CHAPTER - III

OPEN AIR SCULPTURE OF RAMKINKAR BAIJ: TRANSITION FROM CONVENTIONALISM TO MODERNITY AND BEYOND

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In contemporary era, Indian sculpture is well established in the world of art. Numbers of sculptors are engaged with this creative field. Many young artists are coming in the forefront with great skill and talent. They are giving more dignity to the Indian sculpture through their everyday’s practice and ways of new experimentation.

At this stage, it is necessary to review the Indian art scene, especially to get an idea of the task that had to be accomplished by those pioneers in order to get rid of undesirable elements that were being introduced by the colonial rulers, who had their own agenda to replace the high level of Indian aesthetics. It is even more important because of the slavish mentality that the colonial climate had introduced in the Indian mind.

Until the sixteenth century India had been pursuing its own traditions, styles and philosophy of art. These were totally different from the Western approach - both in spirit and in form. Thousands of examples from all over the country are the proof of the sophistication and qualitative exuberance of Indian art. The construction of temples never ceased. Even today, one can see craftsmen building temples in the traditional style, following the classical canons in the carving of figures, decorative motifs and the overall architectural patterns of buildings. Unfortunately, the high level of technical skill at present is bereft of the original creative impulse, and lacks the imaginative power of the earlier generations.

The Western colonial rulers, basically traders, did not have any regard for leave aside an understanding of, the art and culture of the Indian subcontinent. As rulers always do, the Western colonial powers brought with them their own styles and traditions which they strove to implant on Indian soil. Of course, later, they did some good work towards the restoration of the art heritage of the country, for which India should be and is
grateful. However, with the imposition of their own educational system on India, the study of indigenous art form was not only ignored but also discouraged (Som : 1998).

The British opened a couple of art schools which had the patronage of the state, and imparted the discipline and standards of Western academic art. They were opened largely to exploits as well as to propagate the traditional crafts of the country for their own purposes. A new category of Indian sculptors grew out of the colonial environment. Some of them trained in Britain, reflected the prevailing academic standards in the commissions they received from a variety of patrons, such as native rulers, the wealthy business class or civic bodies. The bulk of such work was in the nature of public monuments, friezes and bas-relief work for industrial house, decorative statuary for palatial mansions, and garden sculptures. Their sources of inspiration were largely Western, as were their styles, even in the treatment of themes that were distinctly Indian or Oriental. There was little originality, intellectual content of sculptural vitality in the works of such sculptors, who worked mostly in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.

The British rulers tried to impart knowledge amongst the native Indians but that knowledge was primarily realistic and materialistic. The Britishers then occupied a vital position in the international society due mainly to the advancement as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Industrial Revolution was, again, the offspring of science and technology. As a result science and scientific paradigm captured their consciousness so much that they judged even the fine arts from the view point of technology. Their aesthetics which emerged from the Renaissance, set realistic proportion and imitation of realistic structures as the only ideal for the fine arts. Though there were some other voices, but those voices were submerged in art-theory, the grand narrative of which preached realism (i.e., *mimesis*). This is why most of the master art critics failed to understand the Indian art and sculpture; its inherent flow of subjectivity and its emotive aspects. So, it is not surprising that one British art critic once commented that the Indians did not know how to draw human figures; they simply draw animal figures with eight hands, while others simply denied the existence of any art tradition prevalent in India.

So, when the British rules thought of setting up art training centers in India, they quite naturally emphasized on the *real*, *structural* and imitative schooling. Though these art centers were decided to be opened on the basis of the report of the select
committee, during the first phase art training centers were initiated in India on individual
drives and efforts of patrons and connoisseurs.

In 1850 Dr. Alexandar Hunter, the Resident surgeon of Madras patronized and set
up the first Art School in Madras. The purpose behind was the humanization of the
culture of Fine arts. The very next year another School was set up there for the training of
applied arts. Hunter led the drive of unification of those two schools which was to run on
government grant. All over India the training of Applied arts got the greater emphasis
and for this the artisan class could enjoy its greater benefits. With the flow of time, the
teaching and learning process of the Fine arts went to the hands of the middle class

But sculpture never received its due importance in this teaching-learning process
and having no affinity with these art schools, Sculpture developed in its own way in
India strictly in accordance with a conventional set up. There existed many icon-makers
who had unparalleled dexterity and talent in their art. They were undoubtedly an
inspiration in the beginning of modern sculpture. There are many sculptors even today
who, having no training in art schools and colleges, are yet engaged in contributing to
creative sculpture works of every kind. The tradition exerts and expands itself amongst
these talented but untrained Sculptors.

Even before the Independence, many a sculpture work was either erected or
established in many part of the country, depending on the patronage and zeal of the
colonial rulers and well off Indians. These work, were mostly busts or full length statues
of famous personalities. But Indian Spectators before the Independence did not come to
know that sculpture had greater areas to cover other than making more statues and busts.
There was no sign of modernity in the sculpture-works in India during the first three
decades of the twentieth century. The main reason behind this might be that the
institutionalized training system established by the colonial rulers which metamorphosed
the Indian art tradition from its mediaeval orientation to modern phase was not enough to
incorporate and disseminate the true Indian aesthetics. And Industrial Revolution-based
European and British aesthetics held it for certain that the fine arts, too, must imitate the
real. Its success was lying on its imitating the almost mathematical, exact, proportions. In
this reign of exactness and proportion, the natural spontaneity of tradition-based modern
artwork was almost impossible. Eventually new light had to come from the circle of artists and art critics who belonged to the school of Rabindranath Tagore (Ghosh : 1995).

3.2 SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND INFLUENCES

In the first part of the 20th century, Rabindranath Tagore created an education institute as his dream in Santiniketan. In those early days life in Santiniketan was idealistic, simple and joyful. The poet Rabindranath Tagore lived among his students and was a liberal influence. That favourable atmosphere helped the emergence of Ramkinkar. Actually, Ramkinkar Baij, a boy hailing from the red-soiled land of West Bengal during the first half of the twentieth century could turn the picture upside down. He broke into pieces the age-old wall of convention, the stereotyped canons of sculpture-making. Indian sculpture, as it were, was freed from a curse with the touch of his magic wand. It found an altogether new address. The Indian art enthusiasts discovered in themselves as yet unknown faculty to taste the new. Wonder-struck, they saw in front the works of a gifted sculptor who was totally indifferent to the world of artificiality. This uncommon amongst the common figure in the world of Indian fine art was that of Ramkinkar Baij. His creation had the rhapsody of destruction. He had the impulse to destroy in order to create the new. He was the harbinger of modernism in Indian sculpture (Kar : 2002).

The quintessence of Ramkinkar’s art is its nature proneness. Probably Ramkinkar was the first sculptor to prove that sculpture has a keen tie with natural surrounding and this bond can touch an apex. Nature found a new role and significance in his sculpture. For this reason, this sculpture is always harmonious with nature. But how could it become possible? The answer is not so simple. It took years for the artist to have won such a tie with nature. His oneness with nature manifested itself in his art. This oneness gave his sculpture immortality. To know its source we must jump years behind, must cast our watchful eyes upon an adolescent boy who was deeply engrossed in his creative impulse.

As a matter of fact, the bond between man and nature has a primitive language which can never be rendered into any modern tongue. Nature has always opened its fair of beauty for man. A true artist has the vision to watch natural beauty in its different manifestations. He knows by heart the inherent bond between the homo-sapiens and
nature. Nature provides him the space to tread on. While on the one hand he is mesmerized by the beauty of nature, he rejoices at nature’s indomitable, awesome, angry, loving spirit on the other. He is agonized at the humiliation ungrateful man inflicts upon nature. His wanton heart tries to find a way out in trans-creation. Art finds a new direction. The same thing happened to Ramkinkar (Ghosh : 2006).

Ramkinkar spent his childhood in a small village of Bankura. For this reason he was very close to nature. As a small boy he followed the beauty of nature. Dust had thickened on the edge of the road, on the red-graveled path, on the big leaves of Aash Shyaoda shrubs. Dry wind caused the hard leave of the palm trees to quiver. The silent song of summer touched the thatched roof and clay huts and passed through them, and then they were gathered by the red dust of the roads beyond. Breeze bore the weary song of birds. He saw the beauty of Shimul, palash and Radhachuda flowers. Mainly, Ramkinkar’s subconscious was being formed by nature herself. He never denied the influence of nature. So a quest was already there. To heal up the wound, he tried to express himself in pottery-works. When that too seemed insufficient he would pick up clusters of soil and made forms with it. But some unknown, unwanted thing hindered his way, his freedom.

He could not make what he wanted to make. His impulse was imbued with agony. But stereotypes can never be a hurdle for him whose creativity is about to explode within; he needs just an outer ignition, an agent who will show him the right way leading to freedom, an indulgence that will lead him towards a great fall which will create havoc and panic in the current less, mossy pond of convention (Kar : 2002).

Though Ramkinkar never uttered such words about his background, it is our assumption that the story of his becoming a sculptor was perhaps a similar one. Nature stretched a deep-rooted influence all along his adolescence. He could never free himself from this influence, nor did he want to do so. Rather he invoked nature in his work of art and thus freed his art from all kinds of conventional impacts. It was Ramananda Chattopadhyay who ushered Ramkinkar into the artists’ congregation at Santiniketan. Though many a talent, after the first explosion, doesn’t last for long, Ramkinkar had Rabindranath himself and Nandalal Bose as his guardian angels. They knew the art of
guarding the first faint rays of possibility. Perhaps this led Ramkinkar to touch the zenith of being a sculptor. To locate temporally and spatially the relation between the Santiniketan School and modern European art movement, the first important thing worth-mentioning is that it was initiated in the second decade of the twentieth century. Dr. Stella kramrish came to Santiniketan; she made the students acquainted with the contemporary European art world. Ramkinkar was a student then. During that time an exhibition of contemporary German painting was held in Calcutta. Ramkinkar had a mixed response to this exhibition. Because at that time artist of Santiniketan were not confined to realism alone what was the want of the day. As a result, European art form was neither their bosom friend nor their arch enemy. They were not crazy with the history of gradual development of Western Realism to Impressionism or with Cubism crossing its border and entering the realm of post Realism. Rather they had the insight to look at this development in a different way, never forgetting their own background. No doubt they received much from Impressionism or Cubism, but, surprisingly they applied skillfully whatever they had received into Expressionism. Not more imitation, but assimilation; this is what Ramkinkar did. Impressionism opened up vistas of a new world full of colours and of a new insight into thematology which was vivid and full of flesh and blood, while the post-impressionist movement reverted the conventional. Cubists, on the other hand, threw light on the very never-centre of a metamorphosis of the form and shape of painting. Side by side with this, the tie with native conventional art forms always remained intact, sometimes that tie turned into intercourse. This assimilation between the eastern and the western models produced a number of new talents who with their evergreen spontaneity and imagination have shaped the history of modern Indian art.

Ramkinkar was apt to accept and assimilate this trend in his own way. This is why, Cubism, Pointillism or Impressionism; every school found its own reverberation in his art works which always had the mark of his individual talent. An example may be drawn from one of his painting which represents the tea-drinking of some people under the shade of a winglike tree, this painting is now preserved in the Museum of Delhi College of Art. The same theme recurred in Ramkinkar's work for some time during the coming years. The Colour texture and the pluralistic nuances are always made vivid in
his art works portraying this theme, while his backdrops vary from Santiniketan to Nepal to the hilly tracks of Shillong or to Shillong Lake. The rhythm and vibration of the painting too vary accordingly. To be more precise, this painting type follows the mood, while the background represents the chiaroscuro of colours, the front depicts the change of elaborate lines (Subramanyan: 2006).

Again, Ramkinkar himself admitted that Santiniketan played the most vital role in his upbringing and in shaping his artistic exposure. He said, - ‘Coming to Santiniketan, I have seen so many things. I have seen many a great man very closely – Gurudev, Gandhi and so many others. While I saw them, my vision enlarged. If I had not been here, would the same thing could have happened? I have learned here to look at life. Right from my childhood I was having the mind to look at things. Yes, I saw things, everything carefully and meticulously – human gestures, postures of various animals and their behaviors. Though I used to see them, my style of looking at things has changed while I came over here, yes, it has changed a lot. These trees, the mornings and evenings, meadows and fields – no, I have not been able to look at these things in the same way as I do now. I have learned to look at nature in a proper way because I came here. The thought springs to my mind, how has it has been possible? You see, Santiniketan itself perhaps means closes with nature, and there is something in it. Moreover, the songs composed by Gurudev make your eyes open’ (Bandopadhyay : 2000).

Jaya Appaswami thinks the following characteristics of Ramkinkar’s inspiration as a successful artist: Ramkinkar had no other option than to get absorbed in different works, from his early childhood. Their poverty-stricken plight compelled him to do so. He became involved in a drama group. There he would design the set and drew the necessary backdrops. Ramkinkar perhaps gathered the first experience in coloring from his interaction with different stage-dramas. Conclusion may also be draw that this type of works imbued in him the capacity and dexterity to use colour in a very loud, emotive and dramatic effect.

Ramkinkar’s art training in Kala Bhavan in 1919 was to a large extent, unconventional and experimental. Since it was his preparatory stage, he, like a born poet, applied the techniques he learned together with his imagination in field of his work. The art students of those days in Kala Bhavan used to learn less the techniques and craft of
drawing and painting than the way to expose themselves to the outer world, to make them self-confident. Therefore, they could grasp spontaneous and tireless way to express themselves in their art. This was the kind of schooling that was practiced at Santiniketan during those days. The students grew up in a national milieu – they could almost inhale and exhale the art and the science that existed in their surroundings. Their lives became a part of their creation as their empirical knowledge crystallized their experience and enlightened their living and being.

Undoubtedly these things influenced his creation. Ramkinkar was dynamic, passionate, bohemian and full of vigour. He loved life, nature and its beauty with all zeal. A man always committed to his root, Ramkinkar never embraced any artificial style. His long pursuit for intellectual knowledge and his tenure as an apprentice could never erase or polish his basic passionate honesty. The romantic urge and striving quality which found in him and expression was nature, spontaneous and born of the easy-going and simple life lived through (Das: 1991).

Another thing that deserves mentioning is the Santhal folk, who were a part of Ramkinkar’s life. Over and over again the lives of these folk have found expression in his art-works. His sculpture and other art work have been influence by the daily life style of these people—the physical beauty of the Santhal males and the rhythmic body language of the young Santhal girls. The beauty and power which are always hidden behind the facade of physical beauty of the Santhal people make everybody respectful of their lives. Ramkinkar always identified himself with the honest life style of these peoples. Perhaps this is why he iterated in his autobiography: ‘I too belong to their caste—those Santhals and farmers and daily wage earners. I understand their language. You see, sometimes I think I can’t follow the high class, the dilettante. There is no harmony in their lives. It becomes very difficult when there is no harmony between the inner life and the outer one. Nothing remains familiar. Nothing can be known. When you don’t know, how can you mix up? Keeping distance is the only remedy, the only way out. How are you? Are you all right—these are the only exchanges. Many come to get acquainted with me. I see their poses and stance. Disharmony strikes me. Another thing that comes to the surface is hypocrisy—they ape to become what they are not. Some take the guise of Scholars, some of poets, some of artists. Some ape to be good souls, some imitate the role of sacrificing
sagas. They are, as it were, buffoons of a Yatra play. I simply go on laughing inwardly, while keeping my face mum. Again those who crave for some personal gain are unpredictable. I wait for their prompt departure. Whenever they are gone, I feel the doors of my room again wide open. Fresh air comes in, I feel refreshed again’ (Bandopadhyay: 2000).

