



### Wood Carvings of Various Incarnations of Vishnu in the Mohan Chowk at Hanumandhoka Museum

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#### Abstract

This article features the wood carvings of various incarnations of Vishnu in the Hanumandhoka Museum's Mohan Chowk. Nepali artists depicted the religious tales of Vishnu's Avatars in wooden relief sculptures. Investigation into these sculptures is lacking, so the researcher seeks to fill this gap. Qualitative research methods are employed to analyze the artwork. Pratap Malla constructed the Mohan Courtyard in the middle of the 17th century within the Hanumandhoka Palace. It was embellished with carved tales of Vishnu's Avatars, following the iconography described in the religious text. These sculptures exhibit linear quality, rhythm, distortion, and symbolism. These depictions of mythical stories symbolically teach that evil power is always destroyed by divinity. Artists utilize iconographic rules while exploring their freedom of expression in their depictions of demons. Information acquired through analysis of individual artworks leads to an understanding of the meaning of the works.

**Keywords:** *Iconography, Mohan Chowk, myth, symbol, Vishnu Avatar, wooden sculpture.*

#### Introduction

In Nepal, many stone Vishnu Avatars sculptures from the Licchavi period have been found. The authentic history of Nepal begins with Mandev I in 464 CE, and various idols of Vishnu from this period have been discovered. Among them, those with inscriptions and dates include Trivikram Vamana Vishnu, dated 467 AD.

Here, the researcher prefers to explore the wooden relief sculpture of Mohan Chowk at Hanumandhoka Museum. The history of wooden sculptures is mentioned in Chinese literature from the Tang Dynasty, which provides information about the Licchavi dynasty (c.350-850 CE). During the period of King Narendradeva (c.645-85), China's ambassador, Wang Xuan Ze, admired our timber architecture. Modern science has now pushed back the history of the Newar artist's innate genius with the medium of wood to the Licchavi period (ca. 200-879). The late Mary Slusser convincingly presented results of a scientific examination, a carbon-14 test, which dated two free-standing wooden sculptures of bodhisattvas to the Licchavi period. Later, another bodhisattva was added, which pushes back the history of timber sculpture in Nepal to the 6th century (Pal, 2023).

Mohan Chowk is a small courtyard tucked away within the Hanumandhoka palace complex, the seat of the Malla kings for a long time. After the Mallas, who were deposed by the Gorkha king Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769, the palace complex was used by the Shahs for ceremonial purposes. Mohan Chowk served as a central living quarter for the Malla kings, and even meetings and seminars with heads of state were held here. Not only meetings and seminars,



but even punishments for royal family members were carried out here (Vajracharya, 2033). One of the great royal personages born in the Malla dynasty was King Pratap Malla (1641-1674 A.D.), who contributed to building the Hanumandhoka Palace. King Rajendra Bikram Shah renovated the main courtyard and Mohan courtyard in 1822 A.D. and paved the floor with flagstones two years earlier. Pratap Malla also commissioned other statues, including statues of dancers and singers in Mohan Chowk. So, the wooden sculpture of the Vishnu avatar in this courtyard can be considered from the 17th century. Since it is related to religion, it is important to know the religious significance of Lord Vishnu and his iconography as inscribed in books. In Vaishnavism, there is a practice of worshipping various forms of Vishnu. The beginning of avatarism dates back to the time of the Rig Veda. Like other incarnations of Vishnu, the 10th incarnation is very famous. The Mahabharata describes ten incarnations of Vishnu, but Buddha is not included. Since it was written before Buddhism, it can be easily assumed that this happened. The number of incarnations of Vishnu is mentioned in the *Shrimad Bhagavata Purana* as 16, 22, and 23. The *Pancharatra Samhita* describes 39 incarnations, increasing in number. The fact that God repeatedly descends on earth to establish religion according to the age is clearly and beautifully described in the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. In the books of iconography, there are rules for creating statues of various avatars. The rules for creating statues of the 10 avatars in *Roopmandan* are as follows. The fish and turtle should be made in their form, i.e., in their natural form. *Purana Matsya* and *Ardha Matsya*. The half part represents a human with a fish, and the second is complete fish iconography with *Aayudhas* (*Shankha*, *Chakra*, *Gada*, and *Padma*). *Kurma* avatar is also depicted with *Purnakurma* and *Ardhakurma*. *Purnakurma* holds the *Mandrachal* mount on his back during the process of churning of the ocean. *Abhay Mudra*, *Varad Mudra*, and *Kiritmukut* with lavishly decorated jewelry. In the *Baraha* idol, the head should be that of a boar, and the body should be that of a human.

