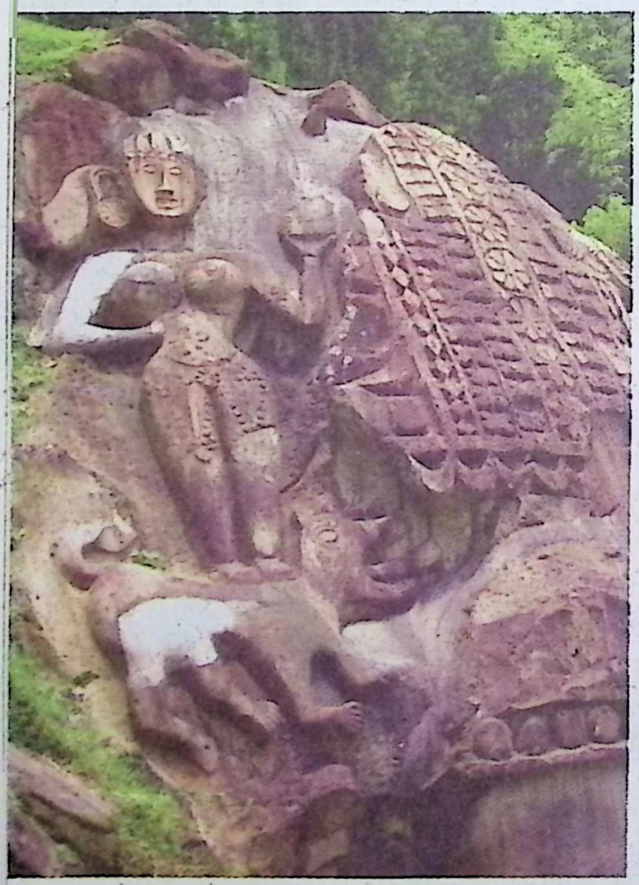


Unakoti is the joining of the trident, the immediate world, the world at large and the inside world.



Durga, riding a lion.

PHOTOS: ANDREW EAGLE



Unakoti.

son Ganesha carved, three times, into stone. Shiva's Nandi Bull, his carriage, indeed three examples of it too, waited and might wait forever half-submerged in river sand. Other rocks had become turtles.

Then North Tripura, as if to bless the moment, found a slight but unmistakable hilltop breeze. Or was it sympathy for the foolhardy May traveller?

The immediate world, the world in general and the inside world are the elements of Shiva's trident. The beauty of the hills was immediate; the daily tension and trivialities removed, as it is when on the road, was the world in general; and peace, not least because the rock-cut faces, both in duration and in space, brought home the twin truths of insignificance and smallness, was inside.

Lord Shiva must've understood that contemplation as he is known as a yogi, often depicted in his cross-legged, meditating aspect of spirituality. And the tranquillity of the place, the music of water at its quietest in May, could've easily encouraged the going beyond contemplation into meditation.

But just how many images were there? It would've taken some effort to count them; perhaps it was just as well to leave it to the name of the place. Unakoti means the one less than one crore pairs of eyes looking out from about the waterfall.

Lord Shiva must've understood the taking breath there, on the hilltop rock, as it is said he also once took rest at the very spot. Time to time a traveller should take rest.

Shiva's travel plan then was to reach Varanasi as a member of a large party of gods and goddesses, totalling one crore in number. One evening they sheltered on Unakoti hill, with Shiva expressly instructing that all should arise before dawn to set out once again.

But when dawn arrived, Shiva found he was the only one awake and in anger he cursed his companions, turning them to stone so that they could remain for eternity, while he set forth towards his destination, alone.