

Tusā Hiti



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– Sukra Sagar Shrestha

Man regarded water as one of the most sacred element in the world from the early stage of human civilization. Although it abounds in immeasurable quantity on earth, it has equal importance in every walk of human life. Man needs it from dawn to dusk and from birth to death. It is the life giver liquid substance and thus most sacred as well. Therefore it is considered as one of the most important among the five cosmic elements.

Man, in Kathmandu, was acquiring water from different sources. First of all they were taking out from rivers and natural pools. Once the civilization took its root man learnt to fetch water from underground source as well. Then they transported the water with their skill than by their physical strength. From the aquifer they brought the water to their convenient point through aqueduct with gravitational force. Then they made the spout there. They were often made into deep fountain (Gāhiti: Newari, Gairidhārā: Nepali) a terraced pit into which one has to descend to the spout. The fountain is terraced in a diminishing stages, each bricked and paved and traversed by one or more stairways down.

The spout are often made on stone thus calling Lonhiti in Newari, and Dhungedhārā in Nepali. Later on they were started to be gilded with gold on copper as well (Lunhiti in Newari and Sundhara in Nepali). The main fountain from which the water issue out are often decorated with a face of Makara, who is the Vāhana of Ganga, a mythical permanent source of water. He is also an embodiment of the river Gangā of India. In totality it is called Lonhiti in Newari, Dhungedhārā in Nepali, Makaradhārā in Hindi and Pranālikā in Sanskrit. In Indonesia this type of fountain is called Tāmpaksiri.

Kathmandu, valley is famous for such spouts since the dawn of its history. The people made them in profuse number. So far to our knowledge, the oldest one is the Mangahiti from Patan established by Bharavi, the grandson of Mandeva in 570 A.D. After that series of such hitis were built and the youngest of such historically important example is the Lunhiti of Kathmandu which was established by Lalitripurā Sundari in 1829 A.D.

Many of such hitis have gone to be buried, encroached and disappeared. Many are still showing testimony of their ancient life and are

thus still running and serving the local people who can not afford for the piped water. Due to the suitable physical setting, Patan city has got maximum number of such running hitis fed by the ground water source. It is surprising to see such a big number of hitis being operated by the people in the middle of the urban areas like Thapahiti, Kumbhesvar, Mangal Bazar, Chyasaltol, Tanga and so many other places. Maruhiti, Bhindyahiti and Thahiti of Kathmandu: Thapahiti, Mangahiti, Kumbhesvarhiti, Tangahiti of Patan: Lunhiti of both the cities are among the best ones running, even today, with full output of water. Outside the cities of Kathmandu and Patan ; the Baisdhara (Lhuti in Newari) Macchhenarayan hiti, Matatirtha hiti, Naudhara of Godavari are best examples which are still serving the local people.

Because of the sanctity of water itself, the source of it were also fitting places for the installation of sacred images. The images often revered by the donor of the hitis are installed in such fountains. Such fountains are now an outdoor museums that provide rich study materials for art historians. There is scarcely a fountain that does not have, at least, a couple of images dedicated to Vishnu, Shiva or Buddha on top and Bhagiratha image below the main fountain. The concentration of those images shows the popularity of the sanctity as well as the economic condition of a donor. The fountains having such profusions are three Lunhitis and respective palatial hitis in three kingdoms of medieval Nepal-Kantipur, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Besides, there are other many hitis also like Kumbhesvar hiti, Wasa hiti, Chyasa hiti, Thapahiti, Mangahiti in Patan;

Maruhiti, Thanhiti and Bhindyahiti in Kathmandu and many in Bhaktapur, too many to mention.

It is meritorious act to provide the drinking water to others.

The most distinctive source of drinking water in medieval Nepal was wells and fountains. The fountains vary greatly in size and depth, in simplicity and complexity and at last designs as well. Most fountains are rectilinear square or cruciform, sometimes oval, rectangular with apsidal ends.

The ruling families-Kings and their family members had to have special water sources for them in their quarters. Therefore, they built such hitis within their palatial compounds with profuse decorations. These are Thanthu Durbar hiti of Bhaktapur Durbar, Mohankali Chowk Hiti of Hanumandhoka Durbar and Tusā Hiti of Patan Durbar. Among them only Tusahiti of Patan Durbar and Thanthu Durbar hiti of Bhaktapur Durbar in accessible to the general people. Tusahiti of Patan Durbar is among the best designed and properly placed almost at the centre of the courtyard known to the people as Sundari Chowk. It is about this hiti that we are going to present in depth.

Sundari Chowk, one among three courtyards of Patan Durbar Square is situated at the southernmost end of the palace square. It is followed by Mulchowk (Main courtyard) and Keshav Narayan Chowks to the North. To the East is big garden with again another hiti called Bhandarkhal hiti in the middle and to the south and west are the main roads of Patan crossing each other at right angle, running from North to South and East to West.

The main entrance to the courtyard is in the Western facade of the palace and is guarded by the icons of Panchamukhi Ganesh and Narasingh. The courtyards paved with the stone slabs and the Tusāhiti is further sunken down to the depth of 150 cms. from the level of the courtyard. There are three Dalans open towards the courtyard and the southern one is supposed to be main entrance leading upwards. The three Dalans were further supposed to be the area for royal guards in medieval times.

There is no unanimity among the scholars about the date of the construction of this hiti. Two sets of date are given by almost all the scholars with the difference of twenty years. First date is 747 N.S. (1627 A.D.) and another one is 767 N.S. (1647 A.D.)

Dr. D.R. Regmi writes that the courtyard along with Tusāhiti was built by Shreenivas Malla but does not give the date.¹

Wolfgang Korn dates the work to be of N.S. 747 (1627 A.D.) and credits it to Siddhinarasingh Malla for its construction.² John Sanday repeat the word of Korn. Both of them do not give any source.³

Mary S. Slusser brings the date of 767 N.S. (1647 A.D.) and writes-" The year N.S. 767 (A.D. 1646/47) was particularly eventful in the history of the palace for it was then that the remarkable quadrangle and its sunken bath, the Sundari Chowk was created.⁴

¹ Regmi D.R. Medieval Nepal P1 II, Pub.: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta 1966, P. 284.

