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My Work 1981

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Preface

After having seven years of my training in institution I wish to have a thorough retrospective perspective of my career which would form the bases of my future endeavors in art, working independently on my own. With this view in mind I wish to review, relate and evaluate all my work to be able to know where I succeeded and failed. What were the sources which have influenced my work and career and what are the areas from where I have gained profitably. To gain a proper perspective I thought it would be useful to begin from the very beginning of my interests and inclinations in art or related to art. Therefore I begin with assessments of the past right from my childhood trying to find the sources, environ, forces that nourished and moulded my interest in art, and more particularly in sculpture. I sincerely hope this will give me an insight into my personality which will guide my further endeavors.

Chapter- I

Early Environs and Visual Experiences

It seems apparently that I imbibed advantageously certain interests in technical professions and craftsmanship through heredity and environ. I was born in a family of carpenters. My grandfather professing decorative craftsmanship in wood as well as technical constructions like that of cart-building and making of farm Implements. My father was a Superintendent in vocational training in wood work and iron-smithy. Many relatives still continue to remain in the same profession.

Probably much of the significance of kindergarten years at Bhavnagar in a semi-urban area lies in my spending much time almost daily at the workshops of vocational training where my father supervised. However I was quite young at the time. It was here that I made my first drawings on floor with chalk-sticks - copying out from the diagrammatic figures of man, woman, cats etc., which my mother sometimes drew.

Just after my kindergarten years we moved to Kanjari, a small cluster of mixed communities and professions mainly comprised of 'patels', 'brahmins', 'muslims', 'garasias' and various professional castes as potters, carpenters, 'vankars' (weavers) etc, - situated near the highway Kanjari was and still is surrounded by fields, lots of greenery with papal, banyan and neem trees. The village had a railway station, mosque and various temples strewn all over.

I intend to note and describe here the environ, the people and my observations and more particularly my early experiences with various media and techniques which I suppose might, have played a significant role during what is considered the most important and impressionable period.

On shifting to Kanjari I found our rented house (and the surroundings) peculiarly strange and scary, its old rather heavy architecture with flat and broad bricks, lime plaster, discolored weathered walls, aged wooden structure, dull black in color and projecting or raised out grains of weathered wood. It had a heavy and sturdy entrance door with iron decorations of flowers, strips and bud-like nails forming a relief, two false balcony windows on both sides of the upper storey and a sloping tiled roof. The street in front which remained almost deserted most of the time wore a strange

mysterious and frightening look with iron-grills and 'khidkees' barred most of the time. Even where some houses had their doors open they looked mysterious because of the heavy shadows cast over them by the overhanging, extended corrugated tin roofs. Adding to all this there lived a shaven-headed madman of giant proportions and a few shaven-headed widows in this neighborhood who never seemed to love children!

The interior in this house with its cow-dung floor, dull black walls, wooden ceilings and tiled roof remained dark except in the afternoon and the darkness was always impregnated with the fear of 'vaniyer' (bandicoot) . All this became more dramatic with the animated shadows cast by oil lamps at night.

Within a year or so we bought a house at the other end of the village. I used to visit this while it was being renovated and on the way enjoyed seeing temples, range of houses in various formations... fronts - unassuming, informal, casual, even careless display of 'otas' and steps, buffaloes, bullocks their thatched and tattered mangers, woven wooden 'charpoys', naked children, old women, 'kothies'(granaries), 'khidkees', stored grass, piles of firewood, dogs, puppies, bullock-carts, dung, urine and of course a lot of dirt and mud and sun and warmth ...backs - walls swollen at foundations, rounded buttresses, little windows with iron grills, wooden brackets, sloping tiled and corrugated tin roofs, walls with slogans, bill-boards...uneven sloping paths, milk-dairy, school, 'panchayat' house, 'chabutara', playground, 'madrassa', mosque, 'kanyashala' and of course neem and pipal trees in between, everywhere.

Our house stood apart with its conspicuous wooden structure carrying the upper storey - on its front pillars over an ota'... the large heavy teak entrance embellished with brass patterns of buds, flowers, peacocks on handles, on each projecting vertical and horizontal structural bars set in heavy wooden frame. The central 'chowk' with tall wooden pillars, lit and ventilated the area around, yet the interior of the house remained rather dark and cool. In the interior, a small cupboard full of printed postcard size reproductions of various gods and goddesses also carried images of *Ganesh*, *Shiva* and *Gayatri*. These images were bathed and worshipped everyday. I liked to do that since it offered me a chance to look at them properly also handle and feel them in my hands. 'Ganesh' - my grandfather's creation from an 'aakda' root was a small squatting image with the rounded volume of the stomach, crowned head and pronounced elephant trunk and carried a sacred cotton thread around its belly. The image of 'trayam-bakeshvar' - a high relief in fine grained wood with the lingam and decorative perforated arch around. The image of *Gayatri* - sitting on a lotus, a repousse relief on a silver plaque with realistically attempted details of drapery in Indo-British fashion. There was also a 'shaligram' - a black shining egg-shaped stone with a few white bands around and a copper-wire snake around it. In the 'parsal' were many oleographs and calendars representing various gods and 'gurus' - all in peculiar gestures. The images of gods were amazing to look at. The gods resembling human beings with fair, healthy physique and strange dresses, ornaments and weapons, sitting or riding on various kinds of animals. And so also the 'gurus' in 'yogic' postures, compassionate eyes and sparse clothing.

