CHAPTER II
HISTORIOGRAPHY

The seeds of sculptural art in India have bloomed ever since early human societies engraved the sculptures of organic things from their environment. However, the writings on the sculptural art in India began fairly recently as part of the larger writings on art history. The first scientific writings emerged with western scholarship and its notions of art. These scholars collected information as travellers, antiquarians, orientalists, administrators, and archaeologists. In this Chapter, we have ventured into examining how Indian art came to be understood and described by scholars on Art history, starting with the earliest historical writings on Indian art. In this regard, based on the approaches adopted by scholars, we have categorized their studies into different phases. The earliest of these are the travellers' accounts roughly between the 13th and 17th centuries AD. We found that during this period most of the writings on Indian art were mere descriptive accounts, often projecting Indian art as somewhat derogatory. In the following century, that is, from the 17th to the 18th century AD, we have the writings of scholars who were relatively more sympathetic to Indian history and art, and they largely considered Indian art as sublime. In contrast to the views of these scholars, we have during the 19th century and early twentieth century, the writings of British scholars usually administrators and officers who in most of their writings viewed Indian art critically. Scholars like Vincent Smith often compared it 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 the nature of Indian art.
In a strong reaction to much of these British writings there emerged, also during the early 20th century, the writings of primarily Nationalist writers. They questioned the colonial conception of Indian art and vehemently argued that the essence of Indian art is rooted in the early Buddhist and the Brahmanical world-views. The chief proponent of this school was Ananda Coomaraswamy whose views were sincerely followed by Stella Kramrisch. The post-independent period witnessed a proliferation of writings on Indian art-history both on a pan-Indian and regional scale. As a result, we have noticed that several writings emerged on studying art in different modern States of the republic of India. The focus here is on discussing only those views pertaining to the Deccan. However, all these writings remained largely descriptive as iconographic or architectural studies. They did not make any endeavour to bring dramatic changes in the way the methodological understanding of Indian art could be reinterpreted. From the 1970’s scholars tended to look at art history from the socio-economic point of view and related art to specific historical contexts. Prominent among such studies for the Deccan were scholars like Amita Ray. It must be stated clearly that through out this survey we could only find four to five specific articles dealing exclusively with the depiction of nature in the sculptural art of the Deccan.

The period from roughly the middle of the thirteenth to the end of the seventeenth century may be regarded as the formative phase in the understanding of Indian art by foreign travellers from different countries. Throughout a greater part of this long period ideas about Indian art were much the same and they were mainly derived from existing travel accounts. Their understanding of Indian art was limited primarily because of their brief sojourn in the country. Their observations on Indian
art were initially brief. Some of them commented on their form and style and often compared it with what was familiar to them in terms of the principles of western notions of art. Nature in Indian art was studied primarily to draw parallelism between Graeco-Roman art and that of India. In this regard, they were interested in making this comparison but gave little or no description of the sculptural art. They also made comments on the depiction of nature saying that Indian art was crude. They vilified Indian Gods and Goddesses with the view of them being evil and monstrous. They studied both Hindu and Buddhist art in the context of the Deccan. Most of them confined their studies to the sub-region of the Western Deccan.

The typical reactions of an early western traveller was bound to reflect certain prejudices stemming from his Western Christian background as well as from a clash of tastes involving two very different traditions. Alongside these reactions one also notices the gradual emergence of a counter-tendency, namely, the readiness on the part of the travellers to praise certain formal aspects of Indian art. For example, the fair Odoric of Pondenone was one of the earliest travellers who gave a description of a so-called 'monstrous idol' in the form of half-man and half-ox.

The eighteenth century was a period of rediscoveries. By the third decade of the eighteenth century much information about Indian gods had been received in Europe through missionaries and the efforts of a growing number of ethnographers who sought to present an authentic picture of Hindu religion and mythology by drawing on Indian literary sources and popular paintings. This new development inevitably led to the dissolution of the long-standing image of Indian gods as 'monsters'. No longer were Hindu gods regarded as thoroughly incomprehensible and
bizarre. There was a dramatic increase in interest in comparative religion during the second half of the eighteenth century. The new concern with emphasis on comparative mythology brought about changes in the interpretations of Indian art. Thus by then, scholars had become increasingly aware of the importance of sexual imagery in ancient classical religion, as present in its myths or in its sacred art.

Scholars in the eighteenth century without exception were convinced that the sexual imagery of ancient classical and Indian sacred art could only be an allegorical explanation of a different kind. According to Partha Mitter, the leading writers to discuss these problems were Pierre-Sylvain Marechal, Pierre-Francois Hugles, called d’Hancarville, Richard Payne Knight, and Charles Dupuis. Their main interest was in erotic art. They were thus, the first scholars to make serious attempts to gain knowledge about Indian art not only from literary sources but also from among the few known examples of Indian sculpture and painting in European collections. For instance, Mitter points out that Sylvain Marechal in his *Antiquities d’Hancarville* drew parallels between the Priapuś and the Indian *liriga*. He was convinced that the respect paid to the phallus in Greece and Rome and the same paid to the *linga* in India was not a local and isolated phenomenon but was a portrayal of nature in this manner. Similarly, it is pointed out by Mitter that Charles Dupuis’ concerns on principles of nature led him to believe that the Indian *liriga* represented a philosophic idea in the form of the union of the two great causes of nature.

In these writings, the creative or life-affirming principle represented by the phallus was also, by extension, seen revealed in other forces in nature and the cosmos. Another focus of attention was the sun that was adorned by all primitive people for its
connection with life, and in a very direct way, with all vegetative life. It was Dupuis who saw solar symbolism as complimenting and not contradicting the essential concern of phallic rites with fertility. Payne Knight described the ancient obelisk as solar symbols, and d’Hancarville identified the Andhakasura Śiva figure on the island of Elephanta as Bacchus in the form of the nocturnal sun because this Hindu god appeared to conceal himself behind the veil represented in the sculpture. These elements thus came to be understood by the late eighteenth-century antiquarians as the supreme example of the creative principle.

Apart from the celestial sphere the antiquarians also reflected on to the animal world. Here, they held the bull to be the most important symbol of generation and fecundity. In primitive societies the bull has always been revered for symbolising power and male sexuality and for its association with vegetation. The late eighteenth-century savants found the association between the bull and the vegetation and god Bacchus especially significant. They further equated Bacchus with the Indian God Śiva whose special emblem was indeed the bull. This association between Bacchus and the bull was fully recognised by d’Hancarville when he described the bull as the foremost symbol of creation that was accepted as such by all Asian societies like the Japanese, the Chinese and the Indians. In d’Hancarville’s view the Indian form of Bacchus was in fact, the god Brhma, who was supposedly represented at Elephanta in the company of cows. He also believed that Indians revered the bull as Darmadeva (Dharmadeva), whose image, he pointed out, was found in a Surat temple which was still painted red and was similar to the bull found in the temples of ancient Greece and Rome. Having discussed the role of Bacchus as the guardian of life and vegetation, the French antiquarian proceeded to examine his role as the god of creation and...
preservation, as well as its symbolism that also presided over death. This point was
illustrated with the example of the common Hindu desire to hold the tail of a cow
before taking leave of his world. Hancarville's interpretation was that Hindus were
well aware that the cow was the emblem of the god of both life and death\textsuperscript{6}.

It was Dupuis who commented on other animals, particularly the goat, which
he argued, was equally concerned with fecundity and vegetation. Recalling the role of
the celestial goat as a beneficent agent in certain Greek and Egyptian rites, Dupuis
turned his attention to the paintings of Indian gods in the Bibliotheque Nationale,
Paris. In one of these specimens, the incarnation of Visnu was shown with a four-
armed sun god who held a little goat on one of his fingers. In another example the god
Isprun (isvara) was shown descending to kill the demon Tiperant (Tripura) who also
had a little goat in one hand. Finally, in yet another example the picture of the god
Yogui-Hisper (Yogi-Iśwar=Śiva) represented him with a crescent moon on the
forehead and a little goat in his hand. Dupuis was convinced that there were some
historical link between Egyptian and Indian cosmogonies and made this the basis of
his arguments. Dupuis was thus one of the first who attacked the view that the
symbolic Indian figures were monstrous\textsuperscript{7}.

