ABSTRACT

Indian Sculptures had a base because they provided authentic documentation of the aesthetics beauty, essence and individual identity. By maintaining that individuality Indian Sculpture was always moving towards development. As obvious, due to the invasion of different rulers in India the sculptural dimension also did not remain static and fulfilled the requirements as per the demand of the rulers. For example during the period of Ashoka a lot number of Images on Buddhist subject matter was created, as per the wish of the ruler. Also, when the Islamic rulers invaded India there was a radical change in the zoner of art and architecture and the demands changed according to the taste of the socio-religious factors. During the Islamic rule sculptural practices were going on in different places through the hands of traditional artists as a part of their traditional profession.

During the colonial era, due to the influence of the west, the vision of Indian traditional artists changed into a broader perspective. The colonial administrators wanted to prepare some craftsmen for their required jobs. Their aim gave a new way for the Indian sculpture towards modernity. But, at that time Indian sculpture was greatly dominated by the European academic realism. Later, only through the works of Ramkinkar, Indian sculpture got the taste of freedom and stepped up to the arena of modernity because he went against all the traditional norms of Indian art and made his personal way of destination.

In the evolution of modern Indian sculpture the contribution of Ramkinkar Baij is vital as well as significant. He had denied the smack of western academics that prevailed for the last few centuries and of course, his art works had the refinement of his personal identity as well. Ramkinkar was born in a remote village of Bankura district, West Bengal, in a poor family. Since childhood he had an irresistible passion and desire for becoming an artist. Although the going was relentlessly hard, his boundless spirit never broke and continued to grow in his destined direction. It is needless to say that
despite many hardships he fulfilled his will. And how he achieved that, is a huge subject for research to all.

It is known to all, in art history, every country is seen to undergo a change of reality from time to time. This change occurs to satisfy certain needs – the aesthetic needs of a particular given period of a society. From this consideration Abanindranath and Nandalal were the undisputed forerunners in the field of painting in first part of 20th century. On the other hand there was no significant attainment in the field of sculpture; what little was practiced was related mostly to memorials. It was then that Ramkinkar started his work. There was no scope for Ramkinkar to align himself with any particular tradition because all our traditions related to sculpture had become decayed since long. To overcome this crisis he had to come forward by a long distance and declare a revolt against the prevailing conventions. With the support of modern consciousness he established an all together new set of systems and procedures. There can thus be no doubt that Ramkinkar can be considered as the first exponent of modern Indian sculpture in the country.

In this study emphasis has been given to the Open Air Sculpture of Ramkinkar Baij. His open air Sculpture brings a new light in the field of Indian Sculpture to give a unique identity of boldness and rhythmic gesture. First in the year 1935, Ramkinkar made a Sculpture with cement and concrete. An elongated figure of a young woman who stands in the midst of long eucalyptus tree. Later on Nandalal Bose gave its title as Sujata. The figure looks as emerged from tree and creates an atmosphere of rhythmic balance and aesthetic pleasure. It represents the inner sense of Indian life as well as the fusion of modern western influence. The syntheses of these two styles give rise to an entire, independent style of modernity of Indian Sculpture. After a long year of struggle finally Indian Sculpture got the essence of modernity in Sujata which is one of the renowned Sculpture of Ramkinkar. And it becomes a trade mark of modernity.

The monumental compositions Ramkinkar erected in the open air craved 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. Another side of Ramkinkar's
work lies in their movement or dynamism. 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 chiaroscuro. To be more explicit, the play between light and shade constitutes the finest essence of a work of sculptors, which gives the observer a sense of great satisfaction. Sculptor has to watch specifically that his work must be placed in such a way that the finest details of every contour become a part of the chiaroscuro.

The sculptural development in the field of art was almost neglected during the days of Mughal period in India. Basically there was no as such a possibility to create a favorable environment for sculpture. In 1803, during the period of British rule in India, the British administrators first established the statue of Lord Cornwallis to glorify the power and reputation. Because Cornwallis played a significant role for the settlement of British rule in India. He took initial role to establish the plan and policy of British Government over Indians. The Statue of Cornwallis was set up with a purpose to pay a tribute to this great administrator of British Government in 1803.