The black-colored boar has a gada (mace) and a lotus in its hands, and its front teeth are like the earth being lifted. The statue of *Narasimha* should have the head of a lion and big tusks. *Narasimha* should be shown tearing the chest of a *Hiranya Kasipu* with both hands (Paudyal, 2000). *Vaman* iconography is a little bit different than others, small and tiny, decorative with *Kundalas*, *Katimekhala*, *Mrigcharma*, and an auspicious *Kushagras* ring on the finger (Ramjisavaliya 2008:112). The iconography of *Trivikrama* is the largest form of *Vaman*, who covered the entire world in just three steps.

*Parasuram* is described differently in various texts, but he has an axe and a bow in his hands. *Rama* has been depicted in the *Tribhanga* pose, *Kiritmukut*, very well decorated with jewels. *Krishna* is depicted with dark or blue skin, wearing a peacock feather in a crown, playing the flute, in the *Tribhanga* posture with one leg bent, in *Balkrishna* and battlefield scenes, which may differ. According to *Brihadsamhita*, *Agnipurana*, and *Vishnudharmottarpuran*, *Buddha* has a lotus mark in the palm as well as on the feet, curly hair, a *Shreevats* mark, long ears, and orange monk drapery (Ramjisavaliya, 2008: 112-24). *Kalki* is the last incarnation of Vishnu. *Agnipurana* refers to the story of *Kalkiavatar*. Distinctive features include horse riding with *Kiritmukut*, *Kundalas*, necklines, hole shoes with *Ayudhas*, *Khadag*, *Madhapatra*, *Chakra*, and *Gada*.

The early iconographic representations of Vishnu are from the Kushana period (1st to 3rd century CE), and the majority of them are found in Mathura, which is even now a strong and living Vaishnava center. After the Kushanas, the Guptas officially promoted Vaishnavism and built many



Vishnu temples. The basics of the Vishnu iconography for the later centuries were established in the Gupta period (3rd to 5th century CE) (Bhatt, 2021). In the early phases of depiction, we see an evolution from the Kushana Vishnu to the Gupta Vishnu. The Kushana Vishnu iconography featured Shankha, Chakra, Gada, and Varada Hasta (boon-giving gesture) as the God's attributes. This iconography underwent some modifications during the Gupta period when Gada, Shankha, Chakra, and Fruit were added. After the Gupta period, we see a more artistic and composite image of Vishnu in which the fourth hand is replaced by a rosary bead or lotus among the permanent attributes. In early iconography, Vishnu was most probably shown as a singular figure or with his Vyuhā incarnations, such as Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Balarama, etc. In the post-Gupta period, he was always accompanied by his associates, such as Lakshmi, Garuda, and Sheshanaga. Thus, the definitive Vishnu iconography came into existence, incorporating various elements attested in Vaishnavism for many centuries (Bhatt, 2021). Thus, since ancient times, various forms of Vishnu began to be embodied in paintings and statues under various traditional styles and iconographies, and we find that it was created in Nepal as well. In Nepal, while studying the forms of Vishnu, it is important to learn about wooden carvings of Vishnu in the Hanumandhoka Museum. The walls of Mohan Chowk are decorated with wooden carved statues of Vishnu's avatars. The further part of this article will discuss the relief sculptures of Vishnu Avatara of Mohan Chowk in Hanumandhoka Palace.

