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Religious values in Hindu sculpture

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"Religious Values in Hindu Sculpture"

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INTRODUCTION

A. Definition of Religious Value in Relation to Hindu Sculpture

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INTRODUCTION

A. DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS VALUE IN RELATION TO HINDU SCULPTURE

Hindu sculpture, unlike much of the art of other countries, is almost exclusively religious, consisting of images of the gods. The fact that it is religious and is especially representative of the religious ideals of the Hindu people gives justification for endeavoring to determine the religious values, for the Hindu, found in the art of India.

1. Definition of Religious Value

Religious value means something worthwhile, desirable, or that meets the need of an individual or group of people in helping them to attain a social attitude toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies and which they deem worthy of worship, devotion, propitiation, or reverence. 1

2. Hindu Religion and Sculpture Reveal the Deity and Draw the Worshipper to Him

The religious value of the Hindu religion to its adherents is its claim to revealing the deity and to establishing a unity between the deity and man by fusing his soul with that of his god, the goal which all Hindus aspire to attain.

The Hindu sculptor attempted to put these same values into the images he carved, so that the devotee as he worshipped before his idol would see his god and through his devotion be drawn in spirit to a union with the god.

This desire becomes a reality in the lives of many sincere, devout Hindus, who truly believe that they see and have direct communication with their god. The conversion of Ramkrishna is a striking

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1 Summarized from: Brightman, E.S., Religious Values, and Pratt, J. B., The Religious Consciousness.
illustration of this fact. When twenty years of age he visited Kalighat, in Calcutta, and looking upon the image of Kali conceived her as his mother and the mother of the universe. He spent many hours singing, talking and praying to her, and believed her to be living and taking food from his hand. Sometimes he wept for hours because he was unable to see his mother as he wished. He spent twelve years in this distress and at last received moral, intellectual and emotional unification with her and overcame self.

Most of the people do not worship the idol for the subjective effect that the image will have upon their own faith or lives, but as a tangible object which helps them to see the god and concentrate their minds upon him. It is therefore difficult for the Christian, who worships principally for the subjective effect upon his own life, to realize that a religion which gives no thought to this phase of worship has any religious value.

3. Disvalues in Hindu Art and Religion

Hinduism and its art have many disvalues, judged from the Christian standpoint. They do not depict a holy and loving God, but an imperfect, evil god made in the likeness of man himself. Their gods are to be feared and propitiated. All the service rendered so faithfully to their images is done to secure the good will of the god, or to appease his anger.

The Hindu religion is not moral and ethical; in fact, a man can be a Hindu if he strictly obeys the caste rules, even though he commit a heinous crime. This religion does not actuate its adherents to live moral and ethical lives, but rather at some seasons of the year and among particular sects gross immoralities are practiced in the name of religion and for attaining certain values, which to the Hindu are religious.

1 Summarized from Pratt, J. B., The Religious Consciousness
An educated Hindu will controvert this Christian viewpoint and try to show by good argumentation that the Christian has misinterpreted the acts of the Hindu because he does not understand the motive and principle out of which the Hindu acts. He does not really understand the religious background of the Hindu. He is also able to point out moral and religious weaknesses in Christianity which to him are equally as bad if not worse than those he sees in his own religion.

In this thesis we shall try to show the highest values of Hindu sculpture and its influence upon the more advanced type of Hindu rather than the lower type for whom it probably has little value.

B. AESTHETIC VALUE OF HINDU SCULPTURE

1. Not Intended to Be Aesthetic

Hindu sculpture as viewed by the European is wholly lacking in aesthetic qualities. Hindu artists heartily agree in this matter, for it was never the intention of the Hindu sculptor to create aesthetic art.

By means of yoga, which will be explained later, he received a vision of his god which he carved into the sculpture he produced. The vision he received was not aesthetic, therefore the image is not a thing of beauty. This fact is recognized by Hindu artists and writers who repeatedly state that the major value of their art is not aesthetic, although it has aesthetic values to those who study it most carefully. No doubt many devotees who devoutly worship the images year after year consider them beautiful, just as we might consider the picture of our father beautiful, while to an uninterested person it would appear most common-place.

2. Multiplicity of Arms Distasteful

To some Europeans the multiplicity of arms is very distasteful,
and renders the figure grotesque, but to the Hindu the addition of arms means the increase of powers and attributes which render his god mighty and wonderful.

C. MOTIVATION

The motive which impelled the production of Hindu sculpture is to be found in the Hindu religion.

1. To Manifest the Divine to the Worshipper

Hindu sculpture came into existence for the purpose of manifesting the divine to the worshipper. The deity, being invisible, could be thought of only in the abstract. It was impossible for men to get a proper conception of the deity in this abstract way, so the image was created to visualize the deity concretely.

2. To Express Religious Feelings and Spiritual Ideas

The image, in addition to being, we might say, a mental picture of the deity, also expresses religious feelings and spiritual values. When a Hindu sees an image he recalls through it certain religious feelings and spiritual ideas that he has experienced in the past, or that he has learned about. It functions for him much as the sight of our Bible or prayer book functions for us, in stirring up religious feelings and thoughts, that we have experienced.

Images have been a great unifying force in India, a land so disunited by religion and caste. A worshipper can travel from one district to another and find the image of his god worshipped in practically the same way. This fact makes his god more universal and creates a bond of union between him and the strangers among whom he has come. "Even a stone may have this same unifying effect for it connects the deity with the events, rites and ideas of a locality."
3. To Serve as a Means of Approach to the Deity

It serves, too, as the means by which the worshipper may approach the deity and become identified with it when he worships. For those who are able to have an immediate connection or relation to the deity there is no need of an image, but most worshippers are unable to approach the deity directly. They must have an image to bring the deity out of the invisible distance, close to them so that they can worship him in reality. It places him in their homes and their temples and gives them an opportunity to see and to serve him directly. This does not mean that the Hindu believes the image to be the god. Far from it. Even the humblest Hindu realizes that the image is the form or body, within which the deity dwells. The deity still remains somewhat abstract just as the human soul enclosed within the body is thought of abstractly. But as the soul is nearer to us and better understood because it lives within the body with which we can have intimate association, so the deity is nearer and more real because it is enclosed within the visible and tangible image.