From the very beginning some Santhal villages (plate 3.1-a and plate 3.b) were adjacent to Santiniketan. Ramkinkar become well acquainted with the symmetrical shapes of these Santhal men and women, their laborious and struggle some, their dynamic life style right from his childhood. Ramkinkar’s abode was at Jugipara, adjacent to the Gandheswari River, Satighat and Keshiakol. As road existed crossing Tilabedya, Kanchanpur, Amarkana, Gangajalghat up to Mezia, the Santhal labours crossed the Damodar River to reach the coal industries like Raniganj, Kalti and Asansol. For the labourers of the coal mines, the mine is the land of their wish fulfillment. Some of them, however, prefer the other route—they cross the Gandheswari river and travel through Keshikol, Beliator and Sonamukhi to reach Burdwan, which is on the other side of the Damodarghat. The East Burdwan is yet too famous for its paddy cultivation. The land of the red soil, Bankura and Purulia is known for drought. Santhal male and female from the Santhal villages of the hilly tracks of Shisunia flock during the harvesting and reaping seasons to these districts for earning a modest livelihood. They carry along with themselves their household necessities—utensils and folding bed. Their trust worthy pet dogs and their little ones follows them in their journey towards Burdwan and Hoogly. Ramkinkar saw this moving house, this moving kitchen right from his childhood sitting on the bank of the river Gandheswari. His genius as an artist found an unending source of inspiration in this trivial but perpetually human sight—no one can have any doubt about it (Singha : 2006).

In addition, Ramkinkar responded to the call of patriotism and freedom struggle movement in his early youth. Anilbaran Roy the famous leader of Bankura left his position as a lecturer of Bankura Christian College in order to become follower of C. R. Das. He made Ramkinkar to design secretly different posters and sent him along with others to paste these posters on the different walls of Bankura Township in the depth of the night. Coming in close contact in with this freedom fighter and his clandestine party
Ramkinkar had to visit the hilly regions of Shusunia. There again he had a direct contact with the poverty-stricken Santhal people and their life style in such villages as Sheulibona, Banshol, Goaldanga etc. He saw a Santhal less with a big burden on her shoulder; he listened to the song sung by these girls. His direct touch with Santhal life decided the thematological aspect of his creation.

In his memoir, Ramkinkar said, ‘The Santhal figures recur in my sculpture and painting . . . they have become my models. I feel an attraction towards them—the main reason behind is their life, vigor and rhythm. Their movement and words are rhythmic. The same rhythm is reflected in their household, their day to day activities, in their festivities. Their lives are not so quarrelsome and dirty as our lives.

You see, the boatman and his wife toil the whole day, both the male and his female partner. Their baby son then lies perhaps on the earth under the shadow of a tree or perhaps under a bamboo umbrella. They dig the earth and carry these soil—their sinews represent vigor. They are tanned by the sun, wet in the rains. And after the work of the whole day they come back to their huts, singing a song and blowing a pipe. Their melodies are reflected in their walking home together. This not like yours military march. This is not an imposed thing. This thing they come to learn spontaneously by heart right from their childhood’ (Bhattacharjee : 2002).

It is very difficult in the world of sculpture to invoke the dynamic in the heart of this stasis which is the quintessential nature of any matter. But Ramkinkar was always surprisingly spontaneous because of his dexterity as a craftsman to achieve the impossible. Seventeen or eighteen years after his creation of the Santhal Family was installed a similar eco-friendly work The Call of the Mill. Just in order to survive to earn a meager livelihood, Santhal girls have to leave their peaceful huts to respond to the call of the mill. While they pass the meadows or the paddy fields their movement still retains the rhythm of nature. Their naive way to living always keeps fresh the natural beauty of their movement which even poverty, even their toilsome life cannot take away. The youthful rhythm of the Santhal girls merges with the uncontrolled and wind lifted and of there sarees which they forcibly pulls to keep in their grip. Now this rhythm of dynamism in kept intact almost magically in the static form of the concrete and cement structure.
A total annihilation of the artist's ego, of the subjective through the process of identification with the object of art or creation secures success of such art work. Ramkinkar's success was so grand and unique that we can almost have a smell of the typical Santhal life in his Sculpture works, such that the artist remained hidden behind his work.

But Ramkinkar was inspired by his tradition what he has found from his childhood. He shares his feelings, "My first art school was the nearby potters' locality. As far as I can remember, there were pictures of gods and goddesses draw on the walls of houses in our neighborhood. I liked them and copied some of them. One picture, in particulars, stunned me. It was the symbol 'OM', which the couple 'Radha-Krishna' was shown embracing each other. I copied it several times. You could say that it was my first introduction to the visual arts. And you know the fun of it was that after some time I heard Rabindranath song: 'Your image is fully visible in the unions of the couple.' Yes, yes, your image, God, is captured in this union! Do you notice the semblance between my first lessons in painting and this line of Gurudev's song? When I discovered the similarity between the painting and the song, it was for me a profoundly joyful experience.

The history of making clay images is also rather amusing. The road in front of our house was covered with red earth. One day, after a spell of rain, I noticed that the red sand had been washed away, showing the blue earth underneath. I brought some of into my house and started making different kinds of dolls. I was used observing potters at work—making images and other objects from childhood. Whenever I got the opportunity to handle clay, I would play with it. Later, I brought clay from the river-bed and did modeling. The children of the neighbourhood enjoyed it greatly. Along with my school studies, I used to paint. Our teachers did not tell me off for it, rather, they encouraged me" (Bandopadhyay : 2007).

Ramkinkar's love and respect for indigenous materials available and enveloped in his surrounded inspired him to accumulate these materials such as cement, concrete, pebbles, bamboo, rope etc to create his unique sculpture. But his first and foremost trainer was life itself. In an exclusive interview with Somendranath Gangopadhayay, Ramkinkar admitted himself: 'I have learned from life. From images and icons I saw
around. This is natural in our life. I have my own trainers too. The works of village pot-painters, we have our own temples in Bankura and the work of Barhut, Ellora, Madurai, Mahabalipuram, Khajuraho, Egypt and that of western artist—these are always there, an unending source of inspiration. We can see them and learn from them.

But, to tell you frankly, I got my inspiration from life. My surroundings, the fields and ponds, rustic people, the Santhal folk, their everyday life—all this inspired me. You see, so much of activities are done in their community life, in our natural surroundings throughout the year. We have to keep our eyes wide open—and see—see with our eyes. There are lots to borrow, lots to be inspired by. An artist’s life is too small to take the whole of it’ (Bandopadhyay : 2000).

Ramkinkar was against the stereotype process of teaching-learning that is usually imparted and accepted in a classroom. According to him an artist must be self trained. In an interview he once said, ‘Do you know what is going on with this schooling? The world of art too is now infected with this schooling system like everywhere else. But school does not give birth to artists. Artists are born out of soil, what you call in your language as self-trained. Yes, self-trained. No, no, my coinage ‘Soil-born’ is not at all bad. It has a deeper connotation. One who is born out of soil. Now what is soil? It’s nothing but life itself. The soil of life. I have been trying to perceive and understand this life from many sides since my childhood. Whatever I have perceived, I have tried to imprint and depict in my works.

Our country is poor. We don’t have much infrastructure. How could we collect the raw materials? Who will give it to me? This is why I had to work with cheap and trivial materials. I started working with soil and ended up with concrete, which too in nothing else but soil—pebble, soil and cement. All along my life I have remained confined to soil alone’ (Das: 1991).

As a matter of fact, Ramkinkar always gathered his raw materials from his surroundings. Till the final day of his life, he could not finish the journey of understanding his own soil. So he was never seen flying abroad in search of advanced raw materials. He had never the mind to do so. And he had no repentance for not doing so. Moreover, he had no urge to beg alms from other’s doors.
He said, 'I have not travelled much out of Santiniketan, only occasionally to Delhi and Bombay. I was in Delhi for quite some time—to work on the Reserve Bank of India project, Yaksha and Yakshi. I have heard people praise highly. I had put in a lot of hard work in making it. If 'going abroad' means going out of the country, then yes, I had been to Nepal once, and that too to carry out a commission assigned to me by that government. I have often been invited to go abroad, but have not responded. What would be the benefit of going there? Why leave your homeland? The context of my art, my painting or sculpting is here, and so is the ambience. What would I learn by travelling out of this country? We can know all about art in the world by sitting here. As for technique—of either painting or of making sculptures—it is a question of talent, genius for that matter. Why go begging door to door for information? Many do that, no doubt. They come back to this country after carrying out their particular aim. After all, Abanindranath Tagore did not go abroad, nor did Jamini Roy. I have heard that Bade Gulam Ali didn’t either' (Chattopadhyay: 1991).

Kala Bhavan was not well-endowed financially. It could not afford everything required by the students or the staff. Ramkinkar once wanted to make a sculpture of Mahatma Gandhi but the Principal, Suren Kar, pleaded that there was no money; and despite his best efforts, he was unable to raise it until just before his retirement. Here it is important to mention Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy on the relationship between money and education. He believed in a life of voluntary poverty - “Poverty brings us into complete touch with life and the world, for living richly is living mostly by proxy, and thus living in a world of lesser reality. This may be good for one’s pleasure and pride, but not for one’s education. Therefore, in my school much to the disgust of people of expensive habits, I had to provide for this great teacher—this bareness of furniture and materials, not because it is poverty, but because its leads to personal experience of the world’ (Tagore: 1945).

The result of such a philosophy was that the artists at Kala Bhavan, despite inadequate tools and infrastructure, never felt a sense of deprivation. On the contrary, they looked upon the situation as a challenge to their spirit of innovation. Nandalal and Ramkinkar experimented tirelessly with new materials and tools. The former was particularly interested in discovering substances and techniques to make mud buildings
water resistant and to provide shields against white ants. An experiment was conducted with a mixture of mud, cow dung and coal tar. Two such buildings still stand in Santiniketan: 'Shyamali' in which Rabindranath spent his last years and the 'Black House' or the 'Boys hostel' comprising six rooms. Ramkinkar and his students executed fine relief works in the exterior walls of both the house and on the Varandah of the 'Black Hostel' (Debi Prasad: 2007).

The sculptor himself admitted this that the congenial environment prevalent at Santiniketan helped a lot for the proper development of his talent. At the same time he said that man learns all through his life. Every school has something to contribute. And the artist's talent itself should never be looked down upon. Ramkinkar said, 'I have learned a lot from Santiniketan. You must learn. Art has its own language. But this learning is not a crammer's notebook. Man learns from his childhood. What he observes, he draws. Do you know the exact meaning of learning? It means to know how to see, how to observe, to become an insider. Only the good teachers can help you in this field. But you must master your crafts yourself. Who else will master your own crafts for you? And it does not happen with a single stroke. It takes time; it takes pains to learn the technique' (Bandopadhyay: 1994).

Sometimes the art or technique of assimilation plays a vital role in the upbringing of an artist. Now-a-days, specialization plays the most important role in art schools. How far one has advanced along a particular style, what degrees one has accumulated—these became the determining criteria. But there are many artist who still assumes that degrees and schooling in a particular area do not make one an artist. The renowned art-historian cum art critic K.G. Subramanyan thinks that ‘specializations’ is just like our caste system. This should not happen in the field of arts. This hinders overall development. An artist has the freedom to choose whichever expression, whichever medium really suits him. I paint, do sculpture-works, have done print making works too. Ramkinkar too did so (Subramaniyan: 2010).

This art of assimilation helped Ramkinkar a lot while at Santiniketan. The well known painter Ramadanda Bandopadhyay has said: 'In our time the arts teaching at the Kala Bhavan had a marvelous side. Gradually the system has moved away from it. A student had to go through all genres of art in order to complete his art education. When
we drew figures, we had to create idols, again at the same times remaining busy with the technique of fine arts. This system makes an artist a complete artist. For this reason only our Kinkarda—Though he come to learn the art of painting, gradually ended up as an epoch-making sculptor. Another thing must be taken in to consideration. He never left his painting. He was always thrilled at the marvels of the applied arts. Now and then he would utter, have you seen these lines, these colors in the boutique, these brightness of designs! This happened as a result of that assimilation’ (Das : 1991).

The style of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose did not influence him much, but did he consciously avoid their styles? Ramkinkar said, in an interview, “No, there is nothing like ‘their style’ or ‘my style’. Style comes naturally to one. Sculpture is what I am especially interested in; it is my specialty, my field of work. There is no Nandalal here. Of course, there are indications of his suggestions, but there were hardly any sculptures done by Nandalalbabu in Santiniketan at that time, whereas I had been doing sculpture since my childhood even before came here. I also paint. I do both . . . Take, for example, my sculptures. I have done abstract work along with other styles, such as ordinary realistic figures. Nandababu has made some realistic sculptures which you can find here. Even in that there are differences’ (Bhattacharjee : 2002).

There was a profound restriction and discipline in art teaching at Santiniketan when Ramkinkar Baij was a student. Painting used to be done, very neat and clean, sitting either on the floor on bare earth. But even in that orderly and prohibitory myelin, Ramkinkar broke the convention with his mighty hands. None could understand that. Only Nandalal Bose realized. Nandalal once said, ‘Kinkar has attained success. He can do anything and everything.’

Ramkinkar hailed from a village, therefore he was close to the soil and nature, with village folk—there was no doubt about that. While it is never true that in order to become a great artist one must have urban background, one must be ‘cultured’, it is equally true that an artist must have talent of his own and that talents must have wide expanse. The congenial cultural environment at Santiniketan, the close touch of Rabindranath Tagore and above all, contact with art teachers like Nandalal Bose removed all hindrances from Ramkinkar’s becoming a great artist. Rabindranath welcomed Ramkinkar’s talent as an artist, he enthusiasmed Ramkinkar. He wanted to
embellish the natural environment of Santiniketans with statues and sculpture work built by Ramkinkar (Choudhury: 1991).

Ramkinkar had only one passion in life: to create. He Painted and made idols all through his life. The environment of Santiniketan suited his bend of mind. The free and open fields, wave like red-colored Khoai, green trees and row of palm trees, the great blue sky overhead—all these would intoxicate him. He was never willing to join a job of good pay-bond at the cost of this natural spell. Rabindranath once said, ‘Devotees will always remain here, only the passersby will leave this place.’ Ramkinkar had a devotee’s soul, otherwise how could be submerges himself in his quest for the beautiful. (Barman: 1991)

Ramkinkar’s talent was multi-faceted; he loved natures very much and considered his home to be the open air. He would spend most of his time having long strolls along the sun-bathed, Santhal village-strew natural miler. His memory would always be enlightened by those happy moments through pastoral like landscape with short shrubs and dried up river Kopai. He bore a natural, almost an inborn liking for drama and music. Other than Rabindranath’s song, he would often sing loudly the metaphysical songs of the bauls. He would sing because the lyrics and the melody of those songs would transcend his mind to a different world. While singing the songs, he would often realize that the pains lying in his heart and the ennui living in his soul are spreading out through the melody of the song. Ramkinkar loved performing dramas. He would often think in his own way about drama. He staged some dramas very successfully. Most of these dramas were really non-conventional in their selection and approach. Sukumar Roy’s ‘Ha Ja Ba Ra La’ directed by him could be taken as a good example. These aspects bring out the versatility of his genius (Appaswami: 1991).

All these show that Ramkinkar was really crazy about his owns creation. He created because the joy of creation was always there in his mind. He performed dramas because those plays also were expressions of his creativity. Here lie the influences, whether willingly or unwillingly, of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore himself embraced every arts form whichever suited his creative impulse. Ramkinkar inherited almost a similar urge to give vent to his creativity. He was as virile and multi-faced as Tagore himself.
3.3 RAMKINKAR’S SCULPTURES AND ITS CLASSIFICATIONS

Conventional learning had no meaning for Ramkinkar. In his art work too, he sought and made, broke and played with shapes and forms whatever he found essential for him. He was not so much concern about the opinion of the art critics. It was his idiosyncrasy and he maintained it throughout his life in painting and sculpture.