### Methodology

The research area of this paper is “Traditional Nepali wood sculpture”. This has been explored, emphasizing Nepali traditional wood sculpture of Mohan Chowk at Hanumandhoka Museum that depicts the Vishnu Avatar. Books and articles are the secondary sources that are used for the background of the study. Works of art are primary sources that have been analyzed and interpreted. This research is based on the qualitative method, as the interpretation of artwork can be plural and multiple.

### Interpretation of works

The artwork of some of the wooden Vishnu avatar statues located in Mohan Chowk at the Hanumandhoka Museum is very beautiful. These statues are all carved in high relief. These reliefs have been placed on the surrounding walls to decorate the walls of this courtyard. The idols are adorned with various ornaments. They have many arms and legs, and the arms are adorned with various amulets. These statues depict the Hindu mythological story of Lord Vishnu taking various avatars and saving the earth from destruction by killing demons at different times. These gods, who have many limbs, also have postures showing their feet in different ways. Following the iconography of Nepali art, it depicts the god in a large size and demons in a small size according to hierarchical proportions. Regarding the composition of these statues here, all the statues are facing forward, and the figure of the god is symmetrical, while the demons are asymmetrically arranged. In the figures of the demons, it seems as if the artist has expressed the defeat of the demon by rhythmically contorting the figure freely. The work is linear, and symbolic representations are used to show the defeat of demons.

This high-relief wooden sculpture, *Matsya Avatar killing Demon* (fig. 1), depicts the Matsya Avatar of Lord Vishnu. This first incarnation assumes the form of a fish to recover the Vedas, which were stolen by evil demons and hidden in the floods of a deluge that covered the entire earth. The Matsya Avatar of Vishnu killed the demon Hayagriva. In this story, Hayagriva stole the Vedas from Brahma and hid them in the ocean. Vishnu, as Matsya, rescued the Vedas by killing Hayagriva and restoring the knowledge. Puranic accounts tell us that, besides Manu, the Seven Divine Rishis (the Manas-putras, or mind-born sons of Brahma), along with their wives, were also saved and repopulated the world afterwards. In plastic

representations of the incarnation, Vishnu appears as half fish and half man, the lower half being fish. In his four hands, he carries the coach and wheel, and two hands are in the boon-giving and protection mudras. He wears a kirita crown and the other usual ornaments (Gupta, 1972). According to Hindu iconography, Kirita Mukuta is worn by Vishnu. It is made of gold and decorated with precious stones. There is Mayurapiccha on the left back of the crown. Behind-ear fish fins resemble hair, illustrating how the artist adhered to the rules of Rupa Veda. He has to show, at the same time, that he is Vishnu, and he is also a fish, and Vishnu has taken the form of a fish. He is wearing *Keyurs* on his shoulders, an ordinary wristlet (*Duhirak*) in his hand, and *Padsukhadi* (foot ornaments) on his legs. In the Hindu god manuscript (*Pustaka*), the lotus (*Padma*) in the Hindu pantheon symbolizes water and creation, self-creation. The wheel (*Chakra*) symbolizes the rotation of the world and represents the Wheel of *Dharma*. It also stands for air. The mace (*Gada*) represents light, and the conch (*Sankha*) represents auspiciousness, purity, and divine sound. It is used in rituals and ceremonies to invoke blessings and purify the environment. He is wearing a flower garland as the sacred thread. He is in *Alidha Asana*; the left



Fig.1 Matsya Avatar killing Demon, Woodcarving,  
Hanumandhoka Museum, Kathmandu.



leg is bent at the knee, and the right leg is straight but angled. This is a standing position. It is found in aggressive gods. He is wearing a dhoti below the waist. On the lower part of the sculpture, the water is designed in a linear pattern on the pedestal. An artist tries to give the impression of water and the water animals in the sunk relief (stacciato).

