

A Note on the Iconography of Uma-Mahesvara in Nepal

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1. Introduction

The incomparably beautiful and distinctive image of Siva-Pasupati at Kathmandu (Nepal) with the four visible faces of Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora and Tatpurusha, respectively and the invisible form of Isana, forming a Panchamukha-linga combines in itself the dual aspects of the Sakti cult. The five faces are also known as Mahadeva (eastern side), Bhairava (southern side), Nandivaktra (western side), Umavaktra (northern side) and Sadasiva on top, also known as Isana, not usually portrayed as this aspect is held as beyond comprehension. The Umavaktra form on the north is a clear recognition of the union of the Purusha with Prakriti.

The earliest reference to the cult of Pasupati in Nepal is in the Harigaon inscription of Amsuvarman installed towards the beginning of the 7th century A. D., wherein he calls himself bhagavat-parama-bhattacharaka-pasupati-padanudhyata. But the earliest inscription which clearly points to the existence of the Pasupati temple is the stone inscription of Jayadeva dated in the year 153, i.e., in the 8th century A. D., recording his gift of a silver lotus to the deity. We have completely reliable evidence of the destruction of the temple and the image, in particular, at

the hands of Shamsuddin Ilyas of Bengal in the year A. D. 1349, and of their restoration by Jayasimbharama in A. D. 1361. The present image of Pasupati is in the visible form a Chaturmukha (four-faced) linga with two hands corresponding to each face on each of the four sides of the shaft. The hands hold an akshamala and a jalapatra (skamandalu) respectively. Of exquisite workmanship, this black stone image of Pasupatinatha proclaims the high standards of plastic modelling obtaining in Nepal in the 14th century A. D. Though the treatment of the hands are peculiar to Nepal, the most well-known comparable forms in India are the so-called Trimurti panel in Elephanta, off Bombay, dated to the 6th-7th centuries and the Chaturmukha Siva temple at Nachna in Madhya Pradesh, of the 8th century.

What Sankaracharya did for the revival of Hinduism in the face of the many inroads into its stronghold in his days, especially of Buddhism, then profoundly different from the pristine form and philosophy, owing to the trappings of Tantric worship and ritual is memorable. It is a commonplace of history that Sankara was responsible in a very large measure for the regeneration of the Hindu way of life and religious practice and for the devotional support to the cult of Sakti in its twin forms of Prakriti and Purusha, and for

emphasizing the greatness of the mother concept in his Saundaryalahari and Lalita-sahasranama.

2. Sakti Worship in the Pasupati Temple

In fact, in keeping with the general practice set in vogue by Sankaracharya, the mother form of Sakti is daily worshipped in the the Pasupati temple along with five-fold form of Siva in her diagrammatic representation (yantra).

The concept is somewhat difficult for the ordinary mind to comprehend. Sankara's appeal, was indeed more intellectual than emotional. Fully alive to this, he stirred up the slumbering consciousness of the masses through all his devotional hymns and songs such as those addressed to Ganga or Bhavani in simple and charming rhyme. Visible forms of the godhead to quicken the emotion and cause feelings of devotion to well up within the mind and heart of the masses are known in Nepal from at least the 5th century A. D. onwards.

3. The Theme of Uma-Maheswara in Nepalese Sculpture

(i) General

The popular mind has been moved to devotion by forms of Siva and Uma seated together in yogic composure and attended upon by the entourage of the Nandi and Bhringi, Lakshmi and Sarasvati, Ganesa and Kumara, Surya and Chandra, and the ganas of Siva. The theme of Uma-Maheswara is one of the most popular iconographical forms in Nepal, and has received the devoted skill of the artist from the days of the Licchhavis to those of the Mallas in full measure. Each age has left its indelible marks of artistry and workmanship on the form, size, physiognomy and ornamentation of the deities.

The earliest known specimen of the theme of Uma-Maheswara occurs on a gold coin of Huvishka, a Kushan successor of Kanishka, showing a female figure holding a lotus in one of her hands, and standing by the side of a male deity (Siva) and labelled alongside in Greek as OMMO.

Perhaps the earliest specimens of Uma-Maheswara in stone are two of Kushan workmanship from Mathura and Bikaner respectively. The theme became very popular in India during the Gupta period (4th—7th centuries).

One of the earliest specimens of the theme going back to the 5th century A. D. occurs on the escarped face of a hillock at Udayagiri, near Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh (India). It is in bas relief and in a circularly sunk panel, and stands somewhat in isolation. But almost the entire entourage, consisting of Ganesa and the other ganas, is present in the scene (pl. IX A).

For purposes of comparison and evolution of the theme in Nepal, culminating in the development of her own idioms, it would be relevant to mention briefly in passing a few early treatments of the subject in India across the borders. These comprise the Hara-Gauri figures from Kausambi (Kosam) near Allahabad. Uma-Maheswara group from Khiching (Orissa), and the Siva-Paryati or Uma-Maheswara as well as Ravananugrah-murti panels in the rock-cut caves at Ellora.

The Hara-Gauri figures from Kosam, of the 5th century, show both the figures as standing and two-handed. The workmanship is crude, but marks a stepping out from the stage of bas-reliefs to sculpture in the round.

The Khiching specimen shows Uma seated on the left lap of Siva on the

pericarp of a lotus, and Siva as ithyphallic. It also shows in a lower panel the bull, Nandi, below Siva, four-armed Ganesa in the centre and lion below Uma. The divine couple is flanked on each side by a gracefully poised female figure. These figures clearly indicate late Gupta and early Pala influences.

The panels of Siva-Parvati, marking a reversion to reliefs, in keeping with the actual requirement of the scheme of rock-cut architecture at Ellora, going back to the 6th-7th centuries, show many other figures in the group comprising Nandi, Ganesa, Kumara, and the ganas below, occasionally Brahma and Vishnu above, and standing figures who have been identified as dvarapalas. They do not indeed indicate a patterned or rigid development but establish, without loss of charm and effect or even the fullness of the composition, the great freedom enjoyed by the artist in the portrayal of this theme in regard to the component members as well as the actual placement of the members of the dramatis personae. Even the composition of Ravananugrahamurti would thematically belong to the category and partake of the general regional and chronological characteristics.

The theme of Uma-Mahesvara was indeed popular in south India also, but as an interesting circumstance in this context, more so in the Kannada country than in any other part of the peninsular region of India.

(ii) *Early Forms of Sculptural Art in Nepal*

It is well known that Nepal reached a high stage of excellence in sculptural art, in stone, as early as the 5th or 6th centuries A. D. under the patronage of the Lichchhavis.