According to some art critic Ramkinkar’s sculpture can be divided into three parts: Realistic, semi abstract and abstract. However devoted Ramkinkar might have been to semi-abstract and abstract art, his realistic works carry the same weight and draws equal esteem. Most of his realistic work was done during the earlier part of his life. His later life found him more inclined towards the so-called semi-abstract and abstract forms. His works have always raised a hue and cry along the art critics’ gallery. Among the realistic and semi-abstract works are included timeless pieces like Sujata (Plate 3.3-a), The Santhal Family (Plate 3.4-a), The Call of the Mill (Plate 3.5-a), Harvester (Plate 3.6) etc. while deviating a little from its form. In semi-abstract work, he never invited an iota of abstraction upon their themes. Original as they are, they are drawn from our familiar social ethos. In this, the world of his reality was empirical, not a priori. Although new generation’s art historians like Ansuman Das Gupta do not like to classification of Ramkinkars sculptures. They view, ‘Ramkinkar was not a representative of particular ism or style. He always traveled from one ism to another, introduced new style and technique, and many times went against the norms of art. He was different from all. So categorized of his sculpture will be an injustice for his creation (Das Gupta : 2011).”

The most significant quality of the sculpture; so-called semi-abstract work brings out a keen sense of proportion such as where to emphasise and highlight and where to ignore and everything seems to follow a perfect routine. Nowhere in his work is any space for exaggeration, he knew where to stop. These works imprint upon us the feeling that their creator has just now finished the work and has gone for a stroll. His cement – mixed concrete medium would sometimes leave out some spaces open- to an onlooker and leave it to the spectator to answer the question he laid upon. Such spaces too mean something, which is beyond any apprehension. It is as if one was given a palatable dish – one’s satisfaction over the edibles doesn’t end one’s hunger to taste more. In Indian musicology there is a term called ‘catching the right note’. Ramkinkar’s sculptures
perhaps extend this term and apply it to the world of visual arts. His pieces are unique in symmetry and order so much so that they always catch the right note.

Ramkinkar is regarded as the father of abstract sculpture in Indian art. The *Lampstand* ((Plate 3.7) done by him in front of the old Guest House in Santiniketan is considered as the first piece of abstract sculpture in Indian context. But while doing such abstract sculpture too, Ramkinkar was unique in his own style. He stands apart from his successors the avant garde of abstractionism who consider their departure from realism as their victorious culmination. The more removed they are from reality, the more successful their work of art will be. For this they always busy themselves in quitting the reality around, in departing from social phenomena. To them, art must be less and less intelligible in order to become more and more moderns.

But one of the best painters of the world, Van Gogh uttered, “I want to paint humanity, humanity and again humanity”. For this the pulsation of life is vibrant in his work as is rarely found in any work. Nature’s bounty light and air, colour and movement gave his work a touch of freedom (Dutta : 1983).

Ramkinkar reminds us of an Indian counterpart of Van Gogh. His abstract and semi-abstract works always regard nature as their base. Like a thirsty passer-by the world fill his cup with the essence of his environment and then would metamorphose it into something else in his art- work. Ramkinkar adopted abstract art form not for ignoring reality but for giving it a newer expression. His life was a guest of new and new models, tones, expressions.

It was Ramkinkar’s realization that the quintessence of nature lies in its movement, motion, dynamism. He knew that our mode of existence is motion. Without this element, perfection can never be attained in any work of art. This seemingly calm and quiet nature hides volcanoes of explosion. This realization has given Ramkinkar a keen eye for motion and perfection. This is evident in his every work of art – right from *Sujata*, the *Santhal Family* to his abstract sculpture *Speed*.

Again, while creating his abstract art, Ramkinkar never neglected common man. Many a times he would pay heed to their opinions too. Ramkinkar was very keenly observed by Binode Behari Mukhopadhyay. In front of him one day an incident
happened while Ramkinkar was watching on the sculpture the *Lampstand*. A sweeper got curious to know about it. The conversations that follows was such:

‘What are you creating Babu sir?’

‘Why don’t you say yourself?’

‘I have never seen such a thing in my life and to know this, we must go back to the *Vedas*’. Ramkinkar burst into his visual uproar of laughter and told Binod Behari ‘you see who says common man does not understand the abstract art?’ (Mukhopadhyay : 1991).

On another occasion, he was creating the world famous *Santhal* Family. The *Santhals* came and went, stood askingly. One of them said ‘Hey sir, which god are you creating?’

‘Why don’t you say yourself?’

Then another cried out saying ‘what are you doing sir? Your man is so big but the pedestal is so small how will he sleep over it?’

Ramkinkar enlarged his pedestal after a few days (Singha : 2006). So he was always attentive to his world around, to the murmur of common humanity, to their every cry and whisper. His sculpture expressed his philosophy of life. No critic’s diatribe would remove him from his self-chosen way.

3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL SCULPTURE AND RAMKINKAR BAIJ

The concept of environmental sculpture is a new form and it has augmented new directions and dimension to the art of sculpture. For an environmental sculpture the sculptor considers matter, space, form and content of a situation or surrounding. He does not approach it with a preconceived manner but explores to evolve through selection and rejection a new sculptural which has a direct accord with the larger environment. Thus the form and content of it is an outgrowth of this consideration that the sculptor has to depend on. Environmental sculptures are generally of an open air type and their scale is relative to their surrounding space or their background. An environmental sculpture is not a self-contained or space bound form as a pedestal sculpture usually is. The former co-exists harmoniously on its surroundings. The use of the medium and its value in the open air space where the sculpture is to be erected is another factor. It should not
antagonize the given situation: but work towards the unity and homogeneity of its totality. Lastly, the factual or historical context of the place or site in one of the important governing factors for the selection of form and content in particular. The environmental sculptures are usually erected in various urban architectural surroundings, parks, gardens, cross roads, city squares or in historic or memorial sites and architectural settings of public or private mansions (Narzary : 1980).

In the pre-war period, most of the open air sculptures were closer to the traditional concept of realistic sculpture. In spite of their realistic form in Rodin’s Sculptures their dimensional expressions as free-standing sculpture have an impact on the immediate open air space environmental. Rodin’s Balzac (1893-97) or his Burghers of Calais (1884-86) are obviously the pioneering kind of modern environmental sculpture. These sculptures with their rough surface textures, the use of bronze and patina for tactile and organic sensibilities the changing light and shade and the kinetic gestures reverberating in space tend to co-exist harmoniously in natural surroundings (Maria : 1919). Maillol’s River (1938-43) in the Tuileries Gardens, unlike most of his nude figures of static pose, suggests in its dynamism the unrestrained movement of the river in space. This sculpture is in the public park as a ‘civic monument’ and though unrelated to architecture it fulfills the function of animating a space with its presence.

However, in the post war period modern architecture demanded new sculptures based on modern constructional technology. Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Gabo, Calder, David Smith, Naguchi and many other sculptors were commissioned by various patrons and agencies to execute open air sculpture of an environmental kind. For example Henry Moore in his reclining figure for the UNESCO 1957-58 which was an open air sculpture has selected a honey coloured stone rather than bronze to suit the immediate surrounding and treated the material considering its textural values for which the sculpture shows an exuberance of the vitality and has an inducing impact on the vision. The sculpture incorporates architectural stability in its reclining pose with a size large enough to balance and stand on its own against the architectural background (Ghosh : 1994).

The cubist and post cubist sculptors’ explorations of form in sculpture in spatial relation have brought new changes in the form and structure of sculpture. Since the space
has been considered as a component medium the sculpture is no longer a mere object defined by space but is a spatial creation and such sculpture propounds to be extended in the open air space as a monumental and environmental one. Zadkine, in his *Destroyed City*, a bronze memorial crated at Rotterdam in 1953, has distorted the figure expressionistically with a cubistic means of treatment. Its dramatized gesture of arms and legs involves the outer space to express horror, and the central gash is not merely symbolic of the heart torn out but denotes space form relationship of its inside and outside.

Constructivists have adopted the modern constructional technique in their sculptural creations and their forms have appeared to be purely abstract. Gabo’s stringed constructions are technical creations although organic and abstract. In its latter development many constructivists have worked in structural construction and their forms are closely related to the modern architecture. Tatlin’s construction (1920) is the pioneering work of its kind.

Today’s sculptural forms reflect a greater concern for mathematics and other scientific laws even for human figuration. Mathematical solids as cube, cylinder, cone, pyramid, prism, sphere etc. have associations other than their geometrical character. The sculptures by Calder, Lippold and others; even Rovert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* are significant for such consideration. Calder’s mobile sculptures are a new departure from traditional concept of time and space bound sculpture. His sculptures move continuously in the infinite time and space that they incorporate universal meaning in them. The moving motifs abstract geometrical shapes, light and airy, organized with proper measure to float and move automatically on their own balance associates the stars and moon, leaves and flowers, birds and flies and create an abstract environment of space and skies. His stable sculptures are abstracts of the kinetic dynamism of his mobiles. Whereas his stables are earth bound constructions in space incorporating the primary structure to stand freely, but their curved geometrical shapes with angular points penetrates into the space to combine the earth and skies.

Brancusi has used mathematical order of proportions in his *Endless Column* (1937). He was developed the proportions of the column based on the module 1:2:4. Its great size is not easily enveloped by the mind, and powerful optical and psychological
phenomenon comes into play. Other sculptors who have been using mathematics and science for visual expression in the recent experiments are the minimalist sculptors like Tony Smith (Smoke 1967) Ronald Blanden (The X, 1967), Sol Le Witt (B789, 1966), Bernard Rosenthal (Groffring Mountain 1969), Anthony Smith and others. Their sculptures are based on the simple primary structure. These sculptors have began with a geometric concept, but their ultimate context and universality are dependent on the arrangement of forms.

The experiments of environmental sculpture are introducing newer elements; one of them is the ‘ecological’, which undertakes the transformation of nature or urban features of even an entire area by constructing rocks in natural lakes or wrapping a coastline or a city skyscraper. An example of such experiment is the Spiral Jetty (1970), a constructed rock jutting into the Great Salt Lake, one of the colossal creations in Utah by Robert Smithson. Another experiment in this direction has been by Christo who wrapped up his series of; Project Not Relised a fountain and a medieval tower (1968); Museum of contemporary Art Chicago, 2,800 square feet of drop clothes; and an Australian Coastline (Little Bay, 1969). These are the most ambitious of contemporary ecological art, aimed at transforming landscape; but remind one of the timeless stone-henge.

In India there is no significant development in this direction of environmental sculpture. The reason could be either the absence of patrons to commission large size outdoor sculpture in modern form and concept or the lack of artist’s courage. Concerns often commission the sculptors to make portrait status of great national heroes in realistic form of Victorian style and these patrons have influenced even the creative sculptors. The realistic memorial status in the imperial style of the colonial era are considered by Indian patrons and sculptors of pre and post-independence period to be the ideal model for the model for the monuments or memorial status of their national leaders and personalities. But though these are large enough and erected on high pedestals deemed to be monumental and environmental yet creating no impact as such they only stand arrogantly. Independently and isolated looking like strangers in the Indian wilderness.

A few creative sculptors have however influenced the Indian patrons to commission monuments and open air sculpture of new form and concept. In fact, today,
there are many open air sculptures of the new type, but not many of these have impact in terms of an environmental context and most are only decorative designs that adorn modern cities.

In fact the beginning of modern exploration of environment sculptures in India is associated with the name of Ramkinkar Baij. He is the most important original sculptor working in India in the period of transition from a traditional to modern art’ and ‘essentially individualistic based and rooted in his own personality and environment (Appaswami : 1961). However, he commission to this credit. Astonishingly, his maquette for the memorial monument of Gandhi and Subhash Bose had been rejected by patrons because of their non-conformist character. The Yaksha and Yakshi (Plate 3.8-a and Plate 3.9-a) in front of the Reserve Bank of India building, New Delhi, are the only two sculptures; he did under the official patronage. Ramkinkar made a series of studies for the monument between 1954-57. He began with the traditional images of Yaksha and Yakshi as a model. In this series, the exploration of the Yaksha – Yakshi images its individual development and evolution of form and concept is significant. He decided that carved figure in granite from Baijnath would provide the best solution. The grey coloured stone specially in open air would make a greater impact to eve than other materials like bronze, marble etc. its archaic simplification of form in gray granite stone becomes heavy and earthly. The sculptor has depicted the figures as symbols of wealth and authority. It has a meaning in the content of the building that serves as the background. Both the figures stand monumentally flanking the main door of the building. Its scales large enough to hold their own against the architecture (Debi Prasad: 2007).

His unyielding creative sprit had never waited for a patrons or commission. The large open air sculptures of his early period for which he had innovated a technique and medium all by himself are unique and first of the environment kind in modern Indian sculptor – equally significant with Rodin (Burghers of Calais) Zadkine (The Destroyed City), Giacometti (Walking Man), Emilio Greco (Pinocchio), Henry Moore (North Wind),Ronald Bladen (The X) And others.

Among the notable outdoor sculptures by Ramkinkar few are clay reliefs on the mud wall of Shyamali and Black House. Yaksha-Yakshi is frontal and stands freely against an architectural background. Others like Sujata, Santhal Family are free standing
open air environmental created for the environment of Santiniketan. A few of them are realistic; others are semi abstract or abstract. Most of all these outdoor creations are of large size, monumental and claim to be new as environmental sculpture in form and concept. They are in cement mixed with the locally available pebbles as a sub statue to the costly medium like bronze. The outdoor sculptures have armatures of bamboo, iron rod and hay on which the mixture of cement and pebbles have been employed by adding and throwing process. The excess of mass and volume have been chipped out to direct process in cement has widened the scope for executing sculpture in large outdoor sizes. The throwing process of the mixture renders a rough organic textured surface of natural look which enhances the environmental contact of his sculptures (Narzary: 1980).

His outdoor scriptures enjoy the rhythm of primary structure, be they realistic or abstract and whatever their structure be. Vertically elongated Sujata 'diagonally dynamic Call of the Mill architecturally stable Santhal Family or cross-balanced Harvester all these are controlled by the balance of the axis line and structural our growth. This has given him a significant point of departure from the other sculptors of our times. The use of the plumb line for defining the balance of axis line an exploration of the structural construction in west is apparent only since the works of constructivists and the scope primary structure is extensively explored only by the minimal sculptors. But Ramkinkar's explored of primary structure and structural construction the basis of the axis line was mostly to depict the representation idea in realistic form. But his sculptures realistic or semi abstract like Sujata, Santhal Family, Call of the Mill, Harvester unlike that of Rodin, Maillol and Zadkine, incorporates the abstract values of stability dynamism and universal meaning.

The subject of his sculptures are his close experience of man, woman, animal and landscape. Two of them which are known as the best examples of his environmental creation are representation of Santhals who through the neighborhood. Forty years back, when Ramkinkar had been doing his Santhal Family the life and nature of Santiniketan was different. The life of the Santhals and other people of the neighboring villages, their daily chores, their bursting laughter and music became the part of Santiniketan life. Ramkinkar was enthused to record the life of the Santhals with all their vitality and exuberance. He executed the Santhal Family in 1938-39 and Call of the Mill in 1955-56.
by the side of a public road that is frequency by the simple folk; *Santhal Family* is a complex composition of a *Santhal* couple, returning from the market. This large monumental sculpture in stylized realism is characterized by graceful rhythm of body strongly built, healthily an energetic- their typical feature, formally it is significant for the structural strength of the forms that support each other to stand on natural balance controlled by the axis line in the centre, rendering the whole architectonically stable and yet incorporating movement and dynamism in it. The throwing process of the mixture renders a rough organic texture on the surface that look lively, organic and homogeneous to nature. The consideration of material and its surface for enhanced environmental contact is intensively explored by Henry Moore and other contemporary sculptors along similar lines only in the post war period (Singha : 2006).

The *Call of the Mill* is also made with similar material and technique; it shows a perfect delineation of realistic forms of youthful *Santhal* female figures exuberant with life vitality and expressive of love and joy in their graceful bodies and smiling faces. Their forceful walking movement is emphasized by composing the figures, the rising dust and draperies flying behind in the air diagonally. The figures unlike that of Rodin’s are structural and therefore the expression is a compromise between the abstract and the realistic. Te supported structure balancing on the axis line incorporates in this realistic delineation the abstract principle of construction. It contains the structural strength of a building in space, and has dimensional clarity to a greater extent.

