

Śilpa-sahasradala

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The *Jñāna-Pravāha*, Varanasi has recently undertaken a project of compiling a directory of some unique, rare and uncommon sculptures of Brahmanical pantheon. The reasons that led the authorities for launching such a project are quite apparent. What usually happens is, that the persons engaged in pursuits of knowledge like an excavator, art connoisseur, custodian of sculptural collections in different museums, and scholars devoted to the study of art object in the light of secular and religious literature, folk tradition, etc. are always in search of something new that would make fresh addition to the existing knowledge. Whenever such a happy moment comes, one is naturally eager to share his views with other *samānadharmā* colleagues for their approval, comments, supplementary information or even guiding criticism.

For achieving this goal the best way is to get the new material widely circulated by way of its publication in news papers, standard periodicals, research journals etc. The other way is to place the same in the form of research papers before galaxy of scholars in concerned conferences, seminars etc. arranged by national and international institutions and thus get the matter discussed on all hands. There is a third way also, and that is to write a book or monograph, but this involving several factors, is a long way to go. The easiest way, therefore, is to write a brief note or paper and get it published in journals etc.; but such publications remain confined to limited areas and the main aim remains half fulfilled. Further, factors adding to it are linguistic problems, lack of necessary facilities to get journals etc. appearing in distant corners of our country, paucity of funds on individual and institutional levels and above all the towering prices of books in general and art publications in particular, which are always beyond the reach of a common man or even academic centers with limited resources.

A good deal of standard research work is going on in different foreign countries also, and the result are being regularly published in their journals devoted to South-Asian studies. With exception of a few of privileged class, most of our scholars and research students remain deprived of the latest informations from that end. This situation in short causes adverse effect on our research activities resulting in creeping of different types of lacunae in their final products.

This state of affairs can partly be rectified if something like a bibliography,

A Project Note on : Directory of Unique, Rare & Uncommon Sculptures

descriptive list or directory is made available, which would incorporate necessary information of versatile nature picked up from different journals, bulletins, commemorative or felicitation volumes, proceedings of seminars, reports of academic activities etc. Every entry in the proposed work should have the specific information in brief with full reference including the name of the author, title of the paper or book, page and plate number, year of publication etc. Addition of photographs or line sketches would further enhance the utility. Obviously, this would be an ambitious, long term project worth to be handled by a team of scholars. Easy access to the libraries and active cooperation of different institutional heads and secretarial facilities would be additional essentials. Would it have been wise to wait and wait for favourable situation?

A maxim goes in Sanskrit "*a karaṇāt mandakaraṇam śreyah*", i.e. "better to do a little than not to do at all". Believing in this the *Jñāna-Pravāha* decided to take up and finance this ambitious project in parts. Dr. N.P.Joshi and Dr. A.L.Srivastava, working in the field of Hindu art and iconography for more than last forty years, expressed their hearty willingness to make the beginning and now the work is progressing with full impetus.

The following is the scope and line of action. This volume will be devoted to the Brahmanical sculptures in stone and some extraordinary metal, wood or terracotta figures, which have come to light during later half of twentieth century up to the current year. The sculptures are being selected on the grounds of their being unique viz. unparallel, rare i.e. restricted to a very limited number and uncommon meaning thereby evincing some unusual features in the composition, specific regional trends or something novel calling for special attention. Apart from that, some pieces already known and published but reinterpreted, or discussed with fresh appraisals have also been included. The material has been picked up from journals, bulletins, collections of essays, reports, books etc. roughly published between 1950 A.D. to the current date. Standard works on *Hindu Iconography* like those of Rao, Banerjea etc., text books prescribed for graduate and post-graduate studies, Archaeological Survey Reports, Museum Catalogues, Guidebooks etc., being within easy reach and availability, have been excluded. This source material has of course been fully used with proper references in the Introduction. Besides, the two scholars, on the basis of their personal information and study, have incorporated several unpublished sculptures also.

The opening volume of the project is expected to have roughly 500 entries covering more than a thousand sculptures of brahmanical pantheon accompanied with photographs and line sketches. Detailed Introduction in the beginning incorporating general narrative and allied matters would be helpful for young scholars and interested readers.