² Korn Wolfgang. Traditional Architecture of Kathmandu Valley; Pub.: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, KTM 1976, P.55.

³ Sanday John, Monument of Kathmandu Valley, Pub: Unesco, Paris, 1979, P.902.

While writing about Siddhinarasingh Malla, Bhasāvamsāvali states that the same king enlarged the palace complex in comparison to the size of earlier one established the golden gate along with figures of Panchamukhi Ganesh and Narasingh inside the stone paved courtyard made a golden spout embellished with many Tantric deities in the year 767 N.S. Vaisakh Krishna Utarasadha Nakshyatra Thursday.⁵ Thus Bhasāvamsāvali has given even the day and date. So until the further authentic evidence is available, here we take Mary S. Slusser and the Bhasāvamsāvali as our source and the date of the hiti to be of N.S. 767 as an authentic date of the construction of Tusāhiti. Danniell Wright also gives the same date.

Now let us peep into the fact that why this hiti is called Tusāhiti ? In order to get the reason to be called as Tusāhiti, different scholars were consulted personally and first view according to Late Dhanavajra Vajracharya - the water of this spout was as tasty as that of the juice (water) of sugarcane. Sugarcane is called Tu and taste means Sā in Newari thus the name of the hiti is Tusā Hiti, which literally means the water of the hiti tastes as sweet as that of the juice taken out of the sugarcane. Then the hiti that drains out the water tasty like that of sugarcane juice is called Tusāhiti.

Likewise Tirtha Lal Naghabhani explains an another possibility. He is of the opinion that the hiti's source of water could have been from the well. A well in Newari is called Tun. The

⁴ Slusser Mary, Nepal Mandala, Pt I, Pub: Princeton Uni-Press, USA 1978, P.200.

⁵ Lamsal Devi Prasad, Bhashāvamsāvali, (Bhag II), Pub: Rastriya Pustakalaya, P.62.

aqueduct brought from a Tun (well) is Tunsālā hiti and became only Tusāhiti in course of time. He further says that the source of the well could have been somewhere near or inside the Royal Palace itself and buried in course of time and no one can locate it now.

Hariram Joshi, a prominent expert on Nepalese Culture who is heading Joshi Research Center has different story to tell. According to him, the mouth of the hiti looks like the head of a bull. The bull is called Thunsā in Newari and hiti is hiti. Thus it is Thunsā hiti and became in course of time only Tusāhiti.

Whatever reasons given by different scholars above, the last idea put forward by Late Mangalananda Rajopadhyay seems more nearer to the truth and more convincing one in terms of literal meaning. According to him, usually the Gāhitis are supposed to be fed from the deep water sources. When the channel of a deep water source is noticed, hiti complex is made and sunken down to the required depth for the water to flow. Then the fountain is established there. But in case of Tusāhiti, this is not so. The root verb Tusālegu (तुसालेगु) in Newari is exactly translated as to draw a line. The name of this hiti is derived from this word. Therefore the aquifer of this hiti should have to be somewhere far way from the fountain site. The aqueduct, thus, is brought from far place like drawing a line. Then the hiti itself is named and was called Tusālā hiti which in course of time became only Tusāhiti, the present name. Therefore, the idea of Late Rajopadhyay turned out to be more nearer to the convincing point.

While surveying the aquifer for recanalization of water source for Gāhitis in Patan, UDLE (an organization called Urban

Development through Local Effort) discovered the source of this hiti in Narichā which is a well-known aquifer that still oozes out much water round the clock⁶ They also found that the Gāhitis of Thāpahiti, Saugahiti, Bhandarkhal hiti and Tusāhiti all fed from Narichā aquifer. The idea of Late Pandit Rajopadhyay is more reasonable and thus the name of the hiti. We also accept as Tusāhiti.

Except in vernacular language, there is no mention of Tusāhiti in any of the manuscript so far known to us. Whatever reasons are given by the scholars on its name. It is called at present, as Tusāhiti in Newari and Nepali, and Royal Bath of Sundarichowk in English.

Even the nomenclature Royal Bath is not free from controversy. When one reads about King like Siddhinarasingh Malla, who is credited for building this hiti is pictured as an ascetic and the most devout Hindu King. If we see the position of different icons inside the hiti complex, it is virtually impossible to have a bath without having possibility of polluting the images with the polluted water of the body. Thus the ascetic king like Siddhinarasingh Malla could never offend impure act to those Gods and Goddesses. Therefore it should have been made for second purpose than to have just the bath only. Mr. Shankar Man Rajvamsi, a research scholar and a historian from National Archives, who is already retired has put forward the right assumption that the hiti was not made for bath but it was only made for aqua-oblations to the Gods and Goddesses around. A devout Hindu offers the clean and

⁶ Theophile E and Prayag Raj Joshi, Historical Hiti and Pokhari, Traditional solution to water scarcity in Patan, UDLE Report, Dec. 1992.

pure sacred water everyday to their Gods and Goddess in the morning. They even give the ritual bath to those icons everyday than to have bath himself in such a narrow space. The act is called Nitya karma (daily oblations). Therefore the hiti should have been called only tusāhiti and purposefully it could be called as Nityakarmahiti. Royal Bath is really obscure word to call to such a purposeful spout. The concept of Royal Bath was brought in by foreign scholars and same idea is copied and recopied by other writers.

The controversial idea like that of Royal Bath should be removed from the academic circle and the purposeful idea of Mr. Rajvamsi should be taken up. Therefore it should be better to call as Oblation Spout than to call it as Royal Bath.

There is a reason to be called this place as Royal Bath also. A big stone slab (124 x 237 x 24 cms) made like a cot is placed in front of the spout which is connected to the daily chores of the King Siddhinarasingh Malla. He, as the legend goes on, was a king of ascetic nature. Everyday he used to wake up early in the morning and take bath in this hiti. After purifying himself he used to sit on the stone slab and meditate for hours and thus called this place as Royal Bath.

