CHAPTER II . A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF K. V. SOUNDARA RAJAN
In 1864, it was possible for a British Professor of archaeology to write about Indian sculpture, "...there is no temptation to dwell at length on the sculpture of Hindustan. It affords no assistance in tracing the history of art, and it's debased quality deprives it of all interest as a phase of fine art. It must be admitted, however, that the works existing offer very curious subjects of inquiry to the scholar and archaeologist" (1). The pretentious and poorly informed remark of Westmacott is not altogether true. To comprehend Indian art in totality, a critical appraisal of the related Indian literature and archaeological evidence of the entire period was essential.

Until the second half of the 20th century, the western Art Historians had monopoly in the field of Indian Art. Hence, there was no in-depth interpretation of stylistic and iconographic aspects of Indian Art. To European mind, Indian art was "...a thing barbarous, immature, monstrous, an arrested growth from humanities primitive savagery and incompetent childhood" (2). It is literary pugilism of a peculiar kind. This is "...a furious sparring at a lay figure of India which is knocked down at pleasure through a long and exuberant dance of misstatement and exaggeration in the hope of convincing an ignorant audience that the performer has prostrated a living adversary, sanity, justice, measure are things altogether at a discount" (3). It is a pleasant thing to "...play the fool in place and right season, dulceest desipere in loco" (4).

Meanwhile, the Indian mind "...began to emancipate itself and to look upon it's past with a clear and self-discerning eye, and it very soon discovered that it had been misled to an entirely false self-view" (5). The task of concretizing the implicit meaning of Indian Art with regard to the Indian view of life was undertaken by K.V. Soundara Rajan known and respected for his works of epic size in art history. His technicalities, mainstream mind and unity of purpose have earned him the honour, Heritage Soundara Rajan.

Kodaganallur Vanamamalachhari Soundara Rajan was born on the 17th February 1925 at Cheyyur, Chingleput District in the historic Tondaimadalam, in orthodox Shri Vaishnava family of Tirunelveli with the roots at Kodaganallur, a village on the river Tamrapani. The ancestors of Rajan were traditionalists involved in Vedavritti, Ubbhya Vedantins of South India; some among them had also been the presiding pontiffs' of the Ahobilamath, one of the two well-known Shri Vaishnava Sampradayas in Tamil country, the other being the Munitraya Sampradayins. His father Lt. Col. S.V. Chari was an illustrious journalist working with the Statesman, Culcutta. He was an observer.
in China during the 1940-42 Civil War. He was honoured with the title 'Rao Bahadur' for his commendable dispatches. Soundara Rajan could develop a penchant for pet idioms and cliches in analytical observations from his distinguished father.

Rajan had his early education at the Pattamadai High School and his graduation from the famous Madhurai Dravidam Thayumanavar Hindu College. He completed Master degree from the Allahabad University in Sanskrit with Epigraphy and Ancient Indian Culture as special subjects. Rajan married Kumuda, who was a constant source of great stimulus for his activities. She is an accomplished flutist, good at handicrafts with an excellent sense of aesthetics.

Rajan spent his fruitful years with the Archaeological Survey of India. All through his career, he shouldered various responsibilities, both field-oriented and administrative.

- **Scholar**, Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Region, Madras (1947-53)
- **Pottery Assistant and Excavation Assistant**, Archaeological Survey of India New Delhi (1953-57)
- **Assistant Superintendent**, Pre-history branch, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi (1957-58)
- **In-Charge Officer**, Temple Survey Branch, Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Region, Madras (1958-68)
- **In Charge Officer**, Temple Survey Branch, Archaeological Survey of India, Other Regions' (1968-75)
- **Director**, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi (1975-78)
- **Joint Director General**, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi (1980-82)
- **Additional Director General**, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi (1982-85)
- Formal retirement as **Additional Director General**, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi (1985)