A large-sized conch is placed in the middle lower part of the composition. Four small figures are standing in the Namaskar mudra on the lower right side. They are subsidiary deities, and Jwalabali is carved on the back of each figure. Similar to Nepali traditional art, symmetrical composition is followed, and hierarchical proportions are used. Therefore, the deity is shown to be much larger than the demon. The four-armed demon is killed by the divine, showing its chest being pulled apart; hence, it appears in a contorted form. The demon's hair being pulled also adds to the movement. The divine is constructed in a way that its symmetry and stiffness contrast with the demon in its hand; so, the demon's contorted body appears in a more rhythmic movement. The monotony of the composition is broken by it. The artist has cleverly depicted the defeat of the demon by having his sword broken and his crown falling into the water below. In our traditional art, it is always customary to make a small representation of the main deity at the top of a painting. This applies to sculptures as well, to show which deity is an incarnation of a higher deity and to which family it belongs. Therefore, on the top right side of this relief, a small figure of Vishnu holding a conch, a wheel, a mace, and a lotus, seated in a lotus (Padmasana), is also carved.



Fig.2 Baraha Avatar killing Demon, Woodcarving,  
Hanumandhoka Museum, Kathmandu.

This sculpture, the *Baraha Avatar killing a demon* (fig. 2), depicts the third incarnation of Vishnu as the Varaha-avatar, in which he takes the form of a wild boar and kills the demon Hiranyaksha, who threatened to destroy the earth, with his tusks. There are three sculptural representations in different texts: Bhuvvaraha (also known as *Adhibaraha* or *Nrivaraha*), *Yajnavaraha*, and *Pralayavaraha* (Gupta, 1972). However, this sculpture diverges from these



forms. This colorful sculpture features eight arms, with the hands arranged clockwise, holding a stick, a conch (Sankha), a wheel (Chakra), female deities representing the earth, a mace (Gada), and a lotus (Padma), while the two main hands grasp a demon. As described in the account of the Machhe avatar above, the Varaha avatar also wears the same jewelry, crown, garland, and robe. Prabhamandala is shown at the back of the head. In this statue, the divine is depicted as holding the demon with his feet while also pulling its hair. To illustrate the demon's defeat, its crown is shown falling in the center. Roopa bheda is shown by the head and the aayudh held by the divinity, as the artist has to show that it is the sculpture of Vishnu as well as of the boar. The work is done in high relief with linear detail. The composition is symmetrical. The contorted figure of the demon brings diversity and rhythm. It follows the hierarchical proportion, so the demon is shown smaller than the divinity.

In this sculpture, *Narsimha Avatar killing Hiranya Kashipu* (fig. 3), the artist depicts the fourth incarnation of Vishnu as Narsimha. According to the religious text, Hiranyakashipu, Hiranyaksha's brother, had a son named Prahlada, who was a devotee of Vishnu. The unnatural father attempted to kill his son, but the latter evaded all danger because he continued to pray to Vishnu. When Hiranyakashipu expressed doubt about Vishnu's omnipresence, mockingly declaring that He could not possibly be in the column to which he pointed, the wrathful God decided to punish the scoffer. The column split in two, and Vishnu, emerging from its interior in the form of a monster, half man and half lion, tore *Hiranyakashipu* to pieces. Its moral is to impress upon the people the tragic fate of those who do not believe in *Vishnu*.



Fig.3 Narsimha Avatar killing Hiranya Kashipu,  
Woodcarving, Hanumandhoka Museum, Kathmandu.

