

Ramkinkar Baij in the Light of Rabindranath: A Narrative of Modern Indian Sculpture

Dr. Ganesh Nandi

Associate Professor, Department of Visual Arts, Assam University Silchar

Email- gnandi148@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author-

Dr. Ganesh Nandi

Associate Professor, Department of Visual Arts, Assam University Silchar

Email- gnandi148@gmail.com

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‘शोध उत्कर्ष’ एक स्वतंत्र पत्रिका है। इसे किसी भी सार्वजनिक, वाणिज्यिक या गैर-लाभकारी संगठन से कोई वित्तीय सहायता, अनुदान या फंडिंग प्राप्त नहीं होती है।

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कॉपीराइट सूचना-

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Abstract- Rabindranath Tagore is a phenomenon in India. He charted new directions in literature, art, education, and culture. Although the Indian renaissance began through contact with Western knowledge and science, Tagore realized that true freedom of the mind in this country was impossible without independence in education. From this vision emerged Kala Bhavana, and Visva-Bharati was established. His ideas, consciousness, philosophy, and educational principles nurtured generations of thinkers across disciplines.

Ramkinkar Baij emerged from the atmosphere of intellectual freedom that Tagore cultivated at Santiniketan. He stands as another marvel of Indian sculpture. Tagore recognized the fire of potential within Ramkinkar and granted him complete creative freedom, encouraging his artistic growth. Tagore's efforts were not in vain. Ultimately, it was Ramkinkar who ushered in modernity in Indian sculpture. He opened new avenues of experimentation in concept, medium, and technique. He created the first environmental sculpture in India and pioneered abstract sculpture in the country. Fundamentally rooted in Tagore's philosophy, it was his patronage that established Ramkinkar as the father of modern Indian sculpture. This study highlights that relationship and its significance.

Key Words: Tagore Philosophy, Freedom of Mind, Tradition, Modernity, Environmental Sculpture, Bengal School.

Introduction: Rabindranath Tagore is a name synonymous with wonder. He was a poet, storyteller, lyricist, playwright, essayist, and philosopher. He was also a social reformer and a bold symbol of protest. Moreover, he was a pioneering force in modern Indian painting. His creative ocean is immeasurable, his expanse unfathomable. Truly, he remains an eternal marvel of the infinite. As has been observed, “In our art or life today—in our everyday practices, social structures, and philosophical inquiries—many answers ultimately culminate in Rabindranath” (Ghosh: 2021). Particularly within Bengali intellectual life, both internally and externally, he continues to stand uniquely resplendent in reassessing past glory and envisioning the future. This timeless genius is continually rediscovered with renewed effort.

Tagore scholar Somendranath Bandopadhyay aptly noted: “Rabindranath's genius is luxuriantly expansive. It does not express itself through a single path of creation; rather, it delights in multiplicity. He touched every branch of literature from the very beginning of his journey: poetry, drama, fiction, essays. His creative output has always been multi-dimensional. What is remarkable is that in every field he seemed to arrive far ahead of his time, creating a significant distance between his work and that of his

contemporaries” (Bandopadhyay:2021). This very distance, born of his advanced thought and creativity, sometimes led to confusion among his contemporaries. From confusion arose criticism, even hostility. There were moments of sharp dismissal and, at times, indecorous attacks. Yet today, this timeless creator is revered deeply. Many believe that without Rabindranath, much of what defines modern India would not have come into being. Without him, who knows when stagnation in education and culture would have ended? His ideas, philosophy, and creative output did not merely guide India’s education, culture, society, and economy toward new directions; they also directly and indirectly inspired the emergence of numerous great minds. One such artist illuminated by Rabindranath’s influence was Ramkinkar Baij, regarded as the father of modern Indian sculpture.

Though not as multifaceted as Tagore, Ramkinkar was nevertheless another marvel in the Indian artistic landscape. His journey, from an obscure village in Bankura to becoming a pioneer of modern Indian sculpture, remains a subject of deep contemplation among art critics. In the field of sculpture, he single-handedly transformed ideas, approaches, and techniques. Several external influences shaped his rise: the enchanting natural beauty of Bankura and Santiniketan, Tagore’s philosophy and patronage, and the guidance, affection, and encouragement of his mentor Nandalal Bose. However, there is little doubt that it was the environment created by Tagore that ignited and sustained the creative fire within Ramkinkar.

