CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Deccan region has been rich in natural resources from time immemorial. A variety of natural rock and cave formations as well as the availability of different building materials has allowed its inhabitants to occupy and construct monuments relating to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. Our main concern has been to study nature as depicted on only the Buddhist and Hindu monuments built from roughly 3rd century BC to the 10th century AD. It is striking that the artists of ancient Deccan brought to the forefront nature, especially Fauna and Flora in decorating these monuments. Was this done because nature was central to these religious philosophies or, merely because as part of decoration they were instructed to do so by their patrons? Flora and Fauna on religious buildings did have an underlying philosophical and symbolism. Infact, even when not depicted as part of the divine beings, their decorative elements were also imbied with a rich meaning. In many ways therefore, depiction of nature in early art of the Deccan reflects not only the religious ethos but also a close relationship between human beings and their natural environment.

In the introductory Chapter we placed the study of depiction of nature in sculptural art of Deccan against the background of the various meanings of art and nature. This led us to explain the various views of scholars and the respective schools of art they represented. The relationship between art and nature was thus highlighted and the notion of Indian culture's attitude to nature pervading Indian art was highlighted. Towards the end of this chapter we described the region of our study and
also gave a description of source materials and the methodology adopted for analysis in this thesis.

In the second Chapter on Historiography we examined and described writings on Indian art by different scholars and the way they focused on nature. In this regard, we divided the various views discussed in this chapter chronologically beginning with the earliest concepts about it in the 13th-17th century writings of travellers followed by the scholars who wrote during the 17th-18th century. The tendency to write on Indian art changed considerably during the 19th century AD and this had an impact on the notions of various scholars during the 20th century AD. Additionally, we demarcated between scholars who wrote during the early 20th century from those who wrote after independence from the mid-20th century onwards.

We found that during the 13th-17th centuries most of the writings on Indian art were mere descriptive accounts, often projecting Indian art as somewhat derogatory. We noted that writings of this period were marked by prejudice because these scholars were primarily amateur travellers with a lack of in depth knowledge about Indian culture and were further deep rooted in western ideology. Therefore, they vilified Indian Gods and Goddesses insulting them as monstrous and evil. Though writings of the 17th century increased in describing the depiction of nature in Indian art studies, those on the Deccan art were few. We observed that their main interest was on iconography and especially on providing details of decoration. In the following century, that is, from the 17th to the 18th century AD, we noted that the writings of scholars were relatively more sympathetic to Indian history and art, and they largely considered Indian art as sublime. However, many of them measured every thing from the in scientific point of view. The 18th century scholars focussed more on
documentation of Indian art. Further, they were trained in appreciating natural art and therefore, studied depiction of nature in art by comparing the Indian notions with the classical Greek and Roman traditions. The scholars of the 19th century were more concerned with the interpretation of art than its mere documentation. They were however, both critical and sympathetic to it. Their discussion on nature was less because most of them were administrators and surveyors. Thus, their main contribution was that they reproduced photographs of sculptural representations of nature like flora and fauna as found in the Deccan in their reports and books.

In contrast to the views of these scholars, we have we during the early twentieth century, the writings of certain scholars who in most of their writings viewed Indian art critically. Scholars like Percy Brown and Vincent Smith often compared early Indian art with the Greek and Roman art and found Indian art as less impressive compared to the former. Since these scholars were looking at Indian art through the foreign eye, using their own parameters, they naturally could not appreciate importance and particular relevance of the nature in Indian art. The historians and archaeologists of the early twentieth century questioned the colonial interpretations of the concept of nature and its depiction in Indian art by focusing on it as the central theme of understanding the entire world view of the early artistic and sculptural depictions.

The early twentieth century thus also saw writings that gave special emphasis to understanding the ethos of Indian art while writings of the post independent era brought about a study of art on the particular regions of the subcontinent. Scholars like Coomaraswamy and Kramrisch began a trend that was appreciative of the integral
view of Indian art that was built on the concept of nature. We noted that their influence on studies between the 1940’s and 1980’s was immense and therefore, works on the depiction of nature in Indian art increased. This included the depiction of nature in the art of the different regions of the Deccan. In fact, it is only now that some articles came to be written exclusively on nature emphasising on the depiction of flora and fauna in Indian art. Finally, studies on regional art began to proliferate during the mid-twentieth century. These were mainly dynastic or site studies and some of them discussed depiction of nature by giving examples. However, they are mainly descriptive and give iconographic details rather than making any attempt to analyze the depictions. Methologically, too they did not change the earlier practices of how art studies had been moulded under the colonial period.