"An image to the Hindu means, somewhat, an animated being as tenement and vehicle of the god and fraught with divine influence. The image is a shadow or resemblance or form of the Supreme Being. According to the highest philosophy of the Hindus, God is without attributes, the unqualified Brahma. But that aspect of God, true as it is, is the ultimate stage of realization and not fit for ordinary worship. Therefore they conceived of God as a Being with attributes, in which stage He is the maker of the universe, the preserver and destroyer of the cosmos……… So they found a solution of this problem in worshipping an image which they knew to be image and nothing more. The philosophical idea behind it is that the human soul, once united with the Supreme Being got separated and gradually became forgetful of its identity with Him. This forgetfulness proves a wide gulf between the human soul and the Universal soul. The image tends to bridge this gulf bringing the worshipper near the worshipped."

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D. ORIGIN OF HINDU SCULPTURE

1. Personification of Nature by the Aryans

The Aryan people, previous to their migration into India, worshipped petty spirits, each one of which had a single function. Very little is known now about these spirits or how they were worshipped.

After their ingress into North India it is known that the Aryans worshipped nature gods. Chief of these was Varuna, an ethical god, who held the supreme place for a while, but was later superseded by Indra the god of war. His chief function was to bring rain.

"The greatest of all the gods, Indra, the Thunderer, whose primal function is to bring rain to the parched fields, goes out armed with thunderbolts, flanked by wild winds, Maruts, and smites Ahi, the demon Restrainer, who would keep the living waters from the dying land." 1

The god Agni (fire) held the second place, and along with him was Soma to whom sacrifice and song were offered. Surya (sun) and Ushas (dawn) were light bearers. Rudra (Siva) was a storm god. Then there were Vayu (wind) and Yama (death). These gods were believed to be anthropomorphic and were worshipped by means of sacrifice, hymns and magic. "The spontaneous prayers of the early Rishis became crystallized and hallowed into magical formulas by which the gods themselves could be coerced. This fact is not limited to Egypt and India but is found in almost every religion." 2

Gradually a ritual was developed. Priests or Rishis were set apart to perform the religious rites, not for the people, but for the purpose of bringing themselves into direct contact with these nature spirits. They believed that the gods who had physical bodies which needed nourishment came down to partake of the sacrificial

feast and that they actually saw the gods. They also thought that if they performed the ritual correctly their own souls might be transported into the presence of the gods. As long as the Aryan felt that he had such a vivid contact with his gods he had no need of images.

"The object of the sacrificers was to bring the sacrificer into direct touch with the nature spirits. The devas themselves came down from heaven to take part in the sacrificial feast. Formerly men saw them when they came to the feast, but nowadays they are invisible, yet they are present. The correct recitation of appropriate hymns transported the soul of the worshipper to the abode of the gods, just as a boat might carry him over the sea. These ideas made the use of concrete images unnecessary to the early Aryans. When they could see the devas sitting at the feast or be easily transported to his abode they needed no image of this god." 1

Some other authors do not agree with Mr. Havell in the matter of image making among the Indo-Aryans. B. C. Bhattacharya is very definite in his opinion that images were produced during the Vedic period and probably sold as well.

"Panini about the sixth century B. C. mentions in a grammatical aphorism that likenesses not to be sold but used for the purpose of livelihood do not take the termination kan. It is understood that these unsalable reproductions are divine images." 2

"We believe with other scholars who have made some investigation into the subject that image making was known in India in the Vedic times. Images were certainly not unknown in the Vedic Age irasmuch as we find clear descriptions of them in the Vedas for the sculptors to follow, often in minutest details. The Vedic representation of gods was really the parent of the Puranic representation of gods. The divine artist, Tvasta, has been mentioned in the Vedas." 3

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1 Havell, E. B., Ideals of Indian Art, pp. 8, 9.
The author then lists a number of references in Sanskrit, Nagari character, from the Rig Veda as proof of his statements.

2. Mental Images Derived from Nature Worship

The seers or Rishis therefore personified nature and had a number of nature gods to whom they offered sacrifice and prayer. They found by experience that their prayers were ineffectual when they had no visible object to whom they might address them. In order to remove some of the unreality they evolved Mantras to use in praise of the gods and goddesses and so conceived a personal form for the god. This form became so real and definite that the sculptor later translated it into stone and metal. Mantras were then used by the priests to call the living god into the image that had been made for him. So the gods that the Rishis conceived in an abstract form were finally expressed in concrete images by the sculptor.

It is therefore true to say that the Rishis or seers of Vedic times were the originators of images, not that they made images, but they provided the imagery from which the sculptor could work.

All the ancient philosophers advocated the use of images and "Sankaracharya the greatest monist that India has ever seen, was an image worshipper himself." 

3. Symbolized Deities of the Dravidians

The Dravidians, who were inhabiting India at the time of the Aryan invasion, had their religion which differed greatly from the religion of the Aryans. They worshipped several local, minor divinities as Yaksas, tree-spirits, Nagas and mother-goddesses. These were tutelary deities and believed to be personal beings. They were fearsome and must be appeased, so they were worshipped with a ritual,

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"Puja, which means to anoint a sacred object and make an offering to it." ¹ Each of these divinities had a shrine and was represented by a symbol, a stone, or image, which might be anointed and before which the offering might be made.

There is therefore much difference between the gods of the Indo-Aryan and the deities of the aboriginal people. The god of the Indo-Aryan was heavenly and that of the aboriginal was earthly. The Aryan's god visited the earth to partake of the sacrificial feast while the Dravidian's god had his abode in the community. The god of the Aryan may not have been represented by a symbol or image, while that of the Dravidian was so symbolized.

4. Fusion of the Aryan and Dravidian ideas into Image Worship

"The Aryans entered India from the North between 2000 - 1500 B.C." ² Very slowly they moved until they had taken possession of the greater part of the country. They were, in fact, superior in intellect and appearance to the simple Dravidian folk, who easily became submissive to the superior invaders. The proud Aryan, fearing that he might suffer intellectual and spiritual contamination from contact with the aborigines, was very exclusive. He felt that his religious teachings, the Vedas and Upanishads, were sacred, so that he could not write them or translate them into any form lest they become desecrated. Although the Aryan desired to hold himself aloof and preserve the sacredness of his religion, he found it to be impossible. Gradually a synthesis of the religion and customs of the two groups resulted, as they lived in daily contact with each other, and even intermarried. By the fifth century B.C. the religion of both the Aryans and the Dravidians had been distinctly modified. The Aryan had in a large

¹ Coomaraswamy, A.K., British Encyclopedia, 1929.
² History of Indian and Indonesian Art, p. 7.
measure become Indianised and the non-Aryan had become partially Aryanised. The resulting product was Hinduism, a fusion of the religious concepts of the two races.