Tagore’s Educational and Artistic Vision:

It must be acknowledged that the Indian renaissance began under the influence of Western knowledge. Thinkers such as Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar emerged during this period. Initially, however, the British administration showed little interest in reform beyond their administrative needs. Until the early nineteenth century, they displayed minimal enthusiasm for educational or social reform in India. As early as 1823, Ram Mohan Roy appealed to Lord Amherst, stating: “If the improvement of this country is indeed the objective of the government, then it is essential to adopt a liberal and progressive policy in the sphere of education. Rather than engaging with medieval language and subject matter, there was a growing need for the study of modern, life-oriented knowledge and science” (Som: 1998). In this process, the Sanskrit College was established in Calcutta in 1824. However, this alone was not sufficient.

The British, in order to administer this vast country, felt the necessity of English education to produce a class of employees. As a result, under colonial rule, schools, colleges, and universities were established not as true centers of knowledge but as instruments tied to employment. A section of Indian society became inclined to use education primarily as a means to secure jobs and thereby pursue personal advancement (Som: 1985). Simultaneously, for the expansion of colonial governance—particularly for surveys, documentation, and record-keeping—there arose a need for copyists and draftsmen. This led to the establishment of art schools. However, their objective was not to create educated artists but to produce skilled copyists and technically efficient craftsmen devoid of creative originality. Although the Government School of Art later progressed to some extent, art education remained largely confined within the framework of British “Academic Realism.”

Despite this, during the so-called nineteenth-century Renaissance, sweeping changes occurred in knowledge systems, science, literature, economy, and social reform. Yet, artistic sensibility and art practice remained largely neglected. The intellectuals of the time were not only indifferent to this but also accepted the rigid, colonial model of art education and Western artistic standards as superior. Many even attempted to glorify them further. Even a global thinker like Swami Vivekananda remarked in his book *Prachya o Paschatya (East and West)* that, “In painting and sculpture, we are still far behind the West... We have always been unskilled in these arts... European sculpture and painting are vast subjects” (Vivekananda:1980). Thus, the intellectual climate of nineteenth-century India remained deeply influenced by this mindset.

It was from this point that Rabindranath Tagore began to think against the current. Many members of the Tagore family of Jorasanko held distinguished positions in India’s intellectual life due to their social standing and individual talents. The children of this family were educated outside conventional institutions. From physical training to drawing, from literature to science, they received holistic instruction from private tutors (Tagore: 1375). Growing up in such an environment, those who emerged from the Tagore household possessed a broad intellectual vision. Rabindranath was no exception. He realized that while colonial education might facilitate employment, it remained disconnected from life and lived experience. He also understood that without

achieving autonomy in education, the liberation of the Indian mind was impossible. With the aim of expanding his educational experiments at Shilaidaha, he established the Santiniketan Brahmacharya Ashram (school) in 1902. Gradually, with the goal of attaining educational self-reliance and replacing narrow, limited knowledge with a universal outlook, Rabindranath envisioned expanding the Brahmacharya School into a higher institution. In 1916, he wrote to his son Rathindranath from America: “Santiniketan must become a link between India and the world... the age of narrow nationalism is coming to an end...” (Tagore: 1349). This marked the foundational vision for the establishment of Visva-Bharati.

Meanwhile, Ernest Binfield Havell, then principal of the Government School of Art, began exploring the roots of Indian artistic traditions. Influenced by him, his student Abanindranath Tagore also followed this path. In this context, art education began to develop along nationalist lines. Gradually, driven by the urge for cultural self-identity and nationalist ideals, the Bengal School of Art emerged. Abanindranath started teaching students at his residence and worked under the banner of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. At the same time, under Rabindranath's inspiration, the newly established Bichitra Bhavan at Jorasanko became a vibrant center for literary and cultural activities. Rejecting the conventional school model, Rabindranath envisioned an art center attached to the Bichitra Sabha, functioning more like a studio. His idea was that teachers and students would work together, creating art in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. He even arranged salaries from his own funds for artists such as Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, and Surendranath Kar.