This by itself would presuppose a fairly long apprenticeship of sculptural practice as well as the development of the religious practices to which the sculptures gave visible expression. The sculptural forms enabled easy comprehension by all and sundry of the underlying allegorical import and the justification for the ritual of worship.

The excellence of this phase of didactic art with a strong mythological bias and inspiration is indicated by the sculptural panel of Vishnu in his anthropomorphic form of the boar incarnation at Dhumvarahi on the outskirts of Visalnagar in Kathmandu. The others of the school include the fallen figure of Garuda as the crowning member of the inscribed pillar at Changu Narayan, Virupaksha and Chakrapurusha, (or seated Surya), respectively, in a shrine at Aryaghat opposite the Pasupati temple, the Vishnu Vikranta murti panels of Lajimpat (now in the Nepal Museum) and of Tilganga, respectively, the panel of Kaliyamardana at Hanuman Dhoka, the comparatively less known panels of Kumarasambhavam found disjointedly at Nagaltol, Srigha Vihara (Kathesimbu) and Kankesvari, respectively, all in Kathmandu, besides the secular-cum-religious figures on the base of the stupa (traditionally attributed to Charumati, daughter of Asoka) at Chabhil in Deo Patan. Most of the panels are narrative in character, often expressive of a mythological legend, now and again employing the synoptic method of treatment, that is, by the delineation of some of the figures of the dramatis personae repeatedly in the same panel speaking for an earlier date for the art form.

(iii) *The Kumarasambhava Panels of Uma-Mahesvara*

The soulful representation in stone of Kalidasa's version of the Puranic legend of

the divine love of Uma and Siva, as though they were the primordial parents and the saviour of all earthly folks as of divine and semi-divine beings, in Nepal, as early as the 5th or 6th century A. D., establishes more than one aspect of the deeply interlinked religious-cum-cultural life of Nepal and her southern neighbour. These exquisite pieces indicate the popularity of the theme as far away as the mountainous reaches of the kingdom amid the Himalayas. They also establish the apparent nearness of the composition of Kalidasa and the sculptural representation of it in chronology. These would also mark the beginnings of the popular and conventionalized forms of Uma-Mahesvara that have captured and held the imagination of the people of Nepal for over a millennium.

(iv) *The General Forms of Uma-Mahesvara in Sculpture*

The panel, commonly described as *Kailasparivara-sahita Uma-Mahesvara*, reached in its most evolved form an elaboration that accommodated every member of the family of Siva besides other figures as described earlier. In their diversity of composition, the panels covered the different principal aspects of Siva as Bhairava, Pasupati, Gangadhara, Umapasadana, besides emphasizing the conjoint Prakriti and Purusha aspects of the Sakti cult. Though assigned a comparatively inferior position in the composite panel, Uma effectively symbolizes the quintessence of the mother spirit, as represented individually in the Saptanatrikas, and the slayer of the evil spirit in her form of Chandi indicated by the mount of a lion in a dormant and couchant posture as also the fierce Yoginis, as consorts of the Bhairavas, who have temporarily suspended their ferocity for lack of any occasion or necessity. A group of Saptamatrikas in the premises of the Pasupati temple, though much damaged, clearly sustains

the early evolution of the underlying mother concept in Nepal, for these would be dated to the 7th-8th centuries A. D.

In his role as Gangadhara, Siva is usually shown as sustaining the flow of the sacred waters gushing from an upturned water jar held aloft by the ethereal figure of Ganga, on to the matted locks of the Yogi, as he really is. In this aspect Siva, is also shown as appeasing the irate spouse whose displeasure was incited by Siva's condescension for another feminine personality in his benign aspect of Umapasadanamurti. In this form Siva holds his consort in intimate embrace, even to the extent of caressing the bosom, and thus seeks to assuage her injured dignity, without surrendering the detached outlook and posture of the Yogi, who has yet supremely controlled his senses.

(v) *Some Uma-Mahesvara panels of Nepal*

Thus the Uma-Mahesvara form, as it came to be evolved in Nepal, marked a macrocosm within a microcosm, and a syncretism characteristic of the land. It easily lent itself to comprehension, and made an appeal equally to the intellect and emotion, and compelled the devoted admiration and worship by all and sundry, far more sensibly than the abstract phallic symbol. It is the living symbol of Nepal's principal religious faith and practice and occurs in almost every shrine and in every dhara (enclosure with water spout), and their number should easily count by the thousand. Even now more than a hundred specimens in differential preservation can be accounted for in Kathmandu alone, despite the ravages of time and man.

It is fortunate that some of these sculptural panels are briefly described in

short inscriptions engraved on their pedestals, setting out an account of their dedication and often providing a date. Though the dated or inscribed specimens are not many, yet the isolated pieces of dated panels serve as stylistic landmarks and help to fix the artistic idiom of the respective times of their coming into being. The vast numbers of undated specimens can, therefore, be studied and organized into their respective places in the order of evolution. The gaping lacunæ in the history of art as of the religious beliefs in Nepal which the former subserves, can, therefore, be effectively filled with only a little effort.

The inspiration of the popular bas-relief panels of Uma-Mahesvara can no doubt be sought in the phase of narrative art, of which the Kumarasambhavam panels are undoubtedly the best exponents, going back to the 5th-6th centuries A. D.

An attempt has been made in the following lines to deal with a few specimens of Uma-Mahesvara from the earliest times to the latest, and bring out their salient features with a view to assessing the iconographical details of the theme at different times as a provisional framework for further investigation.

The earliest specimen of the theme in Nepal so far known is a broken panel in the premises of the Chamunda temple near Sankhamul, Lalitpur. It could be dated to the 4th-5th centuries A. D. The next specimen is a broken panel in brownish sand stone in the Archaeological Garden at Bhandarkhal, Lalitpur, datable to the 6th-7th centuries.

The third phase is represented by a sculptural panel fixed in a Dhunge Dhara called Duga Hiti at Sankhu. (pl. X A). Stylistically it would be dated to the 7th-8th centuries A. D. but has most of the characteristics of the developed form of the composite group of later times.

At Sankhu itself there is yet another unfinished specimen following closely upon the one described without any attendant figures above or below, but with Kumara astride the bull on the right and a two-handed female attendant plying the fly whisk. These two pieces would really belong to the category of the Somaskandamurti, as Ganesa is absent in both.