Having discussed the broad trends in which art history on the subcontinent developed, we have found that in each phase of its evolution the depiction of nature remained ‘peripheral’ to the larger concerns on the writing about the sculptural art of early India. Though many regional studies began to be done right from the nineteenth century onwards, they remained mainly descriptive projecting the sculptural panels depicting flora and fauna as only something extra in their respective reports and books that were focussed on themes around different regions, dynasties or sites. As discussed above, only a few scholars have clearly articulated the centrality of nature in the experience and craft of the artists and have given due emphasis to it in appreciating the vitality of early Indian art. From the point of view of the Deccan fragmented studies on highlighting the depiction of nature in the art of the different states--Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka- of the Deccan have been done, but only for specific time periods. It is this lacunae that the present study hopes to fill.
Next, in Chapter Three, we studied fauna depicted in Buddhist sculptural art. This chapter shows how and why animals and birds as a part of nature appeared on early Buddhist monuments of the Deccan. We discuss in this chapter three broad themes: (a) importance of animals in Buddhism (b) animals and birds that assumed the form of Bodhisattva and (c) animals and birds as they appeared during the major events the Buddha's life. On the first of these themes we discussed various descriptions from different texts that explained the close relationship of animals, to Buddhist ethics and the beliefs on the depiction of Bodhisattva as animals and birds during his various lives. Similarly, the association of animals and birds with the great events of the life of the Buddha were also closely analyzed in the context of the overall belief system.

In describing the importance of animals we came across the fact that traditionally animals had great symbolic meaning. Though animals often lived in painful and dangerous ways, and in the evolutionary process were considered at a lower ladder, the Buddhist treated them as equal as human beings. In fact, many Buddhist texts tell us of punishments imposed if animals were ill-treated. The animals were also considered important in the socio-economic life of the people and it was recognized that animals and humans had to live in close association. In this chapter we have given an account on how animals helped the Buddha during his lifetime and how in an animal or bird form looked after people in his previous life. Thus, the symbolic importance of animals and birds in Buddhism cannot be overlooked. It is perhaps for this reason that they were so frequently used as a medium of expression to convey important ideas about the Buddha and his preaching to the people at large.
On theme two we noted that the artistic representation of animals and birds in his former life and animals associated with Buddha on the monuments of the Deccan as depicted by the artists was both naturalistic and idealistic. For instance, the depictions of the elephants in the dream of Maya were naturalistic whereas the elephants in palanquins carried by dwarfs on the same theme were idealistic. In another example the Bodhisattva as snake in the Amaravati sculptural art is portrayed realistically, while the depictions of the naga mucilinda with multi-hoods protecting the Buddha closely followed the legend but was far removed from how snakes appear in their natural form. We noticed the fact that in some representations of animals and birds the artist used the synoptic method. Here, the animals were shown smaller than their normal size. The most common theme where this method was used, because of narrow space was available for elephants in Maya’s dream. Often in telling a Jataka story like that of the Mora Jataka or in the depiction of the Hasti Jataka too this method was used.

The artists had mastered the technique of narrating stories through the art medium. In the descriptions of this chapter we observed that the representation of the Hare Jataka and the Javasakana Jataka were masterpieces. We can say that this was possible because the sculptors were well versed in the Buddhist tradition. However, the style and form of the animals and birds chiselled was most often naturalistic. They also used their imagination in a creative way. In a scene, when the elephants pour water over the mother, they are shown holding pitcher delicately on their trunks. This scene is usually depicted with elephants standing on either side of Maya as in the specimen from Junnar.
Similarly, on theme three in this chapter we noted that different forms of bull connected with the Master’s birth were depicted. In the depiction of the Great Departure, we noticed the artists followed both the Mahāyāna and the Theravada traditions and further, we saw variations in embellishments on the royal animals from period to period. For instance, the horse from Pītalhokha was shown plainly whereas, the one at Nagarjunakonda was showed bedecked richly. The artists also kept in mind the mood of the theme being depicted. Therefore, the depiction of elephants in Mārā’s assault on the Buddha is shown to look ugly and ferocious. On the other hand, on the same theme this animal while running away after the attack shows his movement as fearful due to the great triumph of the Master. The artists were at their best when they depicted various forms and mood of the naga. They are shown both in a stylized and natural form. Most importantly, their varied forms reveal the scope of their association with the human world. The artists took great care to show these different forms of the naga with great sensitivity indicating simultaneously, their significance to the religious thought of the Buddhists.

