale,



a characteristic which is so common to the wall-paintings of the Western Himalayas. The paintings are somewhat faded, but one can still see the remains of the use of a rich palette consisting of *kajjala* black for the outlines and red, yellow, white of lime, indigo, lapis lazuli and green. A few rectangles of painting seem to record the names of the artists; one such artist was called Kuin-ga Sang-Po who was responsible for a few paintings on the walls of the Sati-Taleju temple at Patan. The paintings on the gallery walls of Mulachouk at Bhatgaon still seem to hark back to the classical mural tradition of India in the character of their composition, drawing, colouring and movement.

King Jagatprakāsamalla built several temples between 1655-1667 and made a number of additions with a view to beautifying the courtyard of the Teleju-Bhavānī temple at Bhatgaon. He must have been responsible for some of the later paintings on the walls of this complex. During the time of his sons Jitamitramalla and Bhūpatīndramalla a number of murals were added on to the walls of the Mulachouk, Bhairava Chouk and Sadāśiva Chouk, all at Bhatgaon, to illustrate the legends of the Devī's exploits and victories over the demons. With time the murals tended to be increasingly larger. In the early eighteenth century very large scale huge paintings were executed on the walls of the Sadāśiva Chouk, for example. What the sizes were like can be seen in a representation of king Bhūpatīndramalla kneeling in prayer with hands in *añjali mudrā* in the Taleju temple at Bhatgaon. The figure is two meters in height. Stylistically, however, the paintings remained as before, namely large-scale enlargements of the miniature models on an extended area of the wall.

<sup>1</sup> Ray, N.R. Section on Painting in the *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. IV, p. 692.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 696.

<sup>3</sup> Kramrisch, S. "Nepalese Paintings", *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, December 1933, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 143.





## VI

# Religion and Pantheon of Gods and Goddesses

Since the receptacle of art in Nepal as in India and elsewhere in South-East Asia, happens to be the gods and goddesses of the Buddhist and Brahmanical pantheons in the main, it is perhaps necessary that a short account of these two pantheons should follow any introduction to the art of the country.

### 1

#### The Buddhist Pantheon

Mahāyāna Buddhism by creating the figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, had already paved the way for the growth of a pantheon, but even as late as the fifth and sixth centuries few could have imagined how varied, complex and extensive would this pantheon be four centuries later under the impact of Vajrayāna and its later offshoots. The key to this phenomenal growth of the pantheon seems to have been supplied by the recognition in Mahāyāna itself of the system of the five Dhyāni-Buddhas. Indeed, these Dhyāni-Buddhas and their Śaktis helped the building up of an elaborate but systematically classified pantheon of gods and goddesses who are found sheltered in the monastic establishments of Nepal. The beginning of this expansion of the pantheon may perhaps be dated in about the eighth and ninth centuries, but it was perhaps from about the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, judging by the date and number of the variety of the images found in Nepal, that the process of proliferation seems to have quickened a great deal, presumably because of increasingly closer contacts with the Lamaistic Buddhism of Tibet.

According to the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna interpretations the first divinity of the Buddhist pantheon is, as the name indicates, the Ādi or original Buddha who is supposed to be without beginning and without end, infinite, and self-existing or Svayambhū, the creator of the world revealing himself in the form of a flame issuing out of a lotus, which is the



usual symbol of the Ādi Buddha in Nepal where he is worshipped as Svayambhū. The Lamaist Buddhist sect of Nepal and also a sect of Nepalese Mahāyānists worship him under the name of Sāmantabhadra in which form he sits in *dhyānāsana* and wears no crown or jewellery. The Buddhists of Nepal, in general, worship the Ādi Buddha as Vajradhara who is sometimes represented singly, but is also often associated with his Śakti. Hodgson illustrates a nude figure which he calls Vajrasattva, but which is actually a figure of Vajradhara, seated singly in *dhyānāsana* and showing the *dharmacakramudrā* in two of his four hands, two others holding respectively the *vajra* and the *ghaṇṭā*.<sup>1</sup> He is also not unoften shown with his Śakti, the two interlocked in a fast sexual embrace, which is technically known as *yab-yum* in Tibetan. The representation of Vajradhara is found in Nepalese painting, a sixteenth century example of which has been illustrated by Bhattacharyya<sup>2</sup>; such representations are known in cast-metal art as well.

From the Ādi Buddha was supposed to have emanated the five Dhyāni-Buddhas, each having a Śakti of his own. It is Hodgson again who reproduces a fine mural painting of Pañcadhyāni Buddhas with their respective Śaktis from the wall of Yamaguli *vihāra* at Kathmandu. Vairocana, the first Dhyāni-Buddha often occupies the most important position in the *maṇḍala* paintings of Nepal. The five Dhyāni-Buddhas are often represented in the niches around the base of the *caityas* like those of Svayambhū and the Bodhanātha.

The emanations of five Bodhisattvas and their respective Śaktis as well as of the five Mānushī Buddhas are also well known in Nepal. Of the five Bodhisattvas the most popular in Nepal were the Vajrapāṇi and the Avalokiteśvara whom one finds represented very often in Nepalese Buddhist establishments. Vajrapāṇi is usually represented as showing a *vajra* supported on a lotus, the stem of which is held in the right hand while the left hand is shown in *varadamudrā*. His usual symbols are *vajra*, *ghaṇṭā* and *pāśa*. He has one to four heads and two to eight hands. Not unoften he is represented in Nepalese paintings along with Mañjuśrī and Padmapāṇi and sometimes even with Tārā. From the number of finds it seems that Avalokiteśvara enjoyed a great popularity in the land; indeed he seems to be the most popular Buddhist divinity in Nepal. His main cognizances are the rosary, the lotus, the *namaskāramudrā* and the Dhyāni Buddha Amitābha shown in the centre of his crown. The most important forms of Avalokiteśvara that are found in Nepal happen to be those of Padmapāṇi, Lokeśvara or Lokanātha and Simhanāda Lokeśvara. Padmapāṇi in the Nepalese tradition is supposed to have created all animate things by the command of his Dhyāni Buddha Amitābha. In one of the temple paintings in Nepal he is shown in eleven emanations, manifested in eleven heads arranged in three tiers representing respectively the world of desire, the world of true form and the world of no form, personified in Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi,



standing respectively for Mercy, Wisdom and Force. In fact these three concepts seem to have been concretised in the Nepalese tradition in the form of *Simhanāda Lokeśvara* who sits on a lion, carries a sword and holds a trident and a *vajra*, thus combining in him the aspects of both *Mañjuśrī* and *Vajrapāṇi*.

There is another Bodhisattva, *Mañjuśrī*, who seems to have been held in high esteem in Nepal; indeed here he is regarded as a human hero who is supposed to have cut the hill into two by his sword, created the valley and the lake. He is in fact considered as the creator of the valley and the builder of its cities. His usual attributes are the sword and the book, the latter placed on a blue lotus or *Nilotpala*. Usually he is shown with one head, but he may also be shown with as many as four hands and eight arms. Not unoften he forms the magical centre in *maṇḍala* paintings. He has various manifestations, and is accordingly known by various names: *Mañjughosa*, *Mañjuvara*, *Mañjuvajra*, *Vajrāṅga*, *Vāgīśvara* etc. The last, i.e. *Vāgīśvara* seems to have been a tutelary deity of Nepalese Buddhism and is worshipped widely all over the valley. The prayer wheels in Nepalese temples bear the *mantra* 'Om *Vāgīśvara Hum*'.

In the Brahmanical pantheon the iconic personification of learning and wisdom happens to be a feminine divinity; in Buddhism however this personification happens to be the male god, *Mañjuśrī*, though *Sarasvatī* is not altogether unknown. But the conception in both is more or less similar.

*Lokeśvara* under the name of *Machchhendranātha*, is another very popular Buddhist deity of the valley, among the followers of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism.

In the next scale of hierarchy in so far the Buddhist pantheon is concerned there are the mortal Buddhas among which *Śākyamuni* and *Maitreya* are most popularly represented. Besides, there is a number of divinities which happen to be either emanations of one or the other of the Bodhisattvas or just abstract principles represented in human form. Such are the gods who are known as *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Nāmasaṅgīti*, *Pañcarakṣhāmaṇḍala*, *Nairātmyā* and *Yamantaka* or *Yamāri*, *Jambhala*, the Buddhist counterpart of *Kuvera*, *Hevajra*, *Mahākāla* and *Hayagrīva*, the last three being none other than the *Dharmapalas*, i.e. the defenders of the *Dharma*, specifically in the Northern version. Of these the *Jambhala* seems to have been the most popular and the earliest icon of *Jambhala* in Nepal can be dated as early as the eleventh century. *Hayagrīva*, i.e. the god whose head and neck are like that of the horse, is also frequently met with in Nepal. He seems to be the protector god of the horse and thus a most favourite deity of the nomads of Tibet. In Lamaistic Buddhism, *Hayagrīva* occupies a most important place. *Hevajra* like *Hayagrīva* represents the terrific aspects of reality and wears a long garland of skulls. Not unoften he is shown as embracing his *Śakti* in a deep sexual union. Besides there is the feminine



principle, called under different names in both Brahmanism and Vajrayāna Buddhism, such as Vajravarāhi, Nīla Sarasvatī, Chinnamastakā, Kālī, Vidyādhārī etc. In or around the eleventh century Vajrayāna Buddhism seems to have been the dominating religion in Nepal. On the basis of the fact that the largest volume of Tantrik literature was copied between the tenth and the sixteenth centuries Nepal seems to have been mostly under Tantrik influence during that period.<sup>3</sup>

Years ago Banerjee pointed out that many Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna gods and goddesses were in fact Brahmanical divinities in origin. He indicated very clearly the transformation of Indra to Vajrapāṇi, of Brahmā to Mañjuśrī and of Viṣṇu to Avalokiteśvara, the last being a syncretistic form of both Viṣṇu and Śiva. He showed further that Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara was nothing but Viṣṇu, while his terrific forms like those a Siṃhanāda Nilakanṭha and Halāhala were adaptations of Śiva.<sup>4</sup>

If the Dhyānī Buddhas and Bodhisattvas had significant roles to play in Buddhism, so had their Śaktis whose number, looking at the varieties of their form, seems to have been very large. These feminine divinities were generally supposed to protect their votaries against the *ashṭamahābhaya* or the eight great terrors. The one generic name that belongs to all of them is Tārā, meaning literally one who is the saviouress or protectress. Tārā is represented in Nepalese paintings in various colours, and in accordance with the colour given she assumes different names, and also takes different cognizant marks as Śvetatārā or Jāṅguli. She is the protectress from poison, her attributes being a lute and a snake, and the *abhaya mudrā* displayed in one of her right hands. Her consort is Avalokiteśvara. As Śyāmatārā she is seated on a lotus; as yellow Tārā she is known as Bhṛkūṭī. In her blue complexion she is Ekajaṭā who is supposed to bring good luck and intense religious enjoyment to her votaries; when red in complexion she is a terrific temptress. When she is angry she takes the form of Khadiravaṇitārā, Vajratārā and also of Jāṅgulitārā. She is also manifested as what is known as Mārīcī and Mahāmayūrī. In her terrific aspects she wears a tiger skin, a long garland of skulls and ornament of snakes. Mārīcī seems to have originated from the same concept which gave to the Brahmanical pantheon the god Sūrya. Like Sūrya, a male god, Mārīcī rides on a chariot drawn by seven pigs instead of seven horses. Her name Mārīcī also shows her solar association. Mahāmayūrī, the queen of magic art seems to have been a most popular goddess in Nepal. Here she is looked upon as the chief of the *Pañcarakṣā* or the Five Protectors; she carries a white umbrella for driving away the evil spirits.

Besides the various forms of Tārā, there are other feminine divinities in Vajrayāna Buddhist iconography, the most important of which are Prajñāpāramitā, Vasudhārā, Uṣṇishavijaya and Parṇasavarī. Prajñāpāramitā is very easily identified by her *vajra*-



*paryāṅkāśana*, the lotus and the book symbols. She seems to be a Buddhist adaptation of the Brahmanical Sarasvatī. Vasudhārā also seems to be a similar adaptation of Brahmanical Śrī or Lakshmī; this is clearly indicated by her iconographic cognizances of double-petalled lotus, a sheaf of corn and the *puṇḍrakumbha*. Parṇasavarī seems to have been originally a tribal deity who was incorporated into Vajrayāna pantheon. Usually she wears a short dress made of leaves round her girdle. The name seems to indicate that she was once the tutelary deity of the Śavaras, and was evidently regarded as a mother goddess.

Banerjee cites some examples in which Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna gods and goddesses seem to have in their turn influenced the Brahmanical pantheon. The inclusion of Tārā in the Brahmanical Tantra is a direct borrowing from the Buddhist Tārā<sup>5</sup>. Likewise Vajrayoginī-Tārā reminds one of the Brahmanical goddess Chinnamastā, and the fierce Nairātmā resembles the Brahmanical Kālī.

From what we have seen above it is clear, that the origin and development of the Buddhist pantheon have been very much conditioned by the ever-expanding world of Brahmanical icons. One reason for introducing new forms was obviously sectarian rivalry and another, perhaps a conscious attempt at syncretism. Some gods might have had some concrete mortal base. The Lamaistic Buddhists believe that Tārā was incarnate in all good women; the Nepalese queen of the Tibetan king thus came to be known as the Green Tārā. This belief has been most realistically presented in a copper figure of Tārā from Nepal<sup>6</sup> where the attitude of the image seated on the elaborately carved lotus seat is frankly secular. There is nothing of the usually schematic and hieratic form of icons, nor is there any inwardness of vision. In its pose and treatment, in the merry look in her eyes this particular image is frankly secular and human.