Here, the artist depicts ten hands of the divine. The clockwise hands hold weapons such as a *Vajra*, arrow, *Gada*, sword, *Dhala*, *Sankha*, bow, and *Padma*. *Hiranyakashipu* is shown lying in the divine's lap, with his stomach ripped open. The demon's hands are being crushed by the divine's feet. Blood is shown falling, creating a pattern. The background features a fallen shield and a sword on the ground, symbolizing the demon's defeat. On the left side, *Prahlad* is shown kneeling in the *namaskar* posture. Since the *Simha Avatar* is always depicted emerging from a broken pillar in this story, the woodcarving also shows the pillar broken at both ends in the background. The symbolic meanings of other weapons were previously mentioned in a different sculpture. Still, the divine's different weapon in his hand is a *Vajra*, which, in *Hinduism*, represents a thunderbolt that destroys enemies of *Hinduism*. *Khadga*, or sword, symbolizes enlightenment as it destroys ignorance. *Khetaka*, or shield, represents dharma, which protects like a shield (Gupta, 1972). The arrow (*Bana*) and bow (*Dhanus*) symbolize defense against enemies and protection. The large eyes express *Raudra Rasa*, as the god is angry. The demon's twisted body is balanced by *Narasimha's* hand. The artist brings diversity and rhythm into the symmetrical composition through the contorted demon figure, while the treatment remains linear.



Fig.4 Tribikram Vaman Avatar, Woodcarving,  
Hanumandhoka Museum, Kathmandu

This colorful sculpture of *Tribikram Vaman Avatar* (Fig. 4) is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. It has three heads with smiling faces. He holds the vase (*Kalash*). According to Hindu belief, the universe was all water, so the vase, full of water, symbolizes the universe. The earth is issued out of the primeval water in its vase, so it is primeval water. The wheel (*Chakra*), sword (*Khadga*), mace (*Gada*), and *Dhwoja* (Banner) symbolize victory, and *Pustaka* are also held by the divine. Brahma, on the top left side of the god, holds the uplifted foot of Tribikram and washes it with water flowing down from a vase that falls toward the sea, touching different deities. On his right side is one attendant. Divine jewelry, crowns, and dresses are the same as in other sculptures. One foot on the right side is held by a *Naga* representing the sea, while in the middle, a little *Vamana* with an umbrella is shown to whom Bali is giving something from the vase; the panel of *Aswamegha yagya* is going on underneath, which is in a one-line, plain composition. A horse and an elephant are also depicted to show the *yagya* procession. *Garuda* is on the bottom left side of the divine, kneeling and doing the *namaskar mudra*. It depicts the mythical story of *Prahlada's* grandson, *Bali*. He was a pious king, but on that very account, dangerous to the gods, for he was just about to complete the hundredth grand sacrifice, by which he would have acquired sufficient power to dethrone Indra. Vishnu came to the assistance of the god of heaven and appeared before





Fig.5 Parasuram Avatar Killing Sahasrarjun Demon, Woodcarving, Hanumandhoka Museum, Kathmandu

legged divinity who is shown in action. This composition also follows the hierarchical proportion in the arrangement of figures; the divine is shown in huge size, while other gods are in small size, and the lower panel figures are smaller and carved in low relief.

This *Parasuram Avatar Killing Sahasrarjun Demon* (fig. 5) depicts the sixth incarnation, called the Parashuram avatar. In the sculpture, the god's face is shown in a slightly oblique view. The deity has eight hands; clockwise, the hands hold an axe, an arrow, a wheel, a sword, a shield, a conch, and a bow. According to iconographic rules, Parashurama should hold an axe.

The god is strangling the demon's neck with his right hand, while his left hand holds the demon's hair, and his feet rest on the demon's head. The demon's many arms are shown in white, forming a circular pattern. Several of the demon's heads are already shown as cut off by the god, and the demon's legs are shown bent and restrained. To

Bali as a dwarf in the guise of a Brahman mendicant. Bali honored him with presents and promised to fulfil his desires, whereupon the dwarf requested three paces of ground. This was gladly granted under a severe oath that would be binding on gods and men. Then the dwarf assumed a huge shape and stepped with the first step over the whole earth; with the second step, he strode over the earth, and then King Bali asked him to place the third step on his royal head, as there was no other spot left. Pleased with Bali, *Vamana* allowed him to proceed to the netherworld with his demons and rule there. This is the reason why Vishnu is called *Tripadas*, or *Trivikramas*, the three-paced god. Thus, Bali was prevented from completing the hundredth sacrifice, and Indra was again safe on his throne. This dwarf incarnation is called the *Vamana* avatar. Its sculptural representation is that he should be gigantic. His height should be 124 *Angulas*. The beauty of this form is the three-



Fig.6 Balakrishna killing Bakasur Demon, Woodcarving, Hanumandhoka Museum.



emphasize the demon's defeat, five of his heads are shown severed and falling to the ground, along with his broken shield and scattered weapons.

