CHAPTER - I
Section - I
General Introduction :
Over view of the sculptures in the
Himachal Pradesh
State Museum, Shimla.
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

To most of us a museum is merely a place where old things are preserved and displayed for general public. This is true not only with the museum having a miscellaneous collection, but also with a museum having a specialized collection. A museum of Art is a specialized collection. In such a museum art objects are preserved and displayed for the public to see them and get entertainment and education. It is true that museums, particularly art museums have these two basic objectives, namely entertainment and education. But the educational aspect of an art museum in India is very peripheral. There is very little scope for the public to learn much about the background, technical qualities and stylistic aspects of the arts through whatever is displayed in an art museum in India today. Of course, there are some important museum in the country which have given special attention to the educational aspects of their collections on display. But the majority of the rest gives no thought virtually to the educational content of the arts displayed. Thus the public cannot go beyond their visual experience and response of the arts they are shown in display galleries of the museums in most of the cases.
Even if some members of the public have the inquisitiveness to know more about the displayed objects of art, they fail to satisfy their quest for knowledge in view not only of a very poor, and even sometimes a substandard, system of display and unsympathetic approach of the museum personnel. Although this is very unfortunate, but the fact remains that most of the Indian Museums have remained out of the domain of the inquiring mind of the public.

Apart from the general public some members of which may have an inquiring mind, there is a great host of scholars with specialized knowledge and interest in the arts displayed in the museum. In most of the time these scholars have interest in the pieces in addition to the ones put on display. Most of the museums have a reserve collection of their own in which many pieces are preserved which are not of general interest. In many cases such pieces are broken or damaged, frequently difficult to identify the theme represented in them. The museum authorities rightly keep them aside in the reserve collection and do not think them to be fit for display. These pieces are the ones which an inquiring scholar often find interest in. It is, therefore, natural that
the scholars will like to see and study them for the purpose of reconstruction of the lost threads of art historical facts. But, unfortunately, in most of the museums the reserve collection is kept out of the reach even of the scholars. It is a pity that the treasures of many of the museums remain unnoticed and unknown even to the scholars who are genuinely interested in studying them.

There are some museums which publish catalogues in order to give an idea of their collections. But such catalogues are mostly of the selected items and the selection of the museum authority may not always take care of the things that a scholar with specialized knowledge will find interest in. Even if the catalogue concerned describes all the pieces in a collection, sometimes things are not very clear from the descriptions which often are given in faulty and confusing forms of expression. The scholar is normally interested either to personally handle the piece of art or to have a visual view of the same for the preparation of the basic materials for his study. Well documented catalogues are often met with. But they pertain mostly to a few important museums in the country which can afford the
expenditure involved in such productions. Smaller museum, even sometimes the state museums with insufficient funds, cannot project their art pieces to the scholars through the production of catalogues with illustrations of all the pieces including those in the reserve collection. In such cases what is needed to start with is the study of objects of art in these museums by serious students of art so that these studies can offer the basic authentic materials for the preparation of a catalogue of the same in an appropriate time and circumstance. But a student is not capable always to study the entire collection. He has to be selective not only for the limitation of time and energy but also for the restricted resources that he has to work with. He has to be selective not only in respect of the category of art but also in the matter of counting and discounting the objects which are respectively important and non-important. by non-important is meant the pieces which are virtually damaged beyond recognition.