## 2

### The Brahmanical Pantheon

Brahmanism does not seem to have made any dent on the culture of Nepal before the fifth century, but when it did in about the fifth and sixth centuries it had already evolved its full *Śmārta-Paurāṇik* form. Indeed, Brahmanism and Brahmanical iconography in Nepal throughout her history are characteristically *Śmārta-Paurāṇik* and its pantheon of gods and goddesses are therefore those five divinities or *pañcādevatās* that dominate *Śmārta-Paurāṇik* Brahmanism, namely Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti and Śūrya. There are other minor divinities without doubt, both male and female, like Lakshmī, Sarasvatī, Kārtikeya, Indra, Brahmā etc., *vāhanas* of gods and goddesses like *Garuḍa*, Nandi—bull,



lion etc. and semi-divine beings like *yakshas* and *yakshīs*, *nāgas* and *nāginīs*, *kinnaras* and *gandharvas* etc., but they all cluster around the five principal divinities. All these together go to constitute what one may call the Brahmanical pantheon of Nepal, just as they do in India. Indeed Nepalese Brahmanical iconography does not offer us any iconic form that is not known from the world of the Brahmanical gods and goddesses in India.

According to *Smārta-Paurāṇik* Brahmanism Gaṇeśa occupies the first position; he has to be propitiated first before the worship of any other divinity can take place. Nepal seems to have followed this tradition very closely and faithfully. In fact, he seems to have been and still is the most popular god, and no devout Nepalese Hindu or Buddhist begins his daily life without an invocation of Gaṇeśa. That he was and is the most popular divinity is confirmed by the existence of a countless number of Gaṇeśa-shrines spread over the entire valley, indeed almost at every nook and corner. A Nepalese manuscript of a text called *Gaṇapatihr̥daya*<sup>7</sup> lays down a service of prayers to the god in course of which it is claimed that even Gautama, the Buddha to be, commended the worship of Gaṇeśa in order to ward off all obstructions. In certain Buddhist temples, as for example, at the Vidyeshvarī temple outside Kathmandu, the main entrance door is flanked by an icon of Gaṇeśa on one side and that of Mahākālā on the other, both considered as defenders. That Gaṇeśa is a defender is recognised by the Nepalese Hindus when at the *Kumārī pūjā* they appoint two boys on two sides of the *Kumārī*, one representing Gaṇeśa and another Bhairava or Mahākālā.

The earliest record of the existence of a temple dedicated to Gaṇeśa goes as far back as the time of Amśuvarman; the record is dated in A.D. 645.<sup>8</sup> The original temple which was situated not far from the great Paśupati exists no longer; it seems to have been replaced by a shrine raised at a much later time. However, no icon of Gaṇeśa has come down to us which can be dated before the twelfth-thirteenth century A.D., but from this time onwards Gaṇeśa icons are frequently met with. Enshrined in temples or standing on the wayside the elephant-headed and pot-bellied Gaṇapati can often be seen holding his usual cognizances like the rosary, the *modaka*-cup, the *aṅkuśa*, the *nāga*, hatchet, radish etc. He has two to twelve hands. From the seventeenth century onward he is shown accompanied by his Śakti and is usually guarded by a canopy of snake-hoods. Nepalese archaeology also provides a number of icons of dancing Gaṇeśa; in most such icons he is given eight hands, and is accompanied by one of his *Śaktis*, either Siddhi or Buddhi. His *vāhana*, the mouse, also finds a place on one side.

Archaeologically speaking the history of Vaishṇavism in Nepal dates back to the fifth century A.D. The existence of a Vaishṇava shrine belonging to the Licchavi period is



proved by a stone pillar inscription of Mānadeva, dated A.D. 464 and situated in front of the Caṅgu Nārāyaṇa temple<sup>9</sup> (fig. 35). Here in this inscription Mānadeva invokes Hari who is described as the presiding deity of Dolādri, the hill on which the Caṅgu Nārāyaṇa stands. It is to the patronage of the same Lichchhavi king Mānadeva that one must also ascribe the earliest find of Vaishṇava icons in Nepal. At Mrgasthali and Lajimpet king Mānadeva seems to have installed two icons of Viṣṇu in his Trivikrama manifestation (fig. 36). They are both dated in A.D. 467<sup>10</sup>. The entire imagery of the huge colossus taking the three steps is frankly a Nepalese adoption of similar forms of the Gupta-Vākāṭaka tradition of Western Deccan. This is further evident in the treatment of the material in which a conscious attempt has been made to impart an impression of the surface of the live rock as at Ellora and Badami. An analysis of the details of the icon including that of the horse standing on a separate altar, shows very clearly that the sculptor was well acquainted with the relevant *paurāṇik* myth.

The spread of Vaishṇavism in Nepal seems to have been due to the active royal patronage of the Lichchhavi kings who were closely connected with the Guptas and hence with the Gupta-Vākāṭaka cultural complex of Northern India and the Deccan. It is, therefore, not at all unlikely that the *Pañcarātra* cult which gained popularity in India during the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period became a popular form of Vaishṇavism in Nepal during this time and the Vaishṇavite iconic forms of the Lichchhavi period should, therefore, conform to the usual Viṣṇu icons of Gupta-Vākāṭaka India. The combination of four *vyūhas* of Viṣṇu in one iconic type made itself manifest in Nepal during this period and remained popular throughout the history of Nepal. A small four-faced limestone column shows on its four faces the composite form of this *caturvyūha* illustrating Vāsudeva, Saṅkarashaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, respectively facing east, south, west and north (fig. 50).

The *Vibhava* or incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu must also have been numerous in Nepal since Lichchhavi inscriptions mention the names of Vāsudeva, Keśava, Hari, Narasiṃha, Nārāyaṇa, Varāha and Pradyumna, but icons of all of them are not available. Of these that are available in Nepal mention must be made of the icons of Varāha, Narasiṃha and Vāmanāvatāra (figs. 37 and 42). Indeed their importance in Nepal seems to be as much as that of Viṣṇu Trivikrama. Here too, an analysis of their art and iconographic form shows very clearly the afflatus of the Gupta-Vākāṭaka tradition of Western Deccan. The cult of Rāma does not seem to have ever been popular in Nepal, though at a very late period of her history, Hanumāna came to be regarded as a popular deity offering protection. In the outer courtyard of the Vasantapur palace there stands a huge figure of Hanumāna, obviously to protect the palace against possible disaster; the gate of the palace is called Hanumāna dhokā.





South India also seems to have been another source of Nepalese Vaishṇavism. Not very far from Kathmandu there is a huge figure (fig. 51) of Viṣṇu lying on the coils of Anantanāga inside of a tank. Evidently it is an icon of *Anantaśāyī* Viṣṇu, locally called as Buḍhā Nilakaṇṭha, which however means that the local people considered it as an image of Śiva. What is iconographically most important in this image is a distinctive mark on the forehead of Viṣṇu, a mark which is associated with the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava sect of South-India belonging to the Vadakalai branch of the sect.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that Vaishṇavism became popular in Nepal from very early times is confirmed by the reference to several Vaishṇava *tīrthas* in Nepal mentioned in Indian sources. In the Damodarpur inscription of the time of Budha Gupta (c. 475-495 A.D.) mention is made of two shrines, one of Śveta-Varāha Svāmī and another of Kokāmukha Svāmī, both located in the Himalayas. The inscription indicates that these were places of pilgrimage which were visited by the inhabitants of Northern Bengal. Sircar seems to have successfully identified these shrines with the ancient Varāha-Kshetra on the Son Koshi at the confluence of the river Kokā referred to in the inscription itself<sup>12</sup>. Regmi also makes reference to a Śrīśikharapuri in Nepal which seems to have been a Vaishṇava centre of pilgrimage<sup>13</sup>. Besides, Nepal has also yielded a considerable number of Viṣṇu images of *sthānaka*, *āsana* and *śayāna* varieties, represented either independently or with his consorts and *vāhanas*.

The Lichchhavis, it is well known, had strong leanings towards Vaishṇavism. But there is no doubt that from the time of Amśuvarman, Śivaism came to gain increasing influence in Nepal. This ascendancy of śaivism seems to have centred round the great Paśupati-nātha temple. A clash of cults, at any rate for the time being, may have taken place, but a conscious attempt at the unification of the two cults seems to have been made not very long after. Gnoli mentions a noble named Svāmīvartha who was responsible for consecrating an icon of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa Svāmī; there seems to be here an obvious attempt for unifying the two cults. To cite another instance, Jayārimalla in a manuscript of *Mahīrāvaṇavadha nāṭaka*, calls himself *parama vaiṣṇava parama devatādhideva parama māheśvara*.

Vaishṇavism in Nepal seems to have received a fresh impetus by the introduction of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult centering round the *līlās* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and of Bāla-Gopāla. This changed ideological vision of Vaishṇavism was evidently inspired by the Sahajiyā Vaishṇavism of contemporary Eastern India. At Patan there is a black sand-stone image of Veṇudhara, set up by the seventeenth century king Siddhi-Narasimha Malla representing Kṛṣṇa playing his flute. But here in this image Kṛṣṇa is flanked by Śrī and Puṣṭi. The direct inspirations of the Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā myths and legends as interpreted in



Eastern and Northern India are however found in such examples of art as in the paintings of *Kalāpustaka* (c. 1600 A.D.) of the Cambridge University Library. Here one can see in detail representations of the very well known *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in all their amorous attitudes and associations. A few folios of a manuscript in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan in Varanasi also present similar scenes.<sup>14</sup>

Śaivism in Nepal seems to have made its first impact during the early centuries of the Christian era. The *Bṛhatkathāpaiśācī* of Guṇāḍhya speaks of a *rājā* named Yaśaketu who had his capital in the city of Śiva in Nepāladeśa. Archaeologically speaking, we cannot, however, locate any evidence of the cult before the fourth century of the Christian era. In an inscription of the year *samvat* 399,<sup>15</sup> one Ratnasaṅgha records the installation of a *liṅga* at Deopatan and the grant of several pieces of land for its worship and maintenance. The Deopatan covers the entire area of Paśupatinātha temple including Mṛgasthali and Kailāsa. A little over a decade and a half later in the year *samvat* 413,<sup>16</sup> king Mānadeva records in an inscription the installation of a Śivaliṅga in the courtyard of Paśupatinātha temple. A little over half-a-century later in *samvat* 455, an inscription at the side of Paśupatinātha temple, refers clearly to *Paśupatikshetra* which had evidently gained the reputation of being regarded as a holy site. An inscription on the pedestal of a *liṅga* in Deopatan speaks about a land grant for the Paśupatinātha temple<sup>17</sup>. Gnoli refers to an inscription, dated *samvat* 462,<sup>18</sup> recording the establishment of another *liṅga* in the quadrangle of the Paśupatinātha temple. This *liṅga* was donated by an Ābhīra woman for the benefit of her dead husband and for her children. During the reign of Mānadeva a private individual, Prasaṅgha by name, installed a *liṅga* named in the inscription as Prabhukeśvara, in the same Paśupati temple area.<sup>19</sup> A fragmentary inscription in corrupt Sanskrit records the installation of another *liṅga* called Nātheśvara<sup>20</sup> on the road leading from the Paśupati temple to Mṛgasthali; this *liṅga* was installed by one Mānamati on the bright fullmoon day of Vaiśākha. These records make it perfectly clear that the Paśupatinātha temple had already by about the fourth-fifth centuries of the Christian era, come to be regarded as a most important centre of the cult of Śiva and that the installation of Śivaliṅgas within its precincts and suburbs had come to be regarded as an act of merit. That Śaivism had taken root in the valley seems to be more than evident.

But Śaivism came to enjoy still better days since when king Amśuvarman of the Ṭhākuri dynasty came to power. He describes himself in an inscription of *samvat* 520 as *Paśupati-pādānugṛhīta*,<sup>21</sup> that is, protected by the feet of Paśupati. Earlier, as a *mahāsāmanta*, he was just inclined toward Śaivism, since he described himself as “*Bhagavata-Bhava-pada-pankaja-praṇāma*”, but very soon his acceptance of the religion seems to have been



all but complete. He is known to have been responsible for making a considerable number of donations to the Paśupatinātha temple and for raising a number of smaller shrines around the main one. To which gods these smaller shrines were dedicated, we do not know, nor is there any evidence if in any of these shrines or elsewhere was there any iconic representation. It seems that all early Nepalese epigraphic records are silent about the iconic manifestation of Śiva though the installation of the *liṅga* by various names, like Prabhukeśvara, Nātheśvara etc. seems to have been the usual custom. Even Aṁśuvarman who declared himself blessed by the feet of Paśupati, did not refer to any definite iconic type. In the Khopasi inscription<sup>22</sup> dated samvat 320, king Śivadeva I states that with his approval Aṁśuvarman “removed the darkness of ignorance by his devotional obeisance to the lotus feet of Lord Bhava”. Bhava is a well-known form of Śiva, but there is no evidence to indicate that he was represented in an iconic form. In an inscription of Aṁśuvarman<sup>23</sup> dated Harsha Samvat 39 (A.D. 645), on a stone-slab near a temple of Gaṇeśa, not far from the Paśupati temple, the king makes some dedications for the maintenance of three *liṅgas* installed by his relatives; the first of these *liṅgas* was named as Surabhogeśvara and was consecrated by his sister Bhogadevī for the increase of the merit of her husband; the second was named Hlādita-Maheśvara and was installed by his niece, and the third called Dakṣiṇeśvara was installed by his elder brother. A stone slab inscription<sup>24</sup> issued by *Bhagavat-Paśupati-Bhaṭṭāraka-pādānugṛhita Bappa-pādānudhyāta Śrī Jishṇugupta* in the temple of Ādiśvara near Kathmandu and provided with a reclining bull at the top, records the establishment of a shrine of Nātheśvara for the happiness of his father in heaven. The deity obviously is a form of Śiva, but no such icon has come down to us. An undated mutilated inscription of Jishṇugupta’s reign<sup>25</sup> incised on a stone which supports a parasol over a very weathered icon of Caṇḍeśvara in the great temple of Paśupati, speaks about the god Caṇḍa. Caṇḍa is none but Śiva, possibly in his *ugra* form. An inscription of Jayadeva II dated Harsha Samvat 159 (A.D. 765), inscribed on a stone slab behind the Nandin, opposite to the western door of the temple of Paśupati, opens with a *praśasti* of Śiva who is the highest god and is worshipped by Rāvaṇa and Bānāsura. The same inscription<sup>26</sup> describes Paśupati as a four-faced *liṅga*. From the epigraphic records and also from the extant materials it seems very likely that Śiva in the form of *liṅga*, known by various names, was the main object of veneration, though in one early relief of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu at the Caṅgu Nārāyaṇa temple, dated in the 8th century, Śiva is shown as seated at the top holding his usual attributes of the rosary, the trident, the *pūrṇakumbha* and the *vilva* fruit.