The next stage of development is marked by a specimen, still as a Somaskandamurti, in the Dhunge Dhara at Chyasaitol, Lalitpur. (pl. X B) on a squattish stele, marked by the absence of any figures above or below, oval halos for both Siva and Uma, seated on cushions placed on the rock, but with the addition of a devotee in adoration to the proper right of Siva, and a female attendant supporting the right foot of Uma. The main female attendant of Uma now four-handed, brandishes a long sword, and holds up two upper hands in anjali. Peculiarly and uniquely both the left hands of Siva embrace and caress Uma. The back right hand holds a mani and is extended downwards as varada-hasta, and the front right is raised up in abhaya mudra. This would be dated to the 8th-9th centuries.

An exquisite piece that marks a complete departure in the scheme of details around the central figures seated on cushions is fixed in the south-east corner of the Gairi Dhara near the temple of Kumbhesvara at Lalitpur (pl. XII B). The oblong stele itself has gained in height, and has a rounded edge describing a semi-circle at the top. Horizontally it is divided as it were into three panels, the central panel containing the figures with which we are already familiar. Siva holds a few strands of his jata (matted locks) with his back right hand as though to suggest the Gangadhara aspect. The front right hand, though damaged, is clearly in vardamudra. The back left holds a trisula with curved blades on the sides and with

ghanta and parasu below the fork of the staff. The front left hand rests gently on the right shoulder of Uma. The upper panel introduces for the first time the circular orbs of the sun and moon, on either side of the top, near the edge, the inverted figure of Ganga holding her folded *uttariya* over herself in an arc, legs in *padmasana*, and hands in *anjali* in the act of pouring out water, and the upper parts of two four-handed male figures, one on each side of the central figures.

These figures hold an *akshamala* and *trisula* respectively with the upper hands and flask with the lower left, while the lower right holds a *mani* in one case, it is drawn up to the chest in the other. Their hair styles vary. They have been tentatively identified as *dvarapalas*. The lower panel in the composition is introduced for the first time bringing into focus the figure of Ganesa, in a group of *ganas* which include the skeletal form of *Bhringi* in the act of dancing with the *crest*. The plain halos, the half-closed eyes of the main deities, and their placid composure and grace have become standardized the exemplary. This piece would belong to the mature phase of *Lichchhavi* art in the 9th century. It may be held that the composite form of the *Uma-Mahesvara* panels, in its basic norm of the the *Kailasa-parivara*, as it came to be adopted and recognized in Nepal, was established about this time and this specimen as would be apparent, is indeed a representative exponent of the theme in its mature fullness.

The next stage of development is marked by the dated group (pl. XI B) enshrined in a small temple at *Kulimitol* (*Kumbhesvara Ghyambu*) in *Lalitpur*. The arrangement of the figures is in two panels instead of the usual three. The lower panel shows a group of five well-defined figures, comprising a lion-headed figure at the extreme right of the group, playing upon cymbals to maintain

the rhythm of the dance and music that are on, followed by a three-headed, three-handed and three-footed figure of *Bhringi* caused by the boon of *Siva* to make up for the loss of flesh and sustenance caused by the curse of *Uma* in which form he appears to the left of the central figure of *Ganesa*, and a cat-faced figure beating the drum at the extreme left of the group. On the raised edge below the group is an inscription.

The central figures are seated on a *paryanka* (stool), instead of cushions or the bare rock as before. A set of five objects comprising a *mangala kalasa*, a stand with a *naivedya patra*, a basket of flowers, a water vessel and a *darpana* (mirror), form the *naivedya* equipment and are reminiscent of a specimen of the *Pallava Somaskandamurti* from *Mahabalipuram* near *Madras* (India), where there is a *jalapatra* below the *paryanka*, datable to the 7th century. The other figures of the group are arranged around *Siva* and *Uma* without any attempt at segregation. The stele has become a little flattish on top, giving up the circular curve. *Kumara* sits on the peacock to the right. The head of the *vrishabha* is visible to the right of *Siva*. The figure of *Ganga* has shifted from the centre to the side and her feet are barely visible. The semblance of a *chhatra* (umbrella) has appeared over the head of *Siva*. As though to match the figure of *Ganga*, the flying figure of a garland bearer has been introduced above the head of *Uma*. The standing female attendant of *Uma* is holding up a miniature *chhatra*, which is yet to reach over the head of *Uma*, being still in the incipient stage. The inscription on the pedestal (*jalahari*) tells us that it was raised in *Nepal Samvat 107*. It is thus dated to A. D. 986.

The next datable image and still belonging to the style set up by the *Kulimitol* specimen is represented by the panel at *Ganchanani*, *Tyagaltol*, *Lalitpur*. The stele is slightly more

elongated, with the semblance of a blunt cone at the apex. The lower panel shows a group of seven figures as against the five of the former. Though Ganesa still occupies the centre his stance is different. The skeletal form of Bhringi is below Siva instead of below Uma as before.

Of the upper group Kumara sits on a cushion and not on his peacock. The bull has now been assigned a separate place near the edge. Ganga at the top right pours down a sheet of water in a line with the upraised right hand of Siva. There are now two standing female attendants waiting upon Uma and only the upper parts of their bodies, a little above the knees, are visible. The chhatra, of the earlier scene, has disappeared again, both above Siva and over Uma. The *naivedya* patras, slightly differing in form and composition are still there, though the seat of Siva and Uma changes from a *paryanka* to the old familiar rock again, though a tiger skin covers the bare rock. But the most distinctive mark is the *Urdhvaretas* form of Siva signifying the Yogi's control over his senses even though he is in intimate contact with his spouse, as spoken of in Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra* in the following line:

कान्तासम्मिश्रदेहोऽप्यविषयमनसां यः परस्ताद् यतीनाम् ।

This kind of delineation is found in some *Ardhanarisvara* figures of Siva-Parvati, namely one from Purapara, Dacca (Pakistan), now in the Rajshahi Museum.

This sculpture is dated by an inscription on its pedestal dated to Nepal Samvat 132, i.e., A. D. 1011, and together with the Kulimtol specimen would indicate prevalence of the involved style for over a hundred years.