Likewise, the imagery that the Rishis had built up and which was so easily transferred into an image, came in contact with the images of the local divinities of the aborigines. Then the possibility of making an image to represent their invisible heavenly gods became a reality in the mind of the Aryans. The Dravidians, already familiar with the use of images to represent their local gods, could easily transfer the idea to making images to represent the gods of the Aryans.

In time the two ideas fused and the gods and Avatars, after their disappearance from the earth, were represented in sculpture. "Indian art is a joint creation of Dravidian and Aryan genius, a welding of symbolic and representative." ¹

E. GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT OF HINDU SCULPTURE

Hindu sculpture of the various periods is to be found in the whole of the peninsula from Kashmir and Nepal in the north, throughout the south and over into several of the nearby islands. The sculpture varies some in style and quantity and in the purpose which created it. The sculpture found in Kashmir and Nepal is of minor importance and consists mostly of small bronze figures.

In South India it is principally to Dravidian; that is, it represents the gods of the aborigines usually. Various images of Sivam also, and of Saivaite temples are found in abundance in the South. He really originated in Vedic times for he symbolized the god Rudra, yet his images are classed as Dravidian style.

The earliest inhabitants of Ceylon were called Yaksas and

¹ Coomaraswamy, A. K., History of Indian and Indonesian Art, p. 7.
and Nagas - tree spirits and demons. The images found there represent Siva, Parvati, Ganesha, Apparswami, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Hanuman, Surya, and others.

The early art of Cambodia, Campa and Java represents the style of art found in the Deccan. Its energy comes from an indigenous source, although it resembles the Indian type. Each country modified the Indian form according to its own formula and interpretation. Cambodian sculpture suggests the style of that found in Amaravati, which was originally derived from Kashmir.

The Cambodian figure appears full of vigor and strength, as if all energy had been embodied within it. Some of it is very sensuous, but some is as fine as that found in India proper.

The art of Campa represents the Saivaite characters, Siva, Skanda and Ganesha.

In Java art is thoroughly Indian in style and in subject portrayed. The Hindu sculpture represents Brahma, Siva, and Vishnu, and is of high aesthetic value. Buddhistic art is very fine in Java. At Borobudur the finest Buddhistic art in Asia may be seen and, strange to say, it has escaped the iconoclasm of both the Moslems and the Christians.

The art of Siam is of the Indian Gupta period, about 350 - 650 A.D.

The sculpture of the seventh and eighth centuries in Burma reflects the Gupta tradition. After the twelfth century the Indian influence declined in Burmese art.

Summarized from: Coomaraswamy, A. K., History of Indian and Indonesian art, and Smith, V. A., History of Art in India and Ceylon.
CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOUS VALUES IN HINDU SCULPTURE
RELIGIOUS VALUES IN HINDU SCULPTURE

A. SCULPTURE IS USEFUL FOR VISUALIZING SPIRITUAL BEINGS

Many centuries elapsed between the fusion of Aryan and Dravidian ideas and the actual consummation of those ideas into stone sculpture. The growth appears to be slow, but this is due to the fact that the earliest art was doubtless carved in wood, which was perishable and soon lost.

1. Earliest Sculpture Is Material

The earliest art is not spiritual, but material, as may be seen from the type of the oldest piece, as described by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, which is simply the likeness of a king.

"The oldest Indian sculpture known is the Parkham Statue of Mathura Museum which was made an image of Kunika Ajatasatru of the Saisunaga dynasty, who died in 618 B.C."

2. Mental image of the god attained by Yoga.

In later times art became spiritual. Mr. Havell says that "Indian art was conceived when that wonderful intuition flashed upon the mind that the soul of man is eternal and one with the Supreme Soul." This union of man with the divine was accomplished by means of attaining a state, physical and mental, called "Yoga, which means, yoking, a means of restraint." This Yoga was attained in two ways: by means of assuming a particular posture attended by a prescribed breathing exercise intended to subdue the senses and quiet the body, and by meditation upon symbolic words and religious ideas that might lead to ecstatic trances.

The world must be entirely excluded from the mind and thought.

1 Coomaraswamy, A. K., Introduction to Indian Art, p. 5.
2 Havell, E. B., Ideals of Indian Art, p. 6.
By practicing this Yoga for a long period of time the Yogi, or worshippers, could hope for a union of their spirits with the spirit of God. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy has stated it thus: "When subject and object are identified the illusion of plurality disappears and unity with the Atman (God) is realized." 1

Yoga was a kind of contemplative technique to be used before undertaking to do any kind of work, and it was the basic principle upon which the artist depended. Before the sculptor began to work upon the image, it was necessary for him to experience a season of contemplation, so that he might have a definite mental image clearly in mind. This mental image he depicted in the image which he carved.

His work was not a personal creation, but he was provided with a manual, the Silpa-Sastras, which set prescribed laws of proportion and measurements for him to follow, but not as a copyist. "He must visualize these descriptions in Yoga, and from this mental image actualize the form in wood or stone or metal as the case might be." 2 The Silpa-Sastras embodied the consciousness of the race, their religious thoughts and ideals worked out in rules and regulations for the construction of images, which would comply in spirit with the religion of the people and be the visible production of the artist's mental image. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy has defined the mental image in these words:

3. Divine Ideal Transcribed by the Artist into the Image

"This mental image which is expressed in Indian Sculpture is the Divine ideal, the Great Thinker, ruling the world from the heights of Mt. Kailasa. This is the mental image that primeval tradition has fixed in the Indian mind." 3

The duty of the artist was, therefore, to contemplate by means

2 Coomaraswamy, A. K., Indian Sculpture, a Pamphlet.
3 Coomaraswamy, A. K.,
of Yoga, until he acquired a mental image of God, which was called the Divine ideal, and this he transcribed into an image.

4. Worshipper Visualized the Deity through the Image

The true worshipper, also, is helped by the image to visualize spiritual beings. When he goes into the temple and bows before an image, he is able to visualize this Divine ideal as it has been interpreted by his race, through the artist. This makes his god a very real presence to him, for he believes that the living god is enclosed within the image, and hears his humble prayer and converses with him. The Indian likes to live near a temple so that he may be near his god, who is easily accessible in time of need or when he has a desire to approach him. He has great reverence for his god and for the temple in which the image of the god abides. Not only does the true worshipper realize that the living god is within the image and visualize him, but he must become consciously identified with the deity as he worships.