The approach of most of these early commentators on Indian art was to study
the art of different nations through a comparative method. The mythological
speculations of Dupuis and others had led to a new appreciation of Indian art. Their
attitudes represented a radical departure from previous interpretations of Indian art
while the new attitude was only possible because of a reliable amount of information
gradually accumulated and made available in the West. The dramatic improvement in
the documentation concerning Indian art led to a certain major change in the aesthetic outlook of these interpretations. One of the lasting achievements of these revival movements was the inception and subsequent nurturing of scientific archaeology, and archaeology soon became an indispensable tool for the study of the past. The second important development was the phenomenon ‘grand tour’ which encouraged travels purely for the sake of visual and aesthetic pleasure. Yet another profound change was the intellectual revolution that emerged in the eighteenth century with the European discovery of Sanskrit and other major Asian languages. These developments were of great significance for the reception of Indian art in that they marked the beginning of a systematic approach to the collecting and recording of facts relating to Indian art. It was this corpus of published material that provided antiquarians, philosophers and other intellectuals with the valuable evidence for their interpretations of Indian art.

The authors of the travel reports of the earlier period had not been able to maintain a clear distinction between objective reporting and subjective comments. It is only from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards that one can clearly discern the growth of two distinct traditions: one which undertook to record systematically all the relevant facts about Indian art, while the other, was engaged primarily in speculations about its nature and importance. In this period on the one hand, traveller's accounts became more reliable and archaeologists, on the other, were able to apply the new scientific method to Indian antiquities. The scholars of this period not only focussed on the Deccan but also on other parts of India.

Partha Mitter tells us that the leading travellers of this period to survey India were Anquetil-Dupperon, Niebuhr, Le Gentil and Sonnerat⁸. Anquetil gave an
account of his extensive travels in India wherein he described both art and architecture and especially tried to complete the survey of the rock carvings at Ellora but he was not successful. The iconographical details of the Kailasa temple were painstakingly taken down but due to the lack of his knowledge in Indian mythology there was considerable confusion in his interpretations. He highlighted the evidence for the universal worship of the goat but compared the style of the relief sculptures at Ellora with the medieval reliefs in the Notre Dame at Paris. Another traveller Carsten Niebuhr, a natural historian and scientist did not know Sanskrit and therefore, could provide only limited information on Elephanta that he had visited on three trips. However, Mitter informs us that Pierre Sonnerat, the celebrated traveller, and natural historian published in 1782, one of the most profusely illustrated and detailed accounts of Hindu religion and mythology. He wielded great authority over his generation. Among a large number of illustrations in his *Voyages aux Indes Orientales*, mention must be made of the important series of pictures relating to the iconography of Hindu gods that illustrate his text. Sonnerat’s opinion of Indian art was, however, coloured by his particular view of Indian society. Thus, he falsely concluded that the art in India made little or no progress since despotic governments always ruled the country. In his view climate and innate conservatism were responsible for the stagnation of Indian art. This had great impact on certain imperialist writings of a later period.

The eighteenth century was also a period of revival and rediscoveries. There was a substantial widening of the aesthetic categories to keep pace with a new awareness of non-classical and non-western traditions. One of the consequences was that the academic and traditional concepts of decisive rules in art were gradually
replaced by the notion of the **primacy** of taste". Secondly, art critics of the period were willing to recognise qualities other than beauty as constituting important aesthetic criteria. The first alternative to merely categorize beauty to symbolize the conception of the sublime was revived in the eighteenth century and it now became linked with the growing interest in nature since in its essential meaning, it was applied to nature. Another influential aesthetic movement to emerge in the latter half of the eighteenth century was that of the picturesque which may be properly described as belonging to the period of transition from what is called "classical formalism" to "romantic disorder". The revival of this movement also saw the inception of scientific archaeology that helped the writers to have a better understanding of Indian art. The prominent members of this movement were Christopher Hussy, Sir William Temple, the Earl of Shaftsbury and Addison. The picturesque movement too was an attack on classical notions of beauty as it advocated disorder and irregularity in landscape in both art and nature\(^1\). It was thus only the change in taste in the eighteenth century when artists were taught to look for qualities other than beauty in a work of art, that led them to take a fresh look at the visual beauties of Elephanta and other cave temples. While searching for the existence of ideal scenes in nature, the picturesque traveller and artist learned to isolate the visual properties of subjects from their features\(^1\).

The prominent scholars, who gave mere descriptions of Indian art during this period, were William Hodes, Maria Graham. Though their main interest was to study images from an aesthetic point of view they observed the animal world in Indian art as well. We also have some scholars like J.Goldham and Henry Salt who wrote about nature in Indian art\(^1\). They looked at particularly the depiction of flora at both the
general level and at particular regions. Though they focused largely on India in general they took a few examples of the depiction of nature in Deccan art. They equally studied Buddhist, Hindu and Jaina representations of this art. Let us take a look at some of these views briefly to illustrate how studies on nature in Indian art gradually began to emerge. The first artist of this type to arrive in India during the 18th century was William Hodes. As an artist Hodes was able to make valuable observations about Hindu art. He acknowledged the Indian skill in ornamenting buildings and admired some of the Hindu relief sculptures for their beauty of execution but felt compelled to criticise Hindu sculpture and painting for their lack of concern with nature resulting in a failure to capture the likeness of subjects. However, the picturesque movement left its mark on artists of this generation. Maria Graham made a detailed account of her journey to Elephanta caves. Impressed by the grandeur of the Trimurti here, she concluded that Indian sculptures often showed a certain freedom, taste and concern with naturalism.

The first phase of British archaeological activities in India provided the essential foundations for interpretation of Indian art in the nineteenth century. It is important to note that army officers and officials of the East India Company undertook most of these researches. For the reasons of administration and defence they had to make extensive tours around the country. Since a large number of the officials were trained in and equipped for surveying, the particular task of measuring temples, stupas and other monuments did not pose a problem to them. Therefore, they were able to correct the misconceptions of casual travellers and to place Indian archaeology on a more scientific footing. Their official duties involved the learning of different Indian languages including Sanskrit, identify ancient places mentioned in
classical literature with archaeological material available and so on. These came to their aid in their collection and interpretation of inscriptions and ultimately, helped them in the dating of antiquities. In this regard, the earliest contribution on Indian art was by members of the Asiatic Society. J. Goldingham stated that the Indian lion did not look like that animal, especially because of its peculiar mane. He points out that it is evident then that the sculptor was by no means so well aquatinted with the figure of the lion as with that of the elephant and monkey. Where as Indian sculptors have traditionally represented the lion in a formalised, heraldic manner, while animals such as the elephant and the monkey have always been depicted with naturalism.