His first free standing outdoor sculpture is *Sujata* (1935), tall-elongated, thin-cylindrical female figure; originally the sculpture had conceived her as an *Ashrama* student walking gracefully for a stroll. As his first experiment in direct concrete for outdoor sculpture, Ramkinkar avoided a complex supported structure and used instead simple cylindrical one that stands vertically on the axis line. As its base is at the ground level it has a feeling of being rooted in the ground and growing like a tree. By allowing itself to co-exist harmoniously along with the eucalyptus trees around it has a relative impact on the surrounding and itself propounds to be a tree nymph. Ramkinkar in that case has depicted the figure realistically, the impression of his own experiences. Since the figure is facing towards the statue of the seated Buddha of Kala Bhavan Campus
(now it is enclosed within the Ladies Hostel area) the sculptor later named it *Sujata* by putting an offering on her head.

The *Thresher* or *Harvester* is another significant outdoor sculpture. It’s interesting distortion or reduction of the upper part of the figure is sculpted out in a single mass. In contrast the widely spreaded legs and hands was curved out in the most simplified manner which is expressive and denotes the sculptor’s conscious exploration of primary structure in human figure. This sculpture with its crossed structure strongly propounds and clarifies the use of axis line as the basis of formal organization, and exemplifies the best synthesis of the anatomical and primary structures. Such creation of a new order through the synthesis of two structural levels of reality has seldom been achieved even in the west. The cubists who have been simplifying or distorting the objects or figures were not aware about the signification of primary structure in sculpture. On the other hand constructivists and minimalists began their creation with purely technological or primary structure; their works are free from the condition of anatomical structure Ronald Blanden’s ‘*The X*’ is one of this kind, its crossed structure has a close affinity with Ramkinkar’s *Thresher*; but Blanden’s is a purely creation for abstract representation, while Ramkinkar’s has been to represent a human condition – in the life vitally of man even in his *Speed and Lampstand* which can be considered to be abstract and first of its kind in India, he incorporates the spirit and vitality of life and nature. Irrespective of the realistic or abstract, all his sculptures denote his attitude for technological manipulation of primary structure; in fact he had no industrial technology at hand to combine with or to explore its possibilities as the western sculptors have had. From this perspective Ramkinkar’s contribution in the history of environment sculpture in the East and the West, is pioneering in the direction of synthesizing a primary structure with realistic form and his *Thresher* is a semi abstract transition towards the abstract and the structural art of sculpture.

It has already been said that freedom of movement in Indian sculpture was a rare phenomenon during the pre-Ramkinkar period. Patrons and connoisseurs flocked in the arena. It was a maze and a labyrinth to suffocate the motion and expression of Indian sculpture. After the architectural sculpture of the Mediaeval India, Indian sculpture has never been able to do justice to itself. Ramkinkar’s eyes were opened by Viennese
sculptor Ms. Lisa Von Pot and Bourdelle’s student Madam Millward when they visited Santiniketan.

From this time he began to realize that sculpture could not be imprisoned into the four walls of classroom like the painting. It must be freed into the outer nature. Thus nature became an in-separable ingredient of his sculpture-works. Through a process of unification with nature, he freed his sculpture and gained a rare excellence and perfection. Ever since that Ramkinkar never created his spatial forms without bridging a gulf with their natural surroundings. And his sculpture became environmental-friendly or eco-friendly works of creation (Ghosh : 1995).

The most significant aspect of Ramkinkar’s free sculptures was their monumentality. This is unparalleled in contemporary world. Again monumentality in sculpture does not necessarily consider height as the only criterion. Many tall works show a dearth of his quality whereas smaller works become monumental in their intrinsic essence. Monumentality, as a matter of fact, is not an outer quality but the inherent aura of a work of sculpture. Works which are smaller in size can generate the air of monumentality in the spectator’s mind. It may not be irrelevant here to mention the bronze statue of the martyr Kshudiram cast by the apt hand of the well-known sculptor Tapash Datta and erected at Silchar in front of the Dak Bunglow lawn. A similar casting of the statue in front of the Kolkata High Court made Ramkinkar stunned when the applauding maestro remarked; ‘This is the ideal statue. This is what Kshudiram was’ (Patri : 1991). The sinuous stance and the masculine expression truly expose the undaunted and self respectful personality of the revolutionary. This is what monumentality is. There are colossal works all over the world including the Statue of Liberty, but smaller works have often surpassed them in monumentality. Ramkinkar’s every work is the embodiment of this rare quality. In this age of tabletop sculpture, monumentality is bound to be glorified, mystified. Contemporary sculptor cannot help standing bewildered in front of the so-called monumental works. Their wonder-struck hearts spontaneously salutes the creator.

Ramkinkar was greatly influenced by the endless blue canopy overhead and the uneven contour of land stretching beyond one’s keen visibility at Santiniketan. He was nonetheless struck by the simplicity of the hoi polloi of the surrounding areas. Living on
meager means they drank their life to the less. Life is after all a festivity- this typical Santhali conviction became the philosophy of life for Ramkinkar. The joy of creation, joy of self-expression and the joy of unification with nature always drove the sculptor on and he never deviated from this creed. This is evident in his every work of art scattered in Kala Bhavan premises (Appaswami: 1961).

A keen observation of his works shows that as he felt a deep affinity towards the Indian tradition, he was side by side an enthusiast of modernism. He was well aware of the occidental art tradition and he had a training in it which he applied in some of his experimentations. These are so original in their concept and expression that these works can only be compared with the greatest works of world sculpture. It was perhaps a tragedy that Ramkinkar was born in a poor country like India (Pal: 1991).

The monumental compositions Ramkinkar erected in the open air bring out two salient features. The first is organization of form and the second is their expressionistic quality. The diversity of their construction, movement, sinuous stance, made his works immortal art pieces. The figures of his sculpture works expel the breath of space. There have been plenty of discussions in later years about space in sculpture. Modern and contemporary sculptures have been engaged in experimentation with space. But what Ramkinkar did in reality is beyond the power of words to describe. His works had so much of centripetal force and uneven texture that these not only reflect light but absorb it too. To an observer his works provide a chiasroscuro. To be more explicit, this play between light and shade constitutes the finest essence of a work of sculptors, which gives the observer a sense of great satisfaction. Sculptors have to watch specifically that their work must be placed in such a way that the finest details of every contour become a part of the chiaroscuro. This quality is particularly visible in the open air sculpture of Ramkinkar. He tried to sustain the same quality in his other works too, even in his portrait painting.

For this, the sculptures he created can be viewed from all sides, all angles; a specific shape and idea is bound to emerge. The viewer admires Ramkinkar's work from all sides and angles, encircling it with his admiration, revolving round it as if it were a planet- he is tantalized to have a second look. Sometimes light cascades down the figure, sometimes a chiaroscuro is interwoven between light and shade. Bathed in the twilight,
when Sujata and the Santhal Family are tinged with red, every visitor has the momentary feeling that their beauty will never fade away. However, one has to admit that due to a lack of proper planning of the Visva Bharati authority, the harmonious juxtaposition of Ramkinkar’s work with the surrounding nature is somewhat distorted in the present time (Som: 1985).

Another perspective of Ramkinkar’s work lies in the movement or dynamism. The word ‘statue’ derives its origin from the Latin word Static. Hence a statue or an idol is that which is static or fixed. And yet right from the age of classicism to the present one, the quest of all great artists was to bring in the element of dynamism in their pieces of art work. In Indian poetics, more than one stance of an idol have been discussed and categorized. These are Abhang, Dwibhang and Tribhang etc. In ancient Greek sculpture movement and stance have been given special importance. But to Ramkinkar a 20th century sculptor, movement is synonymous with a whirlwind. This whirlwind has its impression in every piece of his work, right from the so called open air sculptures to every stance and nerve of his figures. It is like an explosion or a deluge. And a similar explosion is formed in the minds of those who come in contact with Ramkinkar’s works. To Ramkinkar, life is nothing but dynamism. Perhaps the insecurity of livelihood, dawn-to-dusk toil of the Santhal life and the inevitable festivity that sprang out of such drab background provided Ramkinkar the basis for this dynamism. His dynamism can only be compared to that of Rodin, the undaunted steersman of modern sculpture (Sen: 2007).

However, Ramkinkar could create epoch-making works because he had the courage to make something new. He did not bother whether his attempt would be rewarded or criticized. Sometimes people would question him whether his works were a manifestation of some inner inspiration. An indifferent Ramkinkar would always rule out such a possibility and answer; ‘Inspiration? What is that? I do not know what it is. I make forms because I like to do so. I don’t know why or for whom I do so’. Ramkinkar had no patron, no munificence behind. He was not committed to any spectator. He created his immortal pieces just in order to feed his own impulse. He was committed only to his creativity.

As a matter of fact, neither Rabindranath Tagore nor Nandalal Bose tried to establish the conventional trend of academic teaching-learning process at Shantiniketan.
This had a vital role to play behind the rise of Ramkinkar as a sculpture and this resulted in the genesis of such splendid open-air compositions (Pal : 1991).

The renowned sculptor Chintamoni Kar was a close associate of Ramkinkar. His analysis in this regard is, ‘There are two races of artists. One Apollonian and the other Dionysian, the former is traditional while the later iconoclastic. Ramkinkar belongs to the second category. The environment that Rabindranath and Nandalal indulged in to be created at Kala Bhavan opened up the possibility of Ramkinkar’s emerging as a Dionysian sculpture. We were Apollonian. We abided by the conventional Conon. We developed ourselves by degrees. Take for example, Rabindranath himself. Does he belong to a tradition? Can anyone follow his footsteps? He himself gave birth to his tradition. Ramkinkar resembled Rabindranath in many ways. His talent expressed itself in such a multifaceted way, in water colour, oil colour, and sculpture that it was awesome. Our master Nandalal too was astonished at the work done by Ramkinkar. Once Nandalal told Binod BehariMukhopadhyay that Ramkinkar was doing works of such a quality that it passed a tremor in the heart. Such a recognition was unbelievable for a student. And Rabindranath gave an open support for whatever Ramkinkar did. To be truthful, it was a smile of fortune. Among his environmental sculptures, Ramkinkar first created Sujata..... On seeing it, an indulgent Rabindranath remarked that wherever Ramkinkar wanted to erect a statue, he should be allowed to do so.After this, Ramkinkar created the Santhal Family. It could be termed as a milestone of Indian sculpture. During the same time such pieces as the Winnower, ‘The Call of the Mill’ came out ... it is beyond my capacity to judge their worth. I have no entry into his world. Full of vigour and masculine, vibrant with energy and power’ (Sen : 2007).

3.5 STYLe AND TECHNIQUE OF RAMKINKAR’S OPEN AIR SCULPTURE

For Ramkinkar, to stick only to conventions would always mean to embrace the life of a prisoner. Deep in his heart he had the never-ending impulse of discovering something new. His life itself, as it were, was an endless search of the new – whether it involved the content or the form of his art. Sometimes his ‘discoverer’s soul’ found its manifestation in the selection of raw materials (Debi Prasad: 2007).
When Ramkinkar set his foot in Santiniketan, sculpture was yet to attain the multifaceted dimension which in course of time would become the hallmark of modernist Indian sculpture. Practicing fine arts would then invariably mean doing some drawing and painting. Nandalal Bose’s occasional invocation of the goddess of terracotta was therefore a puff of the fresh air from this monotony. Then came a period when some non-Indian sculptor came to Kala Bhavan for training they would be sculptors. Their guidelines were more than enough to ignite Ramkinkar’s inborn talent (Appaswami : 1961).

As a matter of fact, there was always a dearth of essential raw materials in Birbhum. Whatever was available came from Calcutta. But scarcity could not suffocate the zeal of this dreamer. His creativity drove him mad till the last breath of his life. Whatever was readily available at hand was instantly converted into his raw material. He did the utmost use of every trivial material which he found responsive in some way or other towards his need either for his painting or for his sculpture. Never did he toil much his brain pondering over the preserve ability of these art pieces. He would often use even an untidy shoe-brush to give his painting the touch of a brush work. His colouring was always thick. Besides, his experimentation was often inclined towards a fusion of the indigenous medium of art with water colour, oil colour and even the Chinese ink. Many of his endeavours were proved futile while he embarked upon such experimentation in sculpture. Though of course, some occasional patches of silver lining were always there. And while disseminating his quest, he enlightened the tradition of Indian sculpture itself. During later years Ramkinkar became at ease with all mediums- clay or bronze, stone or plaster of Paris, everything. Diversity of mediums was the quintessence of his art-work (Som : 1985).

Non-availability of modern equipments left no stain on his versatile creativity. Ramkinkar made the best use of cheaper and easily available mediums. His experimentation with various forms unfolded the mystery of a particular form yet unknown to the citadel of conventional Indian sculpture- a fusion of cement with concrete. This gave the Indian sculpture world a new ethos. Ramkinkar’s attention was arrested by the red graveled, wavelike Khoai mounts situated near Santiniketan. Perhaps the Khoai mounts had been waiting too to serve the purpose of an artist. Ramkinkar
collected ample red gravels from the *Khoai* (Plate 3.10) and mixing them up with cements, applied them in clusters on his armatures. An unforeseen texture was thus born which was to give Ramkinkar's sculpture a yet unknown aura. *Sujata, Santhal Family, Call of the Mill, Harvester* and such other pieces of sculpture were created in this medium (Subramanyan: 1991).

Similarly, while constructing the armature for his sculpture work, Ramkinkar was really innovative. He paid no heed to the conventional methods. Here too, a dearth of the necessary accessories accounted for these innovations. When iron rod was readily available, it was a great occasion. But when the same was scarce, it made no big difference since bamboo sticks, hay, string and the ingenuity of this maestro worked together to construct the armature. And this fitted his purpose well. Neither his creative urge none his pursuit for perfection suffered in the least for such 'queer' apparatus. Besides, he 'stole' a lot from the method employed by our native clay artisans and did some work in the native *Dhokda* casting (Plate 3.11). All he wanted was to adopt from his environment a language to give it back to the environment itself. For this Ramkinkar's sculpture could acquire a strange harmonious unity with the surrounding nature (Pal: 1991).

3.6 EXAMPLES OF SOME OPEN AIR SCULPTURE

The in-depth study of some important open air sculpture of Ramkinkar Baij is examined as they proved the most authentic and vital sources, to understand the true nature of the artist.

3.6.1 Sujata

The piece of sculpture *Sujata* (Plate 3.3-a) can be accredited with ushering in the first modern sculpture in India. Ramkinkar created it sometime in 1935. *Sujata* best illustrates Ramkinkar's eco-friendly type of sculpture. While erecting it the artist totally severed his bond with the accepted canon of sculpture-making. Where a mediocre sculptor would have never forgotten to raise a pedestal below, Ramkinkar simply ignored it. *Sujata* is directly placed on the ground. Exhibiting monumentality, *Sujata* like the surrounding grove, is a part of the natural polyphony around. Rows of tall eucalyptuses
stand all around. A cursory glance might not tell the onlooker of her presence. Hiding its torso amidst the tall trunks of eucalyptus trees, this work of sculpture then stretches itself upwards. Cast in a very bold hand, the work clearly generates some kind of movement, drama, dynamism. It is believed that Sujata with a bowl of ‘payes’ ( porridge ) on her head is approaching ‘Buddhadeva’, absorbed in his meditation a few yards hence.

As a matter of fact, this bowl was the invention of Ramkinkar’s teacher, Nandalal Bose. The medium of sculpture making in this case, like all his eco-friendly sculpture works is concrete and cement. Ramkinkar pasted this cement-mixed concrete in clusters on the body of his Sujata. But strangely enough, his Sujata does not show the slightest of roughness on the surface. On the other hand, an unbelievable texture of smoothness and rhythm is attained throughout the whole of her body including the drapery works. This exemplifies Ramkinkar’s deft handling of material along with his deep oneness with the theme.