One of the typical specimens of the 11th-12th centuries A. D. occurs in Kasaintol

in Kathmandu, and presents perhaps the most representative and comprehensive treatment of the theme. The panel measures 4ft. x 3ft. 6 in., and is one of the largest specimens of Uma-Mahesvara. It is crowned by a *chhatra* (umbrella) surmounted by a *linga* on a pedestal. The sculptural figures are divided into three rows, the topmost of which portrays Ganga in the centre, flanked by Lakshmi and Sarasvati respectively and presumably the *Gangadhara* and *Dakshina-murti* forms of Siva at the extreme edges of the row on the proper right and left respectively. The central row contains the main figures of Siva and Uma flanked on the right by Nandi, Lakshmi and Kumara (*Karttikeya*), respectively, and on the left by Sarasvati and a female attendant. The lowest group of figures shows Ganesa poised in a dancing posture at the centre, with a dancing *gana* to his right and the bony figure of Bhringi to his left. The extreme right is filled with a cat-faced figure, and the extreme left with a tiger-faced figure, both participating in the movement struck up by Ganesa. It is significant to note that the sun and moon, usually portrayed by circular orbs to the right and left of the panel near the upper edge, are missing. The sun and moon are also, though rarely, represented in their anthropomorphic forms on some panels.

The Kasaintol panel has several peculiarities. There is first of all a reversion to the three-fold horizontal division of the groups, and at the same time the novelty of the assignment of a rocky pedestal to each individual member, except Ganga, among the minor figures on top and on the sides. The sun and moon are eliminated, but two female figures, tentatively identified as Lakshmi and Sarasvati, respectively, have been introduced for the first time. The *vrishabha* has become thin, unlike himself, docile and graceless and has been brought down to the

level of the feet of Siva. The peacock-seat of Kumara now with a fully open and circular fan serving as a foil, has been restored to him. At the same time a female figure, has been introduced above Kumara. To the left of Uma there are two female figures instead of three as before. The four-handed female figure, standing and wielding the fly whisk has been dispensed with. Instead there is one wielding a sword and serving as a *dvarpalika*, and another in a raised level supporting the right foot of Uma.

Ganga occupies the centre of the top again as in the *Kumbhesvara* specimen (pl. XII A). Ganga's legs are spread apart and a sheet of water gushing forth from her *anjali* penetrates the *prabhamaṇḍala* and flows on to the *jata* of Siva.

The figure of Siva has become a little stiff, and the upper part disproportionately longer than the rather stunted trunk. The head has the load of a taller coil of matted locks. The plain halo around Siva is much larger than before and covers both Siva and Uma, and has two bands of ornamental *jvalas* along its edge. The *trisula* has shed its component of *ghanta* and *parasu*, and the outer blades flare out instead of closing in as in the earlier examples, the tendency in which was first noticed in the *Kulimtol* specimen. Among the ornaments innovation is noticed in the *sarpakundala* in the left ear. The use of *sarpakundala* is of course known from much earlier times as seen in the *Kankesvari* image of Siva-Parvati (Nepalese Art, 1966). The *hara* has started having a series of pointed pendants. The lower left hand of Siva embraces Uma and reaches upto the chest below her left breast, marking a reversion to the *Chyasaltol* figure (pl. X B).

The attitude and body proportion of Uma suffer from the defects of the main figure.

She sits partially on the left lap of Siva, and her right leg extends forward without its gracious curves.

All the minor figures are provided with a halo, and the figures, including the central figure of Siva project forward from the surface bringing about a multiplicity of planes.

The lower group confines itself to five figures comprising Ganesa in the centre, besides *Bhringi*, *Simhamukha*, *Marjaramukha* and another figure, rather difficult of identification.

The *chhatra*, first seen in the *Kulimtol* panel (pl. XI B), and supervening *linga* or a crowning finial, which was first noticed in the *Ganchanani* panel (pl. XI A) appear unmistakably though in attenuation just below the apex. The *chhatra*, or the semblance of it, first seen in the *Kulimtol* panel (pl. XI A) over Uma has disappeared again. The progress (or retrogression?) to the *Kasaintol* panel is marked by intermediate phases, represented by specimens from *Pharping*. One of them shows a large umbrella, with festooned and tasselled pendants on the edges, a blunted pinnacle, and a stout handle, with a bulbous base for anchoring the framework as it were. Uma has four female attendants in this case, and one of them holds a small umbrella, similar to the one above Siva with a long handle. Ganga occupies a place to the right of the panel and sends down a sheet of waters upon the right shoulder of Siva instead of upon the head. The sun and moon are represented by their usual orbs on the sides. Kumara has his peacock with an open fan. The lower panel has now a contingent of nine figures, all in the trance of dance and music. The stele is almost rectangular except for a bluntly triangular part like a *tympanum* at the top.

Yet another panel shows a disorderly arrangement, showing a haphazard and improperly planned sculpturing.

Siva embraces Uma with the left hand, which completely encloses, rather unrealistically the body of Uma, who is sitting a little stiffly and detachedly. She has two of her female attendants, both of whom sit at her feet. In this case, uniquely, the left foot stretches out and rests on the hands of an attendant and the right leg is folded and tucked away under the left thigh.

Two others, with the upper parts of their bodies alone being shown stand rather unrealistically and improperly, above the head of Uma.

The head alone of the bull is seen frontally at the level of Siva's right shoulder. The right foot of Siva rests on the head of a tiger, introduced for the first time, standing on a level with that of Siva-Parvati. While the usual place on the right side is taken by a four-handed attendant of Siva, the corresponding place on the left is taken by a four-handed female figure, with the usual attributes of Siva including a trisula.

Ganga occupies her place at the top, a little to the right of Siva. Her hands are stretched out to their fullest lengths, and yet, unrealistically, the over-arching *uttariya*, of much smaller expanse than that of the hands, rests overhead. She pours a sheet of water that fall in two streams on to the right shoulder of Siva. At the same time, with her left hand she pours out streaks of water from an inverted vessel vertically over the *prabhamandala*.

The lower panel shows a group of seven dancing figures including *Marjaramukha*, *Simhamukha*, *Bhringi* and *Gajakarna*.

The next stage is marked by a panel from the backyard of the *Kumbhesvara* temple at Lalitpur. The stele shows the accentuating tendency towards the rounding at the top, with a conical tip, and a narrower

base. The panels are divided into four horizontal rows by separating bands of rock. It is surmounted by a *linga* on a *yonipitha* over the central figures. The waters of Ganga in the right, come down in a curve upon the *jata* of Siva. To the left of Ganga is a female figure holding a flower basket in the left hand and a flower in the right, anticipating the garland bearer of the *Kumbhesvara* panel (pl. XII B). Uma has only one attendant at her right foot.

The lower panel shows a group of five unmistakable and clearly carved sculptures, reminiscent of the *Kulimtol* specimen (pl. XI B)

The peacock of *Kumara* has disappeared. The halo of Siva is distinctively plain but for the beaded border and split flames of the *jvalavali*.