However, due to his increasing involvement in developing Santiniketan and other commitments, Rabindranath had to entrust the responsibility of supervision to Abanindranath. The institution came to be known as *The Bichitra Studio for the Artists of Neo-Bengal*. As a result, Rabindranath's original vision was somewhat hindered, and the revivalist style of Abanindranath dominated the studio. This disappointed Rabindranath to a great extent. Initially, he had wholeheartedly supported the Bengal School. But when he began to perceive signs of monotony and conservatism within it, he could no longer accept its direction. His visit to Japan, in particular, brought a significant shift in his artistic outlook.

In a letter to Abanindranath, he wrote: “If you came here, a great veil would be lifted from your eyes. Your inner goddess of art would receive her true offering. Only after coming here did I realize that your

art has not been entirely true” (Tagore: 1323). Again, in a letter to his daughter Mira Devi, he expressed his disappointment and frustration: “Our poverty and narrowness know no bounds; it is under this burden that our country has sunk... I had hoped that from Bichitra would flow a stream of painting that would consecrate the art of the entire country. But no one could truly dedicate themselves to this cause. I was ready to do whatever I could, but nowhere did I find the awakening of spirit. Painting is not my domain. If it was, I would have shown what I could achieve” (Tagore: 1350).

After this, Rabindranath did not delay any further. Upon returning from Japan, he closed the Bichitra Studio. On 3rd July 1919, he established his dream institution—Kala Bhavana. Two years later, in 1921, Visva-Bharati was formally founded. The first principal of Kala Bhavana was Asit Kumar Haldar. Soon, Nandalal Bose also joined, initially visiting once a week to take classes. With his farsighted vision, Rabindranath realized that if he could bring Nandalal permanently to Santiniketan, he would be able to advance his educational and artistic ideals. Though Nandalal was trained in the Bengal School tradition, he possessed a breadth of vision, openness, and originality of thought. Eventually, at the request of Gurudev, Nandalal became the principal of Kala Bhavana in 1921. Rabindranath thus pioneered an integrated model of education where art and culture were inseparably woven into the learning process. Gradually, all branches of fine arts and crafts began to be practiced at Kala Bhavana. After entrusting Nandalal with organizational responsibilities, Rabindranath continued to play the role of a silent supporter behind every activity of the institution. Even earlier, Rabindranath had begun taking artists like Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar, and Dhirendrakrishna Deb Barman on his foreign tours, exposing them to Western art traditions. This experience, along with Rabindranath's companionship, broadened their artistic vision. The Japanese artist Okakura had once remarked: “For the full development of an artist, three elements are essential—tradition, nature, and originality” (Mukhopadhyay: 1390). Nandalal embraced this triad and began his artistic practice accordingly.

At Santiniketan, the environment of free thought that Rabindranath had envisioned gradually took shape. Rejecting the rigid, confined colonial system of education, the Santiniketan model began to attract attention both in India and abroad. The Brahmacharya

Ashram was renamed Visva-Bharati, within which Kala Bhavana occupied a central position. Under Nandalal's leadership, a new artistic consciousness began to evolve.

Influence Rabindranath on Ramkinkar's Creativity:

It was during this formative phase of Kala Bhavana that Ramkinkar Baij first arrived at Santiniketan in 1925. Coming from a poor barber's family burdened by deprivation, he was discovered and brought before Nandalal Bose by Ramananda Chattopadhyay, the editor of *Prabasi* and *Modern Review*, and himself a native of Bankura. In his childhood, Ramkinkar had learned many techniques of idol-making from Ananta Jetha (Uncle) of the potters' quarter and had also practiced drawing. Ramananda was deeply impressed by Ramkinkar's paintings and theatrical work, which inspired him to send the young artist to Santiniketan.

