EDITORIAL PREFACE

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things:

No section of the population of India can afford to neglect her ancient heritage. The treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and beauty which are contained in her literature, philosophy, art, and regulated life are too precious to be lost. Every citizen of India needs to use them, if he is to be a cultured modern Indian. This is as true of the Christian, the Muslim, the Zoroastrian as of the Hindu. But, while the heritage of India has been largely explored by scholars, and the results of their toil are laid out for us in books, they cannot be said to be really available for the ordinary man. The volumes are in most cases expensive, and are often technical and difficult. Hence this series of cheap books has been planned by a group of Christian men, in order that every educated Indian, whether rich or poor, may be able to find his way into the treasures of India's past. Many Europeans, both in India and elsewhere, will doubtless be glad to use the series.

The utmost care is being taken by the General Editors in selecting writers, and in passing manuscripts for the press. To every book two tests are rigidly applied: everything must be scholarly, and everything must be sympathetic. The purpose is to bring the best out of the ancient treasuries, so that it may be known, enjoyed, and used.
PREFACE

ANYONE with an understanding of art in general and a knowledge, however slight, of Indian things, will, on being shown a work of Indian sculpture, unfailingly label it Indian. Differences in age and origin, however clearly marked to the discerning eye, when pointed out to the outsider, will be apprehended only with more or less difficulty. There is something so strong, and at the same time unique, in any Indian work of art that its ‘Indianness’ is felt first of all, and what it is, is seen only on second thought.

How this Indianness is expressed in terms of relation between line, surface, volume and other elements of visualisation, will be dealt with here. That there are permanent qualities throughout the fabric of Indian sculpture, and what these qualities are, will have to be shown. These essential qualities, all inter-related and inseparable, contain within their compass the life of Indian plastic art.

Yet although permanently present, it does not always encounter the same possibilities of manifestation. Time and place\(^1\) determine those possibilities according to their own conditions. The part they play is provocative only and not constitutional. Now one, then another quality will be stressed or else be subdued; but it persists, whatever its degree, within the given total. Within this flexible constancy the provocation however acts still further and elicits various reactions that appear to be temporary or local only; yet, in spite of this limited validity, integrally belong to the whole.

It is not the purpose of this book to give an outline of a history of Indian sculpture. For detailed accounts of
monuments, the reader not familiar with them may consult the publications enumerated in the bibliography.

Western terminology cannot be applied without reservations when studying Indian art. Western methods of art-criticism, too, have to be recast according to the demands of Indian sculpture. Indian terms, on the other hand, can also not be employed. They occur in manuals for the use of the craftsmen and were based on a living tradition, inevitable for, and a matter of course with, the ancient Indian artist, inactive, however, at the present state. There was no need then to explain their implications. But as they stand, they do not convey their full meaning to the modern reader, and require interpretation which the sculptures themselves supply. To arrive at an understanding of Indian sculpture, and to name some of its outstanding qualities that are not, and could not, be classified in the ancient manuals, but are vitally present in the works of art, is aimed at here.

The structure and consistency of the plastic idiom are conditioned by the same bent of mind that gave their directions to the systems of Indian thought. A mode of seeing, a peculiar development of the sense of touch, help to render in visual terms a cognate outlook. The experience common to both is the subject-matter of Indian sculpture. It cannot be dissociated from form, for it is integrally one with it. Iconography, however, was elaborated 'for the benefit of the ignorant' to enable them to recognise such experience beheld as myth.

We late-comers are compelled to proceed retrogressively, from the surface which the work of art offers to its texture and roots. Form is the guide and quality the sole criterion.

Artistic expression is more earthbound than are words. Before experience of life and the outlook that it conditions become worded, they are filtered through the mechanism of language and intangible sound. But the artist works in the
material that earth itself supplies, and his hands form it, warm with the blood that pulses through them. Where words fail, vision subsists. It opens its eyes and their seeing goes forth and touches the objects according to the Indian experience of 'seeing.'

In the following pages the structure of Indian sculpture will have to be surveyed in its relevant aspects. The underlying and essential qualities will be viewed in their permanency throughout the special conditions that the single monuments imply. Their outward connections, geographical and chronological, will be seen to resolve themselves into ethnical problems and those of the artistic process itself.

While stylistical investigations are the basis of this book, they are considered as indispensable preliminaries only. A formalistic treatment and with its help a deductive demonstration of biological laws of evolution or periodicity are not attempted. Indian sculpture will be dealt with as conditioned by the Indian craftsman. His consciousness makes him known to himself as a part of nature and his work is the form of this 'naturalism.' Its degrees and aspects vary according to the levels of his consciousness.