The Himachal State Museum at Shimla is such an institution which deserves the attention of the student scholars for such studies. This museum has a rich collection of the arts of various types. The museum acquired about 7566 objects out of which about 4150
objects have been acquired by way of gift, exchange, long term loan and exploration. The remaining objects have been purchased by the museum on the recommendations made by the Art Purchase Committee constituted for the purpose from time to time. At present there are more than eleven hundred art objects on show in the thirteen galleries of the museum which help to understand the evolution of art through different stages. There are 242 stone sculptures in the collection of the museum. Out of which 140 objects have been taken for study. The remaining others are badly mutilated and do not admit of detailed study. In view of this they could not be included in the present dissertation. In the case of bronzes there are about 249 objects out of which 44 objects have been taken for study. The others being mostly of the category of folk art and decorative art and not of any antiquarian importance, had to be left out, more because of the repetative nature of the types. Total terracotta objects are 384 and out of them 64 objects have been selected for consideration. The left out pieces are highly damaged or are of the nature where no details are discernible. Wooden objects are 152 in total, out of which 25 have been taken for special study in this work.
because they are not only the representative examples of stylistic and iconographic types, but they are the most pleasing ones from the visual point of view. There are only 8 ivory objects in the collection of the museum. Others being unimportant only 3 have been kept for study. Its fabulous collection of miniature painting is well known to all lovers of art the world over. In view of this, this museum is known to the scholars as a collection of painting more than anything else. But one can find in this collection a good number of Indian sculpture of various media, categories and styles. They are not usually known to most of the people for various reasons of non accessability, less publicity and may be due to their over shadowing by the comparatively better known collection of miniature painting. These sculptures deserve careful attention of all scholars not only for their variety but also for their potential to project glimpses of the cultural history of ancient India.
Section II

Placement of the sculptures
In the collection of the Himachal State Museum at Shimla there are many sculptures which deserve the attention of the scholars. Unfortunately, many of these sculptures being broken or eroded, they have not been put on display. It is a fact that the pieces which are visually pleasing should normally be displayed in the galleries of the museum, and there is no doubt that incompleteness due to mutilation or fragmentation is something which disturbs the beauty of a piece of art. In view of this, the museum authorities, perhaps rightly, have displayed those pieces which are comparatively in the better state of preservation. There are many other sculptural pieces which are broken or eroded, and in view of this they are kept away from the notice of the usual visitor of the museum. These sculptural pieces are kept in the reserve collection of the museum, and they are meant for the study by scholars and by those who are interested in the historical or archaeological aspects of the culture more than their aesthetic appearance. If we take not of the entire collection of sculpture preserved in the State Museum at Shimla, irrespective of whether the sculptural pieces have an immediate aesthetic impact
or not it will be evident that the collection is a very rich one in terms of the historical and archaeological importance of many of the pieces of sculptures preserved in the collection. It is a pity that no scholar has yet paid the due attention to the rich heritage of Indian culture that the sculptural collection of the State Museum at Shimla is capable of revealing to us. Of course some books and stray articles have referred to some pieces of sculpture preserved in this museum, but a comprehensive study of these sculptures has remained over due from the scholars.

V.C.Ohri's book on the Arts of Himachal, as the title implies, is a compendium of a number of article on the various aspects of the different forms of art of Himachal written by a number of scholars. In this book there are discussions on the sculptural art of Himachal and in them a few pieces of sculpture found from this State and now preserved in the State Museum, do find their mention. But this book being not concerned with the collection of the sculptures in the State museum as the main focus of attention, it cannot be regarded as any projected study of the sculptural treasure of this museum concern. Similarly, the book written by Goverdhan Singh
'Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh' on it is also an overview study of the various artistic expressions of Himachal, and, in view of this, it also does not deal with the sculptural collection of the State Museum at Shimla. It has, however, to be admitted that like Ohri he has also referred to some of the sculptural pieces found from Himachal and preserved in the Himachal State museum. Dr. V.C. Ohri has recently published a sumptuously illustrated book on "Sculpture of the Western Himalayas" (History and Stylistic Development), in which he has taken note of a number of sculptures preserved in the Himachal State Museum. These objects of art are also being studied in our present dissertation. We expected Ohri’s book to be of great help in terms of factual information and artistic analysis. But unfortunately, our expectations have remained unfulfilled in view of the fact that Dr. Ohri has taken up study in a general over-all way, and not giving much attention to the sculptural pieces individually. However, his book has been of much help for our understanding of many of the sculpture of the Himachal State Museum in terms of their standing in the total artistic experimentation in the Western Himalayas. Dr. Ohri’s Occasional mention of some facts and figures with reference to a few pieces of our
interest has been of much help in the identification of the sites of the sculptures and also in the placement of the respective dates.