Another interesting story is also narrated by the senior citizens of Patan. One night Siddhinarasingh Malla could not fall asleep. He tried much but could not. At last he searched on the bed what caused him so much discomfort ? He found small straw of his hair lying on the bed which caused him so much uncomfort. Same night he thought that if such a nice royal bed could not comfort him to sleep,

what would be the condition of the poor people in the country who did not possess any bed at all. How could they fall asleep ? So he decided then there to discard the comfortable royal bed and instead came down to sleep in that stone couch. Furthermore he started to practice more severe penance onwards. This was the same stone platform on which King Sinddhinarsingh Malla used to sit whole night for the meditation during the coldest months of the year.

Let us now return to the hiti again. Architecturally, the hiti is planned in Octagonal shape and is sunken to 150 cms from the level of courtyard. The distance between the two opposite sides of octagon is only 254 cms. The water used to be drained out from 90 cms. below the level of the courtyard and drops for only 75 cms. The spout coming out of the wall is only 55 cms. In order to keep the working platform dry the channel for dirty water is further sunken down to 15 cms. The lower level of hiti is approached by a flight of nine steps from the courtyard level and is cut beyond the octagonal shape towards south. The main spout faces south.

When one goes down to the hiti, he finds around him seven vertical rectangular walls embellished with profusely carved chambers of the Gods and Goddesses from both the sects of Hinduism-Vaisnavism and Shaivism. Each wall is separated by the stone pilasters and is further divided into two levels upper and lower with a eaves like structure of the stone. The individual niches of the Gods and Goddesses are framed by the tree trunks with overhead foliage forming canopy to the individual icons. The foliage is sometimes decorated with wild beasts and birds.

The details of the images have been tried to be given by Krishna Dev in his publication 'Images of Nepal' published by Archaeological Survey of India in 1984. He has dealt in depth the gestures, postures and ornaments of the Gods and Goddesses. Many names are still unknown.

While the author of this chapter was working in Patan Durbar Square in preparing the Inventory of the Icons for a Unesco project in 1982/83 he came to be acquainted with a prominent Newar Brahmin Scholar Late Mangalananda Rajopadhyay, who ably gave the names of the majority of the icons from this hiti. There are still some icons which could not have been recognized. Those are left for the future scholars to find their names. Therefore as a token of respect to Late Mangalananda Rajopadhyay, the present article has been dedicated to him.

Although the details of the images have been given already in drawing page, the major characteristics and the position of the icons are dealt again. All the eight sides of the Octagon are described one by one in clockwise order, from the southern side in which the steps going down to the hiti is carved.

The first or the southern side of the Octagon is used for the steps. There are nine steps down; and on both sides of the steps two images, one in each side, are installed. They are Ajaikapād Rudra and Dwāradeva of which Ajaikapād Rudra is one of the rarest images in Nepal. Such form of Ajaika pād but in conjoint form was found from Fākhel as well and thus named Ekpād Ardhanāriswara by the author. The vāhana of the icon is Ajaika (a goat).

The second rectangle on the left of the steps is most important and interesting one. It is divided into upper and lower chamber having three images on upper and one image in lower chamber. The lower single image is followed by six empty niches on both sides which are left vacant when it was consecrated. Many scholars get here confusion and writes that the images from the niches were stolen. But the fact is that they were intentionally left vacant and are thus empty now because they represent different svara and tāla values of eastern musical notation of Sā Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa. They are arranged according to Komala, Suddha and Achala values of sā re ga ma pa dha ni sa and thus becomes sā, re re, ga ga, ma ma, pa, dha dha, ni ni. Each niches are represented by each value respectively and carved twelve empty niches accommodating each value in each niche. In Tantra sound is represented by void thus they were left vacant. The central figure is of Sangitesvara Nrittyesvara, the composite icon of music and dance. Lakewise in upper chamber, there are three icons of Sanmukha Varāha, Tāndavesvara and Krodha Bhairava with his Shakti Vaisnavi from left to right.

Third wall is contained with three images on upper chamber and five images inside three niches in the lower chamber. The image in upper chamber are of Chanda Bhairav with his Shakti Kuumāri, Ruru Bairav with his Shakti Māhesvari and Asitānga Bhairav with his Shakti Brahmāyani. Similarly, the lower chamber houses the images of Veerbhadrā and Mahākālā in first niche, Matrikāganaparivesthita Mahismardini in second niche and images of Vatuk Bhairav and Chhetrapālā in the third

Images on top surface
(1 to 24)



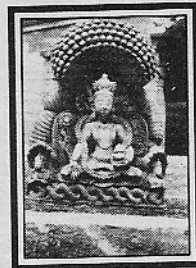
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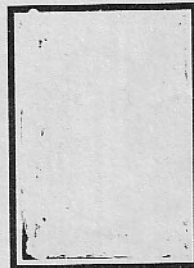
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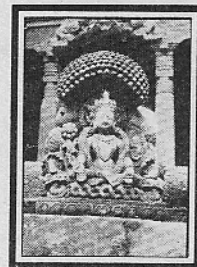
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18