To relate the mythical story, the Kamadhenu is shown in the top left corner of the composition. This story reflects the struggles between the Kshatriya (warrior caste) and the Brahmins for supremacy. It is said that Jamadagni, a pious Brahmin, received from the gods the miraculous cow *Kamadhenu* (or *Surabhi*), which provided him, his wife *Renuka*, and their son *Rama* with every luxury.

*Karttavirya*, a king of the warrior caste, visited *Jamadagni* and, seeing the wealth of the Brahmin, attempted to take the cow. However, the cow destroyed those who approached it and ascended to heaven. In anger, *Karttavirya* killed the pious *Jamadagni*. *Rama*, the son of the murdered Brahmin, invoked Vishnu for help to punish the wicked king. The god then gave him a bow and a battle-axe, which is why he was later called *Parasurama*.

*Karttavirya* is described as having a thousand arms and wielding a thousand weapons, but Rama, empowered by Vishnu's divine strength, ultimately defeats him after a decisive battle.

The artist used both high relief and sunk relief in wood carving. The contorted figure of a demon contrasts with the symmetrical arrangement of the linear arms. The jewelry adorning the deity is similar to that seen in other sculptures mentioned above.

The eighth incarnation of Vishnu is Lord Krishna, who defeated many demons during his childhood in Vrindavan. In this sculpture, *Balkrishna killing Bakasur Demon* (fig.6), the demon Bakasura appears as a giant crane sent by Kamsa to kill him. Bakasura tried to swallow Krishna whole, but *Krishna's* divine power created intense heat inside the demon, forcing him to regurgitate *Krishna*. *Krishna* then seized *Bakasura's* beak and split it apart, killing the demon instantly.

The large bird occupies the entire composition, creating balance and rhythm. The sculptor's specialty in this statue is that he made the main subject large while portraying Krishna as small to emphasize that he is a child. Krishna is shown climbing onto the bird's body, tearing its beak apart with both hands, and pressing his foot against it as he prepares to kill the demon.

In the background, on the right side of the deity, a small figure holding a sword and a plough is also shown; this figure may represent Balarama. Below this, a battle scene is depicted. The oxen in the lower panel are carved in sunk relief (*stiacciato*), indicating Krishna's village life.

The large, contorted figure of the bird occupies the entire space diagonally. The sculpture does not follow the traditional system of symmetrical composition, which gives diversity and



Fig.7 *Balarama Avatar killing Pralambasur demon*, Woodcarving, Hanumandhoka Museum.

dynamism to the arrangement. The twisted form of the crane creates a strong sense of rhythm and action.

This statue, *Balarama Avatar killing Pralambasur demon* (fig. 7), depicts the eight-armed god, Balarama, killing the demon Pralambasura. In some regions, such as Kalinga and Southern India, Balarama was included among the avatars (Bhatt, 2021).

According to the story, Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna, confronts and defeats Pralambasura, who disguises himself as a cowherd boy to kidnap Krishna and Balarama. Upon recognizing the demon's true intentions, Balarama strikes Pralambasura with his fist, crushing and killing him. The story highlights Balarama's strength and his ability to defeat evil powers.

In this relief, the main deity is shown in the *Alidha* posture. One of his two principal right hands strikes the throat of the demon, while another hand holds a conch (*Shankha*).