Upon seeing his work, Nandalal reportedly said, "He is already accomplished—what more is needed?" Then, after a pause, he added, "Alright, stay for two or three years." Those "two or three years," however, lasted a lifetime. Within the environment created by Rabindranath, Ramkinkar discovered a joyous, creative existence and eventually established himself as a pioneer of modern Indian sculpture. Without Rabindranath's patronage, it is difficult to imagine how the volcanic creative force that was Ramkinkar could have erupted. Rabindranath often asked his students at Kala Bhavana, "Do you not have arms? Can you not paint with the strength of your arms?" Perhaps out of a sense of dissatisfaction, he himself took up brush and color in his later years. But in Ramkinkar's sculpture, he recognized that very strength and vitality, and therefore not only gave him freedom but actively encouraged him to move forward.

Ramkinkar was a bohemian and a non-conformist, largely indifferent to social conventions and middle-class values. Yet, he was never seen engaging in overtly antisocial behavior. He was an absent-minded, large-hearted, and transparent soul. On the other hand, Rabindranath was a towering personality whose intellect, philosophy, and artistic consciousness were beyond the reach of most. It is difficult to comprehend on what psychological plane these two contrasting personalities connected. However, Gurudev was quick to recognize the spark within this simple, unpretentious young man from Bankura. He did not hesitate to grant him freedom and encourage him to work with joy and spontaneity (Barua: 2021).

Rabindranath's influence. Yet, his world seemed deeply intertwined with Rabindranath's ideas, songs, poetry, and plays. One particular incident, however, profoundly transformed Ramkinkar's life, as he himself recounted on several occasions. The natural landscape of Santiniketan—with its rugged *khoai* terrain, intense heat, and yet serene, tree-covered ashram-like environment—formed a unique setting. There were no grand buildings, no overwhelming crowds. Students learned under Nandalal Bose; they painted, sculpted, performed plays, and sang together. It was like a harmonious family, where life revolved entirely around art and Santiniketan itself. Amid this disciplined yet creative atmosphere, Ramkinkar remained a carefree, wandering, almost Baul-like figure, unconcerned with conventions. This attitude earned him many critics. During this time, he created the sculpture *Sujata* near the Black House with minimal resources, embodying his own artistic vision. The work became the subject of intense criticism.

In an interview, Ramkinkar recounted: "Gurudev had a habit of walking around the ashram early in the morning. One day, while walking, he suddenly came upon the sculpture (*Sujata*). He asked seriously, 'Who made this?' Those present looked at each other, unsure of what to say. Finally, someone hesitantly mentioned my name. Upon hearing it, he said, 'Send him to me.' Even my teacher (Nandalal) became anxious, thinking I would be scolded. I went to meet him with great fear. He asked, 'Did you make that sculpture?' I nodded nervously. Then he asked, 'Can you create even larger sculptures than this and fill the entire ashram with them? Fill the whole place.' I cannot describe my joy at that moment. After that, I never felt any obstacle as a barrier. It was as if I had received an open license—I went on creating one sculpture after another."

Ramkinkar once reflected: "There was an influence of Rabindranath on my artistic practice—and yet, there was not. As I mentioned in the story of *Sujata*, it is better to say there was no direct influence. He never interfered in anyone's work, nor did he like others doing so. He would even tell Nandalal Babu, 'Let everyone work in their own way. The ashram belongs to them. Here, they should work freely and find joy.' I believe this was the greatest influence." (Baij: 2005). Here lies the uniqueness of Rabindranath. Had he restrained Ramkinkar over the making of *Sujata*, perhaps the path of modern sculpture in India would never have opened. A vivid liter-

encounter between Rabindranath and Ramkinkar is found in Samaresh Basu's celebrated novel *Dekhi Nai Phire*. Empowered by Rabindranath's encouragement, Ramkinkar returned that day as if floating in the air. His long-suppressed creative hunger found abundant nourishment. One after another, he created unforgettable sculptures such as *Santhal Family*, *Mill Call*, *Lamp Stand*, and *Harvester*.

