CHAPTER II

THE CHANDIGARH COLLECTION OF GANDHĀRA SCULPTURES

The collection of Gandhāra Sculptures in the Chandigarh Museum is among the most important of its kind in India and numerically the second largest in the country, the largest being that of the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

This entire collection formed originally a part of the large collection of Gandhāra sculptures in the Central Museum, Lahore. Soon after the partition that came in the wake of the independence of the country in 1947, the holdings of the Lahore Museum were shared between Pakistan and India in the ratio of 60:40. This was in April 1948. The entire share including Gandhāran sculptures, was first located in Amritsar, the town nearest to the Indo-Pak border in India, evidently as a matter of convenience. Soon after this, the sculptures, as a part of the entire collection were shifted to Simla in a make shift museum in a building adjoining the Church, close to the Head Post Office. That building was formally inaugurated in 1952. However, it was Patiala, more security in Punjab region, that was chosen as the spot where the collection was located, nearly permanently as it looked then. The Moti Bagh Palace at Patiala was full of problems as a museum building and it was at the initiative of Dr. M. S. Randhawa that the matter of location of the permanent museum was re-opened. The Punjab Govt. appointed a Committee with Dr. W. G. Archer of the Victoria and Albert Museum London, as the advising expert. The Committee clearly decided against Patiala. This is what
the Committee recommended on March 25,1940: '...It is (Neti
Bagh Palace, Patiala), not, however, designed as a museum
and purely from a museum point of view, it is necessary to
point out its several disadvantages. It is not at the capital.
It is situated on the outskirts of Patiala and is almost
three miles from the Railway station. Its 400 (odd) rooms are
not at present suited for the display of art objects... the
system of lighting is out-of-date and in some cases unsightly...
Chandigarh was then considered to be the place best suited for
housing the collection in a new museum. That is how the
collection was shifted to Chandigarh in 1962. But, the museum
building was not yet ready, the collection was placed tempo-
arily in the Art College, where in somewhat cramped place, a
part of it was put up on display. The home that the sculptures
have now, the Chandigarh Museum, built according to the plans
made by Le Corbusier, came up only in 1968.

The sculptures numbered 627 to begin with; out of these
19 were transferred to the National Museum, New Delhi and 7 to
the State Museum, Lucknow in September, 1968. Thus the collection
numbers at present 601 pieces. Nearly one seventh of this
number is on display; the remaining pieces are stored in the
reserve section.

Only 49 of these sculptures seem to have been published
or taken note of so far, and most of this was done prior to
1947. Surprising as it might seem, thus, no comprehensive
study has been made so far of what is undoubtedly a collection
that is significant both in quality and quantity. It almost
seems that the collection was virtually unknown to the scholars
who have devoted themselves to studies of Gandhāra in recent years. The focus of most studies of Gandhāra has been the collections in Pakistan, Indian collections have gone practically unnoticed in recent years. There is, in fact, not even a notice of the Chandigarh group of Gandhāra sculptures in studies like H. Ingolt's *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan* published in 1957 or in Sir John Marshall's *The Buddhist Art of Gandhāra*, published in 1960 or in Madeleine Hallade's *The Gandhāra Style and Evolution of Buddhist Art* published in 1968 or even in A. H. Dandi's *Gandhāra Art of Pakistan* also published in 1968.

In Chandigarh, a number of sculptures are in an excellent state of preservation. One can count at least 25 works which could fall into this category. A sizeable number of sculptures are partially broken and defaced, but from what remains of them one can quite clearly make out the form. Those in this category number close to 290. Another 275 pieces are badly damaged, despite which some idea can be had of what they were once like. The rest have suffered grievous damage. In terms of material except for 10 head in stucco, the sculptures are all in schist of different tonalities.

The subjects of sculptures in the Chandigarh collection follow what is generally true of Gandhāran work. Most of these are of Buddhist themes, a few works 'secular' in 1.

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1. In a letter that he wrote to me in response to an enquiry, Harold Ingolt expressed complete surprise over such a large number of Gandhāra sculptures originally part of the Lahore Museum, being in Chandigarh.
character in which genre are included, Atlantes, Bacchanalian scenes, amorous couples, etc. Evidently however, even these reliefs once embellished some religious edifice or the other.

Of unusual interest in the Chandigarh collection are two inscribed sculptures. One of these, Chandigarh No.1625, a figure of Hariti, is dated in "the year 399". Many scholars have taken note of this celebrated sculpture. The other, Chandigarh No.206, 'Gautama in the School', is without any date. Both the sculptures have been discussed in the catalogue section of the present dissertation.