The next specimen of this phase (pl. XII B) shows the central figures of the divine couple as carrying a water jar, (*kumbha*) and though it has been surmised that they represent the figures of Siva and Ganga, respectively, the identification is rather difficult to accept. Though Ganga is not normally represented as a spouse of Siva, it is because largely of her being harboured in his matted locks for over a thousand years, that an allegory of Ganga exciting the jealousy of Parvati has been created. In fact she was so excersised by the supposed attachment of Siva for Ganga that she appealed to Ganesa, her grown-up son, to get rid of the other woman. The fact that the female figure sits on the left lap of Siva in the panel at *Kumbhesvara* *Gairi Dhara* would indicate that she is none other than Uma, and that she is holding a water jar, even as Siva is doing, would only show her reconciliation and jubillance at the release of Ganga and even her active participation in the dispersal of the sacred waters. This would be perhaps

the reason for naming the god as Kumbhesvara in the neighbouring temple as well as the locality where it is situated, as suggested by a scholar of art during his recent visit to the place.

Stylistically it is characterized by the presence of a circular and broad *chhatra* (umbrella), without its handle, a couple of female garland bearers on top, absence of the sun (on the left), absence of Ganga, the delineation of a skull in the left lower hand of the *dvapala* on the left, the absence of all but one attendant of Uma, who squats to her left and holds a sword and a shield (or *padma*?) respectively, the absence of the peacock of Kumara, and the presence of five dancing figures at the base, flanked by a devotee at the right and a female admirer at the left.

The plain and almost round halo providing a cover for both the central figures is reminiscent of the Kasaintol figure. The *padmasana* pose on the *padmapitha* is an innovation not delineated hitherto. The four-handed aspect of Uma, as well as their posture, role and attributes mark them out from the entire group. The chubby rounded forms and shape, the half-closed eyes and general agreement with the style of sculptures of the period preclude any Malla influence from the piece, and would date it to the 12th century.

The last stage in this style of portrayal is represented by a unique sculpture from Lalitpur, housed in the office of the Archaeological Garden at Bhandarkhal, Lalitpur (pl. XIII A).

The figures are characterized by disproportionate elongation and consequential slimness of the bodies. The lower panel portrays a contingent of seven dancing figures, consisting of *Simhamukha* at the extreme

right playing on the cymbals, *Ghautakarna*, *Ganesa* in the centre, flanked on each side by skeletal *Bhringi* and three-headed *Bhringi* respectively, besides *Gajakarna* and *Marjaramukha*. The piece is characterized by good sculpturing, delineation of the peaks of hills by means of conical blocks, dispensation of halos, carving of sunk semi-circular hollows, and portrayal of the sun and moon orbs, with a traceried border, itself a specimen of exquisite carving. The *chhatra* over Siva is standardized with a non-functional hub below, but an *amalakapinnacle* above is suggestive of a temple. The vertical presentation of Ganga, with two sets of upper hands stretching out the *uttariya* between them is an innovation not known before. The *dvibhanga* posture of Siva appear for the first time. The presence of the realistic lion under the right foot of Uma is a half-way-house between the crude specimen from Pharping, referred to earlier and the later forms of the Malla period. The fact that Uma sits, however lightly, on the lap of Siva, places this sculpture in a group with the figures from Kasaintol, Kumbhesvara Dhara and the Kumbhesvara temple, respectively. The crowningly miniature Siva-linga over the *chhatra* in this case has a *yoni* with its outlet to the right instead of the left as in the Kumbhesvara temple specimen.

It is sad to reflect that there are not many known pieces of the theme from the early Malla period, which in a mature stage, marked a total departure from the earlier norm of the Uma-Mahesvara. One early piece of the transitional phase is fixed into the enclosure wall of the Dhunge Dhara at Chyasaltol, Lalitpur, to one's left, over the promenade, as one enters the Dhara. Its upper parts are, however, badly mutilated. Enough remains to show the basic character of the Lichchhavi composition. But the lower

figures arranged in three rows make up an assemblage of thirty-two, at once awaiting and challenging identification. Its date is indicated by the fragments of an illegible inscription in the Malla script, of the time possibly of Jayadeva (A. D. 1255-58).

Another panel, obviously of the Malla period, but of similar composition, is represented by a specimen from the southern outskirts of Pharping. It shows two innovations, namely, the portrayal of the sun and moon in anthropomorphic representation as seated figures holding lotuses on either side of the central chhatra and linga. Here the chhatra stands over the linga. The lower panel shows five figures with Ganesa in the centre, and each of these separated from the other by a vertical column forming separate niches as it were. The semblance of the petals of the padma are carved below the seat of Siva and Uma as well as of Ganesa.

A panel in the Satyanarayana temple at Harigaon (Kathmandu), is reflective of the physiognomy of the Malla period, but in spite of the dignified grace of the involved figures, the specimen suffers in contrast with the earlier ones in point of charm and detail of treatment. It is dated to 584 Nepal Samvat (A. D. 1413).

The full-fledged form of the mature phase of this art in the Malla period is represented here by two illustrations (pls. XIII B and XIV). The former fixed in the wall of the Gairi Dhara near the Kumbhesvara Dhara, at Lalitpur, shows the figures in the alingana, standing side by side in tribhanga posture, on a full blown lotus. They are flanked by the recumbent figures of the bull and lion respectively. Each has a halo, which is conical and plain. The sculptures are no longer in high-relief but almost completely in the round with an oval pra-

bhavalī marked by eleven lingas standing for the Ekadasa Rudras. The figures of the sun and moon are represented by circular orbs with slanting grooves on a band around their edges to represent the rays. The figure of Siva has a sarpakundala in the right ear and vrittakundala in the left, besides a sarpa jajnopavita. A miniature figure of Ganesa, the favourite son, is placed between the two about their waists. It should be dated to the 16th century A. D.

An example of the standing figures of Uma-Mahesvara can be cited from the Uma-Mahesvara temple at Lakhutol, Kirtipur, and could be dated by a copper plate inscription inside the shrine dated to Nepal Samvat 776, which works out to A. D. 1655, at the latest. The inscription calls the deity Bhavani-Sankara.