In essence, Rabindranath shaped Ramkinkar indirectly. From the very inception of Kala Bhavana, Rabindranath emphasized both theoretical knowledge and practical application. Despite many limitations, he built a rich library at Kala Bhavana, collecting books on art history, literature, science, and various disciplines from India and abroad. Nandalal Bose also encouraged students to study art history deeply. Inspired by Rabindranath, Ramkinkar's inquisitive mind plunged into the pursuit of knowledge. He absorbed various artistic "isms" from across the world and then reinterpreted them through his own experiences. This gave his work a distinct individuality. Ramkinkar himself recalled: "I had to study a little too—sometimes under compulsion. As a child, I disliked studies; whenever my father asked me to write, I would start drawing. Somehow I managed to pass matriculation in Bankura. At Santiniketan, I continued learning, though not academically—I studied as I wished. Once Rabindranath told me, 'It is not enough to just paint or sculpt; you must also read extensively.' He gave me a book of Eliot's poems and said, 'Read this. At first, you may not understand. Read it aloud repeatedly, and gradually it will begin to make sense.' I used to go through many books—Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Bernard Shaw—I read extensively." (Baij: 2005) This Rabindranath-created environment of intellectual exploration at Kala Bhavana enabled Ramkinkar to move far ahead of his time—much like Rabindranath himself.

Moreover, when Ramkinkar arrived at Santiniketan, there was no formal teacher of sculpture. In that sense, he was largely self-taught. Nandalal Bose introduced some basic terracotta techniques. Kala Bhavana lacked financial and human resources, yet Rabindranath did not stop. Responding to his call, foreign sculptors came to Santiniketan. In 1926, Rabindranath met a sculptor named Lisa von Pott in Cairo, who later came to Santiniketan and taught sculpture at Kala Bhavana. Satyendranath Bishi first learned sculptural techniques from her, including modeling and plaster casting. Later, students such as Sudhiranjan Khastgir, Prabhat Mohan Bandopadhyay, and Ramkinkar joined her classes. After her departure, Margaret Milward, a student of Bourdelle,

arrived and taught modeling and casting techniques to the students (Bandopadhyay: 1980). Subsequently, another eminent sculptor, Bergmann, also came at Rabindranath's invitation. In this way, Rabindranath indirectly nurtured the growth of Ramkinkar and his contemporaries. Earlier, the European art historian Stella Kramrisch had also visited Santiniketan. It is said that she introduced, for the first time in India, a systematic Western analytical approach to art history and criticism (Som: 1985). Through these efforts, Rabindranath significantly advanced both the intellectual and practical capacities of Kala Bhavana's teachers and students—something unprecedented in India at the time.

In the twilight of his life, Rabindranath agreed, with difficulty, to sit for a portrait sculpture. His only condition was that he should not be disturbed for measurements, the work had to be done from a distance. At that time, he was grieving the death of his close associate C. F. Andrews and was physically unwell, often seen bent over his desk writing. Ramkinkar created a remarkable sculptural portrait of Rabindranath during this period, one that remains a unique treasure in Indian art. Recalling an incident, Ramkinkar said: "One day I remember vividly, it still gives me goose bumps. He had finished writing about Andrews and was leaning back in his chair. I was working. Anil Chanda and Sudhakanta-da used to visit often. He checked if anyone else was around, and finding none, he called me close. I went nervously. Without any preamble, he said, his words still echo in my ears—'Leap at your work like a tiger. Once finished, do not look back, let it go. Then leap again into another work.' He fell silent. I too remained silent. I thought to myself, this is not mere advice; this is a mantra. I received a mantra in my ears. I have never forgotten it. I have held onto it. In working, I have understood its meaning, if you linger too long on a work, it deteriorates; the vitality of form is lost. What profound guidance for an artist!" (Bandopadhyay: 1994). Rabindranath himself lived by this principle, constantly evolving, never remaining confined to one form. His works in poetry, music, drama, and fiction reveal continuous transformation. According to Ramkinkar, this is why Rabindranath's literature never grows old. Ramkinkar followed this mantra throughout his life, never looking back, always moving forward. In this way, Rabindranath remained a constant source of inspiration in his creative journey.

While making Rabindranath's final portrait, another significant incident occurred. Ramkinkar recalled:

“At first, I thought I would sculpt the entire figure. When I asked him about clothing, he said, ‘Why express the person through garments? Reveal his character, his essence, only then will I understand what kind of artist you are.’ I did not pursue that idea further.” (Baij: 2005). Ramkinkar followed this principle throughout his life, seeking always to express the inner essence rather than external appearances, striving to find the infinite within the finite. Thus, Rabindranath’s presence permeated Ramkinkar’s thought, consciousness, and life. Though Nandalal Bose stood beside him as a guide, it was ultimately Rabindranath’s philosophy, directly or indirectly—that inspired and sustained Ramkinkar, illuminating his path through moments of struggle and creativity alike.