From about the tenth-eleventh century iconic representations of Śiva in his well known Paurāṇik forms seem to have become current in Nepal. Of these forms most popular



are those of *Umāsaḥitamūrti* or *umāliṅgamūrti* and of dancing Śiva. Of the latter we have quite a few icons from all over the valley though it is somewhat difficult to fix them in time with any amount of certainty. Of *Umāsaḥitamūrti* the two earliest examples are those that were installed by kings Bhajadeva and Rudradeva, respectively at Patan and Mṛgasthali; in both Śiva is shown seated in *lalitāsana* with his consort Umā placed on his left lap, Śiva holding Umā in a loving embrace (figs. 46 and 48). Of similar icons we have quite a number recovered from various places in the valley and belonging to various times, without any change in the iconic form and style which are strongly reminiscent of similar form and style of the Western Deccan. Reliefs representing Śiva with other members of his family known as *sapariivāra* Śiva are also not uncommon in Nepal (fig. 52), but in iconic form and style these reliefs are more reminiscent of East Indian forms than anything else.

The most interesting and distinctive iconographic form of Śiva in Nepal is his manifestation in different forms of Bhairava. A twelve feet high stone-plaque of the black demon, Kāla Bhairava, sculptured in high relief, stands in the heart of the Vasantapur palace, with a chaplet of skulls around his head and a garland of human heads around his neck. In three of his six hands he holds a sword, a cluster of three heads and the trident of Śiva, the destroyer, whose manifestation he is. The Bhairavas are usually nude, terrific with their round rolling eyes, and are often seen with their Śaktis. Bhairava, it is well-known, is a Tāntrik form of Śiva. On the second storey of the temple of Paśupatinātha there is a Bhairavacakra which definitely associates the temple at once with Tāntrik Śaivism. Besides, there are four supports of the main roof of the temple and on each of these supports one can easily notice an image of what can easily be identified as that of Unmatta Bhairava. That the Paśupatinātha temple was at one time a centre of Tāntrik Śaivism there cannot perhaps be any doubt. This hypothesis finds support in the fact that the Guhyeśvari temple which stands very near the Paśupatinātha is frankly a place for Tāntrik rituals and worship, and even to this day one has to offer his worship at this temple before he can do so at the Paśupatinātha. The impact of Tāntricism on the iconography of Śiva led to the creation of a number of iconic forms mainly of the *ugra* or terrific aspect of Śiva like Bhairava and Mahākāla. These types are frequently met with in Nepalese manuscript and *ṭaṅkā* paintings.

Nepal also seems to have had some experience of the *kāpālīka* cult. On the stone parasol over the image of Caṇḍeśvara at the Paśupatinātha temple there is an epigraphic record of the time of Jishnugupta; this record seems to speak of a class of Śaiva teachers (Pāśupatyācārya) wearing garlands of skull. Presumably these *ācāryas* were *kāpālīkas*. There is also the Gorakshanātha temple within the precincts of the Paśupatinātha; the resident-devotees of this temple are still known as *kāpālīkas*.



Nepalese archaeology has also made available to us quite a few images of Śiva in his manifestation of Lakuliśa; these images have all been recovered from the Kathmandu valley, but they belong to different types, from about the fourteenth century onwards. One can easily assume that there must have been a Lakuliśa sect of some significance. The Paśupatinātha complex which seems to have been the centre of Śaivism in all its various aspects, underwent a significant change during the regime of the Mallas, especially of Yakshamalla. This king, for some reason or other, wanted to make the Paśupatinātha temple a centre of *Śmārta-Paurāṇik* Brahmanism, unsullied by any contact with Tāntrik ritualistic practices which were most dominant and pervasive in nature in the religious life of Nepal from at least the tenth-eleventh centuries of the Christian era. He is recorded to have imported *Bhaṭṭāraka* Brāhmaṇa priests from South India; since that time to this day the priests of the Paśupatinātha temple have always belonged to this particular class of South Indian Brahmins who even now happen to be a very closed community marrying strictly among themselves. These priests have been responsible for making the entire Paśupatinātha complex the most important centre of *Śmārta-Paurāṇik* Brahmanical practices<sup>27</sup>; it is indeed the seat of the presiding deity of Nepal, namely Paśupatinātha round whom all the other important gods of Paurāṇik Brahmanism seem to have clustered and led to the creation of new composite and syncretistic divinities. It is a most characteristic feature of the religious history of Nepal that different cults and sects seem to have always sought for some kind of harmonisation or other of different beliefs, persuasions and practices. It has been noticed already that during the Lichchavi period a closer assimilation of Viṣṇuism and Śaivism was achieved which resulted among other things, in the evolution of the iconic form of Hari-Hara. Later on Hari-Hara came to be involved in another iconic form called Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha (Brahmā) as well as in still another called Hari-Śaṅkara. An eight-handed image of Hari-Śaṅkara dateable in the sixteenth century and set up in the Kumbheśvara temple at Patan, represents an icon, the left side of which is that of Hari and the right side of Śaṅkara, the left leg resting on a Garuḍa and the right leg on the bull Nandī. In the same temple there is also an image of Hari-Pitāmaha but this one seems to be dated a century later.

At the Paśupatinātha temple itself one can easily see a frank attempt to unify the main cults of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and the Buddha, which is evident in the four faces of Śiva illustrating the respective aspects of the four cults. Earlier, mention has been made of the god Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa-Svāmī which was installed sometime in A.D. 567<sup>28</sup>. This was evidently an attempt at a unification of Śaṅkara or Śiva with Nārāyaṇa-Svāmī. The epigraphic record itself indicates that Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa-Svāmī symbolised in himself the three concepts of creation, preservation and destruction. A Lichchavi inscription which



mentions such gods as Ardhanārīśvara, Murārīśvara, Keśava-Śaṅkara etc. also mentions another god Sulabhīrcchāraṅgapāṇi<sup>29</sup>, evidently a combination of Sulabhī or Śiva and Viṣṇu as Sāraṅgapāṇi. Regmi also refers to another inscription belonging to sixteenth century which speaks about Hari-Hara. In all the icons of this nature, that have come down to us, the cognizants are those of Śiva and Viṣṇu, namely, *kapāla* or skull, *akṣhamālā* or rosary, *śaṅkha*, *triśūla* and *cakra*. In certain cases Hari and Hara are both shown with their consorts, Lakṣmī and Pārvati respectively. A very interesting icon of this syncretistic type is that of Hanu-Bhairava, which seems to have evolved from the unification of Hanumana and Bhairava; the icon has a human body, while the face is a combination of monkey, Garuḍa, horse and bull.

If there is evidence of unification and syncretisation, there is also evidence of sectarian bias and rivalry. The Bhīmārjunadeva inscription of the year A.D. 642 at Dakṣiṇākālī refers to an icon of a *Jalāśaya*<sup>30</sup> Viṣṇu which is frankly an icon of Viṣṇu lying on the Anantanāga. More than one icon of this description is known from Nepal; but the Dakṣiṇākālī icon is locally identified with and called Buḍhā Nilakaṇṭha or Old Śiva. In the hands of the Buddhists of Nepal, Śiva came to hold an inferior position, soliciting the grace of the Buddha to save himself from destruction. The Nepalese annals relate that Virūpākṣha at one time broke every liṅga of Śiva that he came across; at last he came to Paśupati who had already been praying to the Buddha to save him; the propitiated Buddha gave to Paśupati his own head-dress and thus Virūpākṣha instead of breaking the Paśupati liṅga stood to worship the head-dress of Buddha along with Paśupati himself.

The importance and antiquity of Śiva cult in Nepal is indicated by the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* which gives a list of the number of sacred shrines dedicated to the worship of Śivaliṅga, namely, Maṇiliṅgeśvara, Gokarṇa on the Bagmati, Kiteśvara, Kumbhesvara in Patan and Phaṇilingeśvara, on the Godāvarī. Yakṣhamalla narrates his visit to Gosainthan, a Śivaite sanctuary situated on a lake about fifty miles north of Kathmandu. The deity installed there seems from the descriptions, to have been represented by a liṅga. The growing popularity of Śivaism in Nepal is also reflected in the number of Sivaite sects and Śaiva *ācāriyas* that one can still see and hear of in Nepal.

The origin of the Śakti worship in Nepal can perhaps be traced to a remote past. To an average Nepali the world is animate and there is in everything including in things that are non-living, a living spirit. This live spirit is indeed the fertile force which makes the land yield corns, roots and flowers, the herds to multiply and women to bring forth offsprings. The Nepalese know this force as 'mai' or 'Ajima'. Thus there are places in Nepal which are called *maithan* or the place of the mother; in many such *maithans* one finds a lonely temple or shrine growing up in no time, which are called 'mai-devī' temples.



The Guhyeśvara temple in the Deopatan area seems to have been originally a 'maithan'. On special occasions women offer their worship to 'mai-devī' in order to fulfil their cherished dream to be good mothers. Not unoften the 'mai-devī' is propitiated with sacrifices of animals as well as of the offerings of eggs. In fact the daily round of an average Nepali includes among other things, a series of rituals around the mother. When, therefore, the *Smārtap-aurāṇik* Śakti worship entered Nepal it found very ready acceptance amongst the people, in some form or other.

An inscription of Mānadeva's wife records the installation of a *māṭṛkā* image in a temple at Patanchowk.<sup>31</sup> In another inscription of the same period, we find a reference to a temple of Indaldevī,<sup>32</sup> evidently a *māṭṛkā*-goddess, in connection with the installation of a *līṅga* known as Ratneśvara. At Lalitapura Pattana there stands the temple of *Chinnamastikā*, one of the manifestations of the goddess Kālī, on which king Jishnugupta had an inscription incised,<sup>33</sup> which indicates that this temple must have been in existence from some time before. Besides, there is a small group of images lying within the precincts of the temple, showing very clearly that this temple was an important centre of the worship of the Devī in her various manifestations. There is a similar group of Devī icons lying scattered in the yard of the temple at Ārya-ghāṭ on the Bāgmatī river below the Paśupatinātha temple; there can hardly be any doubt that this temple was also at one time a centre of Devī worship.

In an illustrated manuscript, *Saptaśatī*, datable during the reign of Indradeva, there are representations of the ten mother goddesses (evidently Durgā in her ten manifestations). The Kathmandu valley has yielded a very large number of icons of ten handed Mahishāsūramardīnī, all datable from about the tenth-eleventh century A.D. Besides her Mahishāsūramardīnī manifestations, the Devī has also been represented in Nepal in many other forms, namely, Jagadambā, Annapurnā, Ambā, Bhabānī, Caṇḍī, Bhairavī, Cāmuṇḍa, Mahālakṣmī, Mahākālī, Nārāyaṇī, Taleju etc. which are all in some form or other the manifestations of Durgā. Tantrism seems to have prescribed the same rites and rituals for all these divinities. An unidentified traveller of the late eighteenth century gives a description of the ritual connected with the worship of the goddess Bhavānī: "... at a certain quarter of the moon they offer an infinite number of sacrifices to the goddess of the sheep, goat and buffalo . . . . They eat with great devotion. On that day the number of animals slaughtered in the whole kingdom amount to many millions."<sup>34</sup> There is evident exaggeration in the statement, but the practice still continues. Temples dedicated to the Devī were founded already in the early Licchavi period, but there does not stand anything in Nepal of the kind of a *Śakti-piṭh*, or a sacred centre of Śakti worship prior to the late medieval period. An illustrated manuscript dated A.D. 1732-1771 shows the king Jayapṛakṣa Malla of Kantipur worshipping the goddess



Guhyeśvarī who was his *iṣṭadevatā*. It is interesting to notice that Guhyeśvarī is not present in any record prior to the fourteenth century. Even Gopāladeva does not mention about the deity while discussing Paśupathinātha. The deity in primitive and tribal origin was possibly a *pīṭhadevatā* which later on was creatively synthesised with the conceptions and forms of Brahmanical deities and with the rituals of their worship. Pratāpamalla, sometime in the seventeenth century, seems to have built up a temple over this *pīṭhadevatā*.<sup>35</sup>

Of minor manifestations of the Devī, Nepal knew of Lakshmi and Sarasvatī, Bhūdevī or Vasudhā, but in most cases, as attendants or *pārśadevīs*. In Nepal, as in India, Lakshmi is worshipped even today as a domestic goddess, but there are also independent shrines dedicated to her. Sarasvatī, otherwise known as Śārādā seems to have been at one time a very popular goddess in medieval Nepal, though she seems to have later lost her popularity. In a fourteenth century inscription she is called *mātā* and one of her descriptions is that of *Kamamūrti*, her usual iconographic attributes being the rosary, *viṇa*, *pustaka* and her right hand either being in *varada* or *abhaya* mudrā. Not very far from the Svayambhū stūpa at Kathmandu there is a half-hidden temple on the top of a hillock, which must have been at one time dedicated to Sarasvatī. Even today on the bright *Śrīpāñcamī* day common Nepalese folk flock to this temple to offer their worship to the goddess Sarasvatī.