After this for a long period it was believed in India that sculpture meant to glorify renowned persons. There was no any idea that the sculpture can be represent in a conceptual way. But, here it could be mention the sculpture Santhal Family of Ramkinkar which brought a break to the sculptural tradition. When Ramkinkar visited Santiniketan in the year of 1925, there was a famine in the Santhal district of Bihar. Due to this large number of landless labourer migrated from their native place and turn towards the way of Burdwan to find a job to continue their livelihood. Ramkinkar created a sculpture on this theme, in clay. It was in small size. This small size sculpture in clay is known as Santhal Family. Later on the year 1935 according to the direction of Nandalal Bose he made it in huge scale. The major point is, this was the first time in India it was a conceptual sculpture, which was free from to glorify the identity of a person, god and goddesses. The sculpture was based on a social theme that was the migration of labour. This is the first point. Secondly, before the Mughal period, whatever the sculptural development was noticed in India that sculpture was created in the same place and most of the time the sculpture was prepared in studio, some of the time it was imported from some other countries. But Ramkinkar’s sculptures were
site specific. That means the sculpture were prepared in a particular site which suits the surrounding environment. When he makes the sculpture *Santhal Family* the trees were planted and were not fully grown, and the houses were not multistoried in Santiniketan. The road which leads near the ‘sculpture’ gives a view, an idea of a village road. Before that commonly the statues were placed on a pedestal. But, Ramkinkar’s sculpture looks as if they were the ‘life world’ of the surrounding environment. He gave more emphasis to subjects like simple working class people, because he felt they are one of us and have a relation to the soil they are attached with.

It may also be noted that Ramkinkar did not have money to buy stone or metal to create sculpture at that time. So he took up the natural resources whatever was locally available. Like stone chips, sand, cement and mixed them together and made this sculpture of *Santhal Family*. These gave a unique character to this sculpture as if emerged from the soil and has a bond with the indigenous place. In spite of sand, stone and cement if he had prepared it with stone or some other medium perhaps he would not have be successful to maintain a deep relationship with its soil. So, it means a site specific sculpture, which is based on a particular situation and creates an atmosphere which relates the theme towards the surrounding nature and obviously have a concept. Moreover, whenever he felt the necessity he modeled his idea with the help of chisel which gives a rough texture, and matches to the surrounded roughly natural environment of Birbhum. In this sense Ramkinkar was able to give a breakthrough in the field of sculpture. He proved that there can be a concept in sculpture which is related to the contemporary society. With the help of his sculptures he was able to set up a mile stone of modern Indian sculpture.

In true sense Ramkinkar had acquired the knowledge of sculpture from the rich heritage of the past, which he realized it from the bottom of his hearts. He has understood the nature with his sensitivity. The motion of life, the variety of nature has captured by him. On the basis of his unborn talent he creates his own world of modernity and his open air sculpture clearly reveals this. The artist is very much close to nature, and guided by life, and this togetherness leads him towards the height of aesthetic satisfaction. His sculpture like *Santhal Family*, Sujata etc. reveals these facts. Ramkinkar has
conveys the message that it is not sufficient to take inspiration from nature but also have to create a sculpture as if it emerged from nature, where it will be quite difficult to make a distinction between these two. Otherwise the artwork will be incomplete. It is to be mentioned that the open air sculpture of Ramkinkar not only gives us a new idea of modernity, but also lead us toward a new world.

Ramkinkar had no patron, no munificence behind. So, he was not committed to any patron or art critic. He created his immortal pieces just in order to feed his own impulse. He was committed only to his creativity. But, if needed he did not mind to give value of the common viewers opinion also. 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 was, was an endless search of the new also be it involvement of the content or the form of his art. Sometimes his 'discoverer's soul' found its manifestation in the selection of raw materials.

Absorbed in his own work, Ramkinkar can be considered as the pathfinder of a new and unexplored horizon through his experiments with form, concept, medium and working process. His sculpture is the example of human experiences and sensitivity. He was a person whose creativity travelled in at a time from conventionalism to modernity and sometimes it crossed this limit also.