In his early age itself, Rajan had developed a taste for Sanskrit. His knowledge and proficiency in Sanskrit made him grasp the pan-Indian spirit from its literature. His style of writing closely resembles the celebrated Sanskrit author Bana where each paragraph constitutes a single sentence with multiple-clause and sub-clause. He had keen interest in amateur drama, classical Carnatic music and swimming. He enjoyed playing football, kho-kho and cricket at school and college. Sketching and trekking were his other hobbies. He was known for English oratory. His extensive writing cover
Pre-history, Proto-history, Early History, Medieval History, Art and Architecture of India Epigraphy, Numismatics, Religious Literature. He has been praised as a versatile scholar with profound insight into the core of Indian Culture. His belief in analytic perceptions of archaeological data and synthetic and interpretative competence is laudable indeed. He doesn’t accept the viewpoint that the material remains in archaeology should be studied independently excluding the environment and ancillary frame works of the age. He also believes in art history as contingent upon rise and fall and interaction of cults, and stagnation with out stimulus and change. In total, Rajan has 25 books and 100 plus research articles to his credit. The recent *Classified Dictionary of Hinduism* in six volumes is his masterpiece. Soundara Rajan held the posts of Chairman and President, Vice-President and Recorder of various conferences - learned societies like, Indian Science Congress; Indian Archaeological Survey; Archaeological Society of South India, Madras; International Asian Seminar on Archaeology of the Archaeological Survey of India during centenary celebrations (1960) as Secretary of the Prehistory and Proto-history section, and President of the seminar on Hundred Years’ of Rock Painting in India organized by the Government of Madhya Pradesh at Bhopal (1981).

He was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago, University of California Los Angeles and visitor under the British Council to the U.K. He was a member of the official culture delegation of the Government of India to Vietnam and Thailand for culture exchange arrangements. He was also a member of the consultative committee for the UNESCO project on Port Cities of the Indian Ocean Region at Zanzibar (Tanzania) in 1983. Soundara Rajan had kaleidoscopic proficiency in Pre-history. He had the privilege to learn it from V.D. Krishnaswamy. Soundara Rajan carried out excavation in various parts of India at Sisupalgarh, Sanur, Nagarjunkonda, Broach, Valasana, Desalpur, Nagal, Nagari, Perur, Kaveripattanam, Ropar, Brahmagiri etc. His joint excavation at Sanur with K.R. Srinivasan had revealed pre-Sangam and Sangam epochs. He assisted Sir Mortimer Wheeler in excavating sites at Kalibangan, Banawali, Siswal and Mithathal. From 1949 onwards, he treated H.D. Sankalia as his gentle mentor for having guided him in Indology. He was indebted to F.I. Zeuner for schooling him in pre-historic studies. He was a voracious reader. He had read beyond Kalidasa, Bana, Bhavabhuti and the Tamil Poetry of the pre-Christian centuries. His interest ranged from
archaeology to material dialecticism. He was well-versed in English, Sanskrit and his native tongue Tamil. He had picked-up ample knowledge of the other Dravidian languages of the South, Kannada and Malayalam. He was a language device unto himself. It enabled him derive, obtain and interpret information with ease. SoundaraRajan's death (8th May 2003) has created a vacuum in the academic circle. He is survived by three sons and wife Mrs. Kumudavalli. He was an embodiment of wisdom, industriousness and committed to the cause of throwing light on Art History. His mental faculties' receptivity, retentivity, ratiocination, genial temperment and exposition were remarkable. He had good conversational skills. He was modest enough to consider himself a pre-historian by scientific interest, an archaeologist by profession and art historian by technical expertise. He displayed abilities rarely combined, scholarship and administrative skill. He fostered the studies in oriental culture, fought alchemy and dogma, earned honorable hostility by defying the mendicant order. Being a laborious genius devoting his life on revival of antiquity, Soundara Rajan had observed ethical and moral restraint in liberating history from moral chaos. He had set standard-bearer of justice Consiglio del popolo in writing history. The present study primarily intends to explore Soundara Rajan's procedural data record system and concealed historiography.

* A better part of this unit is culled from INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE: A Soundara Rajan Felicitation Volume edited by C. Margabandhu, K.S. Ramachandran, A.P. Sagar and D.K. Sinha
Reference

2. Sri Aurobindo: *The Renaissance in India and other Essays on Indian Culture*, p.260
4. *Ibid*,
5. *Ibid*, p.6