In many localities in the valley one can see a large number of independent icons of some mother goddesses or the other, either in small temples or standing in the open. The majority of them are no longer in formal and regular worship. Yet no Devī is altogether neglected in Nepal since the Newārs never forget to pay their homages to these wayside goddesses on festive occasions. It is very significant indeed that every week or fortnight they have festivities accompanied by splendid displays of ceremonial rites of observances, each ceremony being marked with the offering of liquor and sacrifice of buffalos which on Māhāshtami and Mahānavamī days turn to bloody orgies associated with heavy drinking. That this is not merely a contemporary phenomenon is proved by the fact that traditional myths and legends associated with the temple Naradevī, Dakṣiṇākālī and the temple of Kālī inside Vasantapur palace, abound with reference to the custom of offering liquor and blood in orgies of drunkenness.

The tradition and practice of *Kumārīpūjā* also seem to have been very active and potent in Nepal<sup>36</sup>. Even today, on specified occasions, a girl of six is duly enshrined as *Kumārī*, the virgin mother, and is duly worshipped as a true and living goddess. Her sway is acknowledged far and wide and even by the king who is almost equated with Nārāyaṇa. To a Nepali she is a human representation of Gaurī or Pārvatī, but her godliness lasts as long as she does not reach her puberty.



The worship of Sūrya seems to have been made current in Nepal already during the early Licchavi period. An inscription of the time speaks about the founding of a temple of Sūrya by one Guhamitra.<sup>37</sup> The image installed in this temple is called in the inscription as Divākara, whose name was Indra. Curiously in the inscription itself Sūrya is identified with Indra, why, it is difficult to explain unless one refers to the Ṛgvedic tradition where Indra is addressed as *Savitṛ* in the fourth maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda. There is a vague reference of the association of Sūrya with the Indra in a hymn of the eighth maṇḍala but more clearly in one of the tenth maṇḍala. There is, however, in early Indian archaeology at least one instance where Sūrya seems to have some association with Indra, the god of war. Two early Bhaja reliefs represent the Sun god riding his horse-drawn chariot over the demon of darkness, towards Indra riding his elephant, the former from the right and the latter from the left of the entrance of the caitya hall.

In a later inscription, the Sun is addressed as Śiva-Bhāskara who is supposed to dispel the darkness of ignorance. At Bhatgaon there is a temple dedicated to a god who is described as Sūrya-Vināyaka which seems to indicate that Sūrya at one time came to be identified with Gaṇeśa, an identification which is mythologically explained in a late text called the *Nepāla-Māhātmya*.<sup>38</sup>

A considerable number of Sūrya icons have been found in Nepal; they are either bare-footed or high-booted. The bare-footed ones are usually seated in *padmāsana* on a double petalled lotus, while the high-booted ones are standing, holding in their hands the stalks of a lotus flower and wearing a waist-band and jewelled crown. The oldest available icon representing Sūrya with his two attendants belongs to the eleventh century, in A.D. 1030.<sup>39</sup> The figure here is a standing one and is bare-footed. The slightly elongated slender figure of Sūrya and his two attendants, the symmetrical composition and the art and iconographic form are reminiscent of similar icons of Eastern India of the tenth-eleventh and twelfth centuries.

In the heart of the city of Kathmandu stands a temple of Indra, but the deity installed at the sanctum is locally known as Ākāśabhairava. This Indra has indeed no connection with the Vedic god of the same name or with Indra of early Indian archaeology. Several times more than life-size Indra has here a most terrific form with long snarling fangs issuing out of his mouth. Normally the god is kept hidden behind close doors that are open on some festival occasions alone. But Nepal also knows of the Paurāṇic Indra mounted on his elephant, Airāvata, and is accompanied by his wife Śachi. This manifestation of Indra in iconic form is very common in Nepal.

Connected with Indra there is a most popular festival in Nepal which is called the *Indra-yātrā* and is associated with the temple of Indra at Kathmandu. For the festival the huge



icon of Ākāśa-Bhairava is brought out of the temple and placed on the main thoroughfare. The festival ceremony is inaugurated by the Kumāridevī, who circumambulates the icon of Ākāśa-Bhairava for seven times, pouring water in front of him at the completion of each turn. At the termination of the ceremony Ākāśa-Bhairava dispenses gallons of rice beer through a pipe issuing from the mouth. Towards the end of the festival, animals are sacrificed and unlimited quantities of liquor are offered. The most interesting part of the festival is a procession and a feast which are participated in by members of all religious sects and cults of Nepal. The *Indrāyatrā* is indeed a national festival of the Nepalese in which the entire population throw themselves in absolute abandon, unconscious of their individual faiths and religious persuasions. King Prthvi Nārāyaṇa Shāh while attempting his final onslaught on Kathmandu, found the people of the Valley enjoying with abandon the *Indrayātrā* festival; he waited till all the citizens were drunk with liquor and entered the city without facing any organised opposition.<sup>40</sup>

The *Indrayātrā* festival seems to mark the end of the rainy season when mother earth is fertilised. Obviously the festival is a magical one, intended to assure adequate supply of water and a rich harvest. Similar festivals are known in many parts of India where the ceremony starts on *Indra Caturdaśī* day of the month of Bhādra and women within closed doors dance naked or semi-naked, sing obscene songs and not unoften take intoxicating drinks, and the ceremony terminates with a big feast.

<sup>1</sup>Bhattacharyya, B. *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>2</sup>Bhattacharyya, B. *op. cit.*, figs. 12 & 14.

<sup>3</sup>Regmi, D. *Medieval Nepal*, Part, I, p. 580.

<sup>4</sup>Banerjea, J.N. *Development of Hindu Iconography*, pp. 557-561.

<sup>5</sup>Banerjea, J.N. *op. cit.*, pp. 560-61, fn. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ganguli, O.C. *Rupam*, No. III, July 1920.

<sup>7</sup>*Gaṇapati Hṛdaya*.

<sup>8</sup>Indraji, B. No. 7, Gnoli, XLI; Basak, R. *The History of North Eastern India*, p. 319.

<sup>9</sup>Gnoli, *Nepalese Inscription in Gupta Character*, pp. 1-2, No. 1, Indraji, No. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Levi II, Gnoli III Basak. *op. cit.*, pp. 303-304.

<sup>11</sup>Pal, P. *Vaisnava Iconology in Nepal*, pp. 20 and 79.

<sup>12</sup>Sircar, D.C. 'Kokamukha-tirtha', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup>Regmi, D.R. *Medieval Nepal*, Part III, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup>Pal, P. *op. cit.*, Figs. 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68 and 69.

<sup>15</sup>Gnoli, VI, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

<sup>16</sup>Indraji No. 2., Gnoli VIII, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

<sup>17</sup>Gnoli, LXV Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

<sup>18</sup>Gnoli, XVI, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

<sup>19</sup>Gnoli, X, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>20</sup>Gnoli, XVII, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>21</sup>Lévi, XIII, Gnoli XXXI, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

<sup>22</sup>Lévi, XII, Gnoli XXXI, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 318.



- <sup>23</sup>Indraji, No. 7, Gnoli, XLI, Basak, *op.cit.*, p. 319.
- <sup>24</sup>Gnoli, LIII, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 326.
- <sup>25</sup>Indraji, No. II, Gnoli, LIX, Basak, *op. cit.*, p. 329.
- <sup>26</sup>Indraji, No. 15, Gnoli, LXXXI, Basak *op. cit.*, p. 342.
- <sup>27</sup>Ray, A. 'Pasupatinath Temple', *Man in India*, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp. 10-22.
- <sup>28</sup>Gnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 28, XX.
- <sup>29</sup>Regmi, D. R. *Medieval Nepal*, Part III, p. 63.
- <sup>30</sup>Gnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
- <sup>31</sup>Regmi, D.R. *Ancient Nepal*, p. 119, fn. No. 70.
- <sup>32</sup>Gnoli, V, Basak, *op. cit.*, 304.
- <sup>33</sup>Indraji, No. 9, Gnoli I, Basak *op. cit.*, p. 321.
- <sup>34</sup>Regmi, D.R. *Medieval Nepal*, Part II, p. 1011.
- <sup>35</sup>Regmi, D.R. *op. cit.*, p. 594.
- <sup>36</sup>Regmi, D.R. *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- <sup>37</sup>Lévi III, Gnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 10, VII.
- <sup>38</sup>*Nepalamahatmya*, Chapter 6, V. 62 f.
- <sup>39</sup>*Nepalese Art*, a catalogue. Department of Archaeology, Nepal, Plate XIV. B.
- <sup>40</sup>Regmi, D.R. *Modern Nepal*, p. 82.





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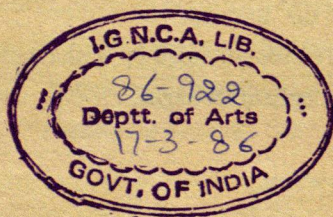
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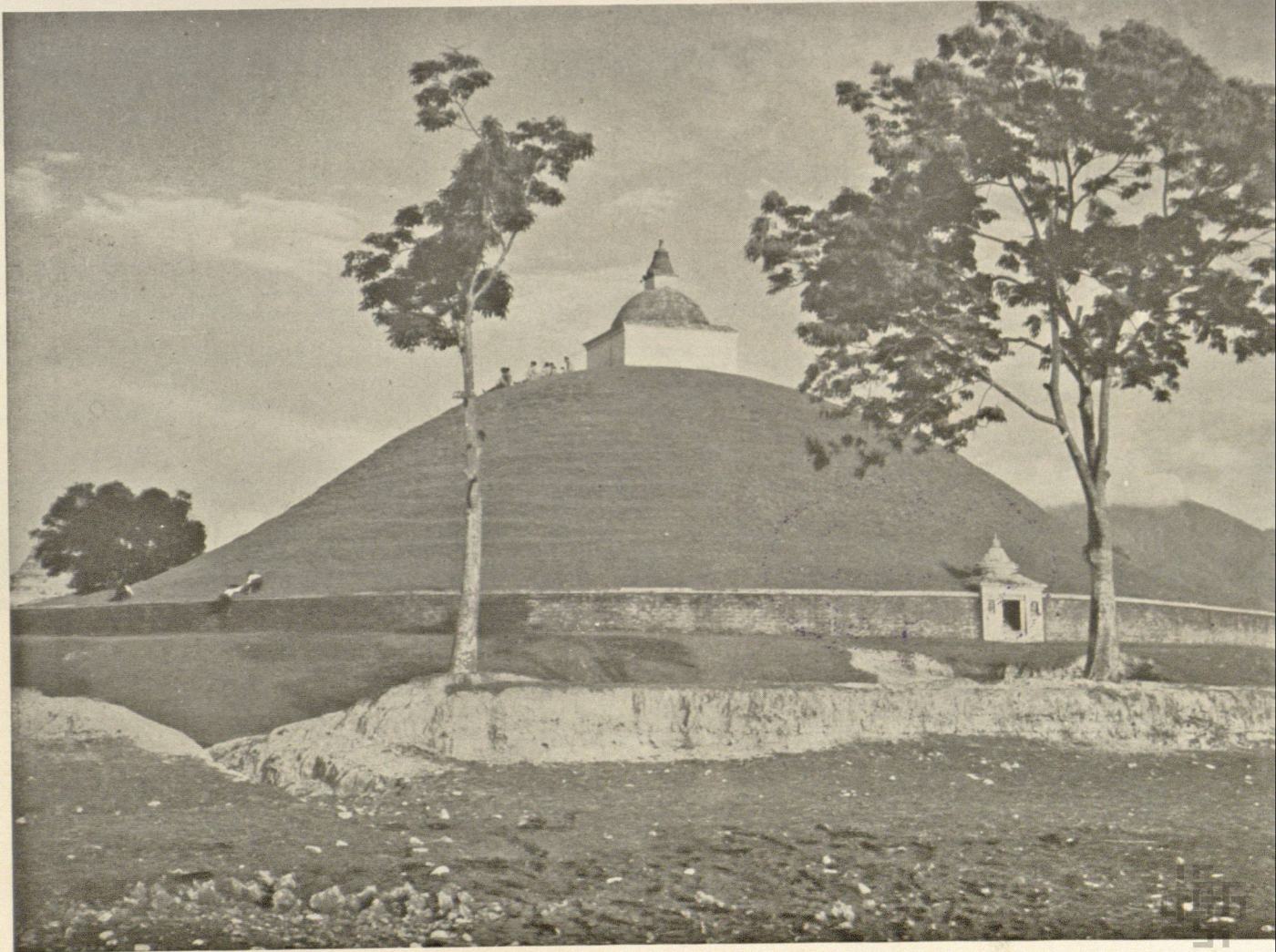
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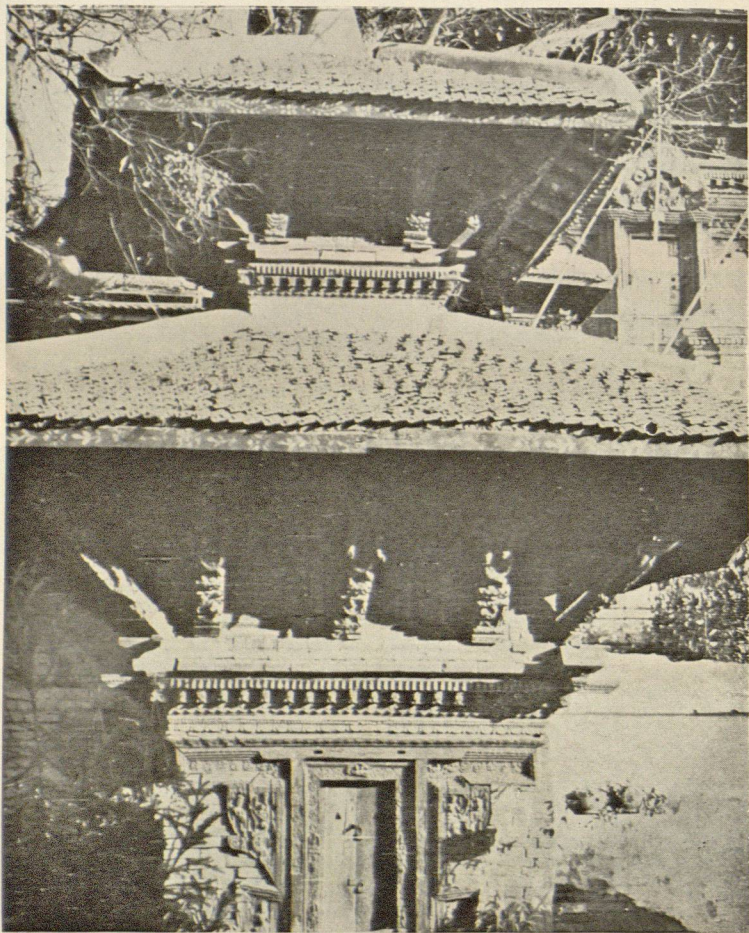