The study of the earliest histories of Indian art reveals four principles that governed its interpretation. These, according to Tartakov, were: racial essence, regressive development, dependent creativity and taintedness. And according to Inden, on the other hand, these interpretations fall into the following types: Descriptive Accounts, Commentative Accounts and Hegemonic Accounts. The 19th century was both a critical and sympathetic period for the study of Indian art. Birdwood, Ruskin, Hegel and Vincent Smith were critical whereas, Ferguson was sympathetic while analyzing Indian art. Birdwood made a notorious statement on Indian art: "the monstrous shapes of the Puranic deities are unsuitable for the higher forms of artistic representation" as according to him they affected decoration. He introduced in this context the notion of 'racial romanticism' which was influential among the 19th century art histories. He said that though the unnatural figures of the Puranic gods, derived from the Dravidian and Indo-Chinese races of India, their employment for ornamentation is in direct contrast to the use of lovelier and nobler forms of trees and flowers introduced by the Aryan race wherever they went.
Ruskin attacked Indian art. He found Indian art 'unnatural' and 'wanting in truth'. He criticised Indian decorative art in saying that inferior nations were able to produce excellent decorative art, which involved neither the intellect nor a developed moral sense. He closely studied nature. The study of nature for Ruskin did not mean the traditional concern with representation but an empirical study of nature. He studied nature to separate easily Indian art from the European art. Ruskin divided the climates of the various parts of the world into five groups according to their fitness for art. He felt that the tropical forest lands, characterised by moist and enervating heat and represented by India were not conducive to the growth of mind or flowering of good art. He gave descriptions of Elephanta within what he called as a rational approach. A personal conception of nature was central to Ruskin's art theory. The study of nature in his opinion was many-faceted and the role of nature in art had to be elaborated in each context. The conception of nature in Ruskin was ultimately related to his notion of truth.  

Another person, who was of the opinion that Indian art was wanting, was Hegel. The lack of concern for actual works of art and a total dependence on literature for making aesthetic judgements constitutes a major weakness in Hegel's view of Indian art. Hegel's obsession with history prompted his interest in Indian art. His indifference, however, to contemporary art robbed him of a sound empirical basis to judge different forms of art. In short, the image of irrational fancy that he laboriously fashioned for Indian art had less to do with facts than with certain aprioristic assumptions. He did not care to search for the differing norms of Indian art in relation to the classical art of Europe. Hegel held that although Ellora sculpture was in some
cases not unworthy of the Greek chisel, it showed an absence of rules and of the harmony of proportions. The struggle of the wild forces of nature *vis-a-vis* the mighty power of the spirit in art remained unresolved in this world view. According to him Hindu did not attach himself to the regularity of natural vegetation\(^{25}\).

At the level of interpreting the above abstract ideas that looked down on Hindu civilization, Vincent Smith's name became popular as he transferred these ideas to the text-book level. He entered the arena in 1889 with an article on the Greek classical influence on Indian art. His article studied views and assessments of archaeologists on Indian art, especially after the discovery of Gandhara art in around 1833. He was convinced that it was in art that the Greeks had left their indelible imprint, on India. He studied the art of different parts of India including th?t of the Deccan regions. In his view at Ajanta, Amaravati *etc.*. the local style of art was modified by contact with that of the western world. Further, according to him Indian art did not deserve high rank 'when compared with the world's masterpieces'. But he argues that they were however, entitled to some praise for great art, which was the outcome of commerce with classical culture\(^{26}\). Those scholars who were critical of Indian art *thus* looked down on it because of their interests to *hegemonize* and control the colonized people. While looking at Indian art they often drew comparisons with Greece and Rome, which in their view was superior whereas Indian art was categorised as submissive and among the British scholars Smith is a good example to illustrate this tendency.

Some scholars of the nineteenth century looked at Indian art sympathetically. They *also* focused briefly on the depiction of nature in Indian art, gave iconographic
descriptions of it. One of the first scholars exclusively interested in the art of Deccan was J. B. Seely who published *The Wonder of Ellora* written by him in 1825. He elaborated his experience on nature through his journey. He surveyed temples, caves and religious monuments in Ellora and looked at nature such as the fauna and flora depicted at these monuments. He observed different kinds of soil like muddy, marshy and swampy on his trips and weather like hot, sultry airy that he felt while travelling. He pointed out to excellent fish, abundant vegetables that he found in markets and remarked that there was no fruit in the world equal to the Alphonso mango that grew around Bombay. He also discussed scenes embellished on monuments with a variety of cultivation and foliage peculiar to the tropical climate. He told us that the lotus as the emblem of female beauty was held as sacred not only in India, but in Egypt, Tibet and Nepal. In this book, he reproduced different methods for suggesting various aspects of nature as, for instance, the examples of the elephant under the tree, the peacock resting on the tree, the monkey devouring the fruits and so on. In this regard, his account became one of the first that gave vivid descriptions of the depiction of nature in the art of the Deccan.

Compared to earlier part of the 19th century interest in the study of nature in both Indian art in general and sculptural art of the Deccan region in particular, increased in the later part of century. This was mainly because, as part of their official duties, they had to travel to different parts of the country and document its ancient monuments as part of a larger enterprise to understand the culture of the society they had come to rule. Rea, Burgess and Ferguson focussed on the Deccan. Rea mainly concentrated on Buddhist art and architecture while Ferguson was interested in both Buddhist and Hindu art. Among several other interests in their reports they also made
descriptions of the vegetative world and animal world by recording and illustrating them. These are thus some of the best examples of nature depicted in the sculptural art of the Deccan that has been written about.

Foremost among them was Fergusson who studied the history of Indian art dividing it into two broad periods. In the first, he argued, a very high level was reached in artistic achievement and opined that there was no art as good as the early Buddhist art. For the second period, he presented a rather distorted picture of the development of Indian art and architecture by underestimating the art of the Gupta period and the whole development of later Buddhist and Hindu art. From the aesthetic point his remarks on the art of Amaravati led him to conclude that a degree of perfection had been reached in the fine sculptures found here. James Ferguson recognized that elements from nature such as animals like buffaloes, rams and flowers like lotus held a special significance to the people who had sculptured them. For instance, Buddha lying under the Sala tree conveyed a special meaning to the viewers and indicated the end of life\textsuperscript{31}. He also commented that, the womb of the Universe was found symbolized in the bell-shaped lotus, indicating particularly the material Universe. He therefore, made special efforts to discuss these aspects of nature in his work\textsuperscript{32}. His interest in depicting various aspects of nature like herds of bull, cows and buffaloes resting in open spaces or, farmers with bulls going to field, snakes with multi-hoods, white elephants in the dream of Maya, the horse \textit{Kantaka} portraying midnight, the lotus issuing from the large decorative vase was mainly because he wanted to convey the true meaning of this art that was intended to convey to the people certain messages. For instance, water from a brimming vases\textsuperscript{3} indicated
either, the moment or, time of day and also could suggest a deeper philosophical meaning.

Like Ferguson, James Burgess described nature and recorded exclusively floral species and animals depicted in the sculptural art. He wrote on ancient monuments of the Deccan region especially about Maharashtra and the Buddhist stupas at Jaggyyapeta from where he took the photographs of different aspects reflecting nature and reproduced them in his report. He was interested in pointing out such specimens as the quality of a dwarf holding the tails of a tiger, lotus with foliage emerging from the primeval water and a turtle with the goddess suggesting the lotus. He also recorded and studied different themes of nature depicted by the sculptors such as the lotus on which the right foot of deities rested that, he opined, symbolized an active and discriminating contact with the world. He further interpreted that the closed lotus indicated evening time, the snake with God suggested Dharma the symbol of time and the crane indicated the rainy season. Further, he reproduced pictures of a dwarf holding mangoes a bull on the pastureland that suggested daytime, while a peacock appearing in the dream of queen Kapina suggested night. All these depictions indicated the relation between the human world and cosmic world. Unlike both Ferguson and Burgess, A. Rea’s work shows that he was more interested in observing vegetation rather than animals. He noted in his report lotus of different varieties, a lotus issuing out of mouth of an aquatic animals that was considered to be a symbol of fertility and related to water cosmology, different kinds of foliage, the best loved Indian animal, namely, the elephant as depicted among the flowers, birds walking on water and in search of food in it have been perfectly reproduced by him. Cunningham another well-known archaeologist was interested in both the celestial
and the vegetative world. He explained how the growth of trees depended on the climate of each locality that had its own size and form of trees. Thus, he explained that the artists had a familiarity of the trees found in their particular environment. This led him to study tall and short trees as depicted on the various monuments. Another scholar writing during the late nineteenth century was Maisey whose attention was drawn to explaining how the *mucilinda nāga* saved the Buddha, the importance of the lion symbolism and so on.