Though majority of the specimens housed in this museum are similar to those in the other museums in India and abroad, the following sculptures deserve attention for distinctiveness of theme, style and iconography.

A relief depicting the 'Mirvâna of Ananda', (Chandigarh No.2265), stands out for its uncommon theme and for its imaginative composition. The theme of 'Gautama's Marriage', (Chandigarh No.1060) and the manner in which the episode is shown are again of unusual occurrence in Gandhâra art. Of interest also is a sculpture (Chandigarh No.1291) with two addorsed figures one holds a large cup in two hands and at the other a jug with a handle. Uncommon also is a free-standing sculpture of a female, (Chandigarh No.2145) with an 'alien' facial structure wearing an 'alien' dress and shown holding a palm branch. This also is a composite figure; her protruding back looks like a part of an animal figure.

A feature of Gandhāra work is that whenever more than one scene is carved on the same slab, the scenes are usually formally separated from each other either by pilasters or by ornamental trees; in Chandigarh No. 102, however, two episodes are not separated by either of the two devices but by the differing stances of the figures alone, something seen more often in other schools of Indian sculpture. Again the conical ukhās on the head of the Buddha in Chandigarh No. 2154 is a rare feature.

Sculptures like Chandigarh No. 2026 raise some interesting question like why seated figures are not shown as seated in the same manner. Here, the figure at the right seems to sit quite comfortably while the other figure more awkward, seems as if he is in the process of sitting. It is possible that more than one artist was at work on the same slab. The figure to the right seems to have been cut by a better artist with a better control over the medium. The possibility that here it is continuous narration which has been employed cannot also be ruled out, since both the figures could be of the same person. Unfortunately the relief is incomplete, and without knowing fully the theme of the relief, the point cannot be established.

In Chandigarh No. 1060, the scene of the 'Marriage of Gautama'. Gautama is seen standing with his left arm akimbo; again in the scene of the 'Archery Test of Gautama', the 'supervisor' is seen standing akimbo. It appears thus that Coomaraswamy

is not right when he says that no figures are shown
skrimbo in Gandhāra.

Among the sculptures in Chandigarh are some which
show a variation in style within the same relief; like
in Chandigarh No. 1402, the top and the lower panels and
in Chandigarh No. 624 the right and the left panels are
markedly different in style.

An interesting feature comes to notice in connection
with the Indo-Persepolitan pillars seen in the group of
Chandigarh sculptures. Of one kind is the pillar represent-
ed in No. 253 in which the capital is simple; the
capital however, becomes elaborate in No. 2992. In No.
1650 there is a suggestion of the presence of animals on
the capital, finally in No. 1134, the animals are clearly
seen. A similar situation is seen in the treatment of
the legs of the seats on which the Buddha figures and
the Bodhisattvas are seen seated. In No. 41 the seat legs
are plain; in No. 346 there is the suggestion of legs with
lion figures but in No. 1076, the lion forms are clearly
visible.

In both these cases that of the Indo-Persepolitan
pillars and of the lion-legs, one cannot be sure if these
subtle differences are indicative of evolution with
the style. The different treatments might have existed
simultaneously, or one might have evolved out of the
other. It is possible that the development was from the
simple to the elaborate.
Some interesting information comes our way about the figures of Vajrapāṇi and Māra from the Chandigarh collection. There is a considerable variety in the manner in which the figure of Vajrapāṇi has been rendered. At times he is shown as a muscular figure suggesting the Graeco-Roman impact, as in Chandigarh No. 2120, at others he looks more Indian owing to the dress he wears and the treatment of his figure as in No. 1648. There is no mistaking his identity, however, for he is shown in the company of the Buddha, and holds the veīra.

Māra in his turn, is sometimes shown wearing a dhoti and scarf, as in Chandigarh No. 2147; but he mostly wears an unIndian stitched garment over the dhoti as in Chandigarh No. 543. Māra is usually shown with a sword when he is about to attack the Buddha; in the scenes showing the 'Great Departure' he holds a bow.

Occasionally one notices some oddities in the sculptures which might be noticed here briefly. In Chandigarh No. 692 we see the Buddha seated in dhyānāsana. The two monks on his right are shown looking upwards as if the Buddha were seated on a very high seat, while in fact all the figures are seated at the same level. A probable reason for this odd treatment could be that the artist was copying out of carelessness or sheer habit, those reliefs where the Buddha was shown seated at a higher level than the accompanying figures, accompanying figures.
In Chandigarh No.1140, in the lowermost panel of the vertical relief, the Bodhisattva is attended by a chhatra bearer who looks away from him rather than towards him. Almost certainly this is due not to an irreverence but either due to casualness of approach or to a desire to introduce a bit of novelty. However, it disturbs the compositional balance and brings an element of disharmony in the relief.