3.6.2 Santhal Family

After completing his ‘Sujata’, Ramkinkar occupied himself with his second eco-friendly work called the ‘Santhal Family’ (Plate 3.4-b). Its diction, medium and aesthetics render it into a timeless piece of sculpture. Ramkinkar probably drew his inspiration from the two works of sculpture cast in earthen relief placed on the two sides of the main door of Shyamali, Rabindranath’s favourite abode. But the touch of academic realism that was vivid in the earthen relief-casting of Shyamali is not at all visible in the ‘Santhal Family’. On the contrary, Ramkinkar’s idiosyncrasy combined with self realization gave the piece of work altogether a different dimension.

The sculpture in question brings out a homecoming journey of a tired Santhal Family after the end of a day. Their infant sits in the basket hanging from a rod on the shoulder of the Santhal male. The female carries a massive bundle on her head, and yet her left hand firmly holds her young kid. Even their pet dog is not left behind. Staying all day long with its master’s family, it is now shadowing them. It may not be irrelevant to mention that his deep tie with nature made Ramkinkar sympathetic towards the animal-world in different works of his Sculpture. In this sculpture, the mere presence of a dog
makes the *Santhal Family* an epitome of perfection. Their poverty-stricken, tiresome life is exposing happiness, which is blessed and even heavenly. After the toil of the whole day, the life they will find at home is out and out their own. They will enjoy life as their limited means allows them to do. For this, their exhausted stepping towards home is full of joy and happiness.

Ramkinkar cast this work in cement–concrete medium in ‘direct throwing process’. Even after this, the work identifies itself with the outer nature, with the red-pebbled land of Birbhum. The *Santhal* male’s neck is longer beyond proportion, the dog’s leg is imperfect, and the *Santhal* female’s body-language is to be admired as a perfect reflection of a *Santhal* beauty. Never did Ramkinkar try to imitate reality or realism. Rather he wanted to surpass their boundaries in order to portray the character of a situation and its feeling. The nature in Santiniketan found in him its ideal worshipper.

### 3.6.3 *Call of the Mill*

Ramkinkar’s colossal work the *Call of the Mill* (Plate 3.5-b) emblematizes movement and motion. It was erected in 1956. Just opposite the work *Santhal Family* in Kala Bhavan premises, a group of *Santhal* women cast in sculpture are seen rushing towards their working place along with their children. No sign of fatigue or weariness, rather the energetic zeal usually associated with every day break is expressively visible in each and every figure. The bust of the *Santhal* woman on the extreme left position in the composition is on the move towards the front, while her companion on the right is looking backwards. The fringe of her wind-blown *saree* has been firmly held by her indomitable offspring. The dire urge for earning livelihood and the motherly instinct of a woman are all engraved quite dexterously. The composition as a whole gives rise to a spin, which exposes a perpetual dynamism. The curved *Palash* tree just behind this composition is very much symmetrical with the same tone in creating a spin. This has given Ramkinkar’s ‘call’ an unforeseen perfection. This composition too, was created with the help of Ramkinkar’s indigenous cement mixed concrete technique.
3.6.4  *Gandhi*

*Gandhi* is one of the first pieces of open-air sculpture done by Ramkinkar. It was erected in the Kala Bhavan premises (Plate 3.12). The making began in 1968. The Government of Assam was his patron in this case. The casting was done in cement-mixed concrete. Initially the sculptor began the work with his own hand though later he left it to be done by his students. However, he himself supervised the entire work.

To build up the statue of a historical personality, the sculptor has to go through the social backdrop that raised the personality, his character, the sentiment of the masses centering round him. Ramkinkar meticulously went through the details. The height of the statue along-with its pedestal is round about 15 to 20 feet-undoubtedly of colossal height. But this height has been overshadowed by the intrinsic monumentality of the statue. This Gandhi is rather scraggy, his shoulder is bending downwards to accommodate the burden of his age, but his steps are as indomitable as ever. No hurdle is a hurdle for him at all. The whole statue records a whirlwind of dynamism and strength.

Later in 1969, however, Ramkinkar handed over to the Govt. of Assam a bronze-casting of the statue (Plate 3.13). But his cement-mixed concrete casting still preserves the glory of Kala Bhavan remaining as rigid as Gandhi himself.

3.6.5  *Harvester*

Amidst the eco-friendly sculpture works of Ramkinkar, the *Harvester* (Plate 3.6) is an immortal creation. It is erected behind the student’s hostel of Kala Bhavan, on the edge of the road running towards Sriniketan. This piece too was made by the direct application of his cement-mixed concrete casting. Its height is 305 cm and it was created in 1943. Though a work of abstractionism, this work does not totally cast aside realism. Ramkinkar presents in it a very significant moment of a farmer’s life. Direct intervention of reality is not there; just its simplified form is represented. No individual is clearly visible, and yet a farmer’s sweating toil is at the center of this artwork. The sinews of a hand clutching a bundle of paddy swell with unending toil. The sculpture is not realistic and yet it is ready to surpass the reality. Here lies the enduring vigor of this piece of sculpture.
3.6.6  **Yaksha-Yakshi**

The *Yaksha-Yakshi* sculptures are flanking the entrance to the Reserve Bank of India building in New Delhi. They are also called *Kuber* and *Kuberni*. After India gained her independence, the Government of India planned to construct a building for the Reserve Bank of India in New Delhi. The country's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, decided that there would be two sculptures on either side of the entrance to the building. The Bank authorities invited some well-known sculptors to submit maquettes on such themes such as Banking and Agriculture, Prosperity and Growth. Ramkinkar was among those invited. The group of experts appointed in 1954, to choose the best from among the submitted samples, adjudged Ramkinkar’s to be the most suitable.

Naturally, Ramkinkar was happy and excited about the project. Whatever might have been the traditional notion of the theme, including that of the ‘experts’, Ramkinkar’s interpretation was truly contemporary. Whereas *Yakshi* (Plate 3.9-a) represented agriculture, holding flowers and food grain, *Yaksha* (Plate 3.8-a) was an outcome of his imagination, holding the symbol of industry in one hand and a money-bag in the other. Many people make the mistake of referring to the image of *Yakshi* as *Yakshini*, *Yaksha* and *Yakshi* are brother and sister, and not husband and wife.

The preparatory work by Ramkinkar for the final sculptures included a large number of exploratory studies, in the course of which he experimented with several stylistic and formal elements. Only eight remaining examples we have from among the more than twenty studies which Ramkinkar made for *Yaksha* and *Yakshi*, the others being untraceable. A careful study of these would show that in his search for the appropriate form, he ranged over practically every style of classical Indian sculpture. It is as if he tried to recreate these images only to absorb their immanent spirit, having cast away their outer trappings. The *maquettes* represent different periods of ancient Indian art step by step, intensely scrutinizing each one until he was saturated with its animating principle to the point of repetition. It is as though he wanted to be absolutely sure that while no one style would influence his final creation, it must, nonetheless, be imbued with the essence of each.
The feeling we feel by looking at the *Yaksha-Yakshi* figures is that they are a distillation of the purest essence of Indian sculpture, and have the outer form of no particular style or school. After receiving the final order for executing the commission, Ramkinkar had to resolve the problem of finding the suitable stone. He choose a particular kind of grey stone of very large mass since the figures were to be about 732 centimeters in height. After discovering the right kind of stone and excavating it, there was the problem of transporting it to Delhi. Ramkinkar had initially planned the figures to be carved out of a single, monolithic mass of stone. His plans to be frequently altered to meet the technical demands of the assignment, and the estimate rose well beyond the original figures. It was a very hard task for Ramkinkar to accomplish all this, especially because he had no experience of the issues involved.

While he was working on the basic plan for the monumental statues, the Directors of the Reserve Bank sent for him to find out about the progress of the commission. As was his wont, he turned up late, shabbily dressed, and with a nervous student for an interpreter beside him. The Directors were understandably perturbed: about eighty thousand rupees had already been spent and the sculptor was still not through with his experiments with small *maquettes* and sketches. No stone had been ordered or paid for the final work, and the deadline for completion the work had also been nearly spent.

At first, the Directors tried to impress upon Ramkinkar the consequences of a breach of contract. Whereupon, in his innocent way, Ramkinkar burst into peal of laughter, and quoted: *What! Are you threatening to put me into jail for breach of contract? Wonderful! I will then have free time to work hard on the sculptures and fulfilling the commission will be guaranteed.* The Directors then raised the amount of the commission and also extended the time limit.

Now began the search for the required stone. Mathura sandstone was too red or too yellow and could lose its character; *Makrana* marble was too polished – so Ramkinkar went to Bhakra, Kangra and ultimately to Baijnath, where he saw a beautiful hill with deep blue rocks. Ramkinkar camped there by the roadside. His companion, Pranab Deb Burman, was a hard-headed, practical man. He realized the difficulties of procuring the stone from the site. He tried to dissuade Kinkarda by saying that it was the distance that lent blue charm to those hills and that, actually, the stones in those "blue
hills’ were as drab a grey as any to be found near Mama-Bhagne, close to Suri or Santiniketan. He suggested that they should get fine stone instead, from Andhra. But by then Ramkinkar had lost his heart to the blue stone of Baijnath. On his lips was an old *keertan*: ‘Krishna prem ki ....sadhei mele’. Ultimately, the Indian Railways agreed to transport the stone from Baijnath to Delhi, at a very heavy cost. But it had to be done, for Ramkinkar had lost his heart to the ‘neel-shila’ of Baijnath (Debi Prasad: 2007).

Being a simple, straightforward person who was not worldly-wise, Ramkinkar was often let down and cheated by people, including his own so-called assistants. The money granted by the Reserve Bank of India ran out long before the date of completion of the project. It was a mess all the way, in financial terms as well as in terms of loss of time, apart from the effrontery and callousness of the officials and the humiliation to which Ramkinkar was subjected. Fortunately, in the end, the Bank extended the date of completion. Thus, through a painful and desperately arduous process, *Kuber* and *Kuberni*, two great examples of modern Indian sculpture, came into being.

### 3.6.7 Lampstand

The *Lampstand* (Plate 3.7) is an important example of open air sculpture by Ramkinkar. It can be considered as the first abstract sculpture in the world of modern art in India. The question that arises is why such an abstract work was created in 1940, when 1938 was witnessed the creative birth of a phenomenal work like *Santhal Family*. It was not at all documented whether such a preparation and experiment never happened with Ramkinkar in the short span between 1940 and 1938 that could lead him ultimately to such an abstraction as we see in case of the *Lampstand*. It seemed all of a sudden, that such language came to relevance with form and expression. From the early 1930’s, one can witness the growing abstraction in his works. But here the distortion was taking place only gradually, this was also reflect in works like *Mithun, Woman and Dog, Koch-Devjani* sculptures. Literally with some kind of references, a smaller version of *Lampstand* could be found from that time, in plaster. But no touch of reality could be seen in it. Though it looks like a tree apparently but actually resembles nothing. But, when this smaller version was transformed to a bigger original size, that work seemed complicated to the general eye who tried to find reality in it. It became, difficult to
comprehend. It enables the viewer to view it from all side. Few found in it pair of birds
other found, in it man and woman kissing while other saw in it the dream goddess. But
Ramkinkar never opposed those different views. He laughed endlessly with his open
heart, while experiencing such observations. (Narzary - 1991)

Once a Photographer visited Santiniketan, to make a film, at that time
Abanindranath Tagore was in Kala Bhavan. The photographer looked at the Lampstand
from all sides, but could understand nothing. Abanindranath Tagore Said – “he is
Ramkinkar who will make you revolve around the work on and on show the work.”
According to Ramkinkar “There are two or three subjects together in the ‘Lampstand’.
So one can see more than one process. Few subjects got added while few were
eliminated if the two-three objects were done in realistic fashion, the entire
representation would have been different. But the way it was done, it seems unified and
integrated as a whole there by making the composition more, emphatic to the artists’
need and requirement. It is this very freedom, to construct the spaces as well as the mass.
That Ramkinkar cherished, more than anything through abstraction. This freedom, if
utilize properly could give rise to another form that seems unknown but still known

The vertical axis that supports the Lampstand stands still fixed on the ground and
based on the solid form was constructed, diagonally, straight, upward and downward.
The surface is highlighted by light while at other places dark reveals the infinite depth. A
divided plane merged with another plane by circling around the form. Another divided
plane bends and turns somewhere and create an angle that sometimes getting in and
getting out of the form. The form with its sweeping surface bending and twisting with
light and shade falling on it creates a drama, at every curve, thereby making it compact
and precise. Therefore the rhythm and continuity of the surface gets enhanced and unique
in its character. The eternal growth process and the energy it generates from nature could
be seen, earnest in this work of sculpture and the artist succeeds in bringing it in full
blossom, in sculptural terms. The sculpture terms the formlessness of true experience
through the Lampstand instead of any dream or imaginative efforts. Though the smaller
version in plaster reveals certain resemblance to a tree but such resemblance diminishes,
as one looks at the bigger version, in the open air. This kind of non referential abstract sculpture would have been required in front of the Prayer hall of Barhma. As he was aware of the places and environment of open air sculpture, he couldn’t deny the ideological importance of house of prayer hall of Brahma. After several thoughts and consideration he made this sculpture is between Santiniketan house and house of Brahma. And so this sculptures formlessness, Ramkinkar tied the whole spirit of the surrounding trees, birds, animals, human in to one universal whole. Though Lampstand remaining his first open air abstract sculpture, but the perfect example of form in space couldn’t be seen in any sculpture of today (Narzary- 1991).

3.6.8 Fountain

It is believed that the ‘Fountain’ was Ramkinkar Baij’s last open air sculpture created in Santiniketan (Plate 3.14). In this sculpture locating the ‘Fountain’ as the central pole. Few forms can be seen revolving around the appearance in the front assumes the shape of a buffalo and the back shows the image of fish, before this in Ajanta a kind of imaginative and hybrid of two different living forms could be seen. Relating to the extreme weather of Birbhum water seems inevitably necessary for a buffalo to crunch his thirst and just like at the same time water is extremely important for fish to survive. The sculpture applauds the rhythm played by the formal elements of two species in their extreme love for water. The beautiful rhythm that has taken place by the two forms coming from different sources but still seems almost probable together (Som : 1985). The two forms thus culminate to make the sculpture more justifiable and provocative to its theme. The heads of the buffalos are seen raised higher as compare to the bodies which are slanting downwards. A heavy creeper rises upwards centering on the fountain as if creating a rhythm of motion which is common to his other sculpture. Flowers along with leaves and branches can be seen at various places in between the fish and the buffalo which in turn has added to aesthetic quality of the work in the manner of technique, process and stylization, the fountain is somewhat different from other works like Santhal Family, Call of the Mill or Sujata. Though the work is made out of cement and mortar, but one can see no textural surface for the enhancement of organic character.
The surface is polished and one can resemble it with the lining of bricks in the wall. The formal elements are expressive in the composition. Always a pathfinder with new innovative approach he was never confined and delimited in any space of thought. All through his life he has experimented with technique and subject content. That is why one can find lot of differences between his earlier works and those of the later period. Thus, it can be seen that there are various stylistic formal and contextual difference between *Sujata* and the *Yaksha-Yakshi* figures in front of The Reserve Bank of India New Delhi. In his last work the *Fountain*, one also can witness the similar traits and distinction as compared to his other works.

3.7 RAMKINKAR, AN AVANT-GARDE ARTIST

Ramkinkar's contribution to Indian sculpture is beyond comparison. It was he who ushered modernity in to the threshold of Indian sculpture. To gauges his multifaceted talent, art critics and art historians face innumerable problems. It is difficult to classify Ramkinkar as a creative genius. Was he a traditionalist? Was he modern? or a Modernist? It is, however, very much obvious that Ramkinkar began his journey as a traditionalist. Gradually he expanded his realm and a time came when he even surpassed modernity. This is why he cannot be categorized in any particular trend or school of thought. Though his style and technique were modern, this was not an echo of western modernity. He was deeply rooted in his own tradition. It becomes, therefore, imperative to analyze some of the aspects of traditionalism and modernism that was traced in Ramkinkar's works.