When a Hindu sits down before an image to worship he says, "He is myself", meaning that the image represents himself, his thought, devotion, and personality. He and the god are united in one personality.

"There is a Sastrik (scriptural) injunction for a worshipper, Sivo bhutva Sivam Yajeta, which means becoming a Siva one should worship Siva." ¹

Theoretically, nothing less than this visualization of the Divine ideal is true worship, but the mass of the people never attain to this high ideal for worship. Probably most of them have never in their lives perceived their god in any comprehensive way. To most of them, perhaps, worship is merely performing a certain form or exercise which they have received by tradition.

5. **Indian Hero Used to Personify the God**

When at last Hindu sculptors, in the early centuries of the Christian era, decided to represent the actual presence of the gods in an image, they used the form of the Indian hero - the superman, as the best type to represent their conceived ideal of their deity. "If Hindu society has ever approached the ideals that have been guiding its development it is through hero-worship." 1 The idea of the hero as a superman was very ancient and was the ideal for the god-like heroes of the Mahabharata. According to this writing, the hero was a mighty hunter who had acquired a lion-like body, broad shoulders, thick neck, long heavy arms, and a wasp-like waist. His legs were like those of a deer to symbolize fleetness of foot, and his long arms indicated a long sword-thrust, which would give him the victory in the chase.

All of these characteristics were not only the mark of a warrior, but of aristocracy, and the symbol of spiritual rebirth, which could redeem man and make him as the gods. This form, to the Indian mind, was symbolic of supernatural power and beauty and a worthy form into which he might embody his mental image of the god. 2

The worshipper, as he looked at the image, visualized his god, not only as really present, but as one worthy of his devotion. The image may have had much value to the Indian man as a standard of physique, which he might attain. Perhaps the sight of the robust form of these images gave the Indian mind the basis for the calisthenics practiced by many Indian men today.

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1 Coomaraswamy, A. K., *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*, p. 3.
2 Summarized from Havell, E. B., *Handbook of Indian Art* and *Ideals of Indian Art*. 
B. SCULPTURE REPRESENTS THE EMBODIMENT OF HUMAN DEVOTION - "BHAKTI"

1. The Sculptor Expresses His Devotion to the God by Means of the Image

The sculpture of India depicts a very important characteristic of the Hindu, his devotion or "bhakti". This devotion was the spiritual force, the drive, which impelled the artist to create the image out of the Divine ideal he had in his mind. Bhakti is the subtle force which animates the lifeless stone, the life which the sculptor carved into the image, his own devotion to, and affection for the god which he reproduced into stone. It is the inspiration which the sculptor received as he visualized the god by means of Yoga.

2. For the Worshipper Bhakti Means Salvation

The deep devotion of the sculptor to the god, as depicted in the image, catches the religious emotions of the devotee and in turn creates in him a passionate devotion to the god upon whom he lavishes his love. The devotion of the worshipper is not only motivated by this deep and worthy love, but to him bhakti is really salvation.

True devotion to the god will gain the devotee emancipation from rebirth, by giving him a knowledge of Brahman (creator) and the union of his spirit with the spirit of Brahman. This is the goal which all true Hindus aspire to attain - release from this world, union with their deity and salvation. Dr. Farquhar sums it up in this statement:

"Souls live under laws of transmigration and karma (deeds done which determine one's future lot,) undergoing an endless round of births and deaths. Release from this bondage can come only when the soul acquires knowledge of eternal Brahman. This knowledge is possible through the grace of God to the soul and the response of the soul in bhakti - devotion."

The god is served by means of the image. Every Brahman should spend several hours daily in the home worshipping his god. Many of them do this. This time is spent in the study of the Vedas, in offering gifts to the departed and the gods, and in the reception of guests. He offers grain to the gods, inviting them to be present and happy while he reads the holy writings. The puja, or worship, consists in offering rice, fruit, flowers, and incense before the image for the god.

The worship in the temple is similar in some respects to that performed in the home, but is rendered by the priest. The people come with the gifts and the priest makes the offering, at the same time muttering a ritual in Sanskrit that the people can not understand and in which they are not interested.

Different deities require different offerings, but in most of the great temples, with the exception of the temple of Kali, the offering is vegetarian. 1

The priest treats the image as if it were really living, just as a five year old American girl treats her doll baby.

Dr. Farquahar gives this epitome of the cult:

"The priests wake him (the image) in the morning, give him a bath, offer him perfume and flowers, burn incense before him, and give him food and drink. They give him other meals at different times during the day. When an offering is made to him, a bell is rung to call his attention to it. At night he is put to bed, and the shrine is closed.

"The detailed procedure in the morning worship consists of sixteen operations performed upon the image as follows:
"The priest brings water and washes the feet.
Gives water to rinse the mouth.
Pours out a libation of water with several ingredients.
Gives a mouthful of honey-mixture.
Gives water to rinse the mouth again.
Bathes the idol.
Puts on the under garment.
Puts on the upper garment.
Puts on the sacred thread.
Puts on all the ornaments.
Gives drinking water.
Gives perfumes.
Gives flowers.
Burns incense.
Swings a light before the idol.
Gives the morning meal."

No doubt the priest truly believes that the living god resides within the image and that he, in providing for every need of the god, is rendering the highest service possible. This performance shows how truly anthropomorphic the god has become in the mind of the priest, and how the priest in his devotion to the god is oblivious of the fact that the image is merely a stone. We wonder how a man could spend his whole life, day by day, at such a task, as many of the priests do. This is easily explained when we remember that this devotion to the god means salvation for the priest. His highest duty is to serve the god, whom he believes resides within the image and whom he is able to serve best by rendering this personal service to the image. To us it is meaningless, but to the Hindu priest it is true, sincere service to the god he adores.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOLISM IN HINDU SCULPTURE
THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOLISM IN HINDU SCULPTURE

A. SYMBOLISM SUGGESTS ATTRIBUTES WITH AN INFINITE ELEMENT

Symbolism permeates all of Hindu sculpture, giving it animation and meaning. Without the symbol, Hindu art would have very little meaning and could not call forth the adoration of the Indian as it is now able to do. In some of the images, such as the Dance of Siva, the whole figure is symbolic, representing cosmic activity. The figure adequately demonstrates this in its bouyant, exhilarating form, poised upon one foot.