There was also a wooden image of a goddess carved by my grandfather. It had mobile arms with one hand in boon-giving gesture, the saree carved in 'dakshini' fashion (a few such images were commissioned by some Maharastrian client). The figure standing on both the legs in 'samabhanga' showed a sensibility that was filtered through a conservative attitude of the social life of the time. The modelling of thighs and breasts was weaker as compared to the finely modelled arms, hands, palms and feet. Its otherwise rather stern face wore a smile on the lips, its heavy slightly projecting eyebrows, broad open eyes, hair knotted at the back forming flat mass over the head all reflecting a sort of imagination nurtured by popular oleographs of goddesses.

On the upper storey there were many group photographs of father with his colleagues and students, some family photographs and printed litho-offset reproductions of national heroes like Sardar Patel and Gandhiji. There was no photograph of myself anywhere even in the family album. Family members hardly paid much attention to me which I did not like. But I liked the national heroes about whom we were taught in school. I spent most of the early years here observing activities around specially those of various artisans and craftsmen in our vicinity. The smoke of firing at the potters, their whole families involved in making and baking the earthenware and clay tiles, the constant noise at the carpenter's workshop making and mending bullock carts and agricultural implements various types of clients, mostly farmers, coming there with turbans and caps was a constant feature - also watching children at the playground - and often playing with young puppies and donkeys. It was most amazing to watch buffaloes and donkeys giving birth to their young.

At the Shiva temple a brahmin made images of Shiva and Parvati in black clay resembling in portrayal the characters in popular calendars. They were busts and heads painted over with different colored powders.

At home many relatives and friends of grandfather came to see him clad in khadi kurtas, 'congressi bandies', dhoties with walking sticks, turbans and caps on their heads they engaged themselves in long serious discussions. And I used to relate their faces with reproductions of people illustrated in the history and text books I studied at School. Yet other visitors were farmer customers with sturdy physiques and sun burnt faces, sporting big moustaches, they wore ivory white clothes and rough heavy shoes. I often went to the outskirts of the village through the paths with many fields and trees on both sides where looking at insects, birds, trees, creepers, flowers and seeds, clouds and sky was great fun. My mother while covering certain utility objects with papiermache sometimes made little toy bowls all of which were covered with inlaid colored glass pieces and beads, she also made clay toys for us. I liked playing with clay, making objects like houses, and human and animal figures. Clay mixed with various ingredients in different proportions offered innumerable experiences of varying plasticity and feel, e.g. playing with ordinary sandy earth on the playground after the rain, the potters' black-plastic clay mixed with cow dung used for covering of floor and walls. I liked its great abundance everywhere, its plasticity, a kind of heaviness and palpability it imparted to the objects and the rounded voluminous shapes and forms governed by the peculiar nature of the material. At the same time I continued drawing throughout these years, learning and picking up from books and magazines, at times using colors.

I played with 'bajari', 'juvar' reeds picking them from cattle feed, peeling off the hard golden yellow skin, which gave thin slivers of soft, light, crisp material and made skeletal objects like cradle, cart, pair of spectacles etc, identifying basic structure of objects in them. I made blow-pipes from hollow wheat-reed tubes producing different sounds by cutting and slightly lifting a strip on one side. In spring I rolled new shining green pipal leaves again to make blowing pipes. In the monsoon, rubbed one side of the growing mango kernel retaining the new shoot of the seedling with plastic-pink leaves on the other side, peeling the kernel skin off to make yet another blowing instrument. The sound this produced was rather heavy and grave whereas the wheat pipes produced a sweet and pleasant sound and the pipal leaf a sharp, deep sound.

I saw strange semblances of life seen around in leaves, fruits and seeds, e.g. the concave shiny succulent leaves of the hedge cactus when put upside down were seen as buffaloes; at times, a smaller leaf inserted underneath it and subsequently brought out secretly from the hind part, meant the birth of a young buffalo.

I was thrilled by automobile vehicles and their mechanism and seeing their reproductions in magazines in high school I made small miniature cars out of card paper, discarded readymade objects, wires and gelatin paper, often painting them with poster colors. To make a car running on its wheels with utmost speed was considered a merit.