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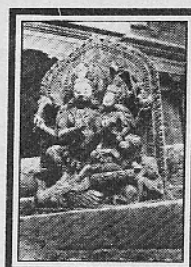
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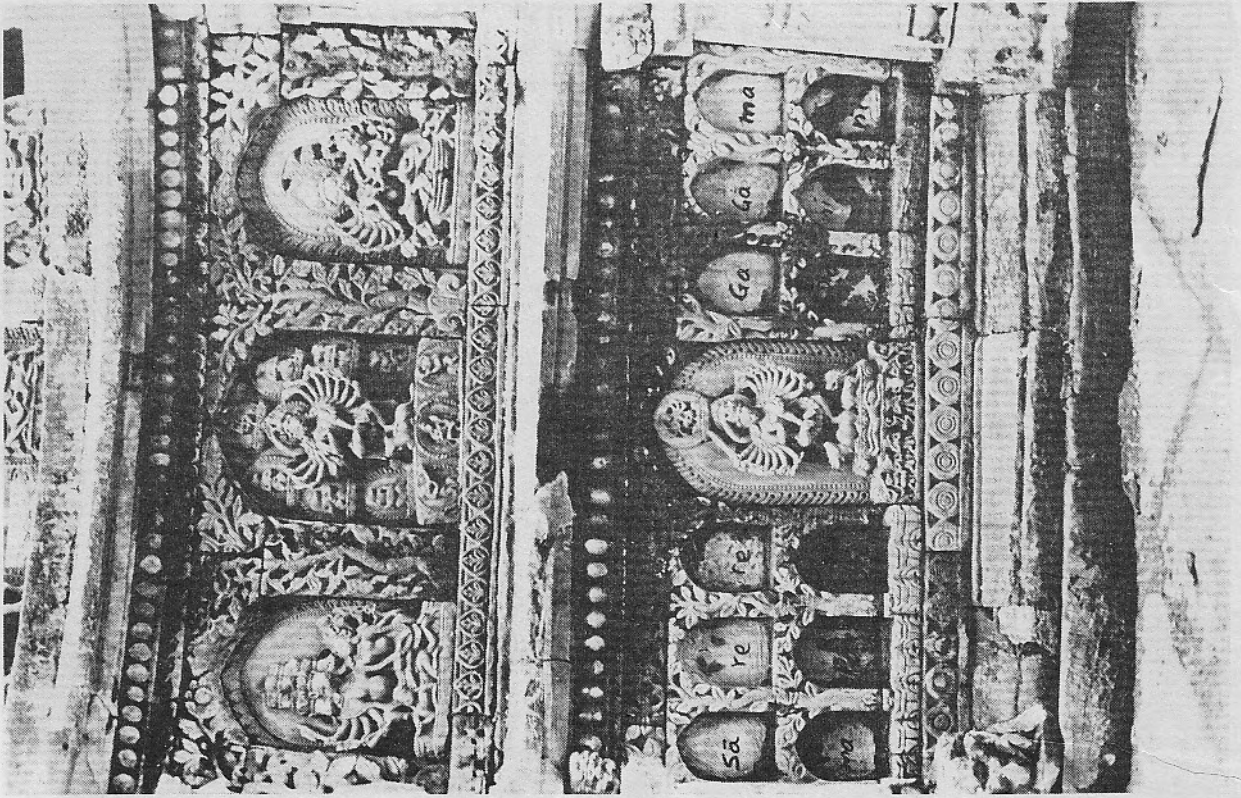
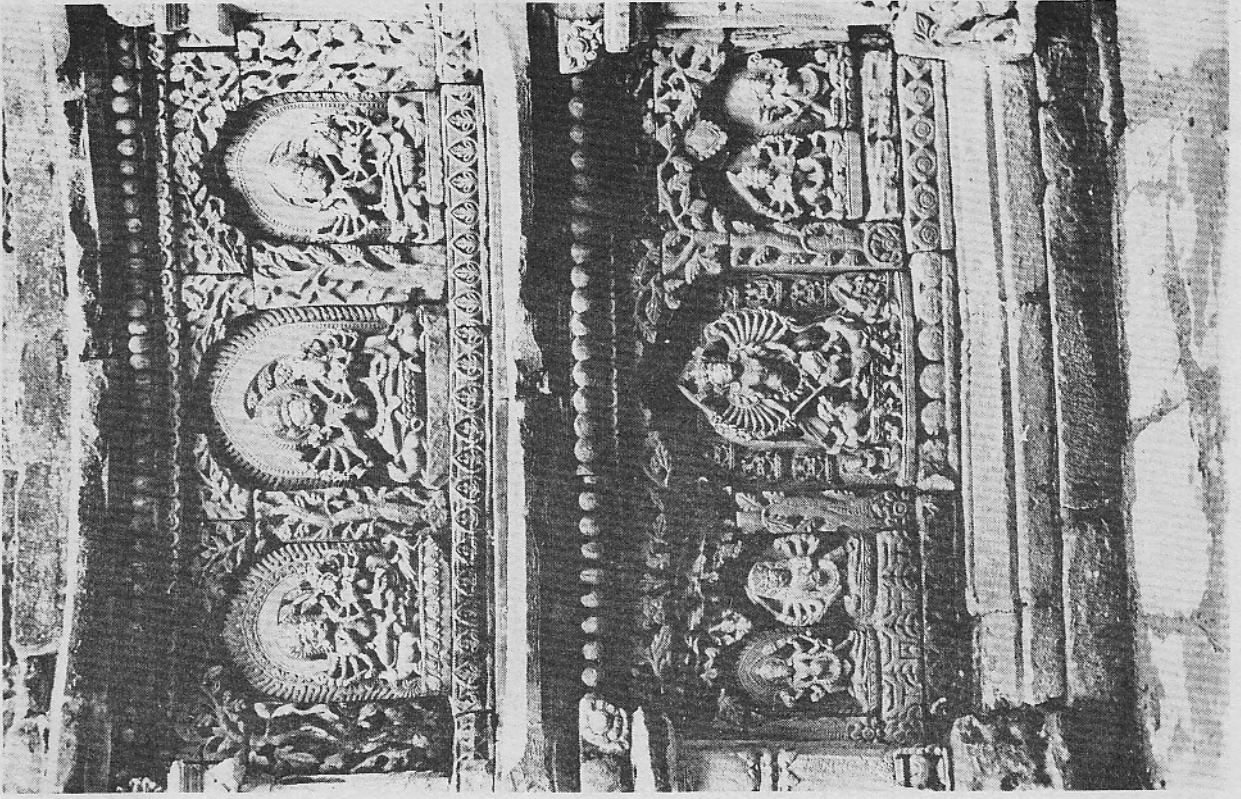
Images on the both sides of the steps down