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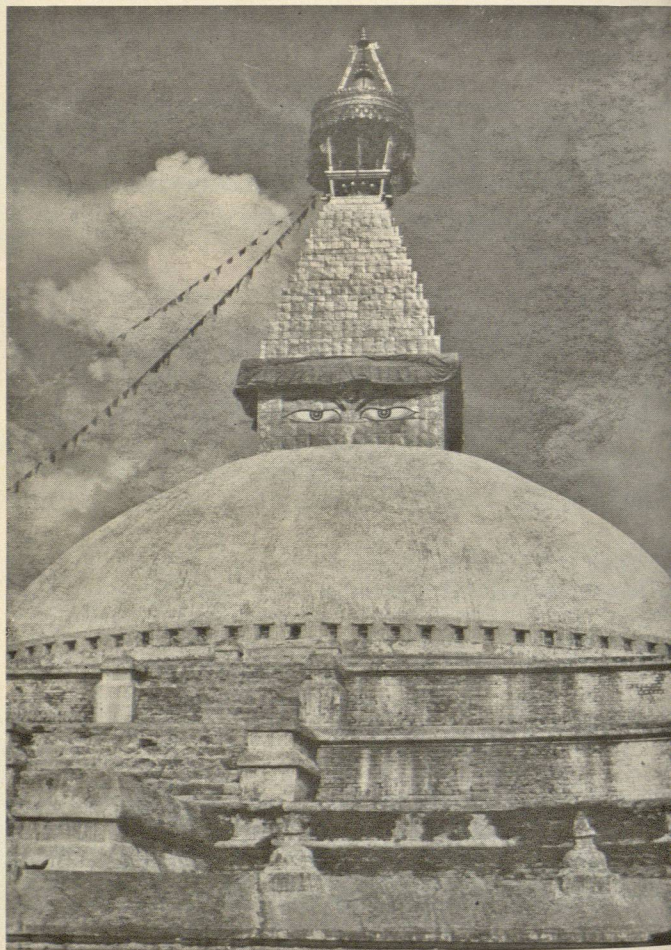


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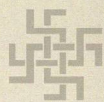
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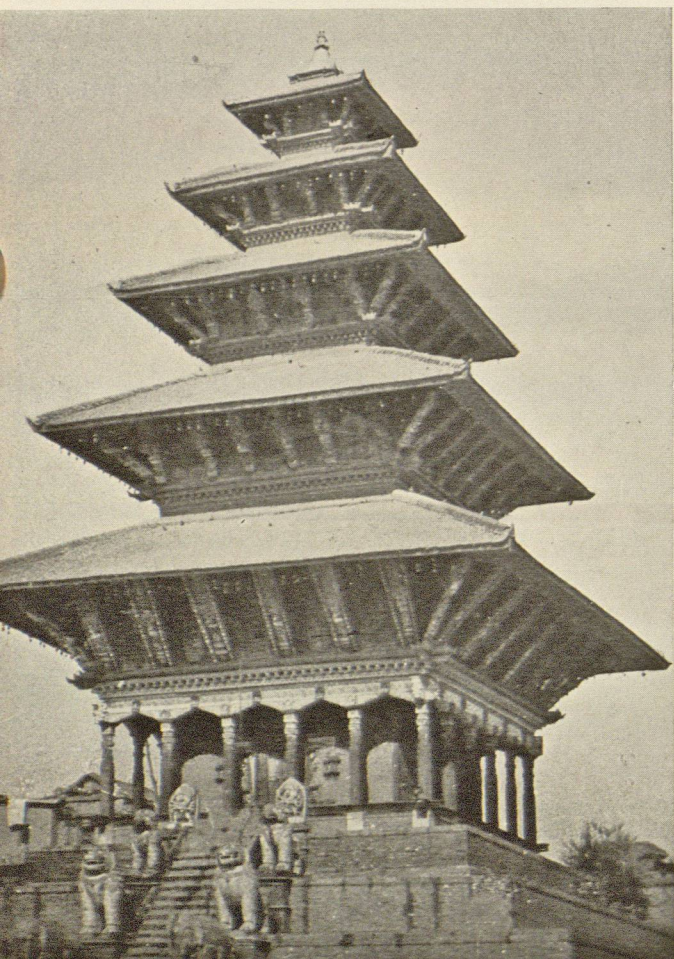
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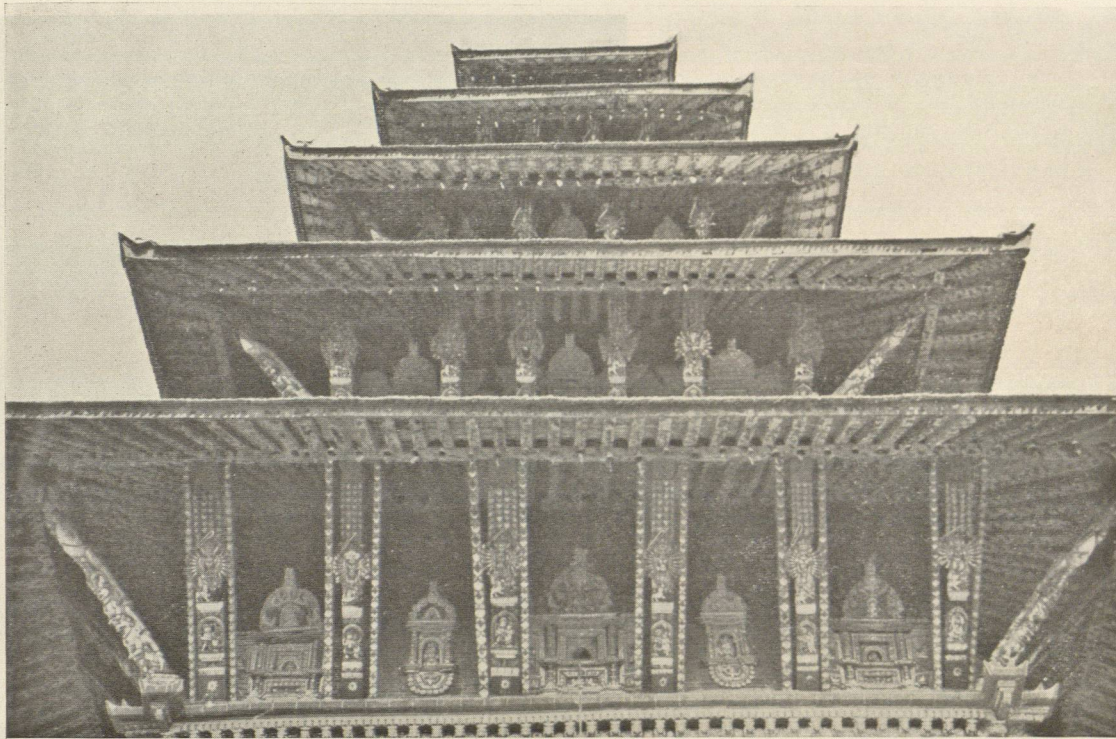






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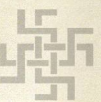
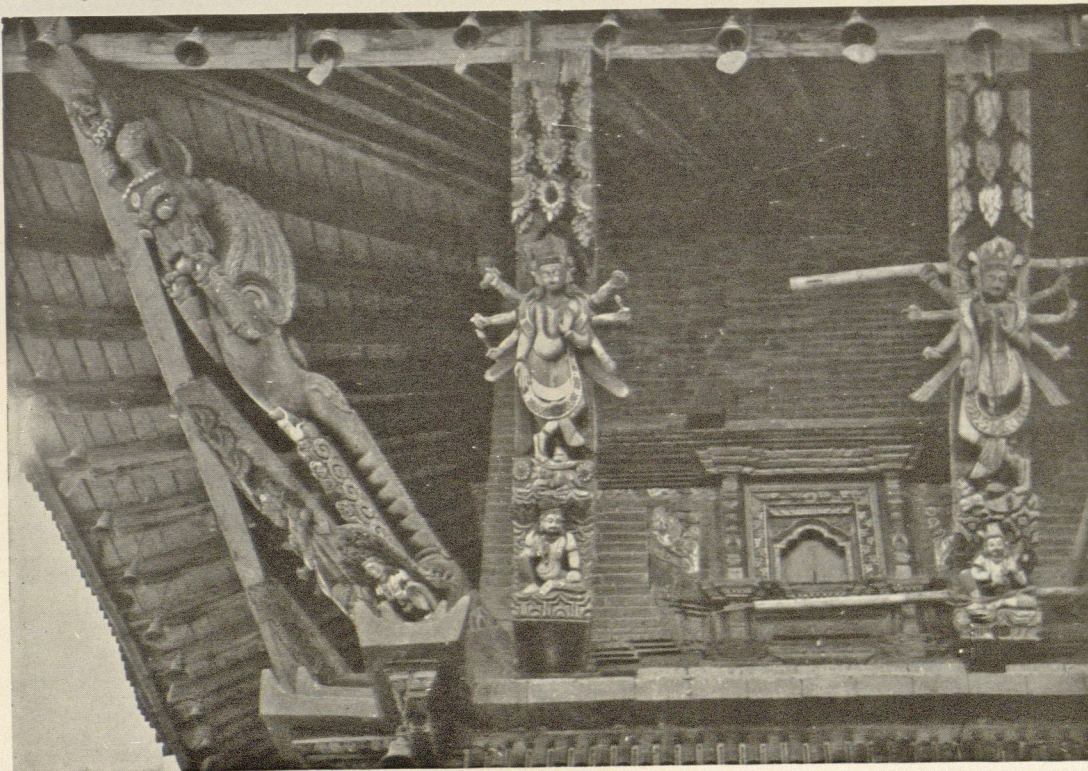