My curiosity and intense desire to realize forms and figures in three dimensions led me to carve these out of chalk-sticks, soap and even wax. The perishability of these materials, their delicate nature and also the limitations of size greatly curtailed my experiences and realizations. However, I worked with these materials for quite some time although proper guidance and availability of appropriate material could have provided immense value.

At the same time, though this need led me to search for material, I used whatever came handy (e.g. aluminum foil in packaging for repousse relief of birds, etc.). During all this time drawing of the human figure, from books and reproductions of western masters attracted me. I also made a lot of paper toys, particularly various kinds of vehicles -the most interesting of these being a crane with various mobile parts.

After all this, around the age of thirteen I decided to model in clay. I got black potter's clay and added ceramic clay to it to lessen shrinkage and began making things - the head of Gandhiji, elephants, peacocks etc. They remained all relatively flat like popular images in plaster of paris or trophies often seen in showcases of middle-class people. Then I made a bigger statue, about two feet high, of a soldier with a gun from a reproduction of a Russian monument.

In the next phase I took to wood carving, I collected some tools from my grandfather, learnt how to sharpen them, how to see the grains and veins of the wood, how to use the tools on wood - the technique which I had witnessed for a long time since childhood. Later I also worked with forms found naturally in wood where I saw some resemblance to human or animal figures.

Hereafter I was guided towards learning commercial art (painting) which brought an end to the early search and realization of sculptural forms till I joined the Faculty of Fine Arts at Baroda.

CHAPTER-II

Formative Period

Before coming to Baroda 'shilpa' to me meant an image for worship, an equestrian statue or a portrait bust.

On entering the Faculty of Fine Arts I had simultaneous exposure to multiple disciplines in the fine arts which molded and enlarged in the course of time my conception of art in general, and sculpture in particular, in the heat of which all my earlier conceptions and ideas melted away. The institution, offering practical experience along with a theoretical background supplemented with visual aids, slides, books, exhibitions, demonstrations etc., helped me to see the phenomena of human expression in proper perspective. Preparatory years served as grounding through practice in drawing, color design, clay modeling, pottery and print making.

This period brought; about a new awareness in the field of perception and experience. I looked into things, beings and surroundings with renewed interest and inquisitiveness - seeing, observing, touching, feeling natural or manmade objects, human beings or for

that matter animals, birds, insects and plants, experiencing the 'feel' of the things in their texture, surface qualities, color, shapes, structure etc. Drawing, - modeling or painting the objects further nourished the vision and the contact. My response to the perceived phenomenon motivated me to shape and form a tangible reality of my own.

The institution with its fixed system based on the syllabus intended to provide compulsory training through experience in various materials and techniques (e.g. wood carving, stone carving, repousse, scrap-metal welding, sand casting, casting in the lost-wax process or cire-perdue etc.) breaking the teaching into fixed and limited periods of time did not leave enough scope for free and personal experimentation. The breaks in time limits and sudden changes from medium to medium most often delayed and hampered the search for a personal idiom and expression which for me was most vital even as I see it today. Each medium and technique brings in its peculiar demands and impositions drastically different from the other as far as expression, imagery, character, structure, and building of form or modeling are concerned.

The general mode of expression

The human form, male or female, has remained the centre of almost all my works throughout; on it all my imagery is based. I had a great fascination for the perfect human physique and its beauty exemplified by the Greek and other western masters, for instance Michaelangelo, Rodin, from very early days. However this interest was deep at the start. It went through transformations as I worked and moved with my growing interest in Indian Sculpture, from which source some subtle qualities of modeling slowly and imperceptibly influenced by sculptures like 'Man on cube - 1' and 'Standing couple. At a later stage a number of works reveal Egyptian influences in modeling, surface treatment, use of color and the treatment of details such as eyes, eyebrows etc. as in 'Brass heads', - the general treatment of the head, eyes, eye-brows, lips, 'Head-2' - modelling of form and color and Life size figures - frontality and symmetry

My deep interest in an academic, naturalistic study of the physical human form in particular as well as animal or bird forms has played an important role throughout. The study of inner structure in the postures, limbs, gestures, the sense of tension or relaxation seen as well as tangibly felt, the feel of the flesh, its contour, the surface quality that envelopes and reveals the subtlety of modeling surface itself becoming transparent, form the core of my endeavors. My figures are lifeless though they depict life. They are lifeless in the sense that the modeling along with surface quality does not equate life as it would in a life study for example but the figures are transformed, becoming objects modeled and formed by hand, which gives them a strange sense of 'distance'. The figures in my sculpture almost always depict full-grown youth or maturity, and in certain examples ageless youth. I did not intend mere depiction of life. The figures or the forms identify certain ideas. However, I have stated that I was interested in a grasp of reality in sculptural forms; I have been very selective till the present in picking up elements essential to my requirements in expression. I was not interested in depicting, equating visual reality as it is normally seen around where the human body, covered with or wrapped up in clothes according to the apparent social norms of behavior, gesticulates in a 'normal' or an accidental way. My accent has been on reaching the essence of the figure revealing in its bareness the inner self the inner forces - which led to modifications not only in modeling but in the postures and gestures in order to emphasize the statement on one hand and to create the desired 'distance' on the other.