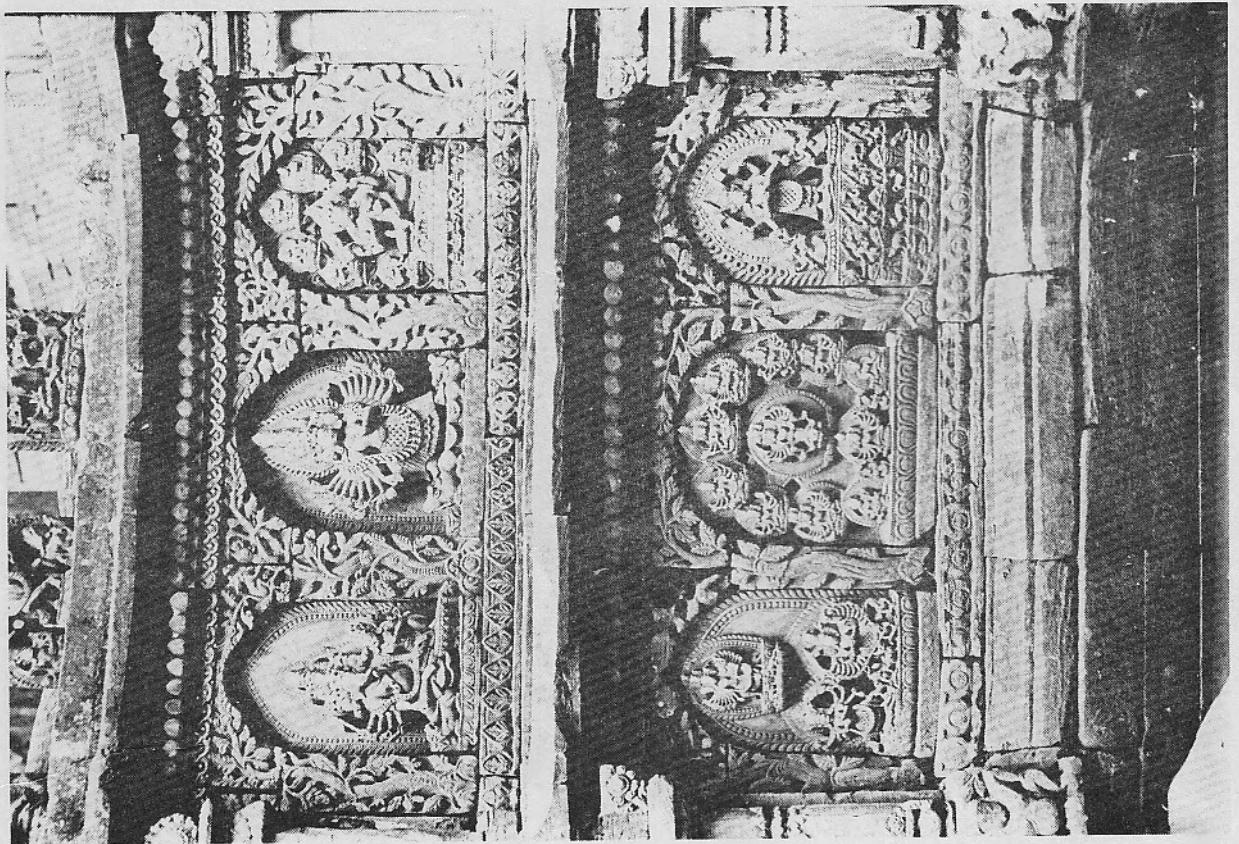
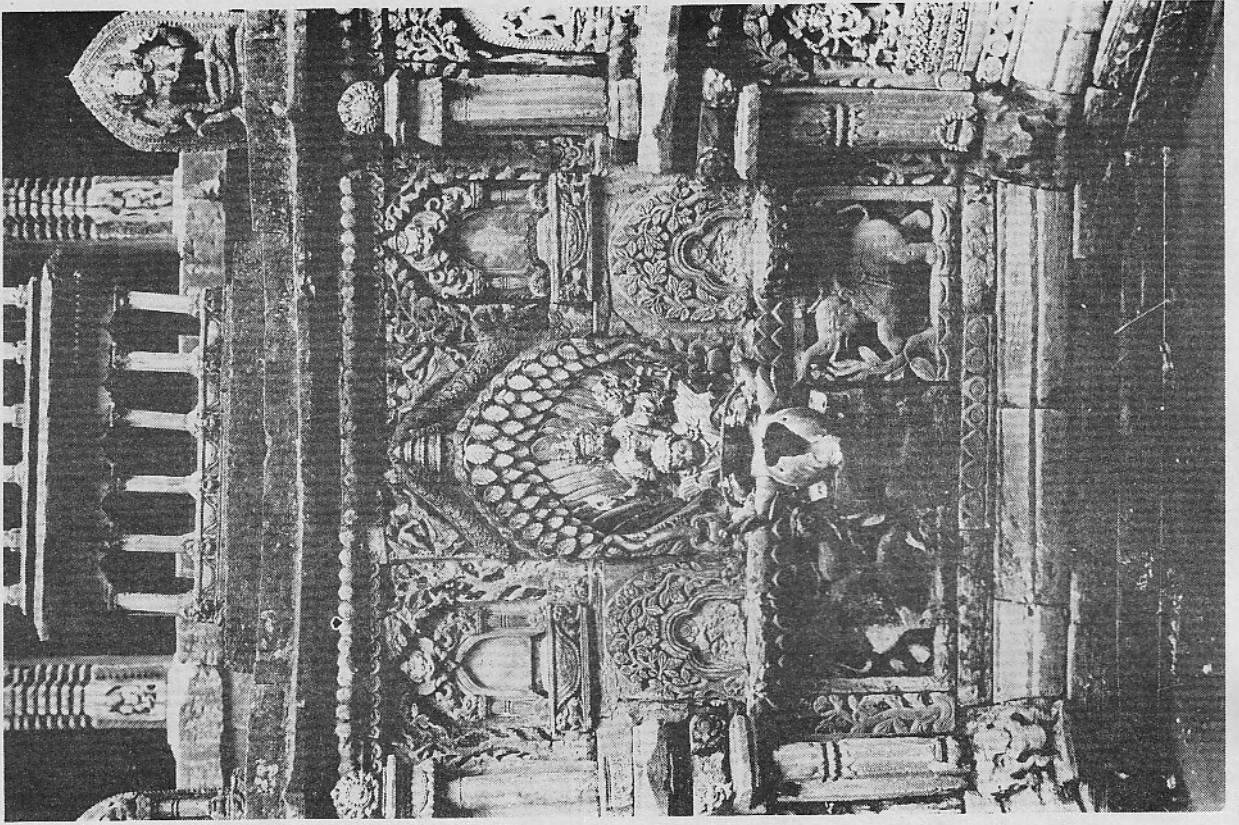