The most important discovery of the nineteenth century with a focus on the Deccan was undoubtedly that of the Ajanta caves and their paintings. They were rediscovered by British army officers in 1819 and described in depth for the first time by James Alexander in the second issue of the *Transactions of Royal Asiatic Society* (1830). He recognized the reflection of the artist's mind on nature in Ajanta art. Much of the discussion on the nature that appeared in many of the works of different scholars discussed above was with reference to different parts of India including parts of the Deccan. However, there was no study that exclusively discusses the depiction of nature on this region apart from the book on *Tree and Serpent Worship at Amaravati and Sanchi* (1868) by Ferguson. In this book he was interested in understanding the role of tree in relation to the Buddhist tradition and how nature pervaded its essential philosophy and ethos. He pointed to various aspects of nature as, for instance, a herd of animals resting in open space indicating morning in the summer, a farmer with a cow and a bull going to field indicating day time, a snake with multi-hoods overshadowing the *pada* of the Buddha suggesting the rainy season, depiction of horse *Kantaka* clearly portraying night and so on.
The early twentieth century was marked by the rise of Indian nationalism. Nationalist writings emerged as a reaction to the critical writings of the British administrators. This period witnessed a ferment of new ideas and gave birth to a fresh set of focus in Indian art criticism reacting against the mere descriptive approach of the archaeologist-historians. The creative artists among them initiated this new tendency. The leading scholars under this category were E. B. Havell, A. K. Coomaraswamy, Stella Kramrisch and Heinrich Zimmer. Their writings continued to have an impact well after independence. As against the western classical standard adopted by the European and British writers for evaluating Indian art, Havell suggested new parameters based on traditional Indian ideals for the appraisal of Indian art and architecture. Ananda Coomaraswamy paved the way for a more sympathetic appreciation of Indian art. The criticisms of earlier scholars were considered as based on the wrong understanding of the basic principles of Indian art. More sympathetic western critics like Stella Kramrisch and Heinrich Zimmer presented the contrasting principles of Western and Indian art. Western art too during early twentieth century underwent thoroughgoing rethinking. Avant-garde artists questioned the basic doctrines of Western art. Some of them drew inspiration from Oriental and African art. For Havell the critic should be considered an intermediary between the artist and the audience.

The century exhibits a broad spectrum of cultural phenomena. The writings of E. B. Havell though marked by polemics, and though he was for the creation of an art that blended the best of East and West, they served a purpose in projecting an Indian point of view. He even opined that India required no western ideas for training its art students and this idea subsequently influenced the contemporary artists, critics and art
functionaries. Havell's basic approach to art was essentially Hegelian. Havell's major ideas about Indian art and his basic art theory are to be found in two works, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1908) and, more importantly, *The Ideals of Indian Art* (1911). The latter was written with the express purpose of changing the prevailing European indifference to Indian art and to bring about a proper appreciation of its aesthetic qualities. It was the positivistic tendencies in British and European archaeologists and their use of classical standards for judging Indian art that came under Havell's fire. He felt that European misunderstanding of Indian art arose because attempts had not been made to gain a direct insight into it\(^1\). Though his interpretation of Indian art pieces was based on aesthetics and not on scientific models set forth in archaeology his stress on idea pushed criticism into the by-lanes of philosophy\(^2\). Thus it was in this context that he discussed the pair of elephants pouring water and the *pūrṇa-ghaṭa* indicating birth of Buddha, a pair of deer representing Buddha's first sermon in a park, a lotus in the hand as symbolizing the created universe, other lotus motifs that were employed suggesting fertility or the life giving power of water, the elephant entering the womb of Māyādevī representing the descent of Buddha and so on. He further deeply studied the artist's creation of the obvious law of nature that a smaller object like Mayadevi could not contain within herself a much bigger object like the elephant emphasising emphatically that the idea predominated the artist's in imagination\(^3\).

In his view, for Indian art, it was thus the idea rather than the imitation of nature that played the crucial part in its development. He was convinced that the common philosophic basis of all art assumed it to be not merely an imitation of the phenomena of Nature, but an interpretation of the inner beauty, and meaning of the
external facts of Nature. He stressed the change of attitude towards Indian art once Europe came into contact with India that led to the ideals and characteristics of the former being undermined or lost. Alongside a detailed study of the keynote principles of Indian art, he also did empirical studies of the sculpture at Elephanta and Ellora and opined that art in India was a living force overall. Havell discussed many critical aspects like the renaissance of art in India, Indian idealism in relation to the art of every day life, art and education in ancient India, art and nature and so on. In this sense his study covers art of the Deccan region. In his work, he reproduced pictures of aspects of nature like fauna such as horse and lion on some the monuments of the Deccan.

Coomaraswamy was an important art historian who vehemently questioned the hegemonic accounts of Western scholarship. The main reason for this was that the latter made efforts to trace the origin of Indian art only to Hellenistic, Roman, Persian or central Asian sources. He therefore, put forward the view that it was rooted in an Indian ethos. To Coomaraswamy naturalistic art was the product and the essential image of materialism and contrary to everything that idealism stood for. This line of argument was pursued further in The Transformation of Nature in Art, where he declared that all the forms of Indian art and its far Eastern derivation were ideally determined but was born out of a necessity that explained their very existence. Here, a distinction between the ideal and the sentimental was made and a new interpretation of nature was offered.

Coomaraswamy added a fresh nuance to the Neo-platonic doctrine of art by suggesting here that Eastern art was as concerned with nature as the Western. It was
his interpretation of nature that proved to be novel in this context. In the classical tradition, nature as the subject matter of art simply meant the visual external world. Instead of using nature in this traditional sense he significantly equated it with the ideal world of Plato. In other words, based on his study of Indian texts, he put forth the view that nature, the point of departure in art rested on a plane beyond the world of appearances. Coomaraswamy, thus suggested that nature was transcendental and it existed on a metaphysical plane. For, after all, we need to use our sense organs, especially our sight, in order to perceive a work of art. In ultimate analysis Coomaraswamy wanted to link this ideational level of art with its utility at a practical level that seemed to be the continuing thread for explaining all art objects in early India.

His book Yaksha studied the depiction of nature in Indian art. He located the Yaksha as being in the midst of nature such as being a garland-bearer or standing on the grove of the tree. He discussed at length the relation between the tree and women in Indian art. He also noticed many unusual aspects of fauna like a fish-tail elephant and other well-known depictions of the horse, the tortoise and the makara in Deccan art. He also turned his attention to the study of flora in Deccan sculptural art while describing the depiction of flowers, leaves, lotus rhizomes with flowers, buds and so on. His History of Indian and Indonesian Art discussed Indian art in a historical context. The origin of the Buddha image was highlighted in detail. Coomaraswamy questioned the concepts of both Hellenistic origin of the Buddha and the Gandhara origin of the Buddha image. His study focussed on both Buddhism and Hinduism. Interesting aspects of nature like the forest scene described in the Rāmāyana, makara as the vehicle of Gaṅga, cat and mice and other such examples found in Indian art.
were all described. With particular reference to scenes of nature in Deccan art such as the lotus being held by the Bodhisattva, the lotus issuing from navel of Visnu, snake, Ananta on which Visnu is shown seated and so on have been given due attention in this book. His book Dance of Siva studied primarily the Hindu view of art in historical context. He looked at beauty of images focussing here too on the depiction of nature like elephants, deer, monkey, tree and so on as they were depicted on monuments in different parts of India. He reproduced scenes of nature in Deccan art with examples of sculptural art found at Ellora but did not discuss or describe these examples at length.