Another book of significance concerning the arts of Himachal is Antiquities of Himachal\textsuperscript{7} published in 1985 and authored by M., Postel, A., Naven, K., Mankodi. This book discusses many art pieces of Himachal Pradesh drawn from the different sources, and they are illustrated in the book. However, these authors have not included too many of the pieces from the state museum of the Himachal Pradesh. Since the collection of this museum is a miscellaneous type, and not very representative examples of the sculptural art of Himachal there in its collection. These authors did not probably pay much attention to this museum's collection. However, we have taken note of their references to the relevant sculptures, as and when situation arose.

It has to be mentioned that the sculptural collection of State Museums Shimla is not a collection of only the regional manifestations of this art. Had it been so, the above mentioned well known books would have covered at least the most important sculptural pieces of the regional idiom of expression. The collection of the
State museum has sculptural pieces belonging to almost all important provincial styles of the plastic art in India. They are also from various chronological phases of Indian art history. There are sculptures coming from the South Indian sites as there are also pieces belonging to the East Indian expressions of art. Similarly, there are sculptures of the Kushana idiom of style, and there are examples of the late medieval styles of Indian art. It is true that the miscellaneous character of the collection is a little bewildering, particularly in view of the fact that a State museum normally takes more interest in the collection of the art of the region to which it belongs.

The miscellaneous character of the collection of Himachal State Museum at Shimla is in view of the fact that the collection has not grown out of any organised archaeological excavation and exploration of the State of Himachal. Of course, the archaeological Department of the State has contributed substantially to the enrichment of the sculptural collection of this museum, but the authorities have depended much to build up this collection through the purchase of objects of art. In view of this, whatever was available to the purchasing committee irrespective of whether they belong to the State of Himachal or not, has been added to the
collection of the museum from time to time. One cannot criticise at this point of time whether the lack of policy decision regarding the mode of collection was good or bad for the State of Himachal, but it is a fact that what for such an general approach many of the treasures of sculptures collected by this museum might have gone out of the reach of those who now can have the benefit of studying them from the present collection of the museum.

The sculpture preserved in the State Museum at Shimla are miscellaneous not only in respect of their variety of styles and chronological levels, but also with regard to the various media of expressions they represent. There are a good number of stone sculptures which deserve our attention. There are also many sculptures in terracotta. The treasures of the metal sculptures preserved in this museum are also very important for a student of art history. In addition to these three well known media of plastic expression there are some interesting pieces of sculpture in wood and ivory. The sculptures in the last mentioned two media are seldom to be found in the State museums excepting a few comparatively well established one. The State Museum at Shimla was established on 26th January, 1974. and that way
it is a young institution. That it has paid attention to all these important media of sculptural expression while building up its collection is no doubt a commendable one. The major emphasis of the State Museum at Shimla has been, as stated above, the collection of the miniature painting. And it will be evident from the present study that its sculptural collection is also quite rich, particularly from the point of view of the historians and archaeologists.

The present study has been undertaken in order to focus the attention of scholars to the importance of this collection of sculpture. Ideally, of course a descriptive catalogue of the pieces would have fulfilled the mission well. But, as it has been stated above, there are many pieces which are mutilated or eroded beyond the recognition of the thematic content. Thus it was felt that a descriptive catalogue of all the pieces would have been a mere exercise to perform the ritual. At the same time the account would have then appeared to be too monotonous and repetative. In view of this, we have felt that an account of the better preserved ones, particularly those from which something can be made out, would be a better approach. No doubt that in such an approach an inventory of the items with their
descriptive specifications should first be prepared to serve as the basic materials for the study. In the light of these materials it will be possible for us to go into the interpretative study of some of the pieces in terms of the cultural image of India that they project. Such an analytical study can follow the descriptive study of the sculptures. But the description of the sculptures has to be in the frame work of the historical development of Indian sculpture through the centuries in the media of stone, terracotta, metal, wood and ivory. We will, therefore, formulate first such a historical frame-work of the development of Indian sculpture.
Section - III
Previous studies and their limitations
SECTION—III

From the ancient times Indian Culture, in its variety of ideas and forms, has been expressed through the numerous forms of art. Of these arts, the most important is the plastic art of India. In this art has been reflected not only the diversions of the tastes and techniques, but also the ramification of the changes that took place in the artistic activity. The changing pattern of taste and of the ability to articulate it in terms of the plastic media can be traced through the development of the art of sculpture in India from the remotest past to the present day. The history of Indian sculptural art is in fact the picture of the transformation of taste and skill through the centuries distributed over different geographical and sociological situations.