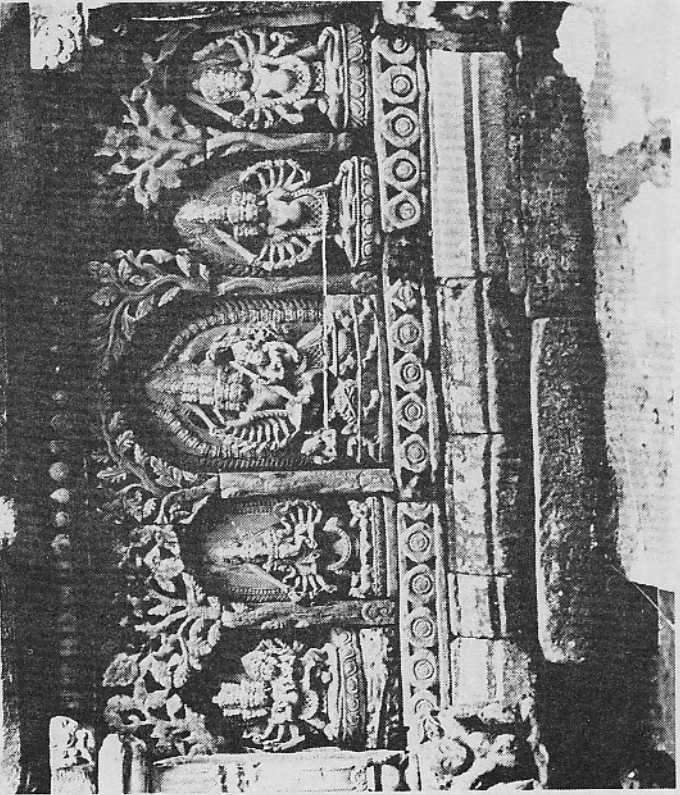
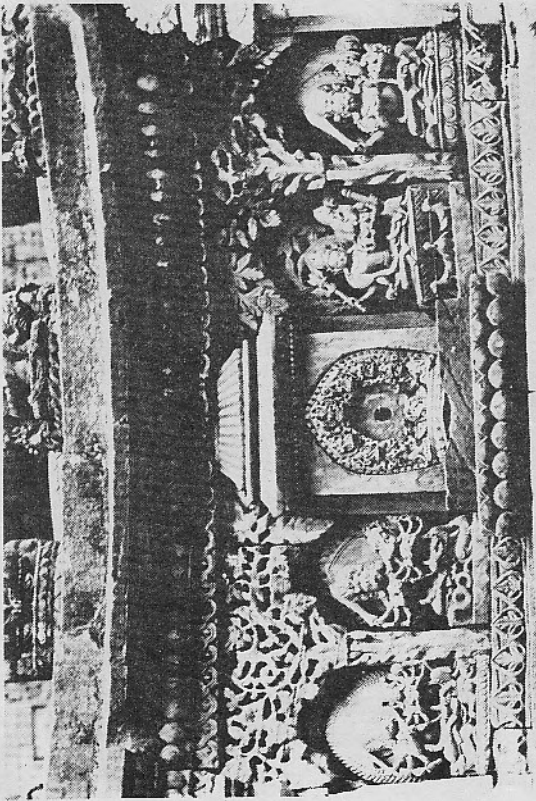
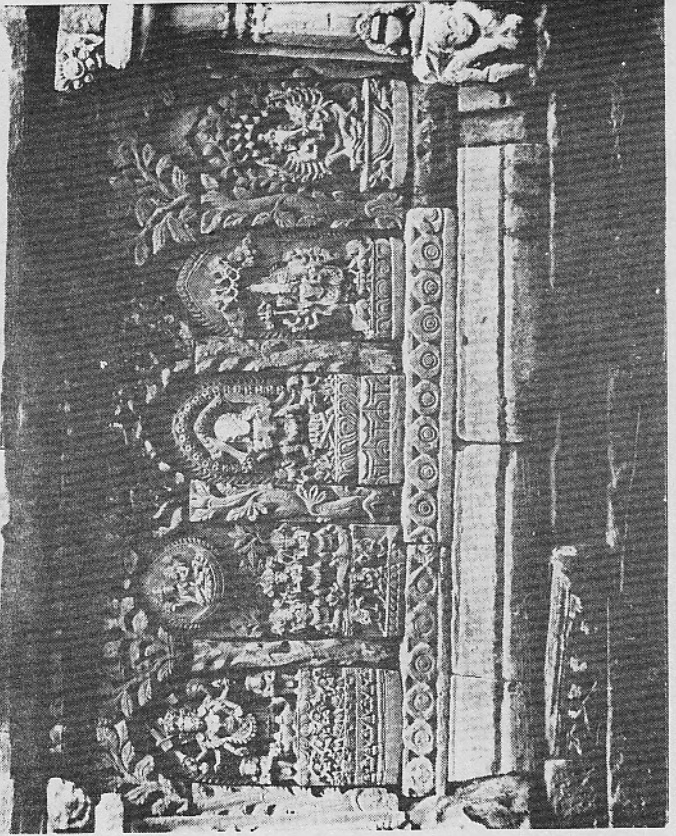
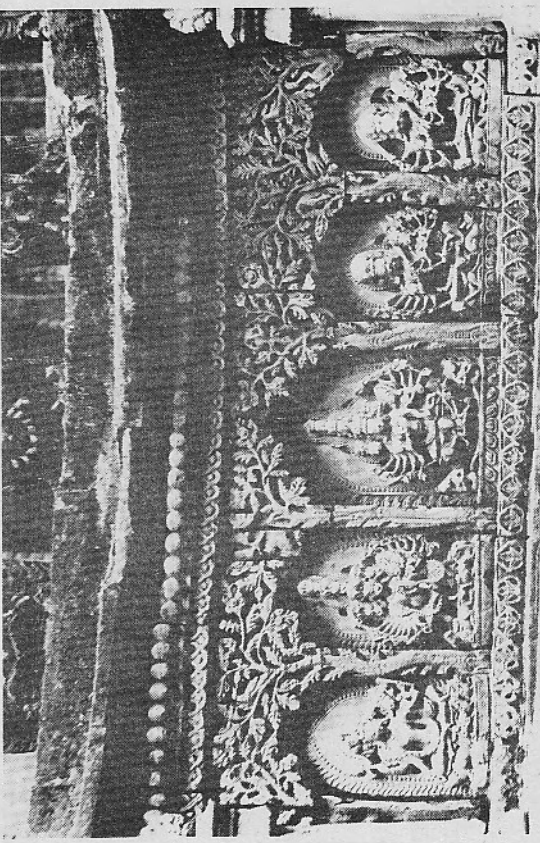
52