The art historian most emphatically influenced by Coomaraswamy was Stella Kramrisch. In her early writings one notices the tendency to analyse closely the artwork, both sculpture and painting using formalistic methods. Despite her close study of modern methods and a deep understanding of historiography she has not indulged in theorizing on Indian art. She has also carefully steered clear of Ananda Coomaraswamy’s romantic glorification of idyllic India as a reaction against the corrupting influence of rising capitalism. She further understood that a solely positivist approach of the archaeologists had failed to support their erroneous assumptions about the inferiority of Indian art. As a consequence, she used different methodologies to put forth her approach. History, myth, religion and philosophy all have a rightful role in her criticism. Aware of the European prejudice against Indian art, she says that the precondition to the understanding of any art is that one must be free from prejudice. According to her, western methods of criticism have to be recast with the demand of Indian sculpture. At the same time, she also points out the weakness of traditional Śilpi texts because the terminology listed in them cannot hope
to explain the understanding of the aesthetic qualities of the art produced that the authors of these texts had not taken into account. These qualities in her opinion were of considerable significance because the structure and consistency of the plastic idiom was conditioned by a certain bent of mind that gave directions to the systems of Indian thought\textsuperscript{54}. However, she does not subscribe to the Havellian position that thought precedes a tangible work of art. In her view the experience common to both the subject matter of Indian sculpture and the iconographical elaboration was rooted in the artist or craftsmen's recognition of his experience. With reference to early Indian art Stella Kramrisch views the end of the Mauryan period to mark the end of the ancient period. She disputes the claim that the Indus art was Mesopotamian and therefore, foreign in origin\textsuperscript{55}. In India on the individuality of regional traditions she points out that at Amaravati human figure is made the main device of decorative patterns\textsuperscript{56}.

An important focus of her work was to study naturalism in Indian art. According to her, Indian sculpture from the outset was profoundly naturalistic. In her view, a flower is not rendered only for its swaying and dewy grace but the sap that surges into its petals finds parallel channels in the creative attitude and achieves form in the work of art and, just as in nature it achieves the appearance of a flower. The artist looks at nature and finds in it a further enticements and actual proof for his experience of it. She also defines Indian naturalism, saying that during various ages and with different degrees, it always relies on the outer aspect of things as a means of understanding a pre-existent situation, whereas in a capillary system, one and the same fluid rises in different and connected tubes. The creative acknowledgement of this internal and the visible world, by putting it into form, is understood by her as
Indian naturalism. While all form is essentially homogenous as far as movement brings it about, the manifold types are keenly understood and stressed as possibilities within, or as qualities of nature. On this basis it easily happens that types are made into interchangeable varieties of animals amongst themselves, and in relation to man and animals as well. Nature in them is afforded a locality of concentration which it cannot supply itself, but which, through the creative agency of man, reacts upon and impresses the worshipper or onlooker with a sense of the supernatural. In this way she uses the term naturalism not in the western sense of illusionist art but, its Indian contextual situation, as explained above. She was able to fundamentally notice the relation between the natural world and the spiritual one that was key to the Indian understanding of art. For instance, the higher level of spiritual convention were found on the relief of an animal, real or imaginary i.e., that occupied a prominent place, on a majority of seals. Naturalism, here as elsewhere in Indian art, was not an endeavour as in western art, but it was an unavoidable condition with this conclusion. She took special care to reproduce various examples of flora such as lotus with buds and flowers, garlands and fauna like elephants and horses as depicted in the Deccan sculptural art, for which careful descriptions were also given in her books."

Zimmer’s, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization is reconstructed from extensive notes left by the author. His basic idea was to relate myths with the form and symbols of Indian art and civilization. He thus studied nature through understanding the symbolism of fauna such as the serpent, bird, the elephant and floral depictions like lotus and so on. For instance, the symbolism of the serpent is understood thus. The serpent as a dweller in the earth starts forth like a fountain from its hole and crawls along the ground. It is understood as an embodiment of the
water of life issuing from the deep body of mother earth. The elephant on the other hand, is discussed as a symbol of divine power as shown by its popularity in early Buddhist art. However, he points out that the first divine elephant was said to proceed from the right hand of Brahma. The other elephants (*gaja*) that were thus born were understood to support the universe at the four quarters. A thousand-petaled lotus of pure gold, radiant as sun was understood as the procreative aspect of the Absolute in the form of the cosmic lotus. It came to personify the mother Goddess through whom the Absolute moves into creation. To illustrate these points he reproduced the elephant Airavata uprooting a tree, Indra sitting under a flowering tree, the life-giving snake, and elephant caryatids from sculptural art of the Deccan.

In Zimmer's opinion though the carved animal figures on Indus seals rank with the best traditions of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia they were distinct. It was his aim to evaluate the extent of foreign influence on Indian art. As a result, demands of communication to some extent reduced the animals and birds into mere apparition, symbols in static repose. The artistic activity of the Deccan region was studied by him in historical context. He reproduced and discussed aspects of nature such as bull as the vehicle of Śiva at Ellora, lion as the vehicle of Mahishasuramardini, Garuda associated with Visnu and *ガルダ* on and flora like trees associated with the Buddha, a mango tree with a cluster of fruit and lotus as a seat of gods and goddesses. Zimmer was thus, first and foremost, interested in unearthing the deep-rooted meaning of many aspects of nature found in Indian art.

An important art historian who wrote a book around the mid-twentieth century with critical approach to the study of Indian art was Niharanjan Ray. Though he has
one of the first to have used the Marxian analytical method for evaluation and interpretation for art history, he never used it exclusively in all his writings. Ray's articles on Indian painting and sculpture and his books on Mauryan Art contributed to "the history and culture of Indian people" and constitute more or less, a complete history of Indian art. The best way to examine his critical and conceptual statements is to follow his linear approach to Indian art.

Ray's criticism of Maurya and post-Maurya art indicates that he owes much to two of his predecessors, A. K. Coomaraswamy and Stella Kramrisch. He focused on nature in Indian art and in his book *Maurya and Post-Maurya Art*, he recognizes the dynamic naturalism that gives strength to the Dauoli elephant and the Rampura bull. He accepts that the elephant carved on a live rock at Dhauli in Orissa shows a creative form and is artistically far superior to the adores lions that seem stylized and artificial. As he puts it: "such plastic presentation of bulky volume, such feeling of live flesh rendered with remarkable naturalism of a dynamic character, such knowledge of physiognomic form of the subject treated and such sense of dignified movement and linear rhythm has no parallel in Mauryan animal sculpture"60. He also described other aspects of nature like flora such as the coconut tree, the banyan tree, garlands carried by *Yaksas* and fauna such as an elephant pouring water on its mother elephant and other elephants and horses in the sculptural art of the Deccan61.

Some historians writing during this period have attempted to present a monastic theory of Indian art. Goetz is one of them and he notices the undercurrent of unity in Indian culture but reminds us not to forget the glaring diversity, which makes it impossible to bring all aspects of Indian art to one denomination. In this context, he
discussed nature. He viewed that the life-giving water becomes the most needed element for man, beasts and plants in this world and that led him to discuss some general aspects of nature. His study found that the presence of water becomes an essential part of the Hindu temple and the lotus, the water flower became the most sacred and common emblem in all Indian art\textsuperscript{62}. In his book, \textit{History, Religion and Classical and Medieval India}, he made some effort to understand Indian art by comparing it with the Roman art tradition. At the same time, while closely looking at nature in the art of Deccan, he also compared it with regional traditions in India. He thus, found the elephant and lion depicted at Ellora similar to those that depicted on the Pallava temples. He further noted that the animals associated with the mother goddess particularly depicted sensitiveness and were most naturalistic \textquotedblright.  