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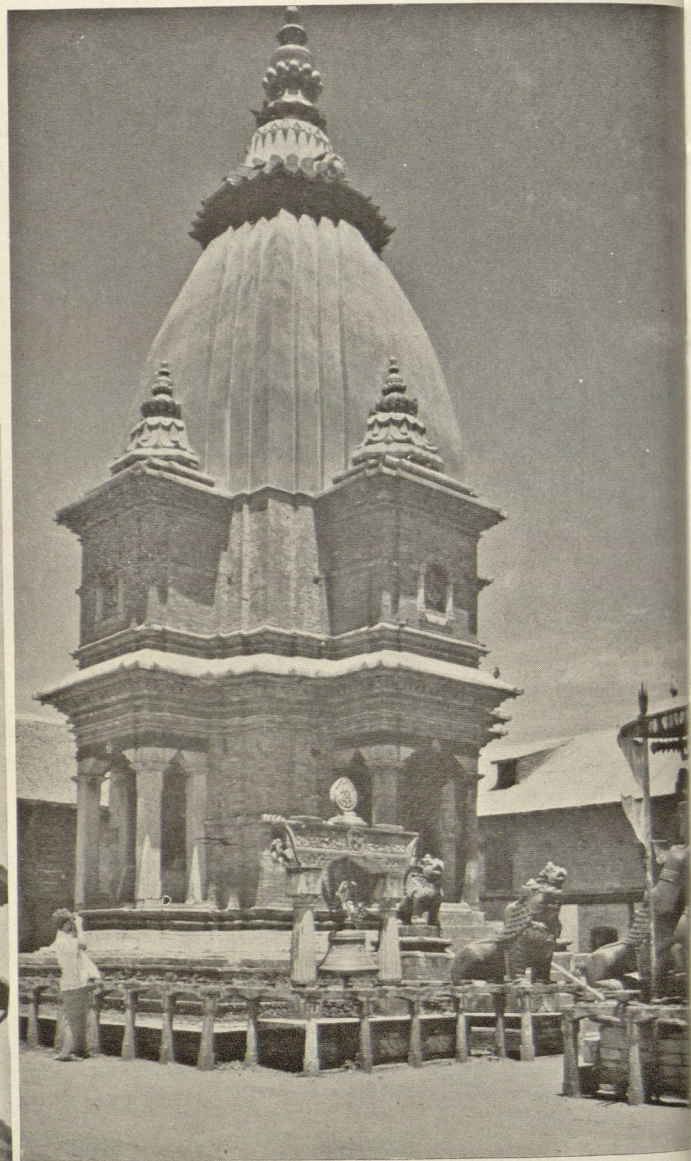
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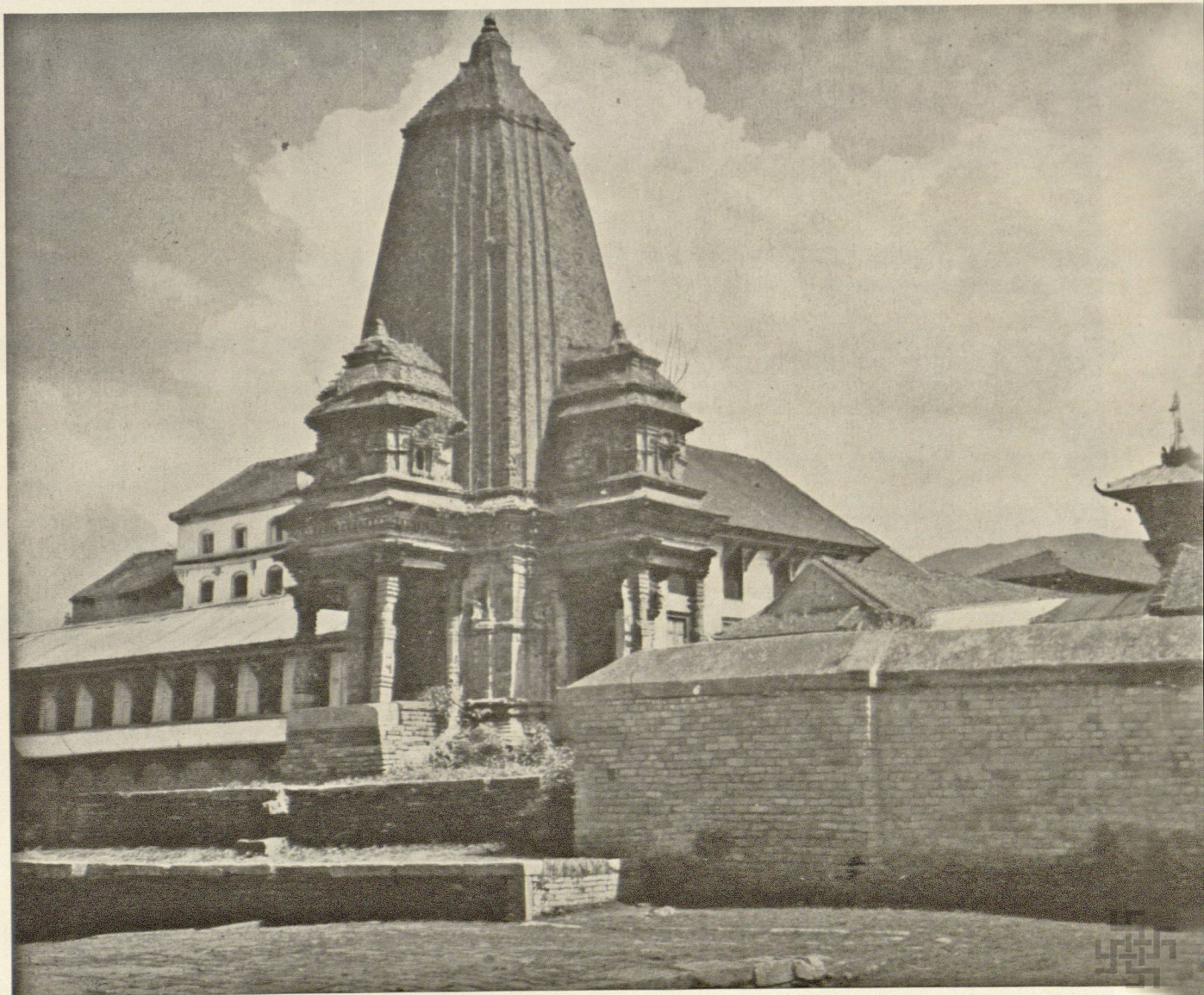


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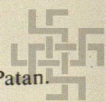




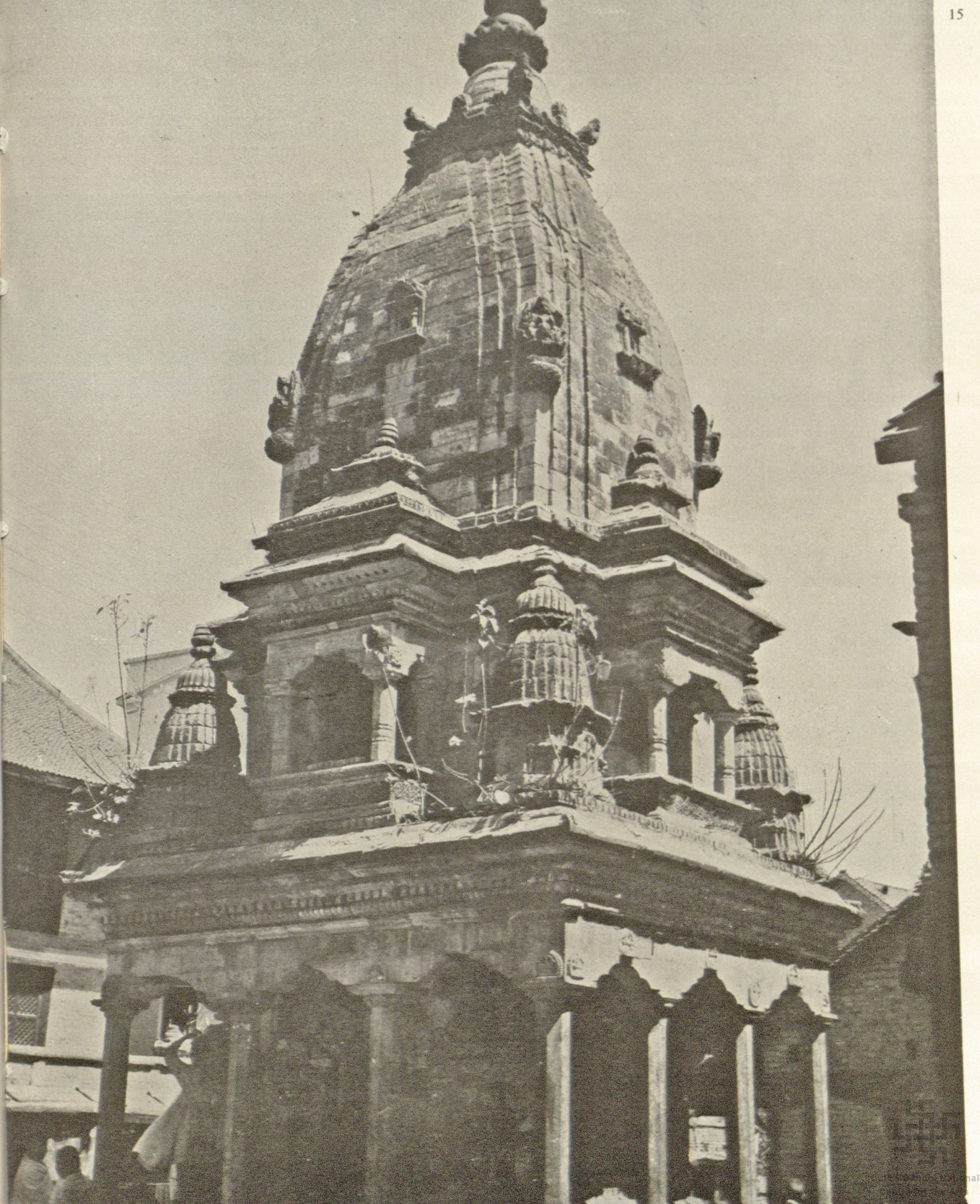
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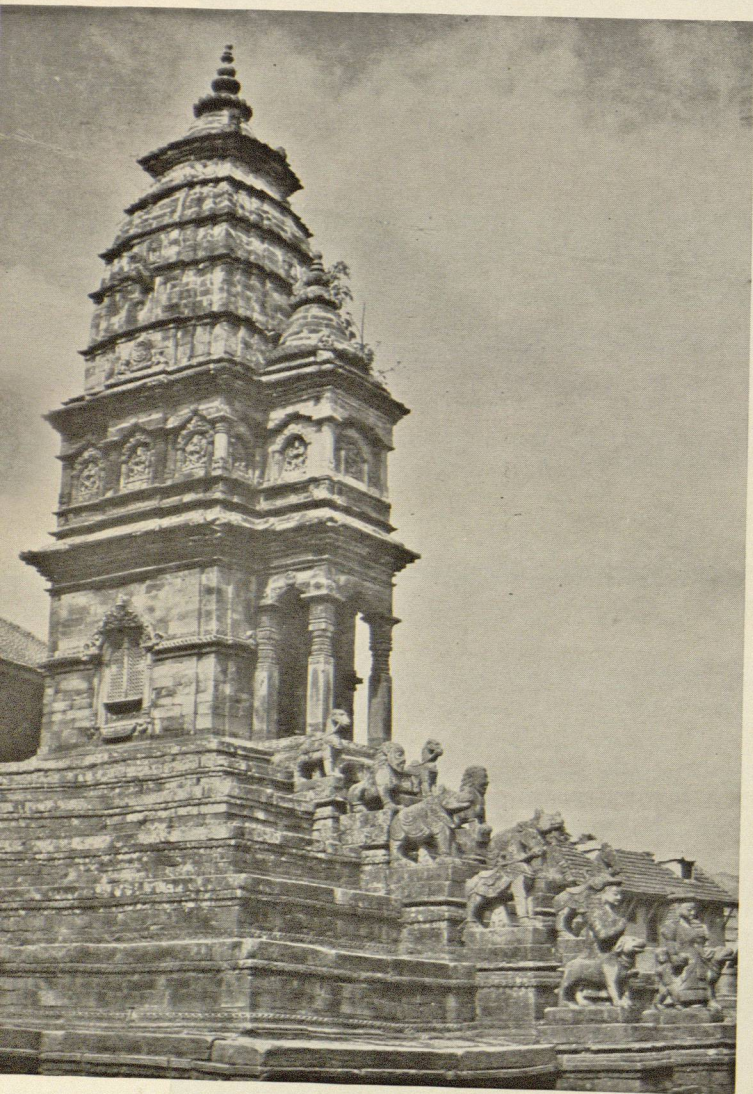
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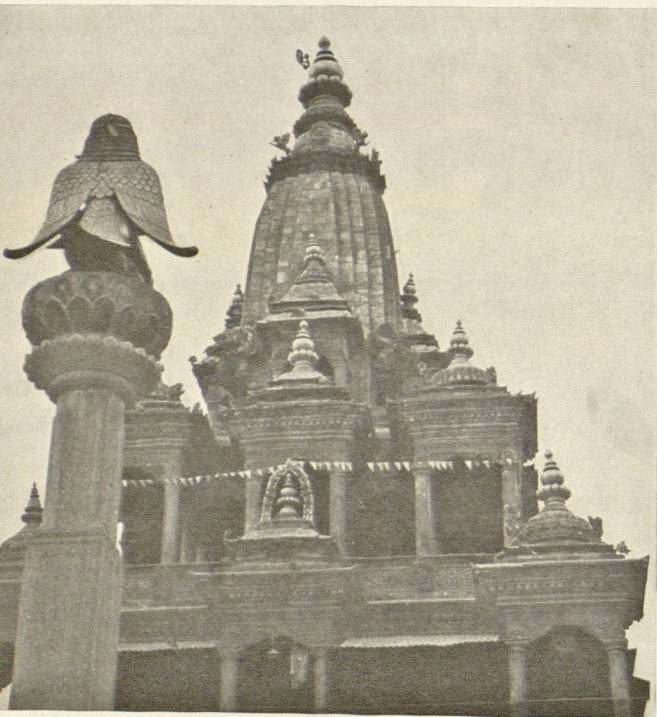
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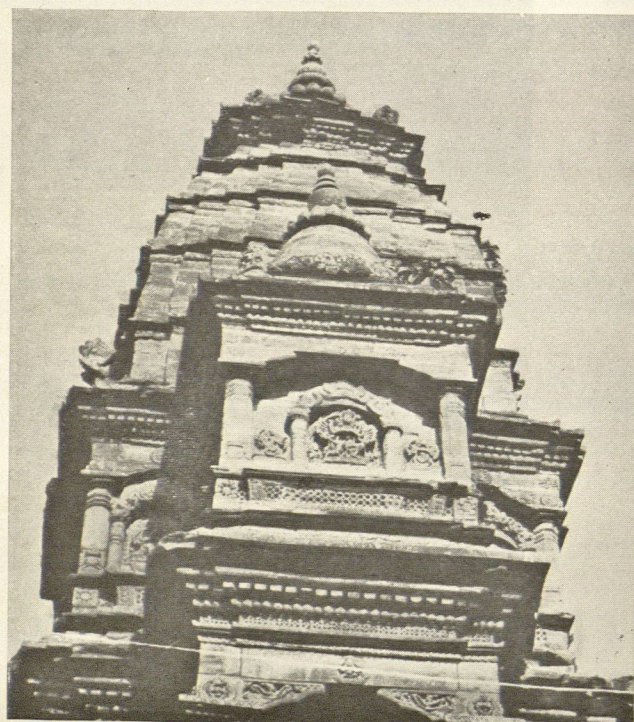
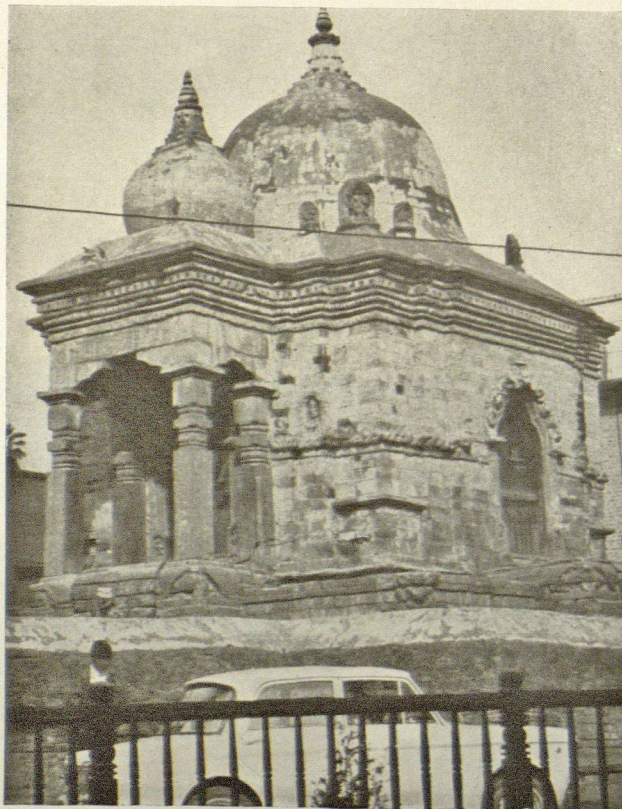