The Uniqueness of Ramkinkar in Indian Sculpture:—From the time of the Indus Valley Civilization, Indian sculpture has demonstrated a rich and advanced tradition. Despite periods of rise and decline, it remained largely influenced by religious consciousness. With the arrival of the British, a certain degree of modernity was introduced, but it did not reach maturity. Even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century’s, despite the emergence of highly skilled and promising sculptors such as Rohinikanta Nag, Hiranmoy Roychowdhury, Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury, G. K. Mhatre, Phanindranath Bose, and V. P. Karmarkar, it was difficult to break free from the dominance and allure of British Academic Realism. It was with Ramkinkar that sculpture in India was finally liberated from the inertia of tradition and the imposition of external influences.

“Carrying with him the memories, experiences, and traditions of rural Bankura, Ramkinkar arrived at Santiniketan. There, he encountered two dimensions of life. On one hand were Rabindranath and Nandalal—two luminous pillars of humanity and creativity. He also witnessed the freedom movement, imperialist exploitation, famine, the turbulence of world wars, and towering figures like Mahatma Gandhi. On the other hand, he experienced the vast natural surroundings of Santiniketan and the vibrant, rhythmic, and colorful life of the Santhal community. These elements repeatedly found expression in his art. Moving beyond the boundaries set by Nandalal, he leapt into the wider world. He employed the significant inheritances of modernity to give form to the flow of memories and realities he had experienced.” (Ghosh: 2008). However, Ramkinkar’s modernity never meant a complete rupture from tradition. Instead, his work reflects a synthesis of tradition and modernity—a harmonious fusion that reaches the heights of aesthetic excellence.

“In this country, the prevailing artistic practices followed two narrow paths. One imitated outdated Western academic ideals, while the other upheld past traditions disconnected from lived reality as the ultimate model of art. Both were detached from real life. Rabindranath’s aim was to free the artists of Kala Bhavana from this conflicting environment and enable them to discover and establish their identity within the context of contemporary global art. A deep interest in global artistic traditions was thus fostered at Kala Bhavana. It was in this environment that Ramkinkar arrived, and a spirit of inquiry toward diverse traditions awakened within him.” (Som: 1985). Yet, through his engagement with tradition, Ramkinkar also perceived its rigidity and sought to break it. He did so both in terms of subject matter and form. In his search for new creative possibilities, he turned toward various Western “isms,” but instead of imitating prevailing styles, he reinterpreted them in his own way. He did not immerse himself in the Neo-Bengal (Bengal School) tradition. Despite strong opposition, he was the first at Santiniketan to paint in oil. Even in watercolor and oil, he avoided conventional methods. Ramkinkar produced numerous paintings centered on life, nature, and contemporary realities. He also created many portraits. In sculpture, he worked across figurative, semi-figurative, and abstract forms. His open-air sculptures, with their rough textures and dynamic play of light and shadow, evoke an entirely new visual world. Drawing from the vast reservoir of global artistic knowledge and blending it with his own life experiences, he created works that were profoundly original and uniquely his own. Reflecting on his exceptional skill, his teacher Nandalal Bose once remarked to another student, Benod Behari Mukherjee: “Binod, go and see Ramkinkar working with clay. The dexterity of his hands makes one’s heart tremble. This cannot be the result of a single lifetime’s practice; he must have carried the discipline of many lifetimes.” (Mukhopadhyay: 1980). It was through such skill, dedication, and lifelong practice that in 1935 Ramkinkar created *Sujata*, India’s first environmental sculpture. Modeled after his student Jaya Appaswamy, the upright figure rises toward the sky amidst a cluster of eucalyptus trees near the Saptaparni house. Due to lack of resources, he innovatively used locally available pebbles and cement, throwing the mixture onto the armature to build the form. The sculpture achieves a remarkable aesthetic harmony with its environment. Its rough texture, animated by the play of light and shadow, creates an almost ethereal beauty. In 1938, he created Santhal Family using the same medium. Positioned along the road to Sriniketan, the