Instead of abstract forms I intentionally used the naked human figure to readily allow identification subsequently leading to the statement. And therefore the sensuality of the figure, however apparent is not the end product but a means to lead further to the



statement. Avoidance of all clothing is not meant to reveal the body; the body is modeled to reveal the inner being. However, the body does not necessarily lose its instinctive natural appeal altogether.

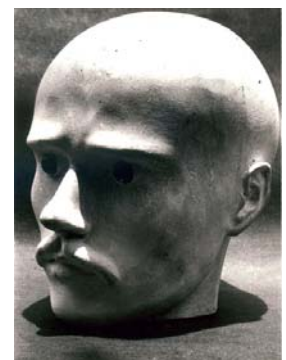
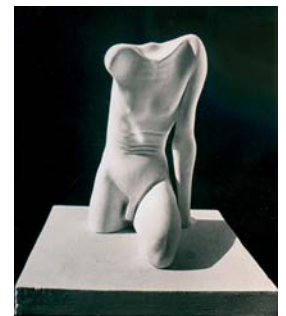
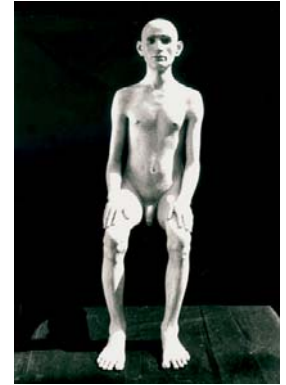
The statement (conceptual development)

My conceptual development went through various phases of experiments in execution, where modes, materials and techniques vary considerably during the formative period, exploring the personal imagery on one hand and experimenting with materials and techniques on the other. This, at times imposed, at others through personal need, led to experimentations which may not always show a linear continuity.

My earliest mentionable sculpture (1975 2nd yr. prep.) reveals my early interest in human physique. The mood, that of relaxed thoughtfulness is expressed through the posture and modeling of the torso itself. In order to achieve the essence of the mood it is reduced to a simple composed statement eliminating certain limbs and even the head. However this reveals the influence of western academicism with which I was greatly influenced (I did many drawings and studies during this time). The expression of the inner self, the attitude that is revealed through the surface treatment, modeling and further and even more the rhythm of the contour and the composition reveal my personal sensibility. And in the bust and head studies (1976) a clear academicism is seen. In the self-portrait ('Head-1, plaster, 1976, subsequently carved in marble in the same year) the stress is on physiognomic structure.

During this period I saw with great curiosity the works of modern Indian and Western sculptors. I was particularly impressed by the work of Krishna Chhatpar, Picasso, Brancusi, Gulo Gonzalez, Germaine Richier, Raymond Duchamp Villon, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Marino Marini, Giacomo Manzù and Henry Moore among others. But my curiosity did not end with viewing their works. And I wanted to go through the very experience and process of creating the tangible objects which I did by way of carving small figures in soap-stone and plaster. In 'Woman's head-1 (1976), keeping in mind Henry Moore's work, I tried to visualize in my own way how he maintained the palpability of the material by minimum carving leaving the form almost intact to the surface, in the way he treats the bulge for instance of the eyes (almost like breasts) and sensitively handles lips and nose. 'Head' (1976) after Brancusi to me meant a head, a cry, an instinct, a phallic form, a sense organ, a search tower, all in one, all in most simple basic shapes. To get the essence - the feel of the most basic shapes I made many drawings of the shape of an egg. I also carved an egg out of a block of plaster and drew upon it with pencil to create various illusions of cracks, eruptive holes, textures and so on. Drawing over it in various ways with lines, smudges, pencil modeling, I tried to create surface qualities. Working with terracotta (1976) I took all the freedom of playing with the material, exploring its intrinsic qualities without imposing any academic modeling. In fact, quite the opposite, it was a complete negation of this modeling. Here exterior surface was almost untouched, I worked with clay slabs warping them, twisting them, and pushing them from the back or underneath to get the desired volumes, bulges, holes or folds. The clay used in earlier terracotta was high temperature (1200 C.) stoneware clay which has comparatively lesser plasticity and much greater tendency to sag. I later worked with red clay (low temperature, biscuit firing 700 C.). I explored fully the expressive quality of the textures, cracks, the surface aberrations resulting from warping or folding of the clay slabs, or pushing the forms out with the pressure of the fingers applied from the other side, all the while taking care not to alter these by touching the exterior surface. I generally maintained the very earthy sensuality of the material itself which auto-suggestively takes over tones of the nuances of the earth, parched, cracked; molded by natural phenomenon.