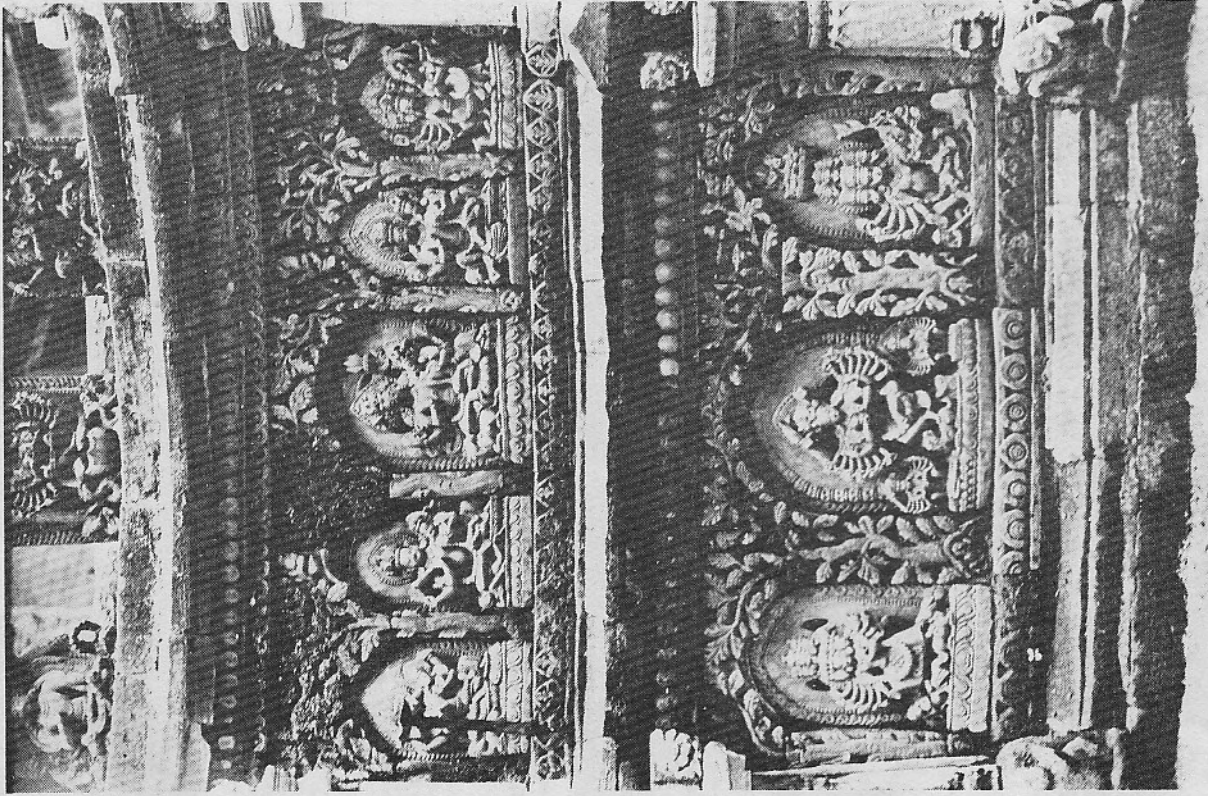
25







In order to recognise the image, please see number first in the text, know the name and then refer to the drawing for number and position and at last go to the photographs to locate the position of the icon in-situ.



niche. Among the lower images, the icon of Mahakala was reinstalled during the renovation of 1960/61.

Fourth wall is on the right side of the main spout and houses six images three on upper and three on the lower chamber. The upper chamber houses the icons of Bhairabdravaktra Saptaswara Riddhivinayaka, Ardhanarisvara Astamurti Shiva and Sarvamangaladevi from left to right. The lower chamber houses the first image carved in one slab with Trimatrikas. They are Chandikadevi on top, Chamunda and Shivaduti on the bottom. The second one is most controversial often named with different names. Jürgen Winkler and Prof. Dr. Mukund Raj Aryal named it as Vatsala.⁷ Mangalananda Rajopadhyay remained silent. Krishna Dev gave the name of Harihara. If we look in detail and compare it with the Kartikeya image of Handigaon, we can say easily that this image is of Kartikeya.⁸ But other ten figures surrounding the main image is still unknown. They have to be further studied. Remaining third image is of Shakta-Smasanesvari.

Fifth wall which lies right in front of the steps going down is adorned with the main spout on which main figure of Laxmi Narayan are shown seated on their mount Garuda. Garuda is shown flying with his feathers flown on the back of his master. Over the image the stone canopy is special to be mentioned as it is carved on stone with full three dimensional relief in leaf design. The image along with the spout is of copper with goldgild. The spout is

further adorned with rows of the aquatic animal figures from back to front the frogs, the tortoise, the crocodile, the fish and the Makara. They are in pair one each in both sides of the spout. But the figure of Makara is already stolen. Below the hiti, as usual, the figure of Bhagiratha, who brought the river Ganga to this world, is carved with two garlanding elephants on both sides of hiti. On the four cardinal directions of Laxminarayana there are four niches seen empty. They were once occupied by the figures of Shiva, Devi, Ganesh and Surya from top left on clockwise direction. On top of this wall stands the replica temple of Krishna Mandir. It was also restored in 1960/61 and after that all the pillars had been broken away again.

