CHAPTER - VIII
CONCLUSION

To conclude, the beauty of the ancient Indian sculpture is thus a flash of blinding light. The national soul with all its richness and depth of experience has found expression in sculpture. Ideal plastic form is illustrated in the existing monuments of our statuary. Indian art does not dry itself out in objective reproduction. The beautiful form is first grasped in the realm of the mind and then transferred to stone or other medium as witnessed through its detailed study in the chapters. Indian art like her literature has thus been a lofty and adequate expression of the religious emotion of the people and their deepest thoughts on the subject of the divine. But that divinity is not an abstraction in Indian art. It constantly incarnates with all its richness and beauty into forms that are considered ideal for real men. Behind the divine symbolism, reality of life manifests itself with all the charm of male and female life, and art and sculpture constantly move in tune with this truth.

Great epochs of Indian history have been immortalized in her sculpture and the rhythm of their footballs rendered permanently eloquent in magnificent forms. At the very outset of the nation’s art history during the Mauryan epoch when big empires sprang up and real “land-taking” accomplished throughout the length and breadth of the country realizing forces of cultural welding, Indian sculpture came forward as the first adequate medium for expressing those mighty forces in an asserting and monumental form. As a result of this the magnificent pillars and capitals of Asoka as well as the colossal figures of Yakshas and Yakshis sprang up at many a centre as the dominant symbols of a new spirit and nation-wide force as studied in the thesis.

The traditions of Indian Art have been always continuous. In the course of time, they have assimilated new elements, rejected old ones; evolved fresh conventions and elevated crude popular art into stylized perfection, given back the perfection in some form or the other. From the rise of the Harappan culture, five thousand years ago, till the end of the creative age of Indian, the tradition was a living inspiration, not a dead ritual. Except in those parts of the country where Hindu art came to be denied the patronage both of the royal courts as well as the rich patrons, vitality was imparted by the architect or the guild by means of a change in emphasis or shape, by some re-orientation which became necessary on account of some great ruling movement, or insisted upon by some great
individual artist. The skill and reputation of the best of them, however, lay in making an image which should be instinct with life and movement. In this creative process he had not merely to carve a copy of older image, but to convey to his contemporaries the significance of the life and mission of the God for whom the image stood. Even that was not enough. The image had to take the soul of the worshipper to a higher plane. The craftsman had, therefore, not only to bring out the spirit and mood of the deity, but to symbolize him in action that they could speak to the worshipper, move him to his depth and give him hope strength and solace. It is true that all Indian art has been produced by professional craftsman who handed down the tradition from father to son or in papillary succession, but the greatest products of this art are great precisely because some of these artisans were skillful, more original and more sensitive to heir material than the others, and that originality and novelty in their creative work were definitely intended if not always realized. The paradox that the vast majority of the works of Indian sculptors displayed an intensely sensuous awareness of life and yet are supposed to transcend life, can be resolved if we agree that while the approach of the artist was inevitably humanist, since he was a sensitive and highly evolved man, the purpose for which his works were intended were the exaltation of a transcendental religion. Indian art shows the heroic attempts made by men of sensibility to infuse certain pieces with the vitality of their individual creative power. Especially in the Indian sculpture and reliefs we see the swaying movements of men and women moving in a sensuous world subsisting in their own rhythms under the formal authority of priests and monks. And the folk imagination has always been the antithesis of orthodoxy, in the proliferation of myriads of forms and symbols based on the actual concrete life of loveless in the lentil fields, mothers desiring children and fathers who pour forth their affection on their children, with toys and dolls of the earth earthy. Who can forget the intricate carvings of the jewellery with which almost every sculptured figure is decorated and the flowers which embellish every design. There is a humanity jutting out of the old carvings which compels in us a change of heart, if we are not altogether dead to the graces of beauty and tenderness.

“Sculpture” says Prof. Herbert Read, “is the creation of solid forms which give aesthetic pleasure.”¹ And if by aesthetic pleasure we mean the vitality perfection and beauty, which we feel in the presence of a particular pieces, then this simple definition seems to me very adequately to indicate the intent of all carving or modelling. The vivacity

or vitality arises perhaps by the concatenation of all those incipient powers and energies in
the artist, which cannot easily be isolated or analyzed under the two heads, personal vision
and social experience. Undoubtedly, the artist applies his intellect to the selection and
elaboration of forms in the daily routine of his work, but the elements which go to make
his work are as varied as his individual genius and the qualities of the material in which he
works.

I think there are few people today, at least among the connoisseurs, who will deny
that, both in quantity and quality the extant monuments of Indian sculpture display as wide
a range of human achievement as the works produced during the whole of the European
Renaissance and after. Then why is it that even the chief masterpieces of this branch of
Indian art are comparatively unknown to the world, not to speak of the thousands of
interesting and vital monuments which are listed in the memories of the archeological
survey?

Throughout the ancient Indian sculpture we have witnessed that the Yaksha
Yakshini worship was universally stamped on the face of India. Yaksha and Yakshini in
sculpture, with their size, volume and energy proclaimed the early triumph of man in India
grappling successfully with the problems of initial colonization, building and settlement.
These early specimens of Indian art represent as it were specimens of triumphant
humanity. They all are divine only in name, and represent real men and women to whom
the power and glory of divine beings engaged in carving out the patterns of early life, were
transferred. Masterful in harnessing the forces around them, contended with their
achievement and challenging obstruction, this is the type of the earliest Yaksha and Yakshi
figures. The motive of the artist in creating such forms was to highlight individual beauty
within the established social structure.

The school of sculpture, represented an ideal synthesis of the religious and the
secular domain of life. The motifs of domestic life including favourite female pastimes and
garden-sports portraying life under the open sunshine are freely illustrated and constitute
one of the most pleasing forms of Indian sculpture. Women standing under Asoka tree
making it blossom with a kick from their foot, plucking kadamba buds and sporting with
them, sometimes bathing under water-falls descending in joyous streams, playing with
balls, dancing, sporting with parrots and swans feeding them, and many other similar
themes contribute towards a happy synthesis and a religious fervour. Every such effort
built a bridge between the personal and the collective unconscious of our graving human
society.
Mr. Aldous Huxley, one of the most enlightened of the critics, frankly admitted in his travel book, Jesting Pilate, that he was biased against the kind of mind and temperament which produced Hindu art. “A visit to India makes one realize,” he said, “how fortunate, so far at any rate as the arts are concerned, our Europe has been in its religious. The Olympian religion of antiquity and, except occasionally, the Christianity which took its place, were both favourable to the production of works of art, and the art which they favoured was, on the whole, a singularly reasonable and decent kind of art. Neither paganism nor Christianity imposed restrictions on what the artist might represent; nor did either demand of him that he should try to represent the unpresentable…How different is the state of things in India.”

I personally feel that in Indian art, basically the Hindus have always permitted the representation of human form, of which other religions are quite orthodox and strict. Such an instinct told the artist that it is his business to express symbolically the superhuman, the spiritual, the pure metaphysical idea…The Hindus have always been too much interested in Metaphysics and ultimate Reality to make good artists. An artist’s preoccupation with the sense of form was at least as important as was their addiction to a profound sense of religion. It seems to me, that their sense of form, their love of carving as such, is more obvious than their religiosity, and thus we all should be surprised to come to know the fact that how the sculptor exactly obeyed all such norms and gave his best in all possible ways.

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