The seated type is represented by an exquisitely carved specimen standing in the roofless garbhagriha (sanctum) of a temple opposite the Sun Dhara, at Lalitpur. It shows the full play of Tantric influence in the sushkamundas on the diadem, the mundamala, sarpakundala, sarpananta, sarpavalaya and sarpapadabhushana of Siva. Peculiarly the figure described above shares with the Kumbhesvara specimen its attribute of the kumbha in the lower left hand. The eyes of both figures are fully open. Siva wears a tiger-skin, and supports Uma on his left lap. Uma wears a pushpamala, and ratnalankaras, but a pleated skirt, reflective of the cultural influences of the times. The absence of the sun and moon and all the component figures of the Kailasaparivarasabita Uma-Mahesvara figures, would bring it into the category of Umasabita images described in the Agamas. The plain stele, with a conical top and with a border of jvalavalis (conventionalized representation of flames), supported on an inner band of uniform floral scrolls is typical. Stylistically, with the broad forehead, tall and sharp ridged nose,

round face and rotund physiognomy, it would belong to the 16th-17th centuries.

Of the seated type a transitional specimen, still with all older paraphernalia but with a completely defaced and blurred features can be cited from the village Khandpu, near Banepa, but later and dated specimens are represented by comparatively miniature panels found in the pati, attached to the Dhunge Dhara at Chyasaltol and the Ganesa temple at Chapatol, both in Lalitpur. The former shows the lower panel of five seated figures including Ganesa. The central figure of Siva and Parvati in alingana, seated side by side on a tiger-skin spread on a rocky seat recalls some of the typical specimens of the older days.

The upper part is occupied by the dvarapalas of Siva on either side, a Siva linga on a yonipitha on the top, the florally delineated orbs of the sun and moon, Ganga with her outstretched uttariya and sheet of water flowing towards the matted locks of Siva and a garland-bearing female to the left. Uma's right foot is supported by a seated female, while a standing attendant waves the flywhisk. A third, poised above the group, holds a chhatra with tassels and festoons over her head. It is dated by an inscription on the pedestal to Nepal Samvat 709 (A. D. 1588).

The piece from Chapatol, Lalitpur shows the couple as astride a bull over a padmapitha, with a conical halo for each and a conical stele but without any other attendant

figure. It is dated by an inscription on the stele to Nepal Samvat 733 (A. D. 1612).

The logical culmination of the coupled form of Siva and Uma is the syncretic Ardhanarisvara (half-Siva and half-Parvati in a conjoint figure) of which early specimens in Nepal are rather rare. A good example of Ardhanarisvara is to be found on the northern face of the little known temple of Brahma (identified by the lalata-bimba on the lintel), datable to the 10th-11th centuries, in the premises of the Pasupati temple. The same temple displays in the central niche on the western face a figure of Siva as Nataraja as a variant of the Kailasa-parivarsahita Uma-Mahesvara. The portrayal of Siva as Nataraja is seen elsewhere also, but is not common in Nepal. The conjoint form of Ardhanarisvara would belong together to the class of panels of Lakshmi-Narayana, in both dissociated as well as Ardhanari representations, as also as Siva and Vishnu as Hari-Hara, of which the earliest specimen in Nepal is the Deo-Patan image of Sankara-Narayana, dated to the 8th century, symbolizing the essential unity of the Hindu godhead, despite the infinite diversity of individual forms.

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It is hoped that the tentative classification and chronology offered above will be followed by further study, leading to firm and concrete results, and will be extended to other subjects also.



B Uma-Mahesvara panel at the Chamunda temple,
near Sankhamul, Lalitpur.

ख. उमामहेश्वर, ललितपुर शंखमूलनेर
चामुण्डामन्दिरको
प्राङ्गणमा रहेको मूर्ति ।



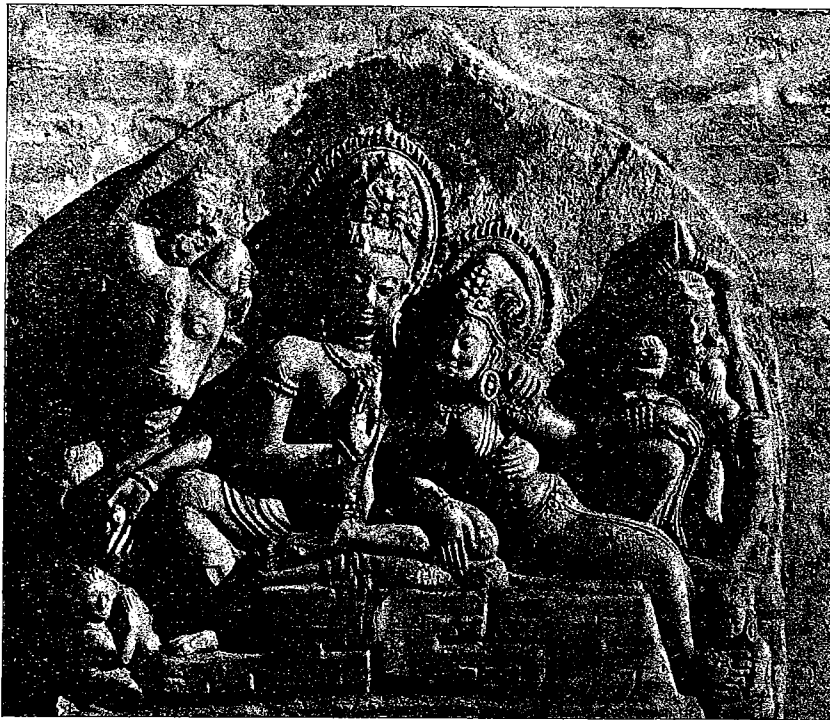
A. Bas relief of Uma-Mahesvara on the escarped
face of a hillock at Udayagiri, near Sanchi,
Madhya Pradesh, India