The depiction of fauna in early Buddhist art was not only varied and stylistically rich in form but also closely entwined with the ideological content as defined by the early Buddhist practitioners of the Deccan. When we examined in detail the animals in the great events of the life of the Buddha, we found that the largest number of animals depicted were elephants. In terms of numbers the deer was next as this signified the preaching of the Dhamma in the first place the Buddha did so after attaining nirvana. The representation of horse was equivalent to the number of times the naga Mucilinda was depicted in the examples we took up for study. The
depiction of the bull and the monkey was, however, rare. Therefore, we observed that representation of elephant in the great events of the life of the Buddha was outstanding and it had a special significance in Buddhist lore. It appears in the art at the auspicious moment of Buddha's birth, as his protector and worshipper but also as his attacker. Similarly, the horse and deer appear at critical moments of the decision Lord Buddha had to make about leaving his home and family and then returning to society to preach the Law of Dhamma, respectively. We concluded that there was also change in the way the animals were depicted in the Deccan art. The artists showed the animals as Bodhisattva in a rather natural form while some animals associated with his early life were portrayed with rich ornamentation. We also studied the creative skill of the artists. For instance, the naga was chiselled with several hoods, which cannot of course be observed in nature and was therefore, part of the artist's imagination to show how the naga ably protected the Buddha. In some of the depictions animals with bad character and intent co-existed with animals that went out of their way to help others in their miseries. We also noticed some influence of art motifs borrowed from Gandhara, and Bharut that indicate exchange of ideas in art between those regions and Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. This indicated that art work related to Buddhism had some common themes that artists, irrespective of region or site, had mastered in their sculptural depictions.

In Chapter Four we took up the discussion on how fauna was depicted in Hindu sculptural art of Deccan. In this chapter we categorized broadly two sorts of animals that were graphically described as demons attacking Gods and Goddesses, and those that were friendly often associated as helping the elements of truth and goodness. These animals associated with Hindu belief were described under three
broad themes. These are those that explained the importance of animals in Hinduism, animal depicted in various texts on Hinduism and animals performing as vehicles of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. As the first theme in this chapter in each case we first described the importance and symbolic meaning of the animals as given by scholars. It was important to discuss the respective nature of different animals and birds as it was due to this that their relationship with Hindu Gods and Goddesses could best be described and highlighted. The sculptors tried to follow this pattern in their artistic depictions. For this chapter one hundred and eighty nine specimens were studied. Out of them ninety seven appeared as vehicles of various deities, nine were considered divine, fourteen were described as demons, four of them were gods in zoomorphic form while two were in theriomorphic form and lastly, two were forms given to saints. The method employed for description was both comparative and interpretative through allegory. Undoubtedly, the popularity of a variety of fauna as vehicles of various deities stands out as their most visible representation.

As part of theme two in this chapter we tried to understand the depiction of Gods, Goddesses and saints in their animal and bird incarnations and animals and birds, while not denying that Gods and Goddesses also fought with them. In this regard, we noted that animals and birds were in zoomorphic form (i.e., animals and birds in the original form) and theriomorphic form (re., animals assuming half-human and half-animal or bird form). This emphasized on the fact that a clear-cut distinction between the animal and human forms was sometimes not maintained underlying an important conceptual basis of this world-view. Our data provided ample examples where the sculptor depicted these animals and birds in the sequence of the stories related in the Purana and other such texts that narrated the traditions where human and
animal association was extremely close and intimate. Apart from this, we have discussed the symbolic meanings of each of these animals in their different incarnations that further underscore this close linkage between the two. In some of the stories narrated particularly those revolving around the God Krishna which was popularly depicted in the sculptural art of the Deccan, we also noted that the human and divine elements as personified through animals also came into conflict. These depictions reflected the destructive aspects of nature, which the humans were continually being warned about. This study thus helped us to understand the importance of nature in Hindu religious art and how the sculptor visualized these animals and birds in their real form thus lending it the color of depicting nature as part of the interplay of the larger forces of the cosmic, divine and human life.