Dr. Coomaraswamy says: "In Indian art every form is the symbol of a clear thought and of consciously directed feeling." ¹

Symbolism suggests attributes with an infinite element.

B. C. Bhattacharya states that "Indian religious literature teaches that artists were directed to express the nature and moods of the deity miraculously." ² This could be done by means of the poses and the facial expressions given to the image such as love, rage, animation, repugnance, and like feelings. The artist succeeded in accomplishing this as may be seen by studying some of the images. The figure of the image Apparswami is symbolic of humble devotion, which is so well portrayed that the devotee could not fail to be strongly impressed by this characteristic of the image. The nature and mood of the deity are inexpressible, save by this symbolic demonstration.

B. SYMBOLISM PRESENTS ABSTRACT IDEAS THAT CANNOT BE DIRECTLY REPRESENTED

Nearly all of the outward symbols express these abstract ideas.

² Bhattacharya, B. C., Indian Images, Vol. I.
They enable the artist to tell a long story or express many important facts in a brief and comprehensive way. As an example of this is the "third eye", which denotes spiritual consciousness, and the lion-like body of the god which expresses his spiritual strength, and the additional arms which carry the attributes of the god. The inexpressible and unknowable, which means God, cannot be expressed. In South India it is represented by Space - an empty cell. It is also represented by black, which is the absence of color.

C. SYMBOLISM REMINDS THE DEVOTEE OF RELIGIOUS STORIES

Symbolism is the medium of communication between the artist and the devotee and between the god and the devotee. Many an Indian, who can not read a word, is able to interpret the whole religious story, that he has heard, from the symbols that have been used in connection with the image.

The lotus will remind the Indian of the story of the miraculous birth of Lakshmi, as she rose from the waves seated upon a lotus. He will feel the joy that the sages of old experienced as they sang her praise. The legend of her birth and of the contest between the gods and demons because of her is a favorite subject in Indian art. The elephant head of Ganesha will recall the legends concerning his early experience, and account for his wisdom.

Symbols are vivid pictures that speak more plainly to the heart of Hinduism than any other representation could do.
CHAPTER FOUR

EXAMINATION OF TYPICAL SPECIMENS OF HINDU SCULPTURE
EXAMINATION OF TYPICAL SPECIMENS OF HINDU SCULPTURE

A. ROUND STONE, CARVED SNAKE, AND SALAGRAMA STONES

The round stone and carved snake, placed under the sacred tree, symbolize the evolution of the cosmos. The first attempt to manifest the unknowable was the Egg or Womb of the universe, a smooth egg-shaped stone placed beneath a sacred tree. This was the first symbol ever used. It symbolizes the birth of the universe. The tree, beneath which it is placed, symbolizes the universe itself, probably after it had grown up. A snake, carved in stone, is often placed along with the round stone and this symbolizes re-incarnation, the process by which the soul evolved.

The three together represent the birth and evolution of the cosmos and the passage of the soul to Nirvana. This stone is found all over India and is worshipped by all the people. Dr. Monier-Williams tells about some other stones.

"There is another stone not so common, called the Swayam-bhu, which is supposed to have descended directly from heaven. These are the most sacred of all objects. Often these stones are supposed to represent the Linga of Siva and when found shrines are built around them. Also in the Narbada river around them, there are pebbles of white quartz, representing the Linga of Siva and black pebbles, called Salagrama, in the river of Gandaki, representing Vishnu and Krishna. Both of these pebbles are used in household worship and are considered much more sacred than any idol, because Vishnu and Siva have occupied them directly without any consecration."

True, these stones are not sculpture, but they are worshipped by the people and have great influence upon them.

1 Monier-Williams, Brahmanism and Hinduism, pp 70, 412.
B. **APPARSWAMI SYMBOLIZES DEVOTION**

Apparswami who exemplifies devotion, or "bhakti", is of the sixth century A.D. First he was a Buddhist, living in southern India and then a Jain, and finally he became an apostle of Siva. This piece of sculpture shows him as a Saivaite saint. His whole attitude is symbolic of true devotion to Siva-Bhakti. This is shown by his submissive posture, inclined forward in readiness to serve. His placid face is raised, indicating that he is waiting to receive an order and willing to execute it. His folded hands are very typical of Indian devotion to a master and may represent him in prayer. He looks as if he were just ready to fall at the feet of Siva in adoration and humble service. On his left shoulder is the kurpi, the implement used for light digging in the ground. With this he has been weeding the temple court yard as a mark of his devotion. This menial work is ordinarily done by a man of low caste; so this occupation, for him, indicates humiliation and a willingness to serve, the concomitants of true bhakti.

The loin cloth is typical of the gardener, and the beads are typical of priesthood. The other ornaments worn, armlets and bracelets, indicate that he is not of the poorest class. His broad shoulders and slender waist also indicate aristocracy and spiritual strength.

He is standing upon a four-tiered stone pedestal. Two iron rings protrude from each of two sides of the pedestal. On special occasions this image is carried through the streets in religious processions by men who insert long poles through the rings on each side and balance it upon their shoulders.

C. **VISHNU-MAWALLAPURAM, BAS-RELIEF**

This sculpture shows Vishnu supporting the universe, and is found as bas-relief at Mawallapuram. It depicts a Puranic allegory.
Apparawami.
Vishnu is here represented as the Soul of the Universe, and is holding up the heavens with one of his right hands turned palm upward, as required by the Vaikhanasagarma. He has four arms on each side which make him to appear full of activity and busy doing many things at the same time. His many arms denote his universal attributes of glory and divinity. He symbolizes the noon-day sun in all the intensity of its brilliancy, as the principle of life. Vishnu has extended his left leg and arm to indicate, in one big stride, the movement of the sun across the sky from east to west.

Just at the point of his toe and doing "puja" to it sits Brahma. He has four arms and wears a jata (dressed high in ascetic fashion) and karna (symbolic of doing) ear-rings. Vishnu's finger is touching one of the hands of Brahma. Just across on the other side of the picture sits Siva. His figure also has four arms, one of them held in the poise of praise.

Below Siva is the sun-god, Surya, encircled by a halo. He is suspended midway between heaven and earth as the rising sun appears in the early morning.