Fig.8 Lord Krishna Killing Chanuda Demon,  
Woodcarving Hanumandhoka Museum

A sword is shown striking the demon's head. The remaining hands, arranged clockwise, hold a staff or pestle, a plough, an arrow, a bow, a mace, and finally a *pasha*.

The demon's contorted body and bent seated legs are portrayed beautifully, effectively conveying his helplessness. One of the demon's hands and legs is crushed beneath the god's right foot, while the deity's bent left leg presses against the thigh of the demon's bent leg. Below, at the base, two-winged lions facing each other are depicted in low relief.

In Hindu mythology, Lord Krishna is known for slaying many demons, including Chanuda. Although Chanuda was a wrestler, he was also killed by Lord Krishna, along with his brother, Mustika. This sculpture, *Lord Krishna Killing Chanuda Demon* (fig.8), depicts that story, in which the divine figure, shown with eight arms, fights four demons.



Fig. 9. Lord Krishna Killing Chanuda Demon,  
Woodcarving, Hanumandhoka Museum.



One demon is crushed beneath his left foot, while another demon's head is held in his right hand. A second head is pulled by another hand, and a chakra, sword, and mace are held in his remaining hands. One demon is grasped in his left hand, while his right hand holds a conch. The crown and jewelry are similar to those seen in the previously mentioned sculptures.

A small standing Buddha appears on the right side of the divine figure, while the lower panel is decorated with four Dhyani Buddhas and floral patterns. The demons do not display expressions of anger or aggression; instead, they appear almost like children playing with one another. The twisted bodies of these figures create a strong sense of movement and rhythm within the composition. In Hindu mythology, Lord Krishna is known for slaying many demons, including Chanuda. Although Chanuda was a wrestler, he was also killed by Lord Krishna, along with his brother, Mustika. In this statue, *Lord Krishna Killing Chanuda Demon* (fig. 9), the hands and legs of both the god and the demon are balanced so beautifully that the composition is a pleasure to behold.

The god presses the demon's chest with his right foot and crushes its neck with his right hand, while pressing the other leg with his left foot. His other hand holds one of the demon's arms.

At the top right side of the deity, a subsidiary deity is shown in the background holding a sword and standing on a lotus flower. On the left side of the deity, above a two-story house, the god himself is depicted fighting a demon by pulling it by the hair.

Another demon is shown behind him. One of the demon's hands is placed between his legs, while the other hand is positioned behind him. In the sculpture, below Lord Krishna, various figures of gods are shown in action, fighting various demons. The arms and legs of one demon are balanced with those of another, creating a dynamic and harmonious composition.

## Conclusion

All these sculptures adhere to traditional iconographic rules. The figures are influenced by the *Pala-Sena* art school, characterized by egg-shaped faces, elaborate crowns, decorative jewelry, multiple hands, and multiple heads. Similar types of jewelry, crowns, garments, and flower garlands appear in all the sculptures. However, sculptors often depict demons as small, contorted figures. Departing from conventional norms, the artists use their imagination to portray the demons in twisted forms. Because of this distortion, the compositions are characterized by a rich sense of rhythm.

The gods are shown symmetrically, while the demons are depicted asymmetrically. Their hair is shaped in triangular forms, illustrating the gods pulling the demons' hair and symbolizing the demons' defeat at the gods' hands. High relief (almost in the round), low relief, and sunk relief are employed. These projections create a strong three-dimensional effect, making the main characters appear almost free-standing in some areas, with subsidiary characters shown in low relief, and narrative scenes are depicted in sunk relief in the lower sections.

The symbolic representation of defeat is beautifully illustrated through numerous metaphors, such as broken swords, fallen crowns, and severed heads. Every *Aayudha* (weapon) in the hands of the deities carries symbolic meaning. Movement and action generate rhythm. Hierarchical proportions are maintained in the depiction of figures, and the works are linear in style. These works demonstrate the belief that the gods will ultimately destroy evil powers.





Therefore, they are didactic in nature, as they contribute to the development of moral values in society. Even within religious art, Nepali artists successfully expressed their artistic freedom.

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