3.7.1 Tradition and Modernity in the Context of Ramkinkar’s Work

Traditionalism is an accepted criterion in the areas of fine arts, but traditionalism, at the same time, is a hidden trap. At the low of some turning point, traditionalism takes the shape of conservatism. Then a new generation of talented artists has to come up with the dream to re-discover the core inside the outer layer, to create a break from the convention. Older techniques and contents are usually rejected during such traditional periods–creativity takes on a new turn through some unusual and untrodden path. Again when the upheaval die down, when deconstruction begins, it is often found that
traditionalism has been expanded through this widening of space done by those talented artists (Bhattacharjee : 2010).

Till 1930’s there was no trace of Indianness in Indian sculpture. G. K. Mahtre, Karmarkar, Hiranmoy Roy Choudhury, Debi Prasad Roy Choudhury were really genius. Some of their works no doubt merges with the neo-Indian stylistic but they were mostly confined to the Euro-centric academics style. The sculptor whose individual talent paved the way for modern Indian sculpture was Ramkinkar. It has already been said that his rise as a sculptor was greatly influenced by Rabindranath and the Santiniketan School of painting. In this sense, Santiniketan can be said to be the womb that gave birth to modern Indian sculpture. But a question that often strikes us is whether Indianness had anything to do with Ramkinkar’s diction as a sculptor. The Ramkinkar who never wholeheartedly accepted the canons of the Santiniketan schooling, who – in spite of his deep regard for Nandalal Bose–had the courage to refute Nandalal’s instruction in order to paint in oil colour, who initiated the western diction in order to learn it and applied the expressionist and the cubist form for bringing in the element of movement and rhapsody in his own paintings. Who had no touch with the so called lyricism and symmetry of Indianness could go on following the classical Indian stylistics–doesn’t it seem a bit absurd?

He had no conventional schooling in the art of sculpture other than what he had gathered while making icons of gods and goddesses in his childhood. But he assimilated everything with his inborn talent and dexterity. He surveyed and went through a good number of books in the library at Santiniketan and came into contact with some western artists there. This made him acquainted with the western school of arts and also this was the foundation by which he made him a sculptor. Apart from this, Ramkinkar was both an observer and an insider of the incessant flow of life, of rural community. The Santhals who lived on the outskirts of Santiniketan, their tireless and free life style have always supplied Ramkinkar the theme for his sculpture and painting. This is where he was always an Indian. If we take into account his two monumental works the Call of the Mill and The Santhal Family, we will find an inner coarseless or roughness in their form which obviously descended from the western modernity. Along with these the specialties which made these works unique and unparallel are particularly traditional (Ghosh : 1995).
But, is this traditionalism that of classical Indian schools? Perhaps not, because a big power house of Indian sculpture lie in its folk-cum-primitive life force. The Dravid Tradition which renovated the Indus Valley civilization gradually explored newer avenues in various folk and non-Indian art forms and developed in to a full fledged school. In Ramkinkar this school found a spontaneous reflection of itself. Some critics say that Ramkinkar borrowed him major strength from Bourdel, but this is only partial truth. Bourdel could have been a technical influence, but technique does not make a great sculpture.

Besides, a stream of folk and tribal art form always ran in India paralleled to the classical stream, and classical school often gathered a lot from it. As the modern European sculpture was largely inspired by the primitive men’s paintings, so too, the modern Indian sculpture was influenced by Indian tribal and folk art forms. Ramkinkar’s *Call of the mill* and *Santhal Family* are two brilliant examples of such influence. Ramkinkar himself was a true observer of Indian classical art works because in addition, the engravings on the temple walls of *Konark* inspired him which was a traditional form of art.

Tradition means the recycling of culture. This is where modernity is in conflicts with tradition. Traditional art school always imposes certain inhabitation upon the artist. As a matter of fact, the modern artist is always in favour of his freedom of expression; our reading of western art history teaches us so.

The society that comes in to being in the western world right after the Industrial Revolution no longer believed the old and traditional values. Individual values become a determining factor. This is how the concept of progress was established. Progress brought in along with itself decadence. Aggression and war and the weapons that were used there in gave rise to a sense of insecurity which fed an individual’s feeling of depression and seclusion. Individualism and individual depression plus frustration, isolation—these mothered different modernist trends and school, different isms. Everything becomes fragmented, fractured. No concept of the ‘whole’ could emerge in these circumstances. Restlessness, self-contradiction and running after the new mark the history of modern European art (Paul : 1991).
Ramkinkar’s art should not be viewed in the light of this modernist trend. There is a definite character or interpretation in Ramkinkar’s sculpture works and paintings which clearly distinguish him as a different kind of modern artist. When we talk of Santiniketan Kala Bhavan, three names immediately come to our mind; Nandalal Bose, Binod Behari Mukhopadhyay and Ramkinkar Baij. They had their individual style and yet there was a certain integrity that flows through their work and makes them three exponents of the same school. They had a clear notion of what art is or should be what language art should adopt theoretical conviction. Nandalal Bose tried to influence his students with three relevant ideas—to stick to the tradition, to have an open eye towards the existing surrounding and to develop an individual expression. He embraced the traditional but not to that extent to lets it into anarchism by severing touch with the surrounding as, for example, the Bengal School did. Both Binod Behari Mukhopadhyay and Ramkinkar Baij truly realized the essence of Nandalal’s philosophical concepts. They therefore, never ignored the tradition but indulged themselves in a discourse with it. They never suffered from any dilemma when they come in contact with western modernism. They, on the other hand never thought of alienating themselves from their Indian origin (Som : 1985).

During his first years Ramkinkar too, like his Master Nadalal Bose, practiced painting in the style of the Bengal school. But very soon he too, like his master found its lack of essence. While he was at Kala Bhavan, he could not forego the impulse to follow the western art aesthetics as he come in close contact with some guest artist from the West. He could never sever his tie with his surroundings and could very well understand its disharmony with the leisurely style of the Bengal school. Very soon he developed his own style. He was never moved or influenced by the dull and almost suffocating direction of the western modernism. Rather he learned the art of symmetry from the Indian classical school.

In the meanwhile, Ramkinkar left the miniature painting style and adopted, like the European masters, large canvases, and thick strokes of brush and oil colour. The soft and slender style of the Bengal school gave way to a harsh and rough form that became his own style. The cubist or geometrical proportion he attached to his arts objects in paintings obviously reminds us of a western touch. But this was only a touch, not an
imitation. Ramkinkar never used the cubist form in the same way as cubist would have
done. The aesthetics of cubism lies in its emotionless, powerful designs; they
metamorphose a flat plain in to almost a prism-like one. But Ramkinkar’s figures are
always muscular. The position of spine in a figure determines its bodily expression; this
is reminiscent of classical Indian tradition. He was not at all hesitant to depict the abstract
style. But his abstract art-works are not just lifeless designs because the element of
dynamism which he portrays in his arts objects typically exemplifies this.

Expressionism is often a representation of social or phycological modernism
because the expressionism that is found in Ramkinkar’s works is always a representation
of joy and happiness. As a matter of fact, this is the most striking achievement of
Ramkinkar’s art; his creations are never morbid, they are full of life and vigour and
revelry. He discovered the archetypal man in different tribal or rural figures whom he
always saw and whom he usually thematised in his work. This happiness which we see in
Ramkinkar’s work sprang from his directs contact with tribal community life. The same
element of happiness is a remarkable feature of classical Indian art. We can, therefore
assert that Ramkinkar’s modernism was an Indian re-interpretation of the western
modernism. (Paul : 1991)

But, Ramkinkar did not like to talk about art, as he stated in the interview he gave
to Bela Bandopadhyay : “I never like to talk about art, particularly nowadays. I have
worked as best as I can and only wish to go on working.” However some people were
able to gather from him, his thoughts and his opinions on the subject. When asked
whether he was a modernist and whether he distorted form, he said: ‘I don’t know what
they actually mean by ‘modern’. They may refer to the time or to the form. Have you seen
Ganesha? What is it? Modern? Ha! Ha! And Ravana’s ten heads? Or the Picasso’s
painting in which there is a face pressed over another face. Is Ravana modern? I would
not know. I bend or disfigure a form because it is necessary to do so. It depends on the
theme and the ultimate objectives, whether to distort or not to distort form. I aimed at
abstraction while making the ‘Thresher’ in order to catch the body in a certain posture.
While making the Santhal Family, I tried to show them in motion exactly as they would
appear when departing. Again, to depict Rabindranath’s personality, in one of his
portraits, I placed a ball in the place of one eye. In fact everything (in art) is making and breaking’ (Debi Prasad: 2007).

3.7.2 Ramkinkar, the Discoverer of the ‘New Way’

Ramkinkar began his career in a very conventional way. But he always accepted the new trends in art. While in his choice of themes, and medium, he was craving for the new. This urge made him a great artist. He uttered himself, ‘At first I only drew pictures, then I concentrated on icon-making, while drawing figures or pictures and making icons, what I always thought was that I must be different from others. Very much different. If I emerge as a right successor of some school of art or as a follower of some great artist— I shall lose my own identity as an artist. So I must be selfish here. Then I used to explore which form or medium, which theme or diction has not been used yet— which canvas remained untouched. I have always been very cautious of this is my painting and sculpture work. I wanted to be distinct. Almost all my sculptures are open air compositions. I wanted to free them from the suffocation of indoors. All my works are big, almost monumental. They are happy in the open air, in open sunshine and moonlight. Almost all the sculptures have some movement. I don’t believe in static. Even the ‘Sujata’ who stands alone amidst the Eucalyptus trees is not static. She too moves on carrying a bowl of sweet rice on her hand. I have shaped her in such a way that she resembles a leafless tree. Even that Santhal Family—created in the garden in front of the Kala Bhavan—a Santhal male is carrying weight on his shoulder; one of his carrier’s bear’s things of different sorts while the other carries his sitting child. Beside him in his wife with things on her hands, she has a dog by her side. Everything is on the move. Nothing is static. I finished the work in 1938. It’s made of direct concrete, even ‘The call of the Mill’ is made of the same. The call too is installed in the garden in front of the Kala Bhavan by the side of the main road. I have tried to capture the movement of a path in it. Two Santhal girls, fully grown, walk swiftly in wet clothes at the sound of the siren from a mill, while their wet clothes dry in the air. A small boy runs after them. I don’t have any faith in static models. My models are those whom I used to see in the morning and at dusk. There is Pearson Village. The Santhal live there. They go to their working places every morning in this way and come back in the evening. Those, whom I
saw every day, everywhere are my models. Most of my works reach out to light. I don’t believe in shades. Almost all my works I did in broad daylight, in scorching heat’. (Bhattacharjee :2002).

3.7.3 Social Relavence

There was a time when royal munificence and patronage counted a lot to encourage the flow of art work. As time changed patronage to become meager. Where there is no demand from the Society and there is a dearth of patronage everywhere–how should the arts survive? To answer a similar question raised by the renowned sculptor Dinkar Kaushik, Ramkinkar said, ‘I don’t bother for social response. I feel an inevitable impulse and it forces to me to create. This inner inspiration compels me to paint or create. Does it really matter whether the rich and elite class demands my art works or not? The forms and figures which are born within me forcefully try to come out and while I give them some shape. I feel relieved’ (Kaushik : 2009).

This utterance not merely bring out Ramkinkar’s talent, that as an artist he belonged to the possessed category, but reveals, with a single stroke, his commitment to the life around and also to his art form. According to Ramkinkar, social relevance means to have an awareness of what is happening around in our society, in a global perspective. But an artist’s creative impulse always proceeds his social awareness. What matters really to an artist is the charge he falls within.

Ramkinkar said, ‘I am an artist treading an extremely narrow yet great path, on which it is impossible to walk without the spirit of ‘Sadhana’. Although all the paths of sadhana are the same, these act as an opposing force against all that you have to fight, which, like an illusion, a mirage, is trying to mislead the liberated mind in the wrong direction. I see that all of you are my companies–so I am not alone! This puja has been going on since ages. It is like the mad desire of humanity to achieve excellence. My gratitude to you all.

Since my childhood days I have had the desire to places sculptures on either side of the road I would be travelling on. I like to see big statues under the rain-laden sky- in sunshine, in moonlight and in rain. Its beginning was in Santiniketan. I have done little, but the resolve to do more is a promise I had made to myself which will, hopefully,
remain until I die. It is the dream of a poor youthful artist. There is one road open for me and that is not to embrace family life. Marriage etc. is anathema to me, although I am not ungrateful to my parents. I have remained a bad boy in this respect. . . .

Making sculptures under the open sky: but whose sculptures and of what and under whose orders? These are determined by encounters between nature and the artist. Purposeless creativity is a great financial burden. Artists are normally poor, they remain in poverty driven by useless creativity. Hence they have to depend on the goodwill of patrons and connoisseurs; on mutual understanding between the two . . . I was blessed by meeting a great sage of purposeless creativity in Santiniketan. He gave life to my immobile sculptures, drenched them with the nectar of music, and, along with it, he himself got absorbed in a speechless ‘Sadhana’” (Debi Prasad: 2007).

He also said, ‘Everybody says everywhere that art must have a social purpose. Art is there in sphere of life. Our homes, our attires, our utensils—everything is artistic. Art is there in our behavior, in the way we talk to each others, in our manners. I view art as something purposeless, which has no purpose at all. Just for beauty, just joy. It cannot be bought and sold. Perhaps this is why artists are so bohemian. They don’t have enough money to become rich, sometimes they are penniless—therefore, they have no other alternative than to lead bohemian lives. But they enjoy their lives.

I do whatever I like. Everything cannot be clinically interpreted. The thing we call art is dissatisfaction personalized. It has no purpose. To propagate something is not its purpose. There are so many things around in this world—trees, human beings, mountains, cities. What’s the harm in choosing manifold ways to paint them? The state and Stalin are always there in Russian art world. Perhaps this caused the abstract artists to leave everything. Art does not accept any imposition, any limit. But this does not mean that we shall not paint picture of Gandhiji. We will paint. Only of we want to do so. Again, portraits of Gandhiji will always win the first prize, other picture will always be thrown aside—this trend must also be done away with. The artist is always on the move. He is never static’ (Bhattacharjee: 2002).

Ramkinkar did not have any faith in the supply and demand theory of art. His view on this is very explicit: ‘As a matter of fact, in my opinion art is created without any logic or reason. And if we bring in the supply and demand theory in the realm of art,
it may cause unproductivity of creation and poverty of imagination. Art carries within itself some form of a demand. It wants to come in to being as a complete whole.

Everybody among us has a rare museum within our brain which is filled up with objects preserved by our own experiences, the tales we hear during our childhood, the books, we read, our teachers, our interaction with different people, the natural resources and the perpetual tradition of our species. These are necessary things for an artist. But during his creative hours, artist has to forget even these things. He has to surpass all these things so that he can point to some monumental and yet attainable truth.

Art is like a challenge. It’s a great challenge. Creative vitality challenges the ugliness and trivialities of life. This challenge and the reaction towards it is like a game play. This is the game play of the art. Gain or loss is not the ultimate thing. What is loss for today may sometimes become the gain for tomorrow. The reverse is also true. So this play is the main thing. One who plays the game with full confidence is a real artist.’ (Chattopadhyay : 1991).

‘I feel always crazy about shaping out whatever thought is there in my mind. I don’t pay much head to the medium or measurement. This is modern, modern . . . All must not be taken out from the source wherefrom the arts spring. Something must be kept intact. We have to add something to the already exiting treasure. This addition is a mental process involving the artist’s mind. I do not know whether I am a modern artist. But I express what I feel’ (Bhattacharjee : 2002).