On the right side of the picture just beneath Brahma is the moon-god, Chandra, likewise suspended in the air. Mr. Havell thinks this is not the moon-god but is Surya, the sun-god, descending or setting in the west, after having circuited the dome of the sky. This interpretation is more in keeping with the meaning of Vishnu's long stride across the sky, and I like it better.

Both of these figures have two hands each, extended in praise of Vishnu.

At the bottom of the picture four figures are seated. These are muni or genii tutelary deities whose duty it is to guard heaven, the
Vishnu - Mamallapuram.
home of Vishnu, and they symbolize the four quarters of the earth.

Another figure is seen at the top of the picture between Vishnu and Brahma. This is either Jambavan, with a bear face, sounding the drum in joy because of the victory of the gods Brahma and Siva over the demons seated at the bottom of the picture, or it is Varaha-Avatara, the boar incarnation, in which form Vishnu raised the earth above the flood. The latter interpretation may be more correct, since Vishnu sometimes is shown with the face of a boar.

Another figure appears sitting on a column of the arch at the right hand side of the picture. This may be one of the Danavas, or demons, that had been hurled upwards by Vishnu and lighted thus.

Vishnu wears a necklace composed of five gems, pearl, ruby, emerald, sapphire and diamond, representing ether, air, light, water and earth. In his bent left arm he holds the bow, Gandiva, used by Ajuna in the great war. This bow symbolized the principle of individual existence, the personality. The arrows are the rays of the sun and they represent the power of action and perception. The shield held by the left hand which is about to cover the descending sun-god, may represent either the darkness of night, or Maya, illusion. The sword wielded by the lower right arm is holy wisdom, and the scabbard in which it is sometimes encased is ignorance.

Another right hand wields the mace, the power of intellect; and the upper right hand holds the discus, representing the mind whose thoughts fly faster than the winds. These extended arms form a halo behind the god. The whole composition is vigorous and impressive, and shows the great imaginative power of the sculptor. Every part of it is symbolic of spiritual ideas related to the universe and the daily round.

of the sun. It is easy to understand how a devotee seeing this composition could be a sun-worshipper as is so common among Hindus. The great sun ball is the giver of life, warmth and the productions of nature needed by mankind.

The Soul of the Universe, exemplified, is Vishnu.

D. DANCE OF SIVA, COSMIC ACTIVITY OR ABSOLUTE IN MANIFESTATION

Siva, the Nataraja, Lord of Dancers, is the greatest of the Saivaite sculptures. It was produced in South India in the fifteenth century.

"Whatsoever the origin of Siva's dance may be it became the clearest image of the activity of God that any art or religion can boast of." 1

The Dance is based upon the following legend:

"In the forest of Taragam many rishis lived. Siva went there to refute them, accompanied by Vishnu and Ati Seshan. At first the rishis began a violent dispute among themselves, but soon became angry with Siva and tried to destroy him by incantations. A tiger was created in sacrificial fires and rushed upon him but he, with the nail of his little finger, stripped off its skin and wrapped it about him. Then sages produced a large serpent, but Siva wrapped it about his neck. He began to dance but a monster Muyalaka rushed upon him. He stepped upon the back of the monster, broke it and left him writhing upon the ground. Then Ati Seshan worshipped Siva." 2

In this figure he is standing upon a pedestal with one foot implanted upon the demon Muyalaka, the symbol of evil or bond of original sin. His whole body and every movement shows the ecstasy of this victory over the evil one, the darkness.

The figure has four arms. The upper right arm holds a drum from which creation proceeds. The other right hand is held up in assurance of protection and to remove any fear from the onlooker.

1-2 Coonaraswamy, A. K., Dance of Siva, p. 56.
Dance of Diva.
The upper left hand holds fire, the symbol of destruction; and the other left hand points down upon the demon Muyalaka, or to the left foot, which is raised, indicating the refuge of the soul, or salvation.

The head of the cobra is protruding above the left fore-arm and another one, encircling his lower right arm, is extending its hood. The cobra is the symbol of the Lord of death and also the theory of the reincarnation. The former because of its deadly bite, and the latter because of its ability to shed its skin and reappear as new.

His whole whirling locks extend far out on each side of his head. The figure of Ganga (the Ganges goddess), who fell from heaven is represented in his locks.

His third eye is visible in the center of his forehead. It is the eye of wisdom and represents an organ that is supposed to exist in all men, but effectively in the deity only, or in those who have attained salvation. There is a legend that Uma one day covered both his eyes with her hands. Immediately the whole universe was plunged in darkness and all movement ceased. The third eye appeared like a sun.

His three eyes represent the sun, moon and fire. He has heavy ear-rings in his ears. On the right side is a long one, a man's ear-ring, and in the left a round one, a woman's ear-ring. These indicate his dual nature, the presence of the Sakti as an essential part of the deity, the left side representing Uma. He wears necklaces, armlets, a jewelled belt, anklets, bracelets, finger and toe rings. He also wears a sacred thread consisting of a double row of pearls.

He is nude, except for short, tightly fitting breeches and a muslin sash tied around the waist, the ends of which fall down to and touch the demon under his foot.
The dance represents five activities: creation, preservation, destruction, illusion and salvation. These are the activities respectively of the deities Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesvara and Sadasiva. These are symbolized in the dance thus: the drum is creation, the protecting hand is preservation, the fire is destruction, the planted foot is illusion, and the upraised foot is salvation.

The dance has a threefold significance. First, it is the image of his rhythmic play as the source of all movement within the cosmos; then, its purpose is to release the countless souls of men from the sea of illusion; and, lastly, the place of the Dance, Chidambaran, the center of the universe, is within the heart. ¹

This image expresses grace and living energy. It has wonderful poise, and shows great calmness notwithstanding the fact that every muscle in the body is actively engaged in interpreting its own message. The eyes are half closed and the whole face shows remarkable passivity. We can only wonder what impression it would have made if the face had been as expressive as the body.

E. GANESHÁ, PERSONIFICATION OF MAN'S ANIMAL NATURE AND THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SOCIAL ORDER AND STABILITY

This image is from Java, 1239 A.D., and is a masterpiece of its kind. Ganesha is a typical Dravidian god. He is also called Ganapati and was king of troops of minor devils under Siva's command. He was a jungle deity made a son of Siva and a teacher of wisdom.