क. उमामहेश्वर, साँचीनेर उदयगिरि पर्वतको
पहरामा कुँदिएको
मूर्ति ।



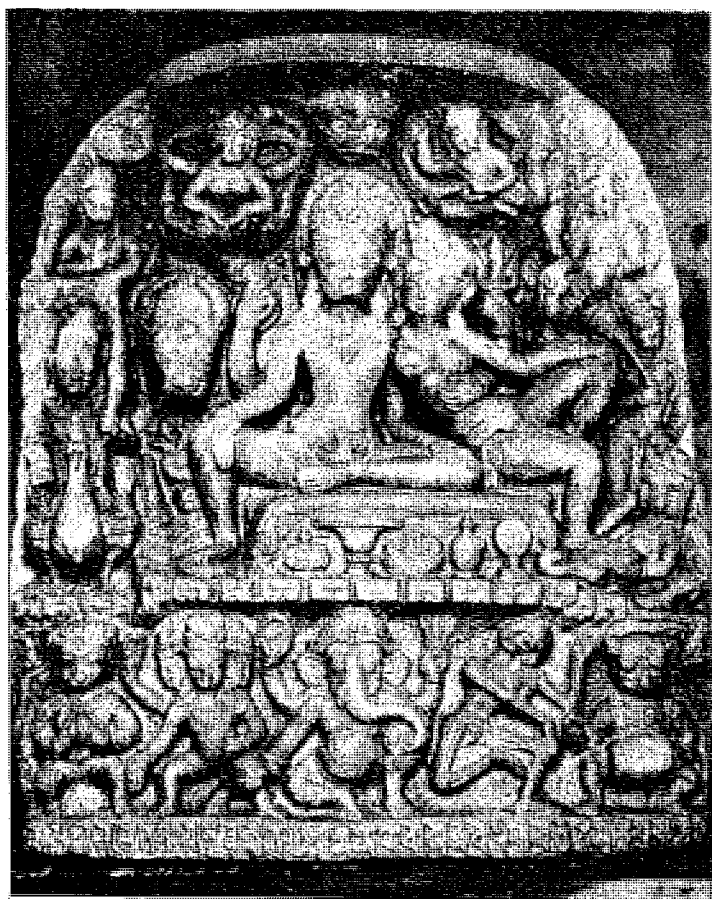
A. Uma-Mahesvara panel at Dugahiti, Sankhu.

क. उमामहेश्वर, दुगाहिटी, साँखु ।



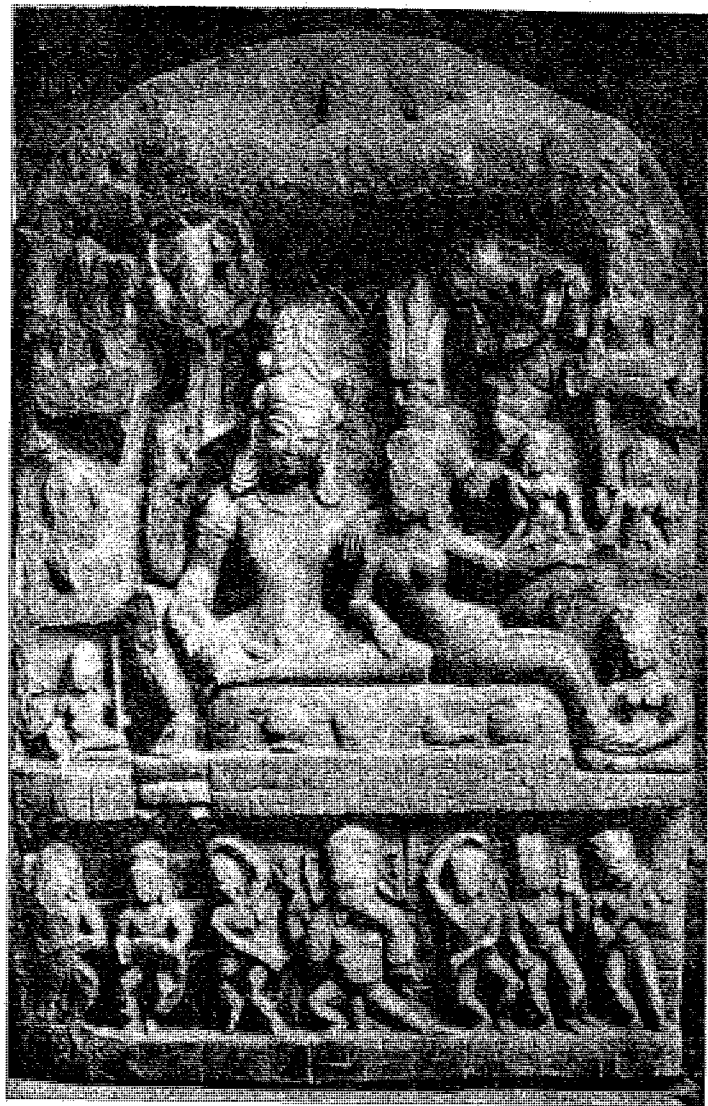
B. Uma-Mahesvara panel at Dhunge Dhara
Chyasaltol, Lalitpur.

ख. उमामहेश्वर, ललितपुर च्यासलटोलको ढुंगे धारामा रहेको मूर्ति



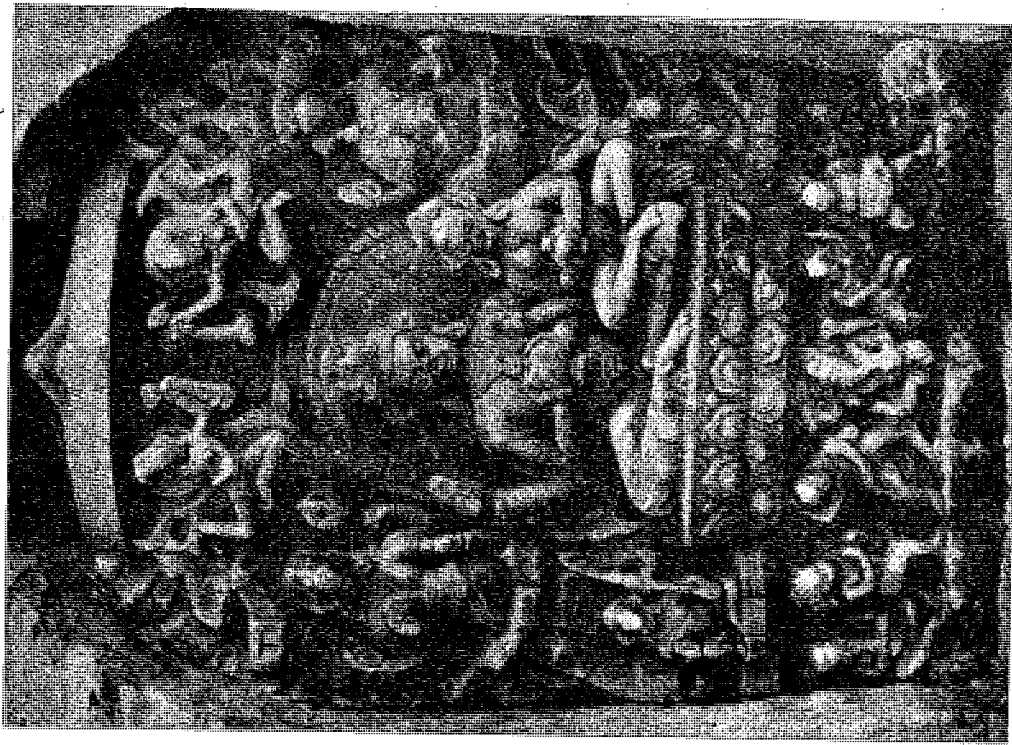
B. Dated Uma-Mahesvara panel at Kumbhesvara Ghyambu, Kulimtol, Lalitpur.