Many other art historians noted the sensitivity with which nature was depicted in Indian art. According to S. N. Dasgupta in Indian art nature was presented with sympathy and understanding. Human beings were treated as part of nature and they were generally represented against the background of some natural setting. For instance, the figure of a \textit{Yaksa} leaning on a tree emphasized that there was a natural similarity between the flowering life of the tree and the flowering youth of the woman\textsuperscript{64}. He further pointed out that Man was born in the world of nature and his life was governed by a harmonious blending of the laws of man and the laws of nature and this was well recognized by the ancient sculptors\textsuperscript{65}. Even gods in this tradition were invariably associated with a plant, a flower, a leaf, a bird or an animal. An important philosophical explanation was belief in the theory of the transmigration of the soul that made the Hindu feel that man could be born again as an animal, bird, insect, plant or any other object in nature. Hence, in ultimate analysis, there could not
be any fundamental difference in the life that flowed through different objects in nature. But Dasgupta rightly points out that art was not a mere photographic reproduction of nature and the aim of the ancient Indian artist was not to rival nature but to create forms parallel to nature in a metaphysical sense. Art was a representation of streams of life flowing through man and nature. Though Dasgupta does not particularly focus on the art of the Deccan, his work provides significant analysis of the importance of nature in early Indian art at a general level.

The trend to philosophically project the indigenous essence of Indian art gained momentum and was clearly a reaction against the earlier analysis of art historians that it was merely derivative from the classical traditions of Greece and Rome. Radhakamal Mukherjee in *the Cosmic Art of India* describes the importance of nature. He stresses on this aspect while identifying plant, animal and human figures not with their physical appearances, but with forms of the ceaseless pulsation of vitality (*sat*) and consciousness (*cit*) that penetrated and over-reached nature and that also underlay the dialectic march of the human soul. Classical Indian sculpture, he argued came into existence when, due to India’s vision of unity and continuity of life, naturalism and rhythm were unified. This, in turn, effected all depictions of nature in art: vegetation, animals, human figures and symbols, trees and creepers, the bull, monkey, horse, lion and elephant and the *nāga*. They were all parts of a vast fluid continuity in this traditional concept of nature and art.

Thus, in this view, Indian *naturalism* treated the charm and vibration of life replicated in the sculpture with delicacy and grace. This was done without sacrificing the expressive vitality and power that was essential and palpable. The
basic theory put forward was that the aim of the Indian sculptor was transformation and consolidation of emotions into the nine or eleven major permanent or universal moods and sentiments (*rasa*) that ultimately defined their abstract, metaphysical and cosmic character. It was because of this character of man, vegetation and animal that could be seen in their subtle communion and extensive reciprocity depicted in sculpture and painting. He thus wrote: "In the majesty of a group of elephants, the repose of the pair of stags, the devotion and tenderness of the monkey families and the mimicking delight of the ascetic cat, animal sculpture reaches the height of perfection in Indian art". He further compares and contrasts depiction of nature in India with other parts of the world. Whereas in India it is a full and ardent participant in human lives, in the west, it was fashioned and composed with its variegated and resplendent hues as being outside human life. Thus, he concluded that like the treatment of women, the treatment of Nature in art also illustrates vividly the collective visions and experiences of particular cultures and epochs.

**Mulk Raj Anand** and **Charles L. Fabri** were critical art historians. They advocate a comprehensive approach in art criticism. The former's book on Indian aesthetics is on traditional art that can be considered as exemplification of the study of nature in a religious context. He deals with different parts of India and points to the terrible and destructive aspects of nature as well. Some aspects of the art of Deccan from an aesthetic point of view have been highlighted and scenes from nature like horse in the departure scene and various types of creeper were reproduced in his book. Charles Fabri's main concentration was on Indian art in its style and form. He first looked at Indian art by assuming that Indian art was dominated by both Hellenistic and Iranian styles. His interest was also in studying the style of Deccani
In his "Truth about Ajanta" he examined the Ajanta cave paintings from the 2nd century BC to the end of the 8th century AD to show the whole spectrum of stylistic evolution from the primitive, classical, mannerist to finally the baroque style. He explicitly says that architecture, just as painting, sculpture or poetry was a result of prevailing attitudes and fashions and that each age brought forth a style that was characteristic of the people. Fabri criticised the effort of art histories to link every dynasty with a style. In his view, dynasties have not made any conscious effort to formulate particular styles. He noticed that despite similarity in contemporary style all over India, there was still variation to make one style different from the other.

Another general book of some significance from the point of view of the present study is the book by Shanti Swarup entitled: 5000 Years of Arts and Crafts in India and Pakistan. In his discussion of nature in Indian art he turned his attention to sculpture at Bharhut, Bodh-Gaya, Sanchi, Bhaja, and the sculpture of the Andhra region. He also took examples from the sculptures at Aihole, Badami, Ellora and Elephanta. His essential argument was that nature played its own role in the evolution of India's culture. Thus, he argued that the Aryans had their vision of Transcendent Reality in Nature and worshipped its grandest and most sublime aspects. Their literature stated that divinities were but the personification of the different phenomena of nature. However, they had also learned to distinguish the smaller gods of nature and the supreme creator. The various gods over time became popular and along with them appeared the spirits of water of herbs, of tree etc. In his work, he thus discussed the depiction of the formation of a rich sophisticated society whose men and women were imbued with an intense feeling for nature in the art of Sanchi and Bharhut. He pointed to the worship of Siva and of his vehicle, the Bull Nandi in Andhra during the
time of the Satavahanas and highlighted the prevalence of serpent worship in the form of Nāgas at Amaravati, Goli and Nagarjunakonda.

Apart from the general books on art history that have discussed aspects of the depiction of nature in the art of the Deccan region, in a recent publication, we have an important collection of articles that exclusively deal with the depiction of nature in art. In these writings nature has been viewed as indispensable to the human world. In other words, the two were considered interrelated, interdependent and always transmutable. The world of vegetation had inspired a great variety of motifs throughout Indian art. According to Kapila Vatsyayana, these were naturalistic, beautiful and spontaneous on one level, and imbued with symbolic significance on another level. At Mathura and Amaravati, this Indian characteristic finds its finest artistic expression in the coping stones with flowering sways, vertical stone columns and trees with abundant foliage. Similarly, she further points out that the life of water and plant was intrinsically related to the first creations of nature, the reptiles. Like the lotus, they too represented a moment in the undifferentiated condition of creation on which human life rested. Snakes also represented cyclical time without a beginning or an end. The animals follow suit and the entire range of evolution, from the hare to the lion, from the rodent to the primate, is vividly represented. In this collection of Essays are also discussed animals associated with Gods guarding sanctuaries. It is pointed out that each animal acquired its own symbolism and they developed into a systematized pantheon closely related to the world of humans and celestials. In this opinion the aquatic, vegetative and animal elements represented aspects of the human psyche. Thus, it is pertinently pointed out how the lotus was related to the mother goddess and the tree to the Yakshinis who represented the water.
and earth principle respectively. Lakshmi for instance, the radiant goddess of the lotus represented both the mother and prosperity. Ultimately, all these came to be considered symbols of an universal order and became part of the mythological themes in Indian art.

In an article in this volume on "The Natural World Tree, Flowers and Foliages" it is pointed out that the fact that the force of life is naturally symbolized by the growing configuration of a tree, naturalism was preserved to balance and lend credence to the anatomical naturalism of the multiple images itself even to the extent of rendering the tree slightly asymmetrical but yet, symbolically depicting the ascending axis of creation. In another article "The Natural World Snake Deities", the relation between the tree and serpent has been studied. We are informed that beneath the tangled roots of trees lie the subterranean waters that are the haunt of serpents. In a specific context it is pointed out that the serpents on which Viśnū is shown lying, represent the oceanic, undifferentiated condition of the raw material of creation. On the other hand, Naga consists of a human head and torso with a serpentine extension below the waist, and a canopy of either five or seven cobra-heads above the human face in the early Buddhist art. Thus, some depictions of Naga beneath the tree from Maharashtra and others of a coiled Naga in other parts of the Deccan can be discussed in this context. In the article "The Natural World Animal and Birds", it is indicated that warm-blooded creatures upon the land and in the air were considered the companions and allies of man. Animals in India were closely studied by the artists and regarded symbolically as part of the great pattern of life. The meaning and the concept of the creation of some animals is also discussed. For instance, the Deer was created only to die, while the goat was meant for protection.
Man’s study of animal behaviour and animal association with particular deities has been elaborated. This volume with its valuable insights on the symbolism and meaning of flora and fauna and their relationship with human life forms an indispensable background to the present study of nature in the sculptural art of the Deccan.