As part of theme there in this chapter we had to necessarily describe a number of animals as the vehicles of Gods and Goddesses. Seventy-five specimens were taken up of animals such as bull, lion, horse, lion, deer, elephant, goat, ram and rat. Fifteen of the examples were of aquatic animals like makara, crocodile and tortoise and twenty-five examples were of birds such as garuda, swan, peacock and owl. Of the animals the numbers of bulls discussed were greater than the horse, followed closely by the lion. The deer, elephant, buffalo and goat appeared in more or less the same number with a couple of examples of the rat and ram. The number of examples of the garuda, swan and peacock were the same while the owl occurred only once in the data collected by us.

In the depiction of animals and birds as vehicles of various Gods and Goddesses it was emphasized that they were projected as serving particular divine
Masters and Mistresses in performing their duties. Important depictions of swan as the mount of Brahma, Garuda, the vehicle of Visnu and the bull as vehicle of Siva are well known. We not only described these but also animals like the lion, the vehicle of Mahisasuramardini, the rat as vehicle of Ganesa, the elephant as vehicle of Indra, the goat and the deer (stag) as vehicle of Agni, the buffalo as vehicle of Yama (god of death) and the makara as mount of Vayu. Some birds like the peacock as vehicle of Subrahmanya and owl the mount of Laksmi were also described and detailed.

Comparatively speaking, the quantity of the bull specimens that were associated with Siva were found in large numbers on the Deccan monuments than the other animals. By and large their depiction was naturalistic. It was noticed that the bull with big body and broad face in the Maharashtra region looked healthier than those depicted in other parts of the Deccan region. Generally, with regard to most animals the later phase shows that the artists while chiselling the sculptures began to adorn the animals with different kinds of ornamentation. This emerged in different ways indicating that artists belonging to different schools or having got different guidance used their own artistic skills to make the animals and birds look pleasing and attractive to the worshippers. Though the embellishments seem to be reflection of the artist's mind we noticed an evolution of ornamentation from period-to-period and region-to-region that definitely indicates the existence of different schools specific to particular localities. Culturally, a large number of animals and birds associated with particular deities showed the prominence of that particular region. Apart from variation in style we also observed that emotions were well-depicted. The two types of lion that were associated with the Goddess Mahisasuramardini are a good example. The animal seated beside the deity usually looked tame while the one in action on the
battlefield was sculptured in a ferocious manner. The artist gave special emphasis on the appearance of the animal in each case especially in the latter case as he was narrating the most famous story of the destruction of evil. Though in a reality ferocious animals like the lion was never shown in close proximity to human beings, through the work of the artists it was indicated that even such a ferocious animal could help humankind by helping in the destruction of evil.

In the descriptions and discussion of Chapter Five, we emphasized that decoration was an important element of art and it played a vital role in producing the ideal form of beauty. For achieving a beautiful form and aesthetic response, a variety of decorative motifs were used in the Deccan sculpture. Nature in terms of flora like trees full of (lowers and foliage, fruits, lotuses, creepers, flowers, Honeysuckles and fauna like horses carrying royal personages and engaged in war, elephants both in war scenes and as helpers in public activities, elephants in hunting, camels in travel, oxen and bulls in everyday life, buffaloes, bulls, cocks in the role of amusements and birds such as doves carrying fruits and parrot breaking fruits all occupied an essential place in their compositions.

In this chapter, we first discussed the importance of decoration, followed by the depiction of flora in decoration as part of the symbolism of life and finally, the depiction of animals and birds in decoration on the religious monuments. We explained the hypothesis of this chapter in that the artists commonly used the things found in nature as decorative motifs and exchanged their ideas through art motifs from both within localities and from contiguous regions. The number of flora and fauna in each theme varied from region to region and over time. In this regard, there
was no uniform pattern or iconographic rules that were followed but rather, artistic
convention was followed and the relevance of the subject matter for the viewer of
these depictions.

For the purpose of the above descriptions this chapter had been divided into
three parts viz., (i) the importance of decoration in order to define its meaning from
various dictionaries and texts, (ii) the depiction of trees, flowers and foliage in
decoration, nature and every day life (iii) the depiction of animals and birds in
decoration, nature and every day life. A special emphasis was given to selecting
special specimens for these descriptions so that for each theme, we described at least
one example. A comparative method was employed in seeing the variations in each of
these specimens. When we analysed these specimens in a region-wise the data
showed similarities and differences. We were thus able to identify common themes
and those in which exchange of art motifs took place against the background of
regional variations.