ख. उमामहेश्वर, कुम्भेश्वरघ्यांबु, कुलिमटोल, ललितपुर ।

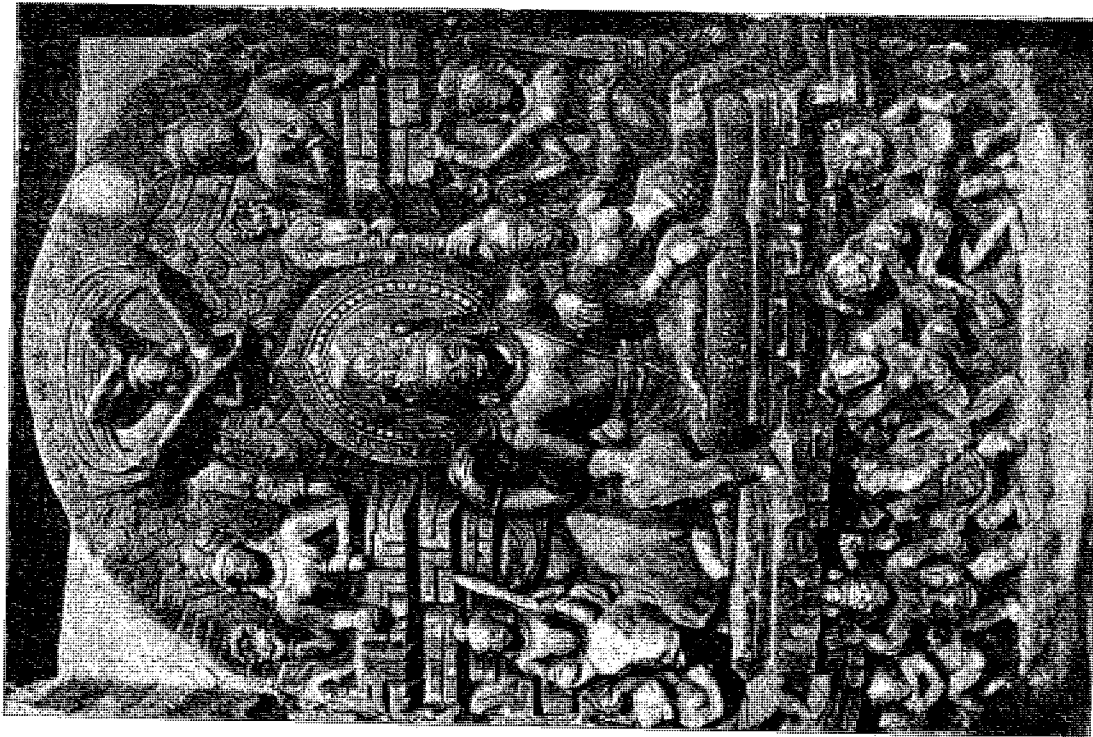


A. Dated Uma-Mahesvara panel at Ganchani, Lalipur.

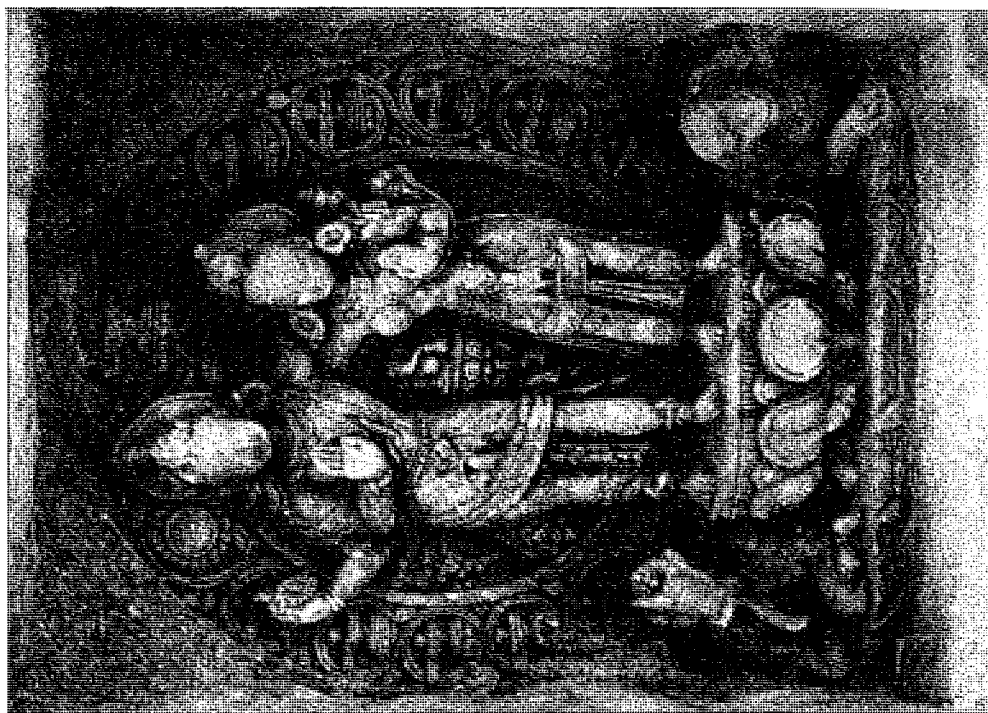
क. मिति भएको उमामहेश्वर, गँचाननी ललितपुर ।



B. Uma-Mahesvara (Kumbhesvara) panel at the Gairi Dhara near the Kumbhesvara temple Lalitpur.
ब. उमामहेश्वर, कुम्भेश्वर मन्दिरनेरको गैह्री धारा ललितपुर



A. Uma-Mahesvara panel at the Gairi Dhara near the Kumbhesvara temple, Lalitpur.
क. उमामहेश्वर, कुम्भेश्वर मन्दिरनेर गैह्री धारा ललितपुर ।



B. Uma-Mahesvara panel at the Gairi Dhara near the Kumbhesvara temple, Lalitpur.

ब. उमामहेश्वर, कुम्भेश्वर मन्दिरको गैरीधारा, ललितपुर ।



A. Uma-Mahesvara panel at the Puratattva-Vagaicha Bhandarkhal, Lalitpur.

ख उमामहेश्वर, पुरातत्व बगैचा, भण्डारखाल, ललितपुर ।



Uma-Mahesvara near Sun Dhara, Lalitpur.

उमामहेश्वर, सुनधारानेर ललितपुर ।