The sixth wall which lies immediately to the left of main spout contains ten images on upper chamber and five on lower chamber. In upper chamber the images, from left to right the Yugmardhesvara sasakti Gangadhara (a form of Harihara) Panchamukha Hayagrivavata, Panchavaktra Ramapati, Samhara Bhairava with his Shakti Mahalaxmi and Bhisana Bhairava with his Shakti Chamunda. Likewise on the lower chamber houses the icons of Bhutesvari, Trimatrika images of Harisiddhi, Svetamaha bhairavi and Balakumari, in one niche; Smasana Bhairav, Vatsalayukta Panchamukha Hara and at last niche the icon of Siddhivinayaka.

The seventh wall seems to be treated with more importance. This wall contains again five images in each chambers. But the central figure of the upper chamber is treated with special attention. The particular niche is roofed and houses the golden image of Ugrachandi

⁷ Jürgen Winkler and Prof. Dr. Mukunda Raj Arya, Nepal, Pub.

⁸ See figure CXXI(129) Images of Nepal by Krishna Dev. Pub: ASI, New Delhi 1984.

encircled by the mini-icons of Navadurgās. All Navadurgās and main central figure were gilded with gold. Unfortunately the main figure is already stolen long before. Other two image to the right of the central figure are Karāla Bhairav with his Shakti Brahmāyani and Unmatta Bhairava with his Shakti Vārāhi. To the left of the golden image are the icons of Chandra (the moon) and Ekāsya Bhairav with his Shakti Kaumāri. Likewise, the lower chamber contains the icons of Sadavaktra Bhairava, Panchamukha Ganesh, Ekādasāsya Smasana Bhairava with his Shakti, Dasavaktra Bhairava and Ekāsya Bhairav from left to right. This wall lies exactly on the right side of the worshipper while facing to the fountain. Therefore the devotee must have treated to this wall specially.

The last or the eighth wall contains five images on upper chamber and three in the lower one. On the upper chamber are the images of Pavandeva, one unknown figure, Umamahesvara, Laxminarayana and Trijatā Naga from left to right. Similarly the lower chamber houses three images of Gaurilaxmi, Chandikādevi followed by Chamunda and Shivaduti and Shadavaktra Narasimha with Srikantha nath on top.

At last on top in floor level, there are twenty four beautiful images of different Gods and Goddesses framed by two majestic figures of Nagas (serpent gods) intertwined with their tail. Among the images the fascinating eight images with multiheaded canopy are of Astamahānāgas. It is very easy to recognise them as they are crowned with the canopy of multiheaded serpents and seated in Padmasānā. The images of Chandra, Surya,

Bhimsen, Bhagalāmukhi and Kalki are to identify. Other images left among them are the figures of Umamahesvara, Krishnahari, Agni, Laxminarsingh, Unmatta Bhairava and Ratna Panchakumāri. The rest of the five images are still unknown.

On the outer circle, a couple of Nagas encircle the complex which is believed that they will perpetuate the outflow of the water from the hiti. The entrance to the hiti complex is further guarded by a pair of lions. The raised heads of the Nāgas are of additional beauty of hiti complex.

Images in Tusāhiti (Please see chart)

1. Bagalāmukhi
2. Kalki
3. Not recognized yet
4. Ananta Nāg
5. Vāsuki Nag
6. Takshak Nāg
7. Chandra
8. Karkotaka Nāg
9. Umamahesvara
10. Krishna Hari
11. Agni
- 12.
13. Not recognized yet
14. Laxmi Narasingha
15. Unmatta Bhairav
16. Not recognized yet
17. Padma Nāg

18. Surya
19. Mahapadma Nāg
20. Sankhapāla Nāg
21. Kulika Nāg
22. Ratna Pancha Kumāri
23. Chanda Bhairav
24. Bhimsen
25. Dwāradeva
26. Trijata Nāg
27. Laxmi Narāyana
28. Umā Mahesvara
29. Unknown
30. Pavan Deva
31. Ekāsya Bhairav with Kumāri
32. Chandra
33. Durgāganaparivesthita Chandi
34. Unmatta Bhairav with his Shakti Varāhi
35. Karāla Bhairav with Shakti Indrayani
36. Bhisana Bhairav with his Shakti Chamunda
37. Samhāra Bhairav with his Shakti Mahālxmi
38. Panchavakra Ramāpati
39. Panchamukha Hayagrivāvatāra
40. Yugmārdhesvara sasakti Gangādhara Hari
41. Vaisnavidevi (No more)
42. Shiva (No more)
43. Sarvamāngaladevi
44. Ardhanārīsvara Astamurti Shiva
45. Bhairabordravakra Saptāsvara Rridhivināyaka
46. Asitanga Bhairav with his Shakti Bhrahmayani
47. Ruru Bhairav with his Shakti Mahesvari
48. Chanda Bhairav with his Shakti Kaumari
49. Krodha Bhairav with the Shakti Vaisnavi
50. Tāndavesvara
51. Shanmukha Varāha
52. Virbhadra
53. Nrityesvara Sangitesvara
54. Virbhadra
55. Mahakāli (newly replaced in 1960/61)
56. Matrikāganaparivesthita Mahismardini
57. Vatuk Bhairav
58. Chhetrapāla
59. Trimātrika (Chandikadevi, Chamunda and Shivaduti)
60. Kārtikeya in Tantric form
61. Smasānesvari
62. Surya
63. Laxminārānaya (in main Spout)
64. Ganesh (stolen already)
65. Bhutesvari
66. Harasiddhi
67. Smasāna Bhairav
68. Vatsalāyukta Panchamukhahara
69. Siddhi Vināyaka
70. Shadvakra Bhairava
71. Panchamukha Ganesh
72. Shaktiyukta Ekādasasya Smasāna Bhairav
73. Dasavakra Bhairav

74. Ekāśya Bhairav
75. Gauri Laxmi
76. Shākta Chandikādevi followed by Chamunda and Shivaduti.
77. Srikanthanāthyukta Shadavaktra Narasingh Bhairav
78. Bhagiratha

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