As gleaned from above descriptions in this chapter animals were engaged in
various functions but flora like trees, lotuses, leaves, creepers, foliage and fruits
played a major symbolic role in these depictions. The artists represented different
sorts of trees. We observed trees conveying symbolic meanings in both Hinduism and
Buddhism. Thus, we could see how nature intervened in conveying religious ideas.
Some trees, however, were represented as mere decorations. Relatively speaking, the
banyan and the pipal tree in Andhra were more popular than in Mahararastra and
Karnataka during the earlier period. But the trees in the Amaravati depictions were
found to be stylised, whereas trees in other regions were depicted more naturalistically. The Jambu trees under which the Buddha meditated was noticed at Amaravati and Gummadiduru that were similar but, the flowering tree under the Buddha was shown lying depicted at Ajanta was not found in any other part of the Deccan region. During the later period mango trees with clusters of fruits were found equally depicted in both Karnataka and Maharashtra. Nevertheless, the fruits depicted in Maharashtra were seen as being bigger than that those represented at Karnataka.

Similarly, among the flowers depicted we found continuity and change in the depiction of the lotus. During the earlier period, various forms of lotus such as coming out from the auspicious pot, as the seat of the Buddha and other deities were found prolifically depicted. The depiction of lotus coming out from the auspicious pot continued during the later period as well. A profound evolution was noticed in the use of lotus as seat of Brahma and lotus issuing from the navel of Visnu, in the form of the creation of the Universe that could not be overlooked. The lotus floating on the water was probably difficult to depict and so we found only one such example at Kessanapali. Apart from lotus we found different varieties of garlands depicted that had symbolic meaning but were often depicted in a naturalistic form. The garlands carried by Vyalas and Yaksas in zoomorphic form and anthropomorphic form were unusual but found in several specimen examples.

Under theme three of this chapter we described different animals and birds in various roles depicted in the Deccan sculptural art. The artists represent most of animals, as they were actually found and working in their respective environment. In some scenes, however, we found that the artist depicted them using his imagination.
For example, the activities of the cow, bull and ox were portrayed how they must have participated in the everyday life of the people. The artists were undoubtedly aware of the value of these animals for the farmers in the fields and for drawing and dragging carts. Before the invention of the vehicle fixed with engine, transport to travel from place to place was done on the back of the animals like elephants and horses. These animals also played an important role in wars and both have been prolifically depicted in the sculptural art. Hunting of animals through the ages was a major activity of human beings and this activity has also been depicted. We noticed the depiction of animals and birds in amusement and pastime of the people as well. Through these depictions we closely observed the interaction between animals and birds and human beings. For instance, the parrot rested on the shoulder and hand of people and doves were used for carrying message etc.

In the above depictions and descriptions of flora and fauna we thus found complex human needs and dependence on nature. Many of these depictions were artistically and beautifully represented indicating the close observations of nature by the artists. Though we suggested above that nature in these depictions was primarily of utilitarian values-- for decoration and use in every day life— it must also be stressed that the symbolic meaning of the trees, creepers, flowers, fruits, animals and birds was never lost. In fact, it would be appropriate to conclude that the human interaction of nature was not merely materialistic but rather, it was rooted in an ethos that viewed and valued nature with respect.

Finally, contributions of the present work can be highlighted. One of the major contributions of this study has been underscoring the importance of nature in the
study of sculptural art pertaining to all three sub-regions of the Deccan together, which has not been done so far by any art historians. Earlier studies as pointed out above are either on individual states with either present-day boundaries or, those defined by ancient dynasties or, still further only on particular sites. This study tries to give a more holistic picture of the region as a whole on a subject that has hitherto not been much importance in art history. The iconography of human figures or architectural forms of various religious structures have drawn the largest attention of scholarly world. However, the recognition that depiction of nature in terms of the depiction of fauna and flora should be seen as integral to iconographic as well as architectural studies has been our particular contribution in taking up this study for the present thesis.