The oldest evidence of sculptural art in India is found from the archaeological remains of the Indus Valley civilization. Although, even today, scholars are not of one view regarding the antecedents and affiliations of this civilization with the mainstream of Indian Culture, it is difficult to subscribe to the suggestion that the Indus Valley civilizations is not ideologically and emotionally related to the overall culture of India. The
question whether this civilization was alien or posterior, or for that matter anterior or related, to the civilization of the Vedic Aryan can perhaps be sought once the so called inscribed legends of the seals discovered from Mohenjodaro and Harappa have been conclusively deciphered. But even if we keep aside the question of the heritage of the Indus Valley culture, we are sure of at least one aspect of this culture, namely that the art of sculpture was in a mature form even at that time. The seals with various designs and motifs, figurative and abstract, are evidence of an advanced knowledge of carving, incising and engraving. Doubtless the concept of preparation of moulds was also known. The figures of animals depicted on the seals are quite naturalistic and lively pointing to the aesthetic vision of the people. One of the seals depicts a seated male figure having a three pronged crown and as being surrounded by a number of animals has been interpreted by many scholars as the proto-type of Shiva Pashupati of the later days. This gives perhaps a glimpse of the possible religious ideas of the people.

Another interesting sculptural evidence from Harappa is also interpreted in terms of the religious
ideas that the people had at that time. This is a sandstone figure of a bearded person who has his tilted eyes with the look directed towards the tip of the nose. This particular facial expression, as also the fact that the figure wears a shawl covering one of his shoulder like a monk and has emulate on his arm, adds to its religious bearing. Most of the scholars have identified it as a Yogi. Whatever it might represent, the sculpture is an unmistakable example of the mature form of plastic expression.

The Indus Valley people had also excelled in the art of metal sculpture. The tiny bronze figure of a Dancing Girl found from Mohenjadaro is a super example of the art of metal sculpture. Its distinctive ethnographic characteristics, the slender limbs of the body, atenuated waist, and posture of movement as if in a dance have made it one of the most significant expressions of plastic art in India.

In order to pinpoint on the highlights of the plastic art traditions of the Indus Valley culture one should rightfully mention the examples of terracotta art from the Indus Valley sites. Numerous clay figurines, mostly representing female forms with emphasis on the attributes of fertility, have been found from
Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Chanhu-daro and the allied sites of Kulli and Zhob in Baluchistan. The number and variety of these figures show that the people were not only very fond of this art, but also that they had acquired enough of mastery over the art of plastic expression.

It is true that some stone sculptures like those of the male torso and the male dancing figure, seem to be too mature, and perhaps a bit alien, for the Indus Valley plastic art tradition. But taking the totality of the view one cannot but come to the conclusion that the people of Indus Valley developed an indigenous tradition of sculptural art. But difficulty arises when we find that there is hardly any evidence of sculpture that can be placed to the period for a few centuries after the Indus Valley Culture. Some scholars cite the examples of the golden repousseau figure of a female, discovered from Lauriya-Nandangarh and indentified as the figure of Goddess earth, as belonging to the post Indus Valley period. Although in the Vedic literature there is ample reference to the art of sculpture, it is doubtful whether the Lauriya-Nandangarh figure can be ascribed to the Vedic period. One cannot, however, entertain the view that sculptural activity in India stopped after the
Indus Valley culture until the Mauryan period under Ashoka's patronage. Numerous references in the Buddhist literature, in the two epics, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, also some texts of Jains suggest that sculptural activity continued through the centuries. The non-availability of the examples can perhaps be explained with the suggestion that most of the works made in perishable material have been lost and the others with comparatively durable material are awaiting the archaeologists' spades.