There are many legends concerning the origin of his elephant head and one of them is as follows: He was the son of Siva and Parvati. One day when Parvati was bathing she fashioned him from the scurf of her body and set him down to guard the entrance. Siva

¹ Coomaraswamy, A. K., Dance of Siva, pp. 56-66.
Ganesha.
undertook to enter and Ganesha resisted him bitterly. Finally Siva overcame him by cutting off his head. Parvati insisted that he be restored to life, but the head could not be found. At last Siva went out to the jungle to secure the head of the first creature he met. He happened upon a sleeping elephant, so cut off his head, took it home and attached it to the body of Ganesha, who was restored. The elephant is called the wisest of beasts, therefore the origin of Ganesha's wisdom.

Because of this legend Ganesha is considered in India the protector of households and the personification of common sense, whose aid is invoked in all worldly enterprises. He is also the scribe of the gods and the patron of authors, representing smriti: that which is remembered, as distinguished from divinely given wisdom. He is very popular and is often carved over the entrance to the houses.

The image shows Ganesha as a thick, squat, most uncomfortable creature. He is sitting on a pedestal with his knees bent at right angles and the soles of his feet placed together. The right hand is clasped as if holding to an object which has been broken off. In the left hand he is holding a small cup into which he has inserted his proboscis for food. He has a heavy bracelet on his left wrist and armlets on both forearms.

A legend says that he once threw one of his tusks at the moon, which explains the waxing and waning of the moon. In this figure both tusks are gone, but this may have been the work of iconoclasts.

At the base of the pedestal is a row of skulls. This is a reminder of his descent from Siva, the great destroyer.

Ganesha does not have spiritual power, as does Siva, but is earthly, born of the earth. He may be considered the personification of
man's animal nature, and is the symbol of social order and stability. Ganesha symbolizes the helplessness of intellectuality without divine inspiration. 1

F. DURGA SLAYING MAHISHA - EVIL

Durga represents the Sakti or energy of Siva and symbolizes the awakening of the soul to infinite experience. She is known and worshipped by several names: Uma, Parvati, Durga, Candi, Kali, and others, but no matter what she may be called she is still the Sakti of Siva and may be considered as his complement.

The female divinity is considered the most potential force in existence, and represents the benign and malignant powers in nature.

This figure shows Durga assisting the gods in the continuous struggle against the powers of darkness and evil. Her opponent in this case is the buffalo-demon, Mahisha, who was the source of much trouble in heaven. Durga is standing upon the dead body of the buffalo in the act of slaying the demon, which has come out of the mouth or head of the buffalo.

She has a jata (ascetic) crown upon her head. In this picture she has six arms, but in some figures she has many more. One of the upper right hands is clutching a dagger with which she will behead the demon. In the other upper right hand she is holding the discus. The lower right hand is holding something, probably a stringed bow which she has been using in her struggle with the demon.

In the upper left hand she is holding a conch shell. She holds a small axe in one of her lower left hands with which she has struck Mahisha on the top of the head. The blow has been effective and his face expresses his anguish as his body begins to settle down.

Durga slaying Mahisha.
enemy, Durga. Beside his face an egg-shaped stone may be seen. Perhaps this is the Egg or Womb of the Universe, and, if so, it indicates that evil is inherent in the universe, and born out of the very germ from which the Universe is produced.

Durga is wearing a portion of a skirt which falls to her ankles in the back. Across the front is a wide girdle of four strands. On the right side it is tied in a big bow. She is bedecked with ornaments consisting of anklets, bracelets, armlets, necklaces, and earrings, the latter resembling those worn by Siva.

This piece of sculpture is based upon a legend. Mahisha had conquered the three worlds and slain many of the gods, and others came to Durga for protection. Mahisha decided that he would conquer Durga and take her for his own. He brought an army, and drew it up before Durga who sent a shower of arrows upon it and killed great numbers of his men. Then Mahisha came upon her in personal combat and a terrible duel ensued. Mahisha was in the form of a buffalo. Durga, being unable to slay him in any other way, leaped upon the back of Mahisha and smote him senseless to the ground as the picture shows.

Mahisha then extricated himself from the head of the buffalo but was unable to escape the death blow from the axe wielded by Durga.

In spite of her conflict, and her malignant nature, Durga stands serene and unperturbed. In common with the faces of most images, and in fact with the living Indian, her face expresses nothing that would indicate the struggle which she has undergone or any joy that she might have experienced in her victory. Rather than exhilaration, her face expresses sadness.

The story may indicate the substitution of goddess worship for the primitive buffalo totem. This is a masterpiece in Hindu
sculpture, and expresses clearly the wrath and strength of the Supreme Power in warfare with the Spirit of Evil. It has an intensity of feeling which reveals the power of the Unseen.
CHAPTER FIVE

ACTUAL INFLUENCES OF HINDU SCULPTURE

ON THE RELIGIOUS MIND OF INDIA
A. SCULPTURE KEEPS THE GOD AND DIVINE IDEAL BEFORE THE PEOPLE

The artist, by means of contemplation, Yoga, conceived the Divine ideal, and received what we might call a vision of the god in his power and glory. He expressed this vision materially in the image that he made of the god. All the people even in the remotest villages have these images in their temples and homes, so that they are able to see them, and worship them at any time. This enables them to keep the gods fresh in mind and to recall at all times the ideals of the gods. Just as the picture of a departed father would recall to the mind of the son in a vivid manner the father's life and teachings, so the image is a vivid picture of the departed god. In it the devotee may see his thought and ideas, the way he lived, what he liked, what he disliked, how he responded to his environment, his virtues, his sins and weaknesses. All of these things he can see in one or the other of the gods. The god becomes the hero whom he admires, reverences, and imitates in large measure.

The Hindu, conceiving his god as having the attributes of a man, with the same physical needs and desires, capable of the same good and bad conduct as man, is greatly influenced by him. He sees the attitude that the god takes and the response he makes to situations similar to his own, and is therefore led to make similar responses.

This truly anthropomorphic conception of the god is one of the greatest weaknesses of the Hindu religion. The god of the Hindu is not higher and holier than himself, but is subject to all the desires, needs, weaknesses, sins and failures of man himself. He is,
therefore, unable to inspire man to live nobly, to attain to high ideals and to accomplish victory over a sinful life. What man would believe that he should live a holier life than his god lived? Yet, yet, I believe that many Hindus actually live on a higher plane than that represented by the lives of their gods. These are probably more influenced by the theory of transmigration and karma than by their gods.

On the other hand, some of the most hideous practices exist, these also authorized by the conduct and lives of the gods whom the people worship.