Most of the other studies on art and art history done in post-independent India fall into three categories: those that are general historical, those that are architecture and those that are on iconography. In the general studies, *Early History of Deccan* by G.Yazdani is an important work. He mainly studied and given attention to political, religious, cultural and economic aspects within a conventional framework of interpretation. He has described art, architecture, sculpture and painting of the Deccan as marginal to his larger concern of editing a textbook on the early history of the Deccan. Thus some interesting references to engravings on rocks in the form of pictorial art of both human and animal figures, depiction of deer associated with Buddha, *nāga mucilinda* protecting the Master, the elephant and horse in transportation are the only particular aspects of his study that drew our attention. Another work, *The Art of South India* by Rajendra Prasad has similarly studied general aspects like the political and religious conditions of the Satavahanas, Ikṣvakus and the Vīṣṇukundins. However, he has focussed more on how nature pervaded in the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain temple architecture. Yet another general study to throw some light on describing nature is the one entitled *Ancient Indian Army its Administration and Organization*. First, it has focussed on political and social conditions of ancient India but has highlighted a bit on nature like fauna, especially elephants and horses how they were used for military purposes and their importance.

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in ancient Indian administration. The author has reproduced in this book, animals engaged in war as found on different monuments of India. With particular focus on the Deccan he has illustrated different types of chariots and elephants as depicted at Ellora and animals used for war in the Amaravati sculptures.

_The Visnu Purana_ by Thakar Harendra Dayal focussed primarily on the social, economic and religious life of people in ancient India, but from the present perspective, he has also described nature like the mountains and their raw material like wild honey, herbs, roots, fruits, flowers and leaves. Further, he has discussed fauna and flora of the age as described in this _Purana_ and has interestingly correlated the use of different aspects of nature to the economy. Other well-known features like the association of Goddess Lakṣmi with cattle and other animals and the lotus, animals associated with the incarnation of Visnu, the sacred rivers, trees like the Caitya tree, the _Kalpa-vṛkṣa_ have all been explained in this book.

Several scholars in the mid-twentieth century were also interested in the study of Indian architecture. One of the first such writings was by Havell who studied the role of nature in the development of Indian architecture. His interest in the importance of the lotus as a symbol of creation, of divine purity and beauty made him link it to how it sustained equilibrium. He pointed out that the lotus was the seat and footstool of the Gods and the symbol of both the material universe and of the heavenly spheres above it. Another symbolism of the lotus was that of the water pot-the _kalasa_ or _kumbha_-which held the creative elements or nectar of immortality churned by gods and demons from the cosmic ocean. Thus he opined that these two pregnant symbols were employed in Indian Architecture and Art, both structurally and decoratively, in
an infinite variety of ways. He further throws light on the correlation between the bell-shaped dome and the lotus dome. In this way, he described the architect's imagination in making pillars with the sacred lotus that from time immemorial was a traditional motif for the capitals of Indian temples. He also studied the importance of tree motifs and their symbolism that were dedicated to various religious teachers and had become an integral part of Indian temple architecture.

*Early Buddhist Rock Temple* written by Vidya Dehejia was another important publication on early Indian architecture. A special focus of her book was on how geography impacted ancient Buddhist monuments. Her argument was that the natural formations of rocks were kept in mind while hewing out the monuments. She further describes some representations of nature on the monuments like elephants, horse, *makara*, fish and so on in various contexts. In her study, she points out the difference in the works of artists in treating the lotus at Pitalkhora, Nasik and Sanchi. *The Buddhist Architecture in Andhra* by D. Jithendra Das is another important book on architecture that gives importance to nature. His concern was to describe the Buddhist monuments against the background of how the regions natural resources encouraged for the development of agriculture that led to the growth of rich *gahapati, kumara* and *setti* class. These classes, in turn, patronized Buddhism and were mainly responsible for raising magnificent monuments in this region. He has described motifs like *naga mucilinda* and the Bodhi tree depicted at monuments of Candavaram and Dhulikatta. Other elements of nature like a fish, a standing figure with a *naga*, the garland motif and a small lion have been reproduced in this work.
Another set of scholars in the post independent era looked closely at iconographic studies. Though many of these primarily focussed on sacred images, saint and human figures in sculpture they could not avoid the depiction of nature. One of the first such books was *Elements of Hindu Iconography* by Gopinatha Rao whose work soon became the standard text book for iconography. This book mainly studied iconography of Hindu deities with references to instruction of various puranic and agamic texts for cross-referencing. In doing so, he concomitantly described fauna such as bull, the vehicle of Siva, swan, the vehicle of Brahma, Garuda, the vehicle of Visnu etc., and flora like lotus emblem of female fertility and other such natural phenomena. He also discussed the various emblems of Gods and Goddesses that symbolized the power of Nature. These discussions were placed in the context of his main discussion on the role of *prakriti* or nature in understanding the totality of the God-head. Select examples of elements of nature like bull, elephant, lion, rat, swan, peacock associated with respect to Gods and Goddess as depicted in the sculptural art of the Deccan have also been described by him. The book *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains* throws light on the worship of Nature as integral to this belief system. For instance, worship of the sun as the cause of Being and life-giver, the supreme soul and the creator of the Universe was discussed to show its relationship to the Iranian sun god, how it evolved to become the Indian sun-god, Surya. Another aspect of this book is that it details for readers the instructions that have been given for sculpting the various deities. For instance, Surya should be on a lotus pedestal, holding in his two hands two full-blown lotuses. This is contrasted with the relationship between the lotus and the Bodhisattva. As with other books on iconography, nature relating to particular Hindu Gods and Goddess have been reproduced like the bull with Śiva, swans with Brahma, Garuda with Visnu, arid
elephant with Indra etc. Art and Iconography of the Buddha Images written by Shailendra Kumar Verma is an important book for iconography with special reference to Buddhism. He focussed on the technique and methods of the different schools with emphasis looking closely at Buddha images in both Maharashtra and Andhra schools of sculpture.\(^9\) He depicted elements of nature like elephants, deer and the most common lotus and Naga features of early Buddhism.\(^9\) Some of these were reproduced by him in the book with reference to monuments and sites located in the Deccan.

In the post-independent era there was also a conscious shift to study Indian art from a regional perspective. Most of the scholars concentrated on writing about separate regions, sometimes focussing on individual states as defined by their present-day boundaries. Many works were produced still highlighting colonialist nationalist methodologies but the content of their work changed incorporating new data from time to time. For the Deccan region, that is the focus of this study, some of the important studies are as follows: An Eastern Chalukya Sculpture (1954) by Sivaramamurti, Stone Sculpture in Alampur Museum (1973) by Abdul Waheed Khan, Andhra Sculpture (1973) by O. C. Gangoly, Nagarjunakonda- A Cultural Study (1977) by Krishna Murti, Sculptural Art in Andhra (1980) by M. L. Nigam, Life and Art of Andhradesa (1983) by Amita Ray and Andhra Sculpture (1984) by P. R. Ramachandra Rao are prominent works for the study of Andhra region. Sivaramamurti continued to publish in the post-independent era. An Early Eastern Chalukya Sculpture is one example where he discussed south Indian scripts that referred to the political scenario but also provided a history of the eastern Chalukyan artistic activities. He threw valuable light on the depiction of nature in the Amaravati sculpture that had come to be well-studied by
this time.\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Stone Sculpture in Alampur Museum} by Abdul Waheed Khan is another example of a regional study. Though he focused on the depiction of nature he also highlighted different materials utilised in the making of sculptures. Important depictions of portraying the buffalo being killed by \textit{Mahisasuramardini}, the goat as the vehicle of Agni, lion moving in the forest and so on have been reproduced in this book.\textsuperscript{97}

\textit{Andhra Sculpture} by Gangoly, apart from studying the character of Buddhist art, the rise and development of the Andhra School of art, the cult of decorating and worshipping the \textit{stupa} and the periodization of \textit{Amaravati} sculpture,\textsuperscript{98} has also shed light on some aspects of the depiction of nature like the garland and some animal motifs. He particularly highlighted and suggested reasons why \textit{stupas} were adorned by garlands. It was considered auspicious and assured great merit to those devotees who placed flowers on the \textit{stupa} and therefore, the placing of a garland on the \textit{stupas} was an established practice. He informs us that the animal motifs occur at Amaravati in three varieties of treatment. The manner of introducing animals on horizontal panels and coping -stones was an old artistic tradition. He highlighted in particular, the Buddhist idea in the representations of animals, which the sculptors must had on their minds. On the other hand, the animals in decorative bands were represented as emanating from the mouth of two \textit{makaras} placed at the two ends of a composition that suggested that all life, including animals were born out of the primeval water at the beginning of the creation.