3.7.4 Oneness with Nature

“Ramkinkar da or Binod da, Dhirenda and Nandalal himself used to say, if you don’t have any direct touch with the flow of life around, you cannot transform your felling in to a ‘pat’ or sculpture work’ (Bandopadhyay : 2006). Indeed this was so. As he had mental ties with the outer world, the nature and his surrounding, Ramkinkar could install such monumental works. These were not simply works of cement or concrete, each and every piece reflects the realization of an artist preserved through his lifelong experiences. If one stands before these monumental open air creations rendered by Ramkinkar, one is struck by a feeling of awe; there is no metrical fault, everything is symmetrical and everything seems harmonized. One never had the feeling that
somewhere something has been left out or that something could have been added in order to add to the overall harmony. The whole composition had completeness.

It is necessary to mention that man does not come to watch art works to find artist the magician. He watches art works in order to be entertained, overwhelmed and content, in order to attain a mental freedom. Every art form, in this sense, is a dialogue between the artist and his spectators or audience. Therefore, the success of an artist lies in the response he gets from those who are at the receiving end. We find examples of this have and there. Not just the dull and untrained, highly educated, often awfully intelligent people go to the cinema or theatre to seek some entertainment. But what is sheer ‘mimesis’, sometimes draws tears from their eyes. Their hearts break at the shocking catharsis. It means that here the art has attained some perfection. The piece of art work may not be a lasting one; it may lack the high ideals of art. But those works which do not even have the quality to move/draw some kind of reader response. Are not art at all? This explains the reason why we are often spellbound without having the knowledge about the grammar of Indian classical music or knowing the first thing about painting or sculpture. An art-work which reaches some form of perfection always develops and reconstructs one taste and sensitivity. Over the years, over the centuries, art has made man liberal, has expanded his world of thought. Allow many of us are aware of this? And without such thinking, if we continually go in exercising the aspects related to form, technique, style and composition of an art work, we will simply dissect the fleshless structure or do some anatomical study. This exercise does not develop our tastes rather dries up the flower which is called art (Basu :2008).

Ramkinkar’s art diction represents a true vigor and vitality. Even the lifeless and rough surfaced concrete through his sculpture works looked animated. His selection colour and theme have often been influenced by the naive folk art. Kinkar da exemplifies this simple and naive art tradition, which was free from all inhibitions (Gangopadhyay : 1991).

We still fill the power and strength of that transitional period, its humanism, liberal outlook and sense of beauty when was encounter the art work of Leonardo Da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Rambrandt? Such great artists are born only when the joy and sorrows, hopes and despair, reaction and progress of the society comes in direct conflict
in their minds. This is why the great sculptors Rodin once said ‘The main point consists in being emotionally involved, in being able to love, to hope, to vibrate, to learn to live. Be a man before being an artist!’ (Rodin). Since art springs from the depth of the artist’s mind, it first stirs own feeling before striking the intellect. A true art moves everybody—irrespective of his gender and class and educational status. If this is not the truth, why do people all over the world appreciate the Greek sculpture and the Japanese painting, Rembrant and Van Gogh, ‘MonaLisa’ and the ‘Nataraj’, icon at the same time? (Basu: 2010). Ramkinkar’s works too have prepared a perpetual festival for the interested ones. When there is no more creations, Ramkinkar will still be there. None of his works will even then lose its significance or spell.

3.7.5 Ramkinkar the Modern Artist

Rabinranath’s paintings must have stirred Ramkinkar’s impressionable mind to a great extent along with the western influence. Rabindranath’s drawings and paintings must have helped him a lot in understanding the essence of modernity. Ramkinkar had an ever green and a ready mind, a zealous and sensitive mind to grasp easily the essence of the poetics of art. He made no mistake in demarcating the Indian school from its western counterpart. He was always in the midway in the conflict between the eastern aesthetics and the western aesthetics. He knew his own art as he knew every throb and sound of his soil (Choudhury: 1991).

Another subject that fascinated Ramkinkar as a sculptor was the study of the human figure. For projects like the one he was engaged in, it was not only appropriate but indeed essential, to study the unclothed human figure.

Ravi Pal, a staff member at Kala Bhavan and Ramkinkar’s close relative, quotes the sculptor in an article published in the Bengali journal Desh (Autumn, of 1990), as follows:-

A philosopher has said, ‘I occasionally feel in my innermost being during some critical period, the touch of some unknown power that dwells within the depth of my soul.’

When asked if he too felt the same, Ramkinkar said, ‘Yes! I do’. Ravi Pal: ‘What kind of critical period?’
The artist tried to explain: 'In Kala Bhavan it is not possible to study the nude. None of you can imagine how essential it was for me to study the nude in the context of making the sculptures of Yaksha and Yakshi... During that period I had gone one evening to Malancha, Mira Debi's house, for some personal reason, I saw that Radharani, their maidservant, was in the kitchen engaged in cooking. Our eyes met and I showed her the way to my house in Shripalli. I asked her to come there at night. And that was that...... Even after wise had become intimate acquaintances, she was not prepared to undress herself completely. I tried to make her understand my problem. I told her about my assignment to make the sculpture of Yakshi. Radharani was a worshipper of God. Taking the Yakshi to be a goddess, she accepted the argument in connection with Yakshi. She never again refused to be studied in the nude whenever I asked her to do so in the context of art. In that was she helped me tremendously in my vocation' (Debi Prasad: 2007).

There is no end to the analysis of the abstract art in the modernist school. The more analysis and interpretations there are, the more puzzling the abstract art becomes. Ramkinkar had his own simple interpretation in this regard: 'the only musical counterpart of the abstract art is instrumental music whose medium is an instrument and whose grammar consist in the seven nodes, i.e., sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni. The instrument is tuned with a touch of feeling and our vocalist tunes his voice following the tuning of the read or the chord of an instrument. These are matters related to a properly tuned ear. In Europe the musician put more stress on the instrument itself. Some of them are crazy about it. Our visual arts to have these seven nodes. As for example, there are squares and spheres, rectangular and cylindrical shapes. According to the conscious efforts of the artist, these forms are attributed their natural dresses. Beauty is born. All normal creation has behind them these squares and rectangles and spheres which is usually not perceived by a layman. Then there is what we call perspective. It these things are played on with feeling and emotion, they reverberate like an instrumental recital. We can't proceed a single step without this abstraction. But even if abstract art in like music, do the musical notes themselves hang on the branch of a tree? It is purely man's creation and many a drive was needed to find it.

Again think of this decorative art--this too has within itself those angles and cubes and circles. Let us take for example the design if an alpana--first you have to draw either
a square or a rectangle. Then you are to bring in the natural shapes. When people see this, they feel entertained. The same is true for icons and statues too. First you find a square, then a triangle, sphere of cylinder. You must do these works with feeling. Then comes the question of perspective. This perspective has another quality—though it looks like a flat surface, colouring makes a difference between the far and the near’ (Das : 1991).

Ramkinkar was the first sculptor to make abstract sculptures in India. Many critics have admitted it. His creation the Lampstand’ has been the first abstract sculpture in India. The renowned sculptor Dinkar Kaushik, however found some traits, of similarity between Ramkinkar’s abstract work and Rabindranath’s painting. He said, ‘Many people have said many things about the abstract art. Whatever little I know, I think that Gurudev has a number of paintings which can be termed as abstract. In particular, I want to refer to a painting by Gurudev which is preserved with Rabindra Bhavan at Santiniketan. The work was rendered in water colour. The lines seem to have been drawn in the same ink as is used in a pen. The type, lines, flow and selection of colours bring to mind the idea that the work must have been made in 1934-35. If we compare this work with Ramkinkar’s first abstract work—which is installed beside the temple in front of the Santiniketan building—we find some similarity between the two. Kinkar da used to call this work as a ‘Lampstand’. Arrangements of electric wiring were made to illuminate its lower portion. Probhas Sen informed me in writing that this work was done in 1938-39. During this period Sankho Choudhury, Prabhas Sen, Santosh Roy and Kamal Nain helped him in this work as student trainees.

I don’t know exactly why, but I find similarity between the two works, in fact, there is similarity of form and shape too. It may be that both of them materialized the same expression in their different languages. It may perhaps also be rather coincidence or just a matter of chance. Or kinkarda might have seen the work of Gurudev and might have translated it in his own language. Still we must keep in mind that no sculptor embarked on experimentation in abstract from during 1938-39. Kinkarda was the only exception. Sankho Choudhury, Prabhas Sen et al began learning sculpture under the supervision of Kinkarda. Prodosh Das Gupta was then practicing in London Royal college of Art portrait, life-study and similar realistic works. Hiranmoy Roy Choudhury
and Debi Prasad Roy Choudhury too engaged themselves in visually realistic, trends of work. Karmarkar, Fadka, Kawat—everybody worked in this ‘see and imitate’-fashion. Keeping this in mind it seems that Ramkinkar was the pioneer to do abstract art in Indian sculpture. When money, raw material and guidance everything was scanty, Kinkarda’s abstract sculpture really draws our wonder. It is said that Okakura once told Nandalal (in 1912), ‘The artistic talent of India has expressed itself in icon making. I see now that here all are painters. You should go for sculpture work.’ Kinkarda felt that necessity in his inner soul’ (Kaushik : 2010).

As in music with the help of melody and rhythm a notation is created and expressed so too in the realm of painting the same creation takes place with the strokes of colour, lines and rhythm. Without rhythm, melody and colour are both futile. There is rhythm everywhere—in the water currents of the river, in the waves of the sea, in the change of seasons, in gales and storms. Rhythm enjoys a special position in poetry. The same is true of painting also. When the artist find the tradition too hackneyed in loving out his individual expression, he has to bring in new rhythm to the flow of the existing one. The modernists are always conscious of this iconoclasm. But some of them do not have a clear idea of what is going on in the world of art. Since they do not know shapes and forms and rhythm, they cannot break them. Ism-centrism comes to dominate their outlook. Ramkinkar was always free from such deviations. He never broke the rhythm, neither in his sculpture, nor in his painting.

The most pertinent reason behind is perhaps Ramkinkar’s meticulous knowledge of anatomy this knowledge was always associated with his keen passion. This is why, whenever he tried to break the existing form, he attained a symmetry which was a new thing and did not exist before. Distortion of forms did not degenerate his art work, but re-vitalized it with new vigour and liveliness. The artist was particularly attracted by the symmetry he saw and found in every day human life.

As a classical singer spell bounds his/her audience with his appropriate selection of melody and rhythm, as a poet writes a poem with a perfect sense of rhyming and expression, Ramkinkar did the something in his sculpture; a poetry was written by him too through sculpture. Again, his drawings exhibit the same spirit; an indomitable and mysterious control over the depth of space and the rhyme of symmetry. Almost all of his
works seem to have a vitality and strength. The same quality is also found in his sketches. He had a keen sense of drawing and knew the anatomy of almost every living object. And yet he was never an exhibitionist. He never hesitated to alter his works, so long as they did not match the picture of his imagination. He was always a perfectionist, if unsatisfied he would break his sculpture work into pieces in order to reconstruct it. The same is true of his paintings also (Barman: 2006).

Dhirendrakrishna Barman commented about Ramkinkar’s works saying, ‘Though there are distortions and simplifications in Ramkinkar’s work, he had no biasness for any particular ism and as such his works were never lifeless. He always created the ideal expression. While studying the Chinese arts, I came to know a very beautiful thing. The thing is the difference between the terms ‘tiger like and like a tiger’. We often see picture of tiger on the pages of a calendar—just like a tiger—this is what we call ‘tiger like’. Again if we go on subtly, analysing the art pieces of some Chinese artists, we may find some anatomical errors in them. But their drawings and picture of tiger often frighten us. The spirit of the tiger is truly present in these pictures. This is what may be called as ‘like a tiger’. Ramkinkar’s paintings and sculpture have this quality. He never seems to be lacking in this quality of expression’ (Das: 1991).

In his world, Ramkinkar was an in born artist. He was primitive, genuine, absorbed and overwhelmed. He had a wildness to jump upon his target with the exactness of a hunter. He cherished in his works the dancing rapture of life. He was a new diction, a part of which, as he himself admitted, was influenced by Rabindranath Tagore. Where Nandalal Bose tried to tame this free flow of life in the form of literary symmetry, Ramkinkar had his own style to keep intact in his works the rhythm of life, sometimes in the fashion of a cubist language which reflected in the works of Ramkinkar’s and later on his successors have had the same language.

But during his later years of life, Ramkinkar’s works were not merely limited to a cubist’s space, he superseded it, broke it, gave birth to new shapes and new designs. The reflection of Picasso’s concepts was always traced in his work; with his essential sense of harmony and symmetry, with his idea of structural iconoclasm. Ramkinkar was very much aware of the works of this renowned cubist artist. But he never becomes a cubist...
himself. He based some of his creative works on cubism, he assimilated it, gave birth to a purely individual language (Subramanyan : 2006)

Ramkinkar’s paintings displays a variety, his sculptures too are more distinctive. It makes him, without controversy, the first major figure in modern Indian sculpture. Sculptor’s before his time were largely professionals tied to the strings of patronage; however original competent some of them were, they were too constrained by the patron’s taste and specifications. So, Ramkinkar was probably the first sculptor in the Indian art scene whom we can designate a ‘creative sculptor’; he sculpted for his own pleasure and did not cater to a patron’s whims. In fact, his few attempts at doing commissioned works brought him close to disaster; he had to leave them to be completed by his assistants. He could not suffer the reins of patronage. His brilliant portraits-head and bust; some most dynamic in recent times, were not commissioned works, he did them because he liked the subject for one reason for the other.

Exposed, as he was, to the works of Rodin and Epstein, he showed a greater range of formal invention and when he painted portraits he transformed each sitter in to a special icon with a distinct emotional aura. One has only to compare his portrait heads of Ganguly Moshai, Preeti Pande, Meera Chatterjee, Madhura Singh, Ira Vakil and Rabindranath Tagore. The head of Allauddin Khan has the lineaments of a saint; his masterly bust of Rabindranath (Plate 3.15), which has of late become a target of controversy, is a veritable ‘tours de force’. It depicts the poet with great dignity, bringing together his sensitivity and strength in an image that keeps the popular false guise at bay. (Debi Prasad: 2007).

Art Historian Shivaji Panikkar says in an interview during his visit in Assam University in 2012, ‘Ramkinkars thought was different. He had a capacity to react to his surroundings, nature and people and to the history. He was not confined in revivalist mould or any other art movement. He mixed up all the isms and gave it to a powerful language of expression. We can call him as romantic also, because he had a great love for nature, people and life. In all the way it can be considered Ramkinkar as modernist in Indian context.’
3.7.6 Ramkinkar, the Social Realist

It is not always true to judge Ramkinkar’s works from the standpoint of a traditionalist or a modernist. In many occasions his works crossed the limits of modernism. This is why; some critics try to categories him as a realist artist. When we call Ramkinkar a modern artist, we must also have to define the modernism he ushered in the world of Indian sculpture. Some, however, call Ramkinkar a modernist, a synthesist and an eclectic at the same time. But question obviously arises, where modernism aims to attain a change or break of tradition, and how a modernist become a synthesist also?

Modernism is a complex idea. Did Ramkinkar follow the same path as for example, Picasso or Braque? Ramkinkar was always modern, always traditional. Lionel Trilling has said, ‘Modernism is such a thing that it invites meaning after meaning, within meaning. Such that a time often comes when one meaning directly contradicts another meaning.’

Nietsze explained that art is an individual consciousness; it should not have any inroads in to the outer world. This free and imaginary world gradually alienates itself from human circumference and becomes ultimately a self-centric thing. This is where art becomes inhuman and unrealistic, just diction or a form made of some techniques. While modernism made the artists more free to them, it lifted them up in to a paradise of self-contradiction.

Modernism thus sows the seed of dehumanization. Breaking tradition in order to cultivate the new, took innumerable turns right from romanticism to naturalism and severing itself from humanism, it lowered itself down to self-centralism, to a refined, elitist language. This process gives rise to ‘radical remaking of a form’. The renewal the old forms take the arts to an abysmal destructiveness. This may be termed as destructiveness or ruin as it finally reconciles itself to discovering newer forms. In this sense, modernism can be interpreted in the following lights: (1) It is the art of play, (2) It is delightfully fraud, (3) It is an aversion to the traditional, (4) It is a tendency toward self-pity or irony (5) It is private art and hoarding of artistic powers against populace and the claims of time and history (Mukhopadhyay : 1991).