The worshipper in large measure becomes as the god he worships, whom he believes to be living within the image, and with whom he aspires to be united in spirit.

B. SCULPTURE IS EDUCATIVE

A very small percentage of the Indian population, even to this day, is able to read, so it has been necessary to transmit the religious teaching by tradition.

The stories of the Hindu gods and heroes are told in every home, and are frequently dramatized. By these methods the people both hear and see the stories of their gods and faith is established in the gods. Sculpture teaches them the same lesson, visualizing it in the image. This method is much more effectual in fixing the teaching firmly in the mind of the devotee, because it is unchanging and depicts the highest ideals attained by the unrelenting effort of the sculptor as he sought to get a vision of the god. By the former methods he must recall the story mentally and may forget part of it, but when the story is exemplified in the image he can trace it step by step and have it always present. The image re-enacts or dramatizes the religious
teaching for the devotee in a vivid and appealing way.

Sculpture not only makes religious teaching more available for the uneducated man, but it inspires him anew. It is said that the Indian peasantry, though illiterate in the western sense, is more cultured than that class of people in any other part of the world. The Indian man can discuss the deepest philosophical and ethical questions. This statement may not be literally true; however, the ordinary Indian man, living in the presence of his gods, has a remarkable philosophical view of theology and religion.

C. SCULPTURE INFLUENCES THE DEVOTEE TO BE CONTEMPLATIVE

As stated previously, sculpture is the fruit of contemplation on the part of the artist. It would be impossible for each man to have the time and ability to sit down and contemplate upon his god until he conceived the Divine ideal, and became united in spirit with the god. Sculpture has provided the image, the result of the artist's contemplation, and many worshippers accept it as it is, with very little thought, just as many Christians never get beneath the surface of the Bible teaching. Nevertheless, if the worshipper desires to really comprehend his god, to be united in spirit with him, he must spend much time in contemplation before the image. That may be the reason for the stipulation requiring a Hindu to worship several hours daily. Contemplation requires much time and effort, but the reward for the Hindu is eternal life through the union of his spirit with that of his god.

D. SCULPTURE IS AN EXPONENT OF RACE TRADITIONS

The inception of sculpture began with contemplation upon the gods, then moved into the realm of imagery, and then into the image which in the beginning could scarcely be called sculpture. It moved slowly, step by step, from the imperfect and almost meaningless past to the
to the perfect and didactic image.

The cause of this gradual evolution is the tradition of the race. Art can only keep pace with the mind of the people. Just as the race conceived the god to be, even so could the artist depict him. So in each stage of the progress of Hindu civilization we find a corresponding progress in the type of sculpture produced. When civilization declined art declined with it. A study of the best Hindu sculpture shows the ideals of the highest civilization of the Hindu people.

E. SCULPTURE IS THE CHIEF SOURCE OF SUPERSTITION AMONG THE PEOPLE

Dr. J. N. Farquhar has stated this clearly:

"The belief that every image is a living god, who is able to bless or curse, and that food, water, flowers, and every other thing that comes in contact with the image is charged with supernatural power, is the chief source of the limitless mass of superstitions under which the Hindu people live enslaved....... Idolatry is thus one of the chief hindrances to the progress of India." 1

1 Farquhar, J. N., Crown of Hinduism
SUMMARY
SUMMARY

Hindu sculpture is based upon and has grown out of the religion of the Hindu, for whom it has some religious values, especially that it brings together the worshipper and the god he worships. To the devout Hindu, sculpture serves a real purpose and is a value from his standpoint, although neither the sculpture nor the religion help him to live a life victorious over sin and evil, the standard by which the Christian measures a religious value. As viewed by the adherents of Christianity, Hindu religion and sculpture have many disvalues which are not so interpreted by the Hindu.

It is almost impossible for any person of one race and religion to make an authentic and infallible statement of the religious values found in another religion; so for this reason an effort has been made in this thesis to point out the highest values to the devout Hindu especially. Aesthetic values, which may be considered by some as the real measure of art, are absolutely ignored by the Hindu artist.

Previous to the existence of art in India there were vital forces at work which motivated the race and the artist to the production of art.

The Rishi, or Priest, who happened to be uncommonly discerning in religious matters produced a theology concerning the gods and their relation to the world. He then tried to create a means for manifesting the divine to the worshipper and a way to express spiritual ideas so they could be understood. He also conceived the idea that the worshipper by serving the deity might become united with him. In other words, he conceived an imagery for the purpose of bringing together divinity and humanity. The forces of nature which were visible to the Aryan and were
a power he did not understand were personified by him and made gods. He had a mental image of these gods. They came into contact with the Dravidians who were already worshipping localized deities by symbols. The two people fused their ideas and Hinduism with its image worship was born.

Hindu sculpture was extended to many points outside India proper, Ceylon, Cambod,ampa, Java, Siam and Burma.

Hindu sculpture has several religious values for the Indian devotee. It visualizes spiritual beings so that the worshipper can have a clearer conception of the gods than he otherwise could have. It causes a deep devotion—bhakti—to the god, and this means for him freedom from re-incarnation and union with Brahman, or salvation. He is able to serve his god by making offerings to the image and by personal service to it.

Indian sculpture is very symbolic, representing attributes and qualities of the gods that could not be understood or represented in any other way. It also reminds the devotee of religious stories.

Several specimens of Hindu sculpture have been interpreted and their symbolic and religious meaning to the Hindu worshipper has been pointed out. The actual influence of Hindu sculpture on the Hindu has been discussed. It has some good influences and some not good.

Because of the abundance of sculpture, and the fact that the Hindu believes the living god resides within the image, his god is ever present so that the worshipper is constantly being reminded of the god and his divine ideals.

Sculpture is educative, especially for the illiterate. It is his course in religious education. It influences him to be contemplative.

Sculpture depends entirely, in its growth, upon race
traditions, for it moves along with the current of race thought. In India sculpture is the chief source of superstition which so degrades the mass of the people.

In conclusion, we have found that in Hindu sculpture there are several religious values which the Hindu experiences as he worships the image. It visualizes the god and keeps the Divine ideal before the people; it represents the embodiment of devotion and calls forth deep devotion from the devotee; it is educative, induces contemplation; it is the exponent of race tradition and the chief source of superstition. The latter is rather a disvalue, but should not be overlooked as one real influence of the Hindu religion and art.
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