In Chandigarh No.1499 seated figures appear as high as the standing ones. This indicates perhaps that the artist's principal concern was symmetry or uniformity to the composition, even though unnatural.

Hieratic scaling is often seen in Gandhara, but at times, the size of the figure of the Buddha and that of the subsidiary figures is the same. In some rare examples as in Chandigarh No.875, the situation of scaling is reverse and the figures of the devotees are larger than those of the Buddha.

The Chandigarh collection is in many ways a truly representative one since almost all important themes and styles found in Gandhāra figure in it. Stylistically, some figures are so attenuated (as in Chandigarh No.854), having small heads, long necks and deflated bodies, that one is inevitably reminded of the figures from Fandukistan. In contrast there are others of entirely different types, short and heavy with large heads and short necks (thus Chandigarh No.135). Some forms appear anemic (e.g. Chandigarh No.2035), others are robust (as seen in Chandigarh No.606). Some are handled with uncommon skill, (thus Chandigarh No.2369). Some are very elegant.
in stance, proportions and bearing (like Chandigarh No.1060),
and others just coarse and shoddy (e.g. Chandigarh Nos.495 and
780).

The faces of the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures, always
of interest, show here considerable variety even when their
manner of standing or sitting remains similar, each other
show variety in their faces. Some of them show Greco-
Roman impact (as Chandigarh No.2200), while others look
strongly Indian (e.g. Chandigarh No.1346). In some is
reflected synthesis of many influences in different proporti
Greco-Roman, Scythian, Persian etc. (thus Chandigarh Nos.
2203, 542 and 1642). Some heads are very refined (e.g.
Chandigarh Nos.12,563), some are very coarse (e.g. Chandigarh
No.372, 447). There are some which have unmistakable 'portrait-
like' quality (as in Chandigarh Nos.584,322) even though most
of them have idealized faces. Some Buddha/Bodhisattva heads
have suggestion of a smile (as in Chandigarh Nos.2369,504)
while others are rather expressionless.

Apart from the variety that one sees in the rendering
of the figures as represented in the Chandigarh collection,
one comes across here all major types of draperies, both in
respect of texture and the manner of rendering it. On the one
hand, one sees the garment as thick and weighty, almost
covering the body (as seen in Chandigarh Nos.178,2045) and
on the others as thin and light, clinging to the form,
(thus Chandigarh Nos.2333,1216). The rendering of the folds
varies from ridges with deep grooves (see Chandigarh No.745),
to deeply incised (as Chandigarh No.1720), to faintly incised
(as Chandigarh No. 622). Again the folds are broad (as Chandigarh No. 1680) or narrow (as Chandigarh No. 1625) or repelike (as Chandigarh No. 2369) are seen with double lines (e.g. Chandigarh No. 1648), or forked (as Chandigarh No. 594).

There is also considerable measure of variety in the treatment of the hair in the figures at Chandigarh. Soft undulating wavy hair are most commonly seen but even in the wavy hair there are variations as seen in Chandigarh Nos. 2083, 526, 1759, 584. In hair one sees also small-shell curls (thus Chandigarh No. 1134, 1247) and straight hair (as Chandigarh No. 1066).

Similarly ushpīshas of all types and sizes can be seen (thus Chandigarh Nos. 1642, 135, 571 and 2213), those that are wound clock-wise (e.g. Chandigarh No. 1127), or are swept back (as Chandigarh No. 563). It is of interest to see the texture and the thickness of the hair on the head in Nos. 1642 and 526, differ markedly from the hair covering the ushpīshas.

In sum, the Chandigarh collection gives a fairly comprehensive idea of the work done in Gandhāra. The collection is rounded off by the inclusion of many stucco heads, even though in stone, in fact they are far fewer compared to the sculptures in they number only ten and can be divided into three groups on the basis of style and facial features. Within each group there is striking resemblance between one head and another which is accounted for the clear possibility of their being made from a mould. The presumption about the
use of moulds gains further when one takes notice of Chandigarh No.298 in which the *ushpāsha* is broken, a large hole on top of the head, revealing that the head is hollow from the inside. The circumstances may not be conclusive, but it raises, more than a fair presumption.