Our second major contribution in this study has been to give an emphasis on noticing similarities and differences found in the form and style of depicting nature in different contexts. We have done this by dividing our study into different phases of the evolution of art in the early historic that is primarily reflected on Buddhist monuments and the early medieval periods primarily reflected on Hindu monuments. For example, in our data we have noticed that when the elephant was depicted as Bodhisattva in the Buddhist context it appeared more naturalistic than the elephant as vehicle of Indra in the Hindu context, which appears stylistically more decorative and with little movement. On the other hand, when the elephant was depicted as a part of the royal scene, we noticed that in both Buddhist and Hindu contexts it appears identical with decorations and ornamentation. Further, we have also noticed similarities and differences in the depiction of nature in the sub-regional context. For instance, the data collected by us shows that the form and type of lotus depicted at
Amaravati and at Alampur of later period is similar. Similarly, the killing of the elephant by Krishna depicted at Badami and Pattadakal in Karnataka was found depicted in a similar way at Srikakulam, which is in present-day Andhra Pradesh. On the other hand, the depiction of trees too shows various differences in the Western and the Eastern Deccan. For example, the Pipal tree shaped like the sun depicted at Kanheri is not natural in style while a similar sort of tree at Amaravati is naturalistic as it is found in the nature. Therefore, our data indicates that there was exchange of art motifs in these regions through the ages. There are also similarities in ornamentation of animals from one region to another that suggests to us that the artists working in these regions might be from the same guild or got trained in the same school.

Though the emphasis in this thesis, in quantative terms, has been to describe the multitude of animals known in the world of the ancient and early medieval Deccan, it has been an important contribution of our study to treat the depiction of both flora and fauna in their essential ideological settings. Decorative art in particular has hitherto been depicted in art histories as though it was meant to only fill up space on the doorways or borders of monuments. In the present study we have specially emphasized that the decorative elements like creepers, auspicious pots, trees, mythical animals etc., had a fundamental symbolism that could not be detached from them. Therefore, if the beauty of these decorative aspects was outstanding it could not be devoid of the essence and value of the meaning of life in nature that they conveyed. At the same time they also conveyed the symbiotic relationship between the human and natural environment. This aspect of course gets more explicitly illustrated in the descriptions we have included of the use of animals and birds in everyday life that were also vividly depicted on the Deccan monuments.
A final major contribution of our thesis is that some specimens depicting fauna and flora that had not been known to scholars on art history so far have been collected and described by us for the first time. For instance, scholars have suggested the tortoise and fish in relation to Visnu was not known for the early period but we have found one such examples from Deccan monuments. We also have found bull as Bodhisattva depicted in Nasik and *Kalpavrksa* tree in Aihole.

This chapter on **Conclusion** is followed by a list of all the sources consulted by us while writing this thesis in the form of a consolidated **Bibliography**. This thesis has four Charts (Charts I-IV) and about eighty nine specially selected plates (Plates, I-LXXXIX) that have been used extensively by us in making our descriptions in understanding the depiction of nature in the sculptural art beginning roughly from the 3rd century BC up to the 10th century AD.

The study thus made us realize that in quantitative terms animals, birds, trees, creepers, flower etc. were no less important than human beings. The ethos as reflected in this art was one that understood the human being as only one of the several elements that defined the natural environment of the times. Thus hopefully, this thesis on "**Depiction of Nature in the Sculptural Art of Early Deccan**" will provide the essential empirical basis for future studies to be based on, highlighting further, the non-human elements that went into the making of our cultural and natural environment in historical time. It will also provide data for further study on sculptural art of the Deccan region by comparing it with other parts of India. There is thus big scope for this type of art-historical study that does not treat the depiction of nature as
marginal to the ostensible central theme of the human endeavours in making artistic expressions possible.

At a philosophical level our descriptive endeavours of these artistic depictions of nature hope to drive home an important point, namely, that in early India aesthetics was not separated from the more functional and everyday aspects of life. Thus, the depiction of animals and birds, flowers, trees and creepers were not mere objects of observation, scrutiny and sculpting but were fundamentally essential for understanding a holistic view of life. The stories, emotions, work practices, amusements that these elements of nature, as put forth in the sculptural art, were equally part of an aesthetic world in as much as they were part of a functional or utilitarian world.

Thus, we hope that both at an empirical and conceptual level we have taken initial steps to bring the richness of this heritage before the scholarly world. It is now for future studies to explore the full potential of this theme at the micro-level for different sub-regions of the Indian sub-continent.