CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION
Art not only represents the individuality of its creator, but also embodies the artist's conception of beauty.

The principal motive force affecting life in ancient India was the socio-religious factor.

Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh was one of the fortunate centres which was in the forefront of economic and aesthetic activity. Inter-regional and foreign forces interacted here producing a composite culture. Its central geographical location and its importance as a marketing centre in ancient India brings into focus the problem of a linear development of civilization and at the same time provides a significant base for the study of various aspects of the life and thoughts of people.

All the three main Indian religions developed in the Vidisha region for quite a long time. The Vaishnavism, Saiva, Buddhist and Jaina sculptures and monuments in and around Vidisha furnish a lot of material for study.

Vidisha enjoyed the privilege of being the capital city of eastern Malwa. It was very near to Sanchi, the well known
Buddhist centre. The long trade route of joining Kausambi Ujjain passed through Vidisha. Several other routes passed through Vidisha. Vidisha played a significant role in the cultural sphere. The rich donors and other citizens of Vidisha contributed their might to the munificent donations made to the Vaishnava and Buddhist establishments located in the Vidisha district. A large number of votive inscriptions, railing-pillar, monuments prove this. These names include not only the royal donors, but also represent the people in general.

The Maurya Age initiated a new era of life-size stone sculptures carved in the round. These figures generally represented the Yaksas and animal figures. The robust art tradition continued during the Sunga-Satavahana Age. The Yaksā and Yakṣī sculptures from Besnagar, Vidisha and Fawaya are remarkable for their colossal forms. The newly discovered images of Yaksā and Yakṣī from Betwa are unique examples of the early robust art of eastern Malwa. The artists of Central India during this period were successful in overcoming rigidity by a fine sense of grace. The traits were carried on by their successors upto the early Medieval Period.

The Bhakti movement during the Sunga Satavahana Period besought an atmosphere for the growth of fine arts. It is noticed not only in the Vedic Puranic religion, but also in Buddhism and Jainism. These religions found the medium of architecture and art very congenial for their development.
Contacts with the western countries also gave a fillip to the growth of art in this region. The setting up of a pillar in front of the Vismu temple at Besnagar indicates the practical and religious importance of Vidisha. During the rule of the Kushānas and western Kastrapas contacts between India and the western countries increased.

The period between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D. did not produce much by way of fine arts in the Vidisha region. A few Yakṣa and Yakṣī images of the period are known from this area. Some statues of Nagas and Nagis, both in the human and the serpent form, have also been found. Similarly, a few Buddhist relics have been discovered showing the popularity of Buddhism in this region after the Śunga-Sātavāhana Age.

The Gupta Period marked a new epoch in Indian art history. In Central India the number of art centres increased during the Gupta Period. The plastic art now attained a maturity, a balance, and naturalness of expression. It was the age of the culmination and perfection of earlier phases and forms of art. It was also connected with the evolution of the temple architecture. The Gupta Age is rightly called the formative and creative period in the sphere of art.

Both from the religious and secular points of view, the plastic art made strides during the Gupta Age. Architecture both of the rock cut and structural types flourished here during the period.
In the time of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya, Vaishnavism carved out its enviable place in the religious art of the country. This rule was responsible for the initiation of the classical style in plastic art. Several deities of the Brahmanical pantheon were represented through the media of stone and clay.

The art specimens of the early Gupta Period are marked by toughness and round forms. This gradually gave place to softness and delicacy. The stone sculptures of the later Gupta Period shows more slender forms and refinement.

The idea of all pervasiveness found its expression in the images of important deities of the Gupta Age. Vidisha made its own contribution to make Indian art truly national during this period.

The Gupta art of Central India made its mark on the art of other religions, particularly the Deccan and south India. Some of its traits became popular in South-East Asia.

The Jaina pantheon also developed in this region during the Gupta Age. The newly discovered Tirthankara images installed during the time of the Gupta ruler Rāmagupta are rare acquisitions.

After the Guptas the Paramāras came into power. The religious ideas and social practices, so well established during the Gupta Age continued during the Early Medieval period.
Image worship became very popular now and hence temples and images of different religions were made in large numbers.

There was a rapid growth of Saivism during the Early Medieval Period. The Saiva temples built during the period from 7th to 13th century A.D. have been found at Badoh, Gyaraspur, Udaipur, Kagpur, etc.

The cult of Visnu was also prevalent during this period. The synchrotic images of the period found at several places clearly show that a spirit of toleration and goodwill among different religions and beliefs existed.

There are relics of Vidiha and its surrounding area eloquently prove the importance of this city as one of the great centres of Indian art. For the study of the evolution of art Vidiha has furnished much useful material of variegated nature. It was here that the main religions found a congenial atmosphere for their growth side by side for a long period. This region thus represented one of the few areas in the country where religious and cultural integration was fructified.

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