sculpture appears to be moving forward toward Pearson Pally. Free from romantic idealization and imposed aesthetics, this group sculpture, with its rugged surface and absence of a pedestal, establishes a natural relationship with the Birbhum landscape through its cement-and-gravel composition (Som: 1985). Through Ramkinkar's work, for the first time, laboring people became the central subject of Indian sculpture. *Santhal Family* embodies strength, vitality, movement, and rhythm. About eighteen years later, he created another sculpture titled *Mill Call*, which captures the dynamic rhythm of Santhal life. In 1943, near the Kala Bhavana hostel, he created *Harvester*. Though it shows abstract tendencies, it clearly reflects contemporary reality. "Despite its simplified form, *Harvester* stands as a powerful symbol of the farmer's intense labor and carries within it the context of the Bengal famine of 1943" (Ghosh: 2008).

All these sculptures were made using unconventional materials like cement and concrete and stand as outstanding examples of environmental sculpture. Additionally, in the monumental *Yaksha-Yakshi* sculptures in front of the Reserve Bank in Delhi, Ramkinkar achieved a striking synthesis of tradition and modernity. Beyond these, he created numerous open-air sculptures such as *Fountain* and *Gandhi*, each marked by his distinctive creative identity. In 1938, in front of the Santiniketan house associated with Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, he created *Lamp Stand* in cement and concrete. Unlike his other works, its surface is smoother. It is regarded as a significant example of abstract sculpture in India. His work *Speed* (1953) is also an abstract composition rich in expressive suggestion.

Ultimately, it is not the number but the uniqueness of Ramkinkar's sculptures that establishes his significance. He pioneered environmental sculpture in India and demonstrated how deeply sculpture can relate to its surroundings to achieve aesthetic excellence. His large-scale works, with their textured surfaces and interplay of light and shadow, possess a luminous vitality. Breaking free from the chains of tradition, he was the first in India to foreground the working class as a central subject in sculpture. He initiated bold experimentation in subject, medium, and technique. He showed that sculpture is not merely for glorifying individuals but also a space for the artist's own expression and satisfaction. He demonstrated that sculpture need not depend on royal patronage.

Through his creations, Ramkinkar firmly established Indian sculpture on the foundation of modernity, shaping a distinct artistic identity rooted in his own land. Illuminated by Rabindranath's light, yet ultimately

radiant in his own brilliance, Ramkinkar emerged as the pole star of Indian sculpture—one that continues to guide generations of sculptors to this day.

Conclusion—At the end of the study it came to the conclusion that—Rabindranath Tagore emerges as the central philosophical force whose vision of holistic education and artistic freedom laid the foundation for a new direction in Indian art.

The establishment of Visva-Bharati and Kala Bhavana created an unprecedented space where art, life, and learning merged beyond colonial constraints.

Tagore's rejection of rigid academic realism and revivalist orthodoxy enabled a creative environment rooted in freedom, experimentation, and global openness.

Ramkinkar Baij stands as the most powerful embodiment of this environment, transforming Indian sculpture through originality, material innovation, and engagement with lived reality.

The relationship between Tagore and Ramkinkar was not one of direct instruction but of profound intellectual and emotional liberation, allowing the artist to discover his own path.

Ramkinkar's works such as *Santhal Family*, *Mill Call*, and *Harvester* mark a decisive shift in Indian sculpture by foregrounding marginalized communities and everyday life as central subjects.

His pioneering use of unconventional materials like cement and concrete, along with open-air installations, established the language of environmental sculpture in India.

The Santiniketan model fostered a synthesis of tradition and modernity, where global artistic ideas were reinterpreted through local experiences and indigenous sensibilities.

Ramkinkar's artistic journey demonstrates how creative freedom, when nurtured within a supportive intellectual environment, can lead to revolutionary transformations in art.

Ultimately, illuminated by Tagore's vision yet defined by his own genius, Ramkinkar Baij secured a permanent place as the pioneer of modern Indian sculpture, continuing to inspire generations of artists.

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