If the interpretations of modernism be so, it may be said that Ramkinkar was a modernist too, though he sublimated modernism in his individualistic approach. He was
basically an eclectic, a pluralist and he absorbed every ‘ism’ in order to use or apply them according to his own bend of mind, in an Indian canvas. This is why his art always spoke of humanism, of life.

Question again arises as how to understand Ramkinkar’s art. Analysis must be pinpointed around these considerations: (1) Ramkinkar’s inborn root and class character (2) the Society that existed during his live, (3) the trends of Indian art during his time, (4) the trends of European art during his time. (5) the multi-dimensionality that is inherent in his art-work, (6) his diction (7) his personal life.

Ramkinkar belonged to the lower strata of the society. His caste and class character undoubtedly had a significant effect on his art. He led a very simple and naive life apart from the middle class mentality that existed at Santiniketan. He always kept himself detached from the fake and superficial life styles. He had his blood tie with the Santhal and the common people around. They were his real kith and kin. Even when he became famous as an artist, he never forgot his surroundings. He was a virtual being in so far as his culture and artistic endeavour was concerned but a horizontal or real being when we consider his life style. This thought led him to think about man, to draw human figures, to speak in behalf of human beings. He was always attracted towards nature. Ramkinkar enrolled himself in school, and he had to design backdrops for dramas in order to earn a livelihood at the sometime he prepared posters for the congress party. So, the education that taught him about life and about his art was not at all confined to the four walls of the classroom. He received a natural indulgence from both the natural and human surroundings and from Nandalal Bose and Rabindranath Tagore (Bhattacharjee : 2000).

The world became a frying pan since 1920. Human beings all over the world encountered an insecurity which they had never faced before. In 1917, the Russian Revolution took place. The world power was divided in to two directions–while, on the one hand there was the presence of the Socialist Block, the Fascists Block on the other hand they tried to capture the world. In India two, the fight against the British imperialism was at its peak and hatred against the fascist force manifested itself in different forms. Both the national as well as the global politics become somewhat complicated. The post-war economic depression could not shake India as much as it
shook Europe. In 1919 under the leadership of Pomand Roland the intellectual across the world raised their voice in the form of ‘A declaration of Independence of thought’. Two worlds renowned Indians put their signature in the declaration: They were Rabindranath Tagore and Ananda Coomarswami. In 1933, the European Anti-Fascist Workers’ congress was held in Paris. In 1935 in the seventh congress of the third communist International, an open call was raised to build the Anti-Fascist and Anti-Imperialist people’s front. In 1937 a committee was formed in Calcutta in the name of ‘League against Fascism’ whose president was Rabindranath himself. The ‘All India people’s Theatre Association’ was formed in 1943. There was a flow in progressive movement of India thought the country. This worldwide movement, this renovation of art and culture from 1935 to 1948 must have stir Ramkinkar too. That may be a reason he created the paintings/sculpture on the 1943’s Famine? This Famine in Bengal also gave birth to realist artists like Joynul Abedin, Chittaprasad and Somnath Hore. The difference lies in the fact that whereas Chittaprasad and Somnath Hore did some political paintings during that period, Ramkinkar view point was different. Both the artists were close to the Communist party of India, and perhaps expressed political thoughts. But Ramkinkar, on the other hand, was always close to the proletariat, he did not have to declass himself (koushik : 1991).

Social thought and Social content always inspired Ramkinkar. During the same periods two artist’s groups come into existence, one in Bombay and the other in Calcutta, viz, ‘Progressive Artist Group’ (1943) and ‘Calcutta Group’ (1943) respectively. Both the groups rejected the Indian tradition and counted in borrowing from the European art, everything such as their language, technique, diction and style. Some of the artists belonging to these groups, no doubt, produced paintings in themes like communal riot and famine. But do these occasional touches make an artist a progressive one? Progressive outlook is not an impulsive urge; it is a belief which cannot be broken into pieces. A progressive artist is not progressive occasionally, he is forever progressive. Rabindranath Tagore himself was an example of this, his position as a creative being is distinctly different in the contemporary milieu from his co and fellow beings (Mitter : 2007).
Ramkinkar said himself; ‘Rabindranath is the first Indian artist to break the convention. He refused convention not for the sakes of discovering a new form or mannerism of his own, but for a deep functional necessity’. Rabindranath Tagore’s time and again implored his nephews to see life not from the balcony of Jorhasanko. He made complaints that the picture of Abanindranath Tagore and Gaganendranath Tagore did not touch the soul. Absence of vigour and vitality was very much there in their art. Abanindranath himself admitted having said to Rabindranath Tagore, “I can paint whatever I want to paint. That is why I have no challenge before me which can inspire me to paint.” But he rectified himself around 1928-30 through his series of paintings call the ‘Arabian Nights’. He painted new models of new themes then. His classical style then come to include even daily wage earners and vendor and had to give way to folk styles which was ready to express a dream land. Nandalal Bose’s style too took on a new turn just after 1921. His preoccupation with legends and myths, literature based wash style modified itself to incorporate the common villages, rickshaw puller, Santhal people and temperas on the simple natural beauty (Debi Prasad : 2007).

During the last phase of Rabindranath Tagore’s art work (1928-41) and Abanindranath Tagore’s career (1929-42) or of Nandalal Bose’s second phase (1921-67), we find in change of theme—as if they had a comeback from their dream land to the real world. Also there are ample evidences of a dictional and stylistic change. To be more precise, it was between 1920-1942 that realism came to win over the arena of Indian art, and this realism was not a photocopy of Euro-realism. Realism here does not stand for mere mimesis or reflection or representation of the reality but ‘Realism is characterized among other things by art’s liberation from mythological modes of thought, an extraordinary broadening of the sphere of phenomena from real life by special system of artistic technique and use of image etc.’

This interpretation of realism is true for Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose in the contest of their artistic performances, but for Rabindranath Tagore this is true for his literary and philosophical pursuit during the whole decade of 1930’s. But art can be critically evaluated in the context of its space and times. Pseudo or non-progressive art is always more fertile than its so called progressive counterpart. But humanism has always been a constant factor in his history of the evaluation of art. We can come to the
generalization that ‘all art is a form of protest—a reaction against the social order’. Ramkinkar’s art too represents this trend.

Realism had its inception in Europe in the second half of the 19th Century in art and literature. Realism expanded its roof in America art since 1910. But there is a vast difference between realism and social realism. Realism proposes to break a pro-mythic trend and to welcome new techniques and thought in art and literature which are free from the conventional feudal enclosures. Realism can emerge only under a particular social condition. This is why it is seen that when the wave of social realism come to the erstwhile Soviet Union and Mexico (1915-30) realism mostly reigned the art world of England, Germany, America and India (Tomory : 2011).

After 1920, a change comes over the art scenario in India too Ramkinkar himself was an activist of this change and has earned a name as a proponent of social realism in the history of modern Indian Art. Another trend was in vogue in Bengal during 1925-40; that of naturalism. Some artists of the Bengal school, like the students of Abanindranath Tagore, viz., Ramendranath Chakraborty, Manindra Bhusan Gupta, Haren Das, L. M. Sen, were the supporters of this land. Many critics, however, commits a serious mistake in connecting Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose with this trend. The revolutionary change that took place during the last phase of their artistic journey almost surgically severed their tie with mythic trend. But Naturalism had its influence at Santiniketan also. Ramkinkar himself admitted: ‘Naturalistic art in fact found favour is Santiniketan’. Ramkinkar had a particular liking for realistic painting. The question of commitment becomes associated with it. Perhaps he was influence by his own time and space. Since 1925, whatever Ramkinkar painted, bears the signature of the Bengal School. Gradually, however, he found his own signature and developed his own style. That is why, Ramkinkar’s art is not confined to any particular wave or school. Art critics right from Jaya Appaswami to scholars till date have divided the artistic career of Ramkinkar in to these phases: (1) The abstract, (2) Semi-abstract, (3) Cubist, (4) Realist and Socio-realist stages (Mukhopadhyay : 1991).

Ramkinkar was certainly influenced by different school of European art, for example Cubism. Ramkinkar created many a painting and sculpture that is essentially Cubist. He broke his plain much in the same fashion as the Cubist do. His use of the
vertical line, the horizontal line and the diagonal line has rendered his expression much subtler and poignant. Lines illuminate his canvas like a flicker of lighting. Ramkinkar used geometric patterns but his geometry was always emotive and humanistic. His recurring themes were the common people who come from the lower strata of life. Even his mythological works show a blending or a fashion with the present. In *Birth of Krishna* (1950), the figure holding a sword in one hand is a sheer definition of a new zoner, because even if it is a mythological character its physical approach was contemporary. No interpretation is needed to explain whom this *Kongsha* represents in this piece (Narzary : 2011).

Even though he often broke his flat plain, but his style of portraiture does not resemble the mode of the cubists like Picasso of Braque? This is evident from the fact that he used body structures of different males and females in order to bring out the essentially Indian nature and style. He kept himself away from the typical romantic world of the Bengal School and embraced a technique that represented the harsh and coarse reality. Examples are lies *Santhal Family* and *Call of the Mill*. Among his contemporary artist, only Chittaprashad, Joynal Abedin and Somnath Hore shared this tendency. But in the world of sculpture, Ramkinkar had no counterpart. This is why Ramkinkar’s place in the history of art will be categorized as a realist artist and sculptor (Mukhopadhyay : 1991).

Art Historian Shivaji Panikkar said in an interview during his visit in Assam University in 2012, ‘May be Ramkinkar was not interested to make personal property or money, wealth, in this sense he can be marked as communist but not in official term. He was come out as bohemian artist, who did not care anything, which is called as Bengali ‘khepa boul’. But Ramkinkar never compromised with his creative work. Actually he was quite different from so called ‘bhadrolok’ (gentleman). He himself was an institution.’
3.8 CONCLUSION

Indian sculpture has a rich tradition traced back from Indus Valley civilization. Sometimes irregularities were observed but the sculptural stream was flowing. It was only during the Islamic ruled that the Indian artists could not find any support from royal patron in the field of sculpture as the Islamic religion was against the making of images of human and animal forms. But till 19th century Indian sculpture was purely traditional. After coming of British it got a new dimension which was influenced by the academic realism. In colonial India, the British were the first to take measures in introducing the art school in India to make skilled craftsmen in the field of art. The points already highlighted that there has been already a tradition of sculpture making in India, bearing the traditional heritage of the country. There was also, the practice of indigenous art work prevalent during that time. This indigenous as well as traditional art had a considerable impact and contribution in bringing Indian art at the juncture of modernism. Art schools in India formulated by the British figurative arts were practiced in an orthodox academic manner. It is through the hand of Ramkinkar that art liberated from its rigid enclosure to the more open concept of individualism and belief under the spell of Rabindranath Tagore’s Santiniketan. The philosophical as well as contextual text that was given by Ramkinkar was very much his very own.

The rural surroundings from his childhood, the indigenous and traditional way of idol making, uninterrupted and unspoiled nature and the atmosphere of Santiniketan laid down by Rabindranath Tagore, all seemed to combine together in shaping and developing the mind and self of Ramkinkar Baij. The Santhal life, the beauty of nature, and close observation of western art led Ramkinkar’s mode of thinking to new light. And in that direction Ramkinkar, established the modern aspect of his work. He showed that creation is possible outside the periphery of any patron. Sculpture is possible there where lies, the need and satisfaction of the artist.

He always wanted to stay away from the path laid down by other and was involved in creating the unexplored in art. Using his own expression and deep sensitivity he created open air sculpture which reflected his trademark. This led to the birth of new idea in Indian sculpture. He was the first to show the deep relation between art and environment; the relationship which touches the essence of aesthetic understanding.
Through his open air sculpture Ramkinkar hold forth, the contemporary reality. What came up is the life of the common man mingled with nature and surrounding. He gave new direction to Indian sculpture by giving new thought and provocation.

The main features of open air sculptures of Ramkinkar were the newness of form and concept, the monumentality, the harsh texture of the organic form, their movement, dynamism and lively expression and the construction of structural relationship. Along with it is the play of light and dark shades. By breaking the ideology of traditional sculpture making, he introduced new scope for experiment in different mediums and subjects. He was undoubtedly a modern sculptor in terms of style and technique. He was always anxious for new ways in sculpture and the limitation of material availability led him to adopt his sensibilities for cement and mortar available to him at that time. Here new identity for expression was given a definite way.

One cannot relate the modernism of Ramkinkar with that of the West. His modernism has to be examined on the basis of condition prevalent in the subcontinent. He made a rare confluence of tradition and modernism without leaving the past as can be seen in modern western art. And the most important example, that conveys this principle are the Yaksha-Yakshi figures in front of the central Reserve Bank of India in New Delhi. Here, he not only used the traditional elements but an also blended modern essential which was an example of a new horizon in the Indian art scene.

He studied all the movements and ism’s of the west and however used them, in term of conditions necessary for Indian sculpture. He saw, Shivalinga and Nataraja as the most perfect example of abstraction. He was a revolting, self oriented person. He worked relentlessly in an untiring manner. The usual manner of his practice never tired him down. So, when the entire art of the country was involved in the patriotic struggle, inspired by the Bengal school, Ramkinkar solved his own way, of creating a language for his art that could express his undaunted spirit to strive for creation. He took whatever was required and moulded them according to his own way. In his work one can taste the flavour of global art in a new zoner; a kind of new introduction of concept to the art world.

It would be insufficient to discuss about him only in the light of modernism, because, his exploration expanded its horizon in an immense manner. He was never a
sentimental romantic, he art always spoke of man and his life with pride and courage. Never into politics but he was very much concerned about the social conditions in the society. Social constraints, obligations and various incidents of life, touched his art almost exclusively. His works were close to the common man. Thus, Ramkinkar can be called, a 'Social Realist' as well.
Plate 3.1(a) Santhal Village, Near Santiniketan, India

Plate 3.1(b) Santhal Village, Near Santiniketan, India
Plate 3.3(a) Ramkinkar, Sujata, Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India 1935,
Plate 3.3(b) Ramkinkar, *Sujata* (close-up view), Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India, 1935
Plate 3.4(a) Ramkinkar, Santhal Family, Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India, 1938
Plate 3.4(b) Ramkinkar, *Santhal Family* (different view), Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India, 1938
Plate 3.4(c) Ramkinkar, *Santhal Family* (Old Photograph), Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India, 1938
Plate 3.5(a) Ramkinkar, *Call of the Mill*, Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India, 1956
Plate 3.5(b) Ramkinkar, *Call of the Mill* (different view), Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India, 1956
Plate 3.6 Ramkinkar, *Harvester* (Thresher), Cement-Concrete, Santiniketan, India, 1943
Plate 3.7 Ramkinkar, *Lampstand*, Cement, Santiniketan, India, 1940
Plate 3.8(a) Ramkinkar, Yaksha, Granite stone, Reserve Bank of India, New Delhi, 1964

3.8(b) Ramkinkar, Yaksha (close-up view),

3.8(c) Ramkinkar, Yaksha (close-up view),
Plate 3.9(a) Ramkinkar, Yakshi, Granite stone, Reserve Bank of India, New Delhi, 1964

3.9(b) Ramkinkar, Yakshi (close-up view),

3.9(c) Ramkinkar, Yakshi (close-up view),
Plate 3.10 *Khoai*, Near Santiniketan, India

Plate 3.11 Ramkinkar, Abstract, Dhokra casting
Plate 3.13 Ramkinkar, *Gandhi*, Bronze, Guwahati, 1969
Plate 3.14  *Fountain, Cement, 1963*
Plate 3.15 Ramkinkar, Bust of Rabindranath Tagore, Bronze, 1948

Plate 3.16 Ramkinkar, Poets head, Bronze, 1938
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