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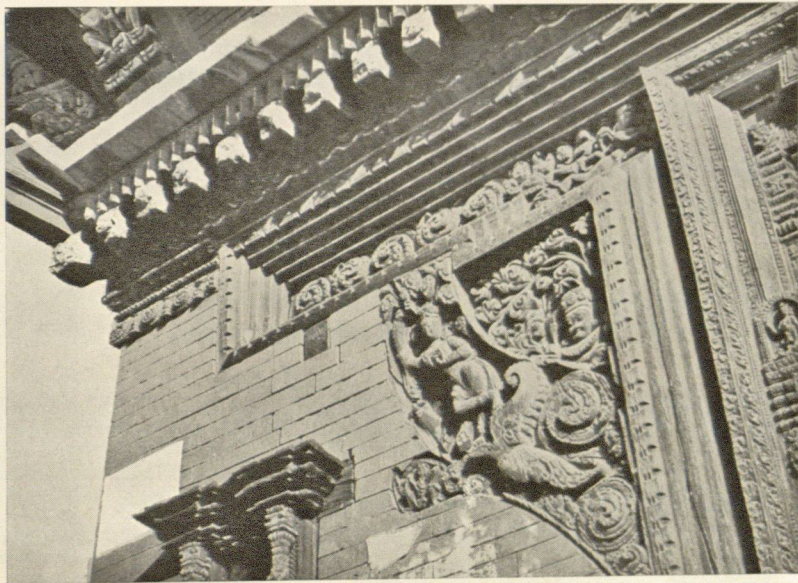
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25. Headless *yaksha* figure, Harigaon.

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28. Kumbha and woman's head, Harigaon.



29. Nativity scene, Deo Patan, 8th-9th century.





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Uma's Penance, Naugál Tol, Kathmandu.



















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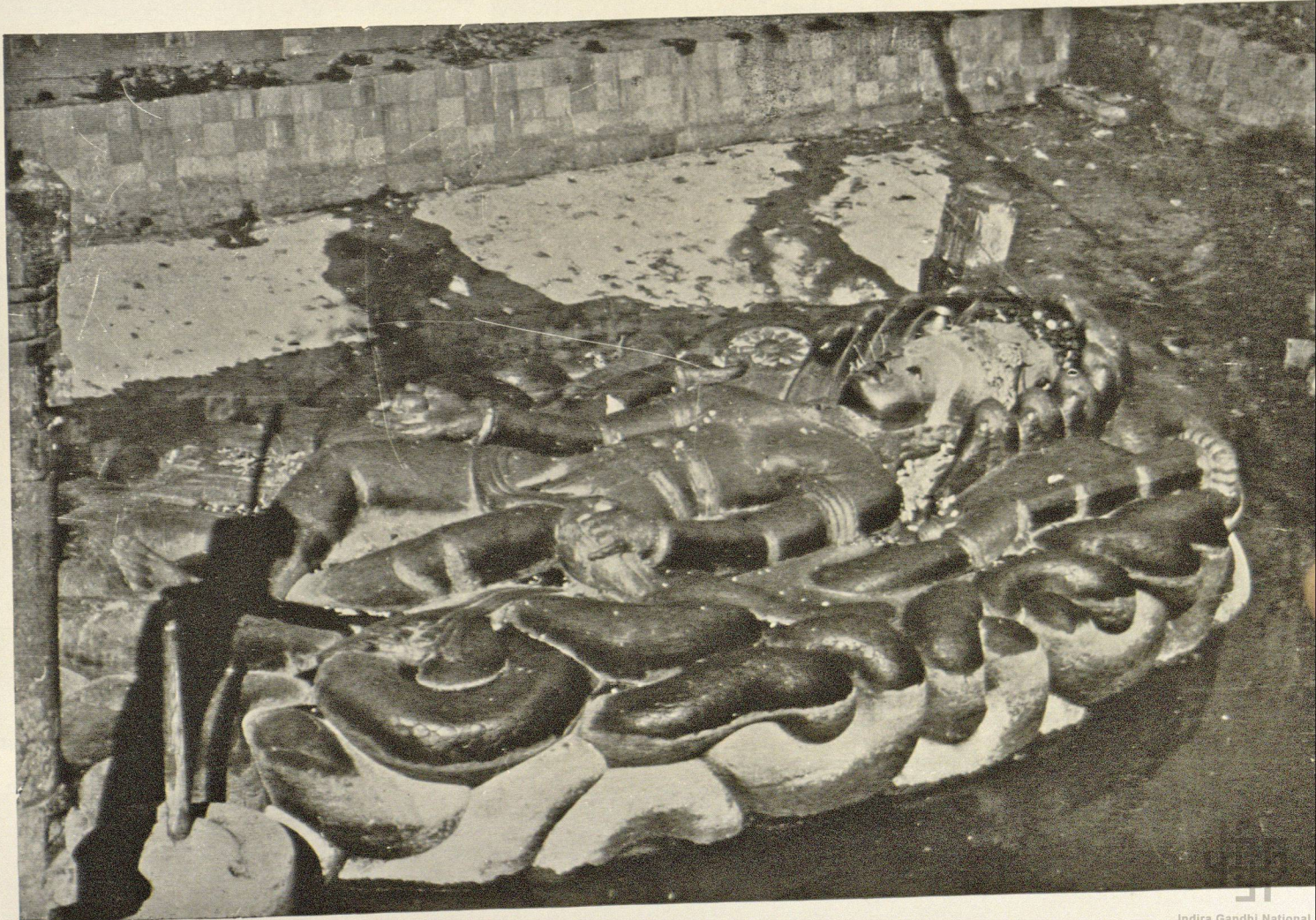








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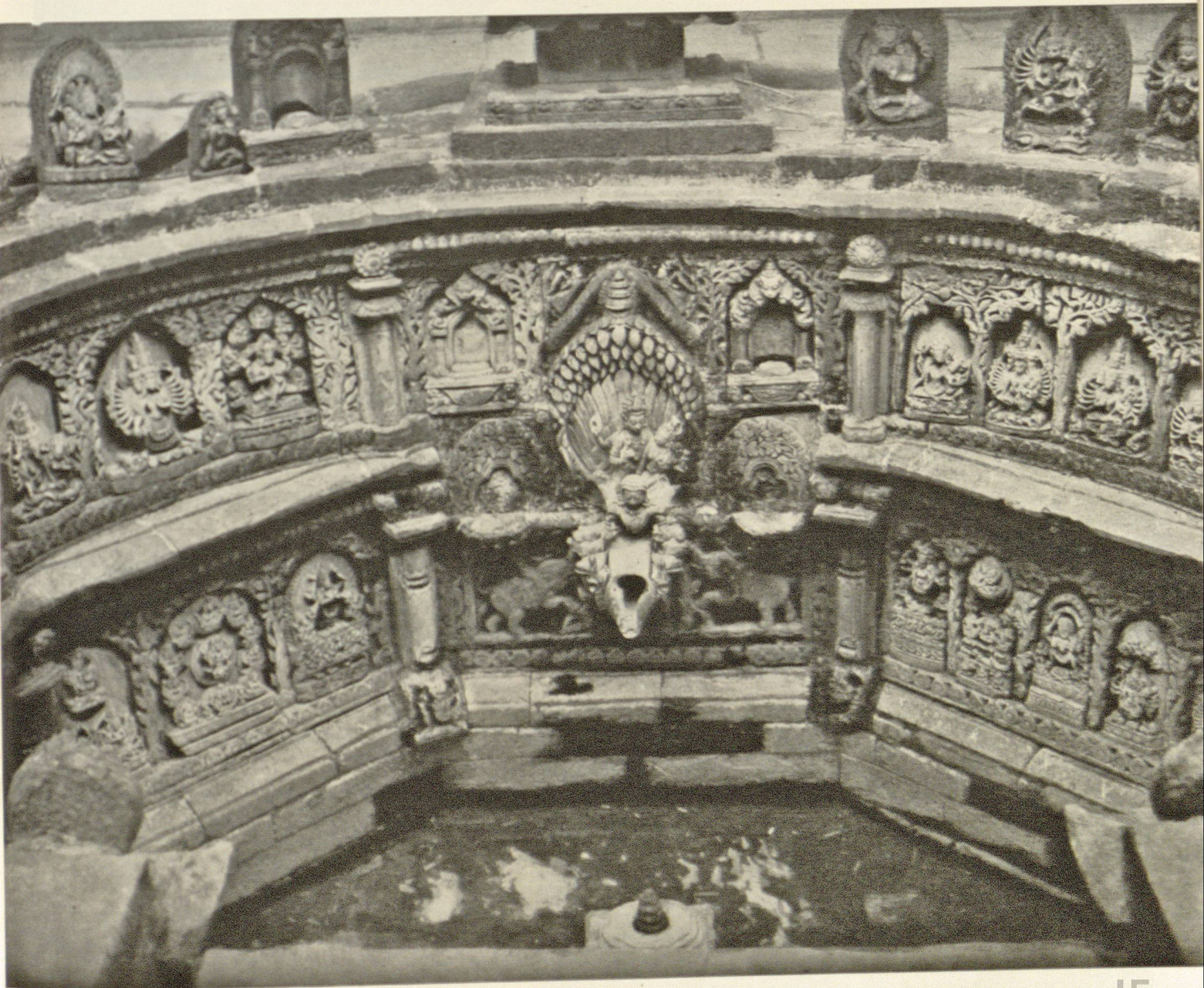




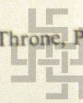


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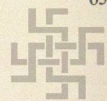
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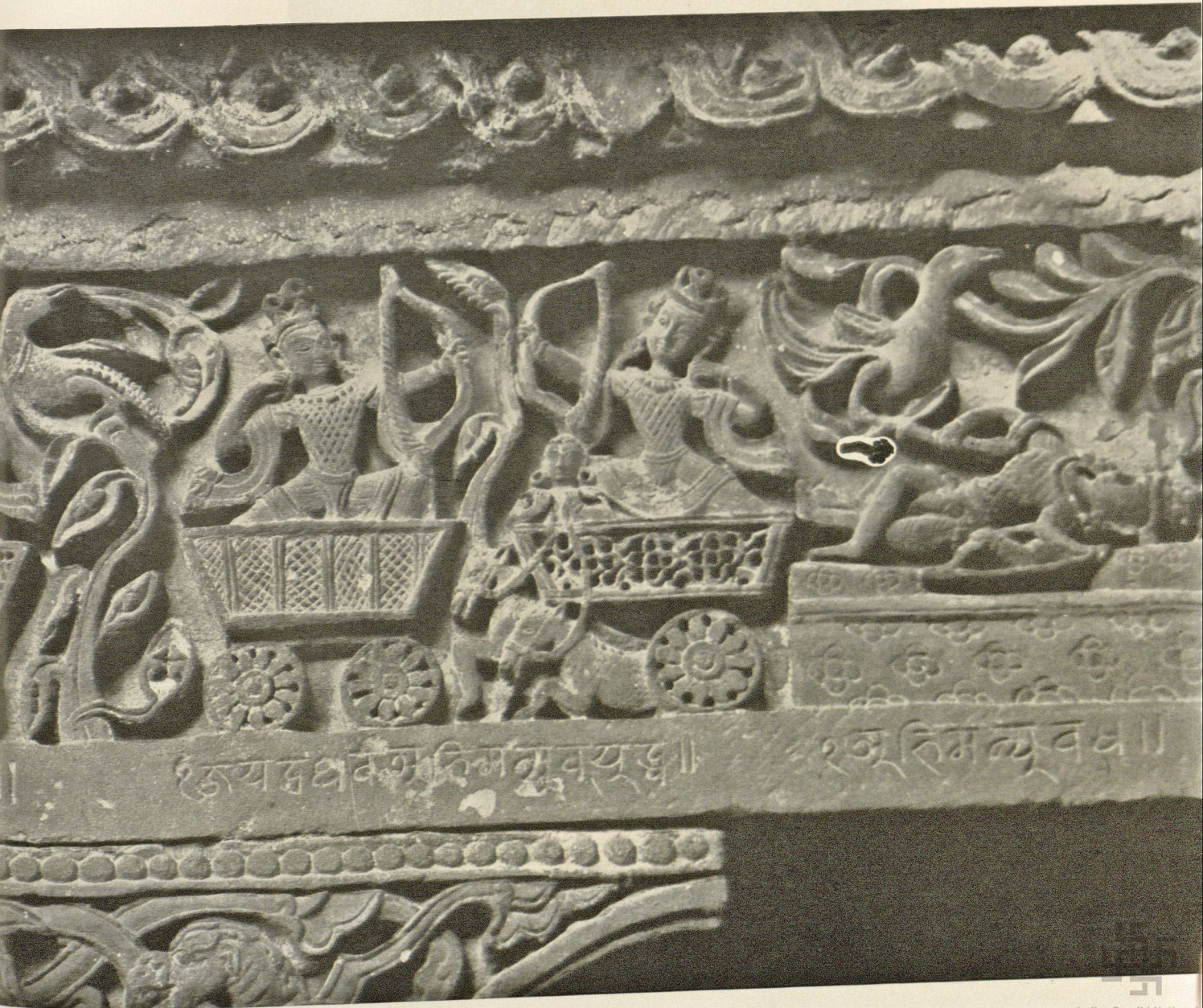
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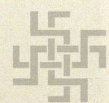






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77. Chamuṇḍā, 18th century.