\textit{Nagarjunakonda- A Cultural Study} (1977) by Krishna Murti exclusively gave special focus on Nature in the art of Nagarjunakonda. He discussed a variety of
animals such as spotted deer, hare, bull, buffaloes, horse and elephant in both secular and spiritual contexts on the monuments at the site. He also discussed a variety of creeping, jumping, swimming animals and birds. He pointed out that the entire flora like Banyan tree; Sita-phal tree and lotus depicted in Nagarjunakonda sculpture was found in the vicinity of its natural environment. Therefore, the surrounding ecology was reflected through the artists mind while portraying the sculptures at Nagarjunakonda.  

Another regional study discussing the role of nature in art studies is the book *Sculptural Art of Andhra* by M. L. Nigam. He presents for us details on nature like the depiction of *nāga mucilinda* that protected Buddha from heavy rains, the Tree spirit, i.e., the tree-god emerging out of the trunk of the tree, the Bodhi tree that stood for the Buddha attaining enlightenment and so on. Depiction of Nature, according to him, was a dominant feature in other early centres of Buddhist art, like Bharhut, Bodh Gaya and Sanchi but some of the best depictions were found in the art of the Krishna valley. 

One of the most comprehensive regional studies on art history i.e., *Life and Art of Andhradesa* by Amita Ray was set on the socio-economic and the religious background of Andhradesa. This has helped us understand more fully the depiction of Nature in art like flora and fauna on the various monuments of the early historic period. Descriptive accounts like *Andhra Sculpture* written by Ramachandra Rao that was mainly concerned with Buddhist sculpture continue to be published highlighting some of the already well-known depictions of nature in this art. For instance, the Buddha under the *jambu* tree, lotus in full bloom, snake coming out from anthill etc.
There is, however, more recently a trend to do district-wise studies. For instance, *Sculpture and Iconography Cuddapah District Temples* by A. Gurumurthi aimed at studying the form and style of various deities in the different temples of this district. He reproduced in his book images of the elephant head-god, the snake, bull carrying Śiva and Parvati, the buffalo being killed by *Mahisasuramardini* and so on.¹⁰⁴

Gupte, Rajasekhar and Krishnamurti are prominent scholars who have studied regional art of Karnataka. *The Art and Architecture of Aihole* (1967) by Gupte has given a description of all the important temples at Aihole, while the latter part of the book deals with iconographic identifications and detailed descriptions of all the important sculptures on many of the temples at Aihole. He has also traced the iconographic evolution of the sculptural form in general. Depiction of nature like fauna such as buffalo killed by the Goddess, bull as the vehicle of Śiva, elephant associated with India, the peacock squatting by the side of Subrahmanya and other representations in which nature directly intervened in forming the unique character of Hindu mythology have been described. Flora like lotus, foliage coming out from the *kumbha kalasa*, the mango tree, with fruits etc., have also been vividly described.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, *Karnataka Architecture* (1985) by Rajasekhara has given a description of some important temples of Karnataka. He has also dealt with the iconographic identification of sculptures on the temple walls. He has described aspects of nature like flora and fauna that directly intervened in forming the unique character of mythology of the times.¹⁰⁶ Both these books cover the early medieval period and look primarily at Hindu mythology and religion.
The *Nolamba Sculpture* (1987) by Krishna Murthy is another regional study on art but focusing on a particular dynasty. However, in it the study of nature is more elaborate. Descriptions of trees like date palm, plantain tree, fruits and flowers and fauna like creeping and swimming creatures horses, bulls buffaloes elephants and dog can be found discussed. He has also highlighted various influences that went into the making of Nolamba art. It is interesting to find, as noted by the author, that much of the flora represented in the sculpture is still grown in Andhra and Karnataka region. It is quite possible that the surrounding culture should have been the subject matter for the sculptor while portraying some of the scenes. 

*Ajanta Ellora and Aurangabad Caves* (1962) by Gupte and Mahajan, *Aurangabad Sculpture* (1966) by Amita Ray are good examples for a study of the regional art in Maharashtra through the ages. Gupte and Mahajan have studied Buddhist, Hindu and Jaina art in Maharashtra. They have given a description of some important sculptures dealing with their iconographic identification and meaning. Nature that directly intervened in forming the unique character of Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina has also been described. Thus, they have given detailed descriptions of flora like flowering trees and mango trees with fruits and so on. *Aurangabad Sculpture* (1966) has described specimens of nature in terms of female figures standing near the lotus, holding a branch of flowers or standing under a mango tree. Common sculptures of *niga* have also been described. Such regional studies are primarily descriptive giving much emphasis on style and form of the art. They do, however, add to the empirical base of research though many of the new discoveries and lesser-known features of this art have still to be analysed.
This chapter has given an overview of various historiographical trends from about the 17th century onwards. Each phase marked a change with a focus on the depiction of nature gradually increasing. Nonetheless, it must be concluded that exclusive writings on the depiction of nature in the art of early Deccan have been few. This has been so because the concern of early scholarship had been to primarily focus on understanding the iconographic details of deities and their consorts or, to look at details of decorative art. Thus the scholars up to 17th century, although studied Indian art, first confronted it as travellers and were merely interested in the exotic aspects. The 18th century scholars focussed more on documentation of Indian art. The scholars in the 19th century began its interpretation and were both critical and sympathetic to it. The early twentieth century 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.

The study and descriptions of travellers up to the 17th century showed little interest in the finer details of how nature was represented in Indian art as they came to India as amateurs. They did not have any substantial knowledge on Indian culture that pervaded Indian art. Their weakness was that they adopted western religious ideals and opposed the very notion of idol worship. Therefore, they vilified Indian Gods and Goddesses insulting them as monstrous and evil. The 18th century scholars were trained in appreciating naturalistic art. They studied the natural world and the celestial world. They were interested more keenly in the art of south India and an emphasis was given on the art of Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta. Their studies on depiction of nature in art were comparative incessantly comparing the Indian notions with the classical Greek and Roman traditions. Many scholars of the 19th century looked at
depiction of nature in the art of the Deccan. However, their discussion on nature is less because most of them were administrators and surveyors. Thus, their main contribution was that they reproduced depiction of nature like flora and fauna as found in the Deccan in their reports and books. 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. They began a trend that was appreciative of these tendencies so that we find that studies between the 1940’s and 1980’s thoroughly discuss the depiction of nature in Indian art. They also draw our attention to nature in the art of different regions of the Deccan. In fact, it is only now that some articles are 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 discuss depiction of nature by giving examples. However, they are mainly descriptive and give iconographic details rather than analyze the depictions.

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. The present thesis attempts to provide an empirical basis for the study of the depiction of nature in the art of the different segments of the Deccan over a chronological span time from the first appearance of sculptures up to the tenth century AD.
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