Unakoti means the one less than one crore deities left behind.

Shiva's aspect of destruction and transformation, his necklace of skulls, seemed at odds with the valley. Yet, perhaps in his rock-cut image that once was bare stone is his transformative work. Perhaps there is the message that destruction is an essential part of nature, easily entwined, intermingling with the life of the waterfall and indigenous to the valley's beauty: because it takes an end to make a beginning; because destruction too is necessity.

And the eastern tribal influences in Shiva's features and decoration, as he is depicted in Unakoti, recall another legend, about one potter and sculptor called Kallu Kumhar. It is said the sculptor was a devotee of Parvati and wished to follow her home to Kailash Mountain.

Shiva agreed on the condition that Kallu Kumhar carve one crore images of Shiva in a single night. He worked hard but by dawn he was still one image short, which gave Shiva the excuse he wanted to leave Kumhar behind with his carvings. Even the carver should pace himself.

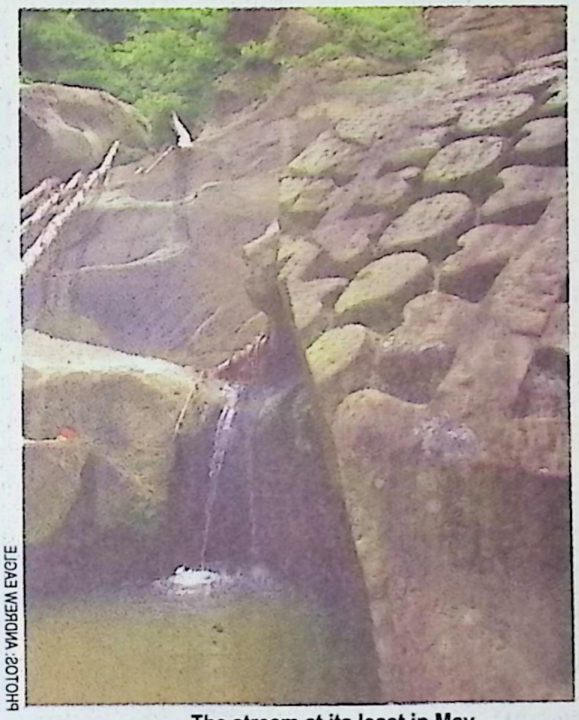


PHOTO: WARDAH FAZAL

The stream at its least in May.

Bangladesh was somewhere, very near, Moulvibazar wasn't far. *(Right)*



Unakoti means the one less than one crore hopes, the trying and the devotion, dashed at last.

Shiva the dancer is not hard to find in the life of the light-hearted cascade tumbling among his images. Shiva the family man is there somehow, not only in the company of Ganesha his son, but in the families of pilgrims and visitors that venture there, even if not so often in that month.

And the archaeologists say the carvings date from the seventh to ninth centuries, possibly earlier. It is said the centre of worship flourished during the Pala rule three centuries on.

But Unakoti is not a triumph of the calendar only. It's the joining of the trident: the immediate world, the world at large and the inside world.

Unakoti means the one less than one crore elements that arrive through three strands to make a singular unity. Even in that foolish month of May. ■