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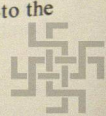


78. Queen Māyā in the  
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80. Monkeys offering  
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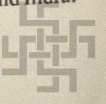




दशशुद्धिं  
 विनायकाया  
 यद्युगतं तदा दशवर्ग्यादि  
 प्राप्ता नानाया ताना नाना

॥ गुरुदेव  
 ॥ नमोस्तुते

81. The Buddha in the Tushita heaven attended by Brahmā and Indra.





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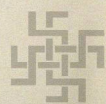




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87. The King  
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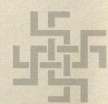


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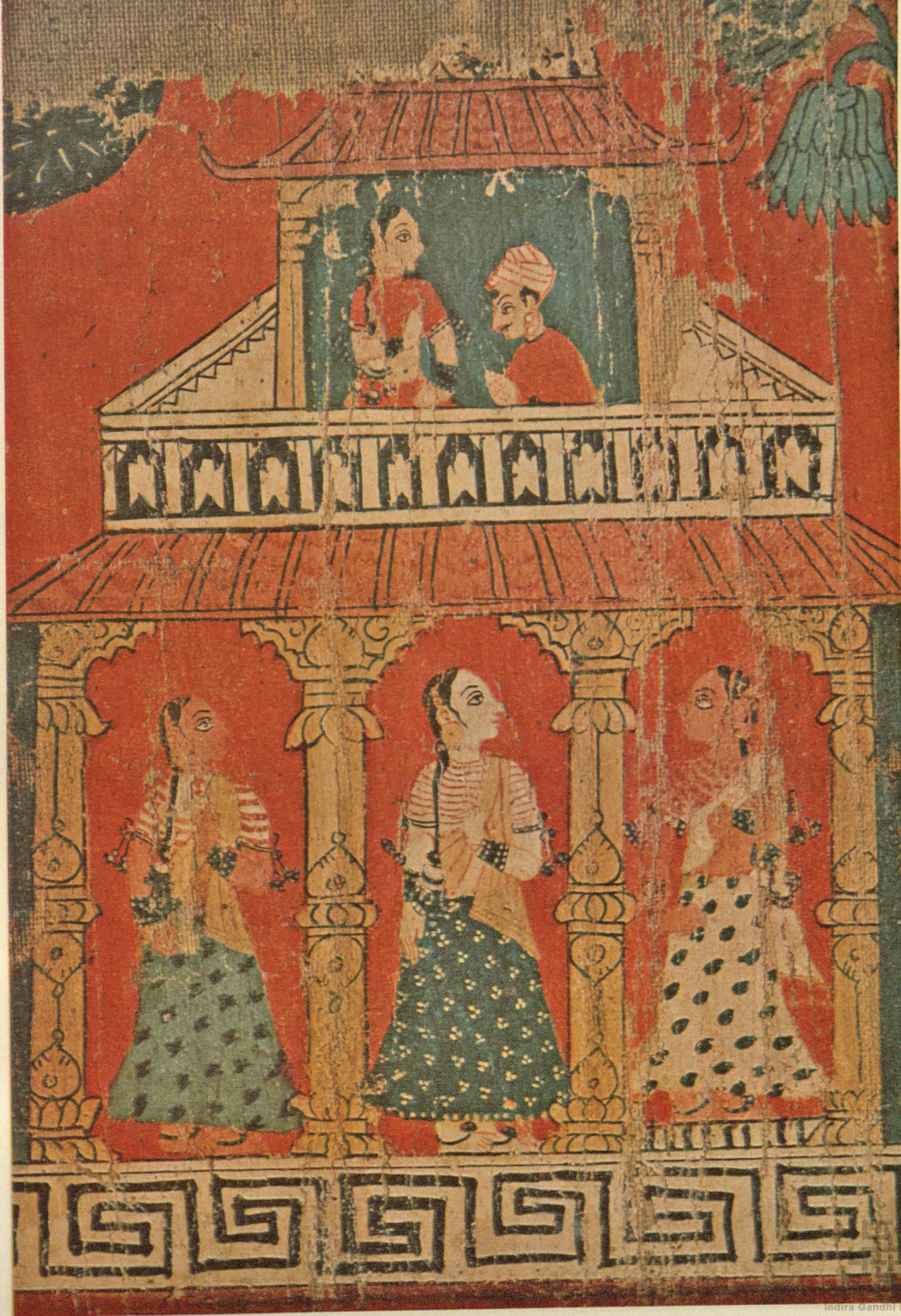




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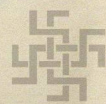


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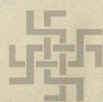




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97. Mahākālā :  
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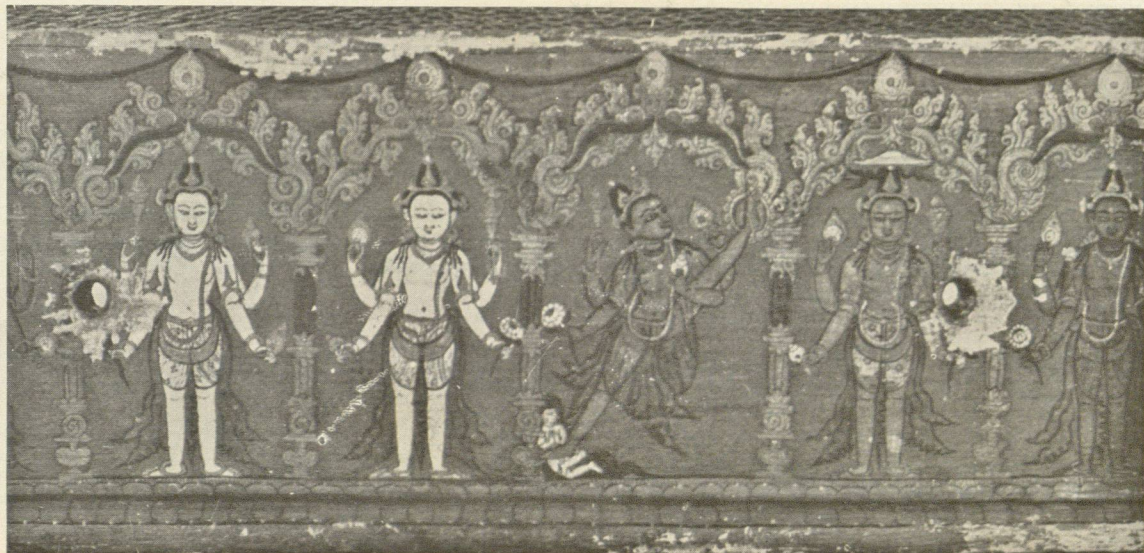




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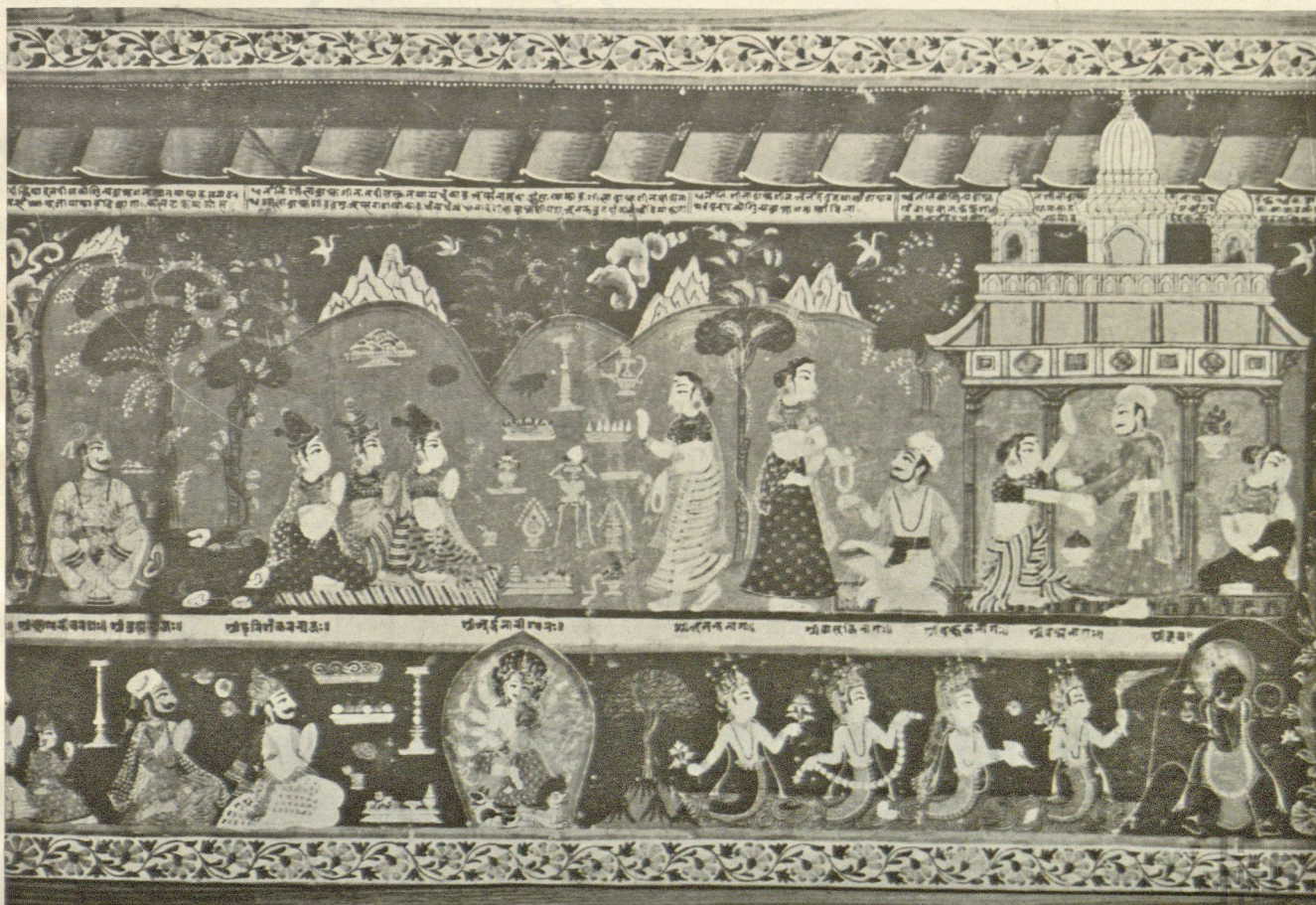


100. Wooden cover painting on a *Sivadharm* manuscript showing *vyuha* aspects of Vishnu. c. 13th century.

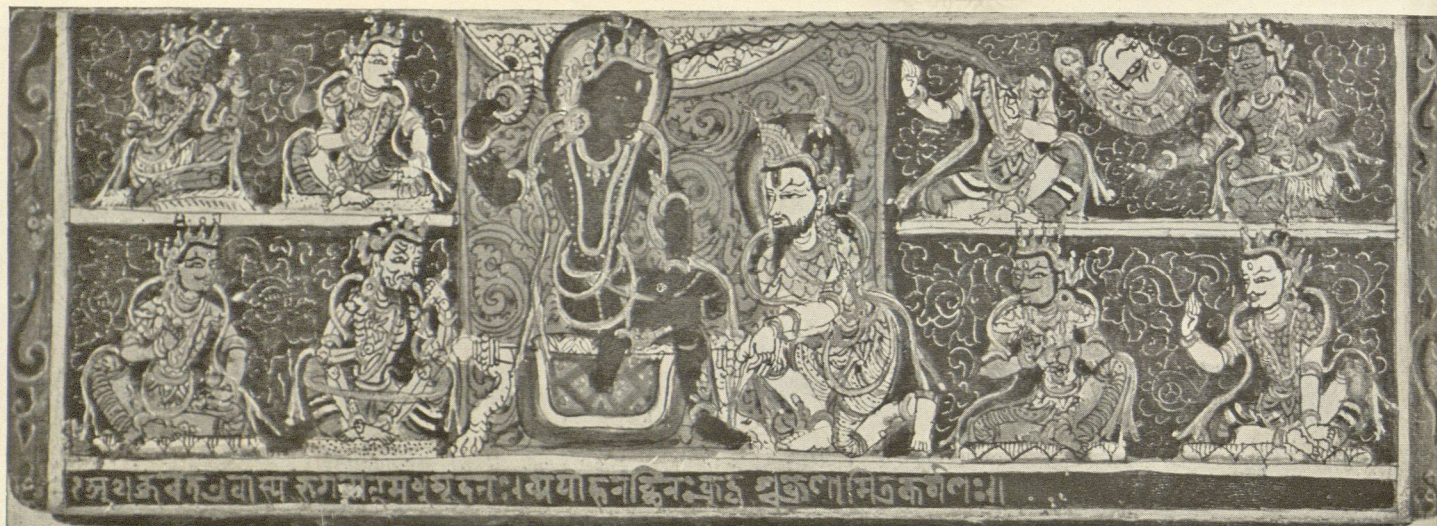
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101. Painting showing a series of scenes in two rows (Rajasthan style).

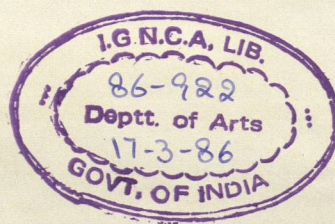






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