In my major works early or later there is no room for chance or accidents either in



form, modeling or surface treatment. All I have done or do today is conscious, meticulous, even painstakingly worked over and almost pre-conceived and calculated up to the last point. All along I drew in pencil, inks and also color- What happened on paper in drawing fascinated me greatly e.g. the illusion, the modeling of the third dimension, and the rendering, the ambiguity of space between the mass of the figure or a limb and the surrounding space, the division of space suggestively created by a contour line and the resulting ambiguity of resemblance and ambivalence of the forms or the spaces thus created, as well as the very quality of hatching or criss-crossed lines, surface nuances, movements and directions. This led me to experimenting with all this by way of drawing on partly modeled surfaces. In 'Chair' (1977) though an isolated example here, some of the qualities of drawing re-emerge at later stage, though greatly modified and in very different context 'Chair' is an assemblage of techniques, low and high relief modeling over the surfaces of a three dimensional object, the chair, and pencil rendering over modeled as well as flat areas resulting in an ambiguous object. Here figure and object fuse into each other, man becoming object and vice versa. In actuality it remains just a chair where the presence of man is a projected supposition.



The two 'heads' (1977) in repousse on sheet metal, and the 'crow' in scrap welding done during 1977-78 remain mere exercises in respective techniques and do not bear direct continuity with my personal search of idiom and imagery. Comparatively In carving in marble ('Head', plaster, 1976, 'Animal' 1978, 'Marble relief-1', 1979, 'Head-21, Kasauli, 1979)



I could carry on my personal explorations with greater advantage apart from gaining acquaintance with the medium and technique.

In the 'Couple' (1977) I was trying to assimilate some influences from Indian Sculpture. Though not so apparent there is an attempt in the measured reduction of physiognomic details with the intention to achieve broad sweeping simplification in the flow of the forms and the surface contours. The heads are transposed here from earlier experiments with 'Brancusian' forms. Here the rise of the spirits, male and female/ convey a sense of the pronounced presence of the forces represented by the figures. These figures stand frontally side by side in balance and are symmetrical and straight forward poses. Here was an attempt to see what one could achieve in bare, simple composition of human forms without the drama of actions and gestures. Some of the qualities in essence were explored further. Later in 1981, 'Man with dog', 'Kneeling man', 'sitting man'.



In the sculptures that follow 'Bust (1977), 'Female (1978), 'Female Deity' (1978) as also in 'The Couple', I attempted to give form to my experiences of life, the sensuality of physique and flesh, sexual fantasy, the indulgent flight of imagination that I perceived around; all interwoven.



In the 'Bust1, to bring forth the instinctive strength of a male, I made use of the phallic form for the head with the normal animism of -the head. In the 'Female' animal sexuality is imposed on a chicken form with a suggestion of life in the gestures of the limbs as well as the stretch of the neck. The skinned form of the chicken accentuates sensual vulgarity. The 'female deity' shows the same sensuality in a flight of fancy deified.

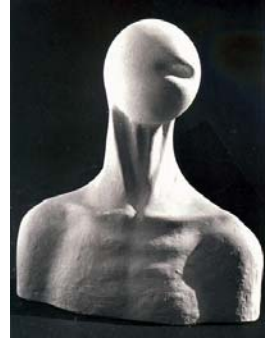


In the reliefs, 'Relief-2 (1979) my interest in academic modeling surfaces again with renewed force. In these figures, the modeling of the forms, almost otherwise exaggerated breasts, thighs etc. of the female figures, sitting, waiting, gesticulating, flying in sexual fantasy with an intention to be seen and noticed express a sense of

futility. They are modeled over flat space from which they seem to emerge or in which their limbs merge or vanish. The relationship between figures and space, which seems almost like a fluid substance but an emphatically opaque rather than tangible solid, the handling of foreshortening, perspective etc. also contribute towards creating a detached, cool feeling.



'Man on a chair' (1978) expresses the condition of man fumbling with words, speech, actions, gestures; a sense of inadequacy, of futility in expressing oneself or performing an act of will. The circular base is suggestive of the limitations of space, actions and the intermingling of flat areas of the chair with the body of the man suggests the circumstances to which the man is inseparably tied down; he becomes almost an object. The posture, the gesture, the head, the multiple orifices and circumscribed space all together denote a man (a victim ?) involved in self-interrogation or in an absurd state in which gesture or speech seem meaningless or futile; perhaps it is an image of desolation (a wall-like emptiness in the chest and stomach). It is not possible for me to pin down any definite meaning to it.



'Man on the cube*' (1979) a variation on the earlier theme, is probably a step further, in the sense that it expresses a kind of realization of futility in a rather more composed state, a kind of acceptance of the state of futility where the multiple positions of the head perhaps suggest physical discomfort or an effort at adjustment (with reality or existence?) or a kind of hesitation or nervous action.



Traces of my study of Indian sculpture at Ellora prior to making of this figure can be seen in the modeling of the shoulders, arms, chest, stomach, thighs, and in the effort of infusing a breathing quality and palpability in the figure.

'Man and the cube - 1 & 2' (1979) represent struggle. The limbs, arms, hands, feet, legs or thorax do not show any muscular contortions due to efforts or 'struggle'. On the contrary they are modeled with an amount of rounded simplicity, even a bit of ease, for obviously it is not a physical struggle that I am trying to portray. I am using the term 'struggle' for want of a more appropriate expression for what is conceived in these sculptures. There is no sense of hard effort intended here. The efforts are rather passive even submissive and convey a sense of wonder at the situation. It is probably this very nature of the conception that lent itself so easily to visual and aesthetic composition of each side freely. Seeing separate limbs or parts of the body against beautiful square planes of the cube also, the square of the platform offering visually satisfying experiences in themselves. The limbs etc. are arrested in such a way as to lead the eye from one side to another in a continued relationship forming a single totality. The content of the form is revealed through this process in the same way.



In most of the sculptures mentioned so far (except a few heads done between 1976-1978) the head remains a small part of the total image. Now at this stage I felt a necessity to model full size heads and to explore the intense tactile quality, feeling them with both my hands, exploring the tactile surface and the modulations of the head. This is in addition to exploring the sensuous tactile quality of clay itself, soft, pliable, yielding to every touch and pressure, establishing a direct spontaneous response. The form and modeling in these is drastically different to my earlier sculptures including heads, where forms were conceived and attained with thoughtful, sustained efforts.

These 'heads' 1,2,3,4,5 (pi.18, 1979), I feel, speak eloquently of the direct spontaneous sensuous response of ray touch to the material, the modulations, the volume, the head and the details (the turn of a lip, the pouch of mouth, the bulge of an eye, the sprout of a nose, the squeeze of an ear) also the texture. Forcefully rising, elongated, voluptuously bulging necks almost merge with the contours of the head



giving them a phallic strength I conceived these heads as forms of strong suppressed desires. They are the results of inspiration from varied sources. I had seen with great interest terracottas of Gujarat and other areas, 'Hanumana' and other temple images, works of Himmat Shah, John Davies, and the drawings of F.N. Souza. The surface was treated with varied textural modulations; scratches, pinches, eruptive, bulbous projections etc. to connote sense feelings in consonance with their expression. From the early series (terracotta) to the second (repousse and stone carved) and to this third series of heads and busts is a long process of experimentations and a quest towards arriving at my own self, my identity vis a vis an obvious surrounding reality. All along the process, passing through various phases, I always paused to look back and refer to reality-my life source, avoiding temptations of every successful and satisfying result. It was almost like ripping, scraping off the layers I myself built over reality to encounter it once again; once again began a fresh probing into naked reality. Though some portraits did become 'beautiful' in contours, forms and features there was even an attempt at avoiding that 'beauty', which came in the way of facing the 'naked' the 'ordinary', instead of arriving at excellence of formal superstructure. While saying this I am fully conscious of the fact that in the sculptural sense it is 'giving form' to experiences or ideas. In fact the formal details of these heads and busts, the bearing of the bony structure, the treatment of the features, the scratches, the wrinkles, even the color modulations and lines etc. reveal and speak of my intentions which I am trying to formulate in words and the analogous process of my search into reality.

By 'reality' I mean in a simple sense my personal day to day experiences as I see them reflected in the physical perceptible world around myself, society, human life.

No more extempore or spontaneous momentary bursts of my earlier attempts; ('Heads') these works are rather sustained, thought over, conscious efforts. Their looks, speaking in general about these works 'Bust' 1,2,3 (1980), are not withdrawn but abstracted and blurred, as if looking into their own selves, their pasts, their agonies, their sufferings, their deaths and lives. This, in fact, does not refer just to the eyes but to the 'feel' in general. The tight, shut, discolored lips create a feel of a dumb stare, as though they do not wish to reveal themselves, or are holding back provoking the spectator in a shocking confrontation, to search for meanings by way of self-identification, leading them to the structure of the bony heads, to the wrinkles, the scratches, and bruises, the layers of time past, the account of year after year of little deaths and life.

These heads and busts were not modeled and portraits in the normal sense, imitating the physiognomic features of a particular person or type, but were visualized and composed in relation to an intended expression. They were composed feature by feature, part by part, structure by structure and detail after detail, keeping in mind the general structure, the volumetric dispositions, the rhythmic flow of formally expressive and greatly emphasized and unifying contours from all possible angles, which necessitated certain modifications, exaggerations or even elimination of physiognomic features, structure or details, e.g. 1. in the 'Brass Heads' (1980), the neck part is a rather simplified tubular form which contextually emphasizes the ovoid form of the skull and 2. in the 'Bust'-1 and 3 (1980) elongation of the neck and gradual broadening of the base of the neck gradually merging its contour with the shoulders emphasizing -the unified vertical thrust, 3. the bearing of the skull (in all these heads) by eliminating hair giving a continuous flow to the surface and contour of the forms emphasizing the inner structure.

Much importance was paid to the contour of the forms, as seen from various angles, giving them a unifying character and continuity in its flow and rhythm. In general emphasis was given to the vertical thrust, the rise of the form like the rise of the sun (is that why the heads are bald and rounded ?) and therefore, the symmetry of the contour



and the frontal positions of the heads. Where I attempted a little turn of the head 'bust'-1 & 3 (1980) I had to be extremely conscious to maintain the thrust.

The time factor plays an important thematic role in these works. This time factor operates not only in the sense of revealing the age or in the characteristic physiognomic changes or in the features and the flesh, but in a revelation of the time past, year after year, either in attaining maturity or leading towards decay. In that sense they are portraits of time. And to portray this time apart from attenuations of the features and other physiognomic details (sagging, loosening of flesh and muscles or wrinkles etc.) I made use of lines, scratches, bruises, scars, texture, color and in color again shading, fading etc. through these techniques and renderings creating effects simultaneously reminiscent of faded and discolored weathering of objects as walls, ancient monuments which speak of age or effects analogous to embalming of the dead; of mummies or anointment with ashes, and the weathering of the skin of Indian ascetics. A queer mixture of all the above effects leads towards a peculiar feel of asceticism. Looking at these heads and busts one can discover a certain trend towards attaining this ascetic quality where 'Bust'-1,2,3 could be seen as a self-revealing ascetic 'sadhus' or 'sadhvies'; I mention this because attributions of sex are necessarily modified to that effect.

Earlier during the formative period I had done some experiments as mentioned before, in mediums as metal casting (in different processes), direct metal work repousse, wood-carving, stone-carving, terracotta, as demanded by the curriculum; these few works had to be visualized in terms of the respective mediums.

The necessary characteristic impositions and the consequent inherent compromises left me dissatisfied with the results, with some exceptions. Naturally therefore all the major works during this period that carry a significant correlation in the evolution of my formal sculptural idiom were primarily modeled in clay (subsequently cast in plaster). Clay reinforced with an armature allowed all the desired freedom in constructing three dimensional forms leaving ample facility to shape, altering the forms at will. By molding and casting I could easily transfer these Images in plaster in order to retain them. It would not have been difficult eventually to cast them in more permanent mediums as aluminum, brass or bronze. But all did not end there as eventually I became more and more interested in working over the surface of the modeled three dimensional forms. I felt the necessity to incorporate various expressive surfacial nuances over the forms using color along with the exploitation of surface quality of the material itself. Experiments in this direction had already started with 'Chair1 (papier mache) and later on the plaster busts, 'Man' and 'Woman1.

Naturally my search for more permanent yet equally flexible material technically led me the choice of fiberglass. The lightness of this material, quicker, less time consuming results, its being comparatively easier and more direct (as compared to metal casting) the process involved and the minimal impositions of its own substance - above all economic consideration - only added to the choice of fiberglass above other materials. In the heads and busts, cast in fiberglass I was able to carry out these experiments to my satisfaction as discussed earlier. The medium readily yielded to my demands. I could advantageously use the translucent/ bony, shell-like quality of the raw fiberglass surface and could get, by using color over it, desired variations of surface qualities, glossy to matt, hard, cool and bony to warm, soft, vibrant and fleshy, glassy reflective to docile-absorbent. I took full advantage of the medium in the full life-size figures that followed.

Present stage

My recent works of 1981 are full life-size figures, via., 'Man with dog' , 'Walking



man', 'Sitting man', 'Kneeling man' and are closely related to preceding heads and busts. Thematically they are evolutions of same intentions in character, content and expression. Most of the sculptures of the formative period were done in sizes more or less arbitrary resulting from compromises dependent on various ruling factors of the time such as space limitations, time limitations of assignments, availability of material, facilities etc. Also limitations of experience, with the result that they would have to be put on pedestals to afford a proper view. Consequently they did not charge, command, or exist in the same atmosphere and space we occupy or In which we feel our own presence or the presence of somebody else, of a tree and so on. These sculptures could be seen as objects with their own formal values, as having their own conceptual space orbits detached normal human existential space atmosphere. So also their treatment in more than one formal aspect, the treatment of mass, color, space, volume, form, rhythm, surface, and overall composition create what may be termed aesthetic distance.



In contrast to these, in the recent sculptures the size is thoughtfully and meaningfully calculated. The 'men' as well as the dog are life size. They are intended to be exhibited or seen on the ground in the same space and atmosphere as that of the spectator. When a sculpture (depicting the human figure) with 'abstract' treatment of formal aspects is put on a pedestal and varies in size (either being smaller or larger than actual life size) it achieves at once a kind of abstraction, a kind of aesthetic distance which becomes the starting point for the spectator in viewing the sculpture.



My intentions in my recent sculptures in this sense differ. By giving them actual size, by minimizing abstraction in modeling (that is, by giving them almost naturalistic, lifelike form, and by keeping them on the ground) I intend to create a sense of shocking confrontation as the starting point. Only at a successive stage an amount of abstraction in the arrested postures, gestures, color leads to the content, the meaning; the conception, so also their nudity. Shocking at the first glance, by its own virtue, it leads and adds to the meaning. For the same purpose, again, I make their gestures almost normal (but only 'almost' normal) and almost casual to the point of disregarding the usual expectations. I compose postures and gestures in such a way as to create deliberate inaction in action, a kind of deliverance from purposeful performing action the form and contours of the bare body. With the use of color and drawing over the surface I depict scars, wounds and bruises – revelatory of sufferings.



In compositions my figures are generally speaking vertical, more or less frontal (not as frontal as the Egyptian) and symmetrical. I deliberately avoid 'artistic' formal arrangements of visual forces with the particular centre of attraction and subsidiary guiding forces around it.. etc. In that sense I am interested in artlessness. I intend to create direct confrontation with three-dimensional form leaving it to the spectator to explore the form, as he may with his own initiation. In short, I work towards a deliberate avoidance of obvious, normally accepted, formal aspects and devices. The apparently normal postures and gestures are geometrically structured and modified to become a little rigid, a little awkward. I use symmetry to give extra stress to the postures and gestures and their awkwardness. I avoid meaningful poses and gestures, arranging them in such a way as to convey a sense of meaninglessness. In short, I intend to create, as mentioned before, a sense of deliverance from purposefully motivated action. The surface treatment of -these figures is more or less similar to that of the fiberglass heads and busts.

Conclusion

How that I have given an account of seven years of my student career I would like to assess where I stand today. I have already discussed the environ in which I worked, the limitations of experience and media with which I have worked, and the experience and

knowledge I have gained from the institution and my achievements. With the life-size figures which I produced in the end of my student career, the question arises today whether I have come out as a full grown sculptor? Although I am happy about my achievements, I believe I have a long way to go yet.

My life-size figures show certain rigidity and stiffness which, though in these examples I have used to advantage, I would like to overcome. I would need a lot more experience to be able to handle the human form with versatility and ease, flexibility and richness of life and its expression best exemplified in the early Indian tradition. At the same time I must state here the polarity of my interest. I am as interested in death as in life and so in flexibility and rigidity. The flexibility of life forms in Indian sculpture and the rigidity of the Egyptian. I intend to retain a palpable ambiguity of life in ray work reflecting the spirit of this life in its polemic tension which intrigues me. Probably the life-size figures already point in that direction, though I have much to explore yet.

Without being conscious of developing a 'style' or 'stereotype' I want to be close to ray experiences of life which can speak of myself best in its essence. For this I am keeping myself as open as possible in that sense.

Looking at the Indian art scene today, I personally feel that the situation is not very happy. Even today most of the artists are being guided more or less by Western norms of art and aesthetics. However we find some consciousness of 'Indianness' it is generally found to be shallow and superficial, to an extent that if we look at Indian art it is through alien eyes. The result is we hardly find young sculptors coming up with authentic expression and with their roots in the soil and surrounds. Of course there are exceptions but they are far too rare and few. On the other hand the young sculptors are still groping with -the medium and materials. Although there are some sculptors working in mediums like stone and bronze their numbers are decreasing. We find many young sculptors working in newer media like fiberglass. But we can hardly find sculptors working with command and ease of expression.

To justify one's present it is of great value to look back before plunging into the future.

The more I see traditional Indian art the more I am inspired by it, the more I marvel at it. The great ease, flexibility and conviction with which life experiences and simple and subtle nuances of all the life and live forms are portrayed in it probably remain unsurpassed. It is not just the portrayal of life but a complete transformation of life forms into sculptural and artistic elements where life and art seem to feed on and enrich each other. Apart from marvelous studies of life forms it is the keen intuitive feel of life along with the superb understanding of the delineation of 'Rasa' in art that makes it so full and rich an experience. The many elements in Egyptian art which also equally interest me and are those where the function of art was ritualistic celebrating death in a glaring contrast to the Indian which emphasizes life. How much shall I imbibe from those great cultures and life around incorporating the elements into my own expression remains to be seen.