As has already been stated above, tangible evidence of sculptural art can be found from the Mauryan period onwards, particularly from the days of Ashoka who ruled in the third century B.C. This ruler erected a number of free standing stone pillars with inscribed edicts proclaiming his message of law and ethics. At the top of these pillars invariably is carved a capital consisting of an animal motif (with single or multiple animal) placed on an abacus showing usually four animals (lion, bull, horse, elephant), the abacus being placed on an inverted lotus with a acanthus motifs from the sides. The most famous example of the capitals are those from Rampurva and Sarnath. The former represents a bull with a super expression of naturalistic sensibility, while the
latter shows four lions back to back with articulated realism of strength and vigour. The artistic tradition i.e. noticed in these examples of art perhaps represent the ideas and ideologies of the aesthetic vision offered by the court. But there was perhaps a more popular tradition of sculpture as evidenced by the naturalistic, and perhaps a little unsophisticated, mode of representation, the elephant figure carved out of the rock at Dhauli in Orissa. The inscription of Ashoka in it registers its Mauryan chronology\textsuperscript{11}. Of the same period, and perhaps also of a few years thereafter, are the sculptures depicting the Yakshas and the Yakshsines found from various sites. The cult of the Yaksha ushered in the gradual introduction of the image of Buddha in the sculptural art in India\textsuperscript{12}. But prior to this revolution taking place in Indian sculptural art there were a series of plastic exprementations in the early Buddhist art at various centres in the North and South.

Early Buddhist sculptural art is primarily narrative in the content. The sculptures are mostly noticed in the relief panels from the Buddhist stupas of Bharhut and Sanchi in North India, and from Amaravati and Nagarjunikanda in the South. There were also many other
Buddhist centres where similar narrative sculptures have been found. These narrative panels mostly depict the scenes connected with the life of the Buddha and with various legends of Buddhist association. Interestingly in the early examples of these panels, like those from Bharhat and Sanchi, the Buddha is not depicted in person with the bodily form. His presence is indicated by various symbols associated with him and with Buddhist thought. These symbols include the throne, the Bodhi tree, the footprints, the Tri-ratna work and the like. Through them the presence of the Buddha in the stories narrative is conveyed. The figure of the Buddha appears in the narrative art and also in the individual presence at a comparatively later period, perhaps in the early years of the beginning of the Christian era.

The emergence of the figures of Buddha gave a new direction to the sculptural art in India. Of course, images of various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon were depicted in Indian sculpture even earlier, and there perhaps a tradition of the representation of the figures of Yaksha and Yakshines and Nagas and Naganes during the period preceding the emergence of the figurative representation of the Buddha. The major centre of sculpture for such representation was Mathura. It is,
therefore, suggested by Coomaraswamy that the image of Buddha was developed out of these Yaksha-Naga prototypes. This theory purports to suggest that the first image of the Buddha was made at Mathura by the indigenous artists. This theory was a different one from that of the view of the French scholar A. Foucher who contended that the first image of Buddha was evolved at Gandhara by the Indo-Greek sculptures. Although the controversy regarding the origin of the Buddha image is not yet finally settled, there is no doubt that the foreign elements contributed by the Gandhara artists in the Indian sculptural tradition were of much significance in the development of the succeeding courses of sculptural experimentation in India.

The indigenous art visions and techniques of the artists of Mathura and the artistic traditions of the Indo-Greek cultural ethos could not but come to terms for a unified expression of the best of the two traditions. Mathura served as a crucible for the artistic experimentation towards such an expressive synthesis. The art of Mathura, particularly its Buddhist aspects, got a lively orientation when it got the Eastern Indian sensibility contributed by the sculptors of Sarnath. The
Productions of Mathura belonging to the period beyond the 3rd-4th centuries show dimensions having the potential of new forms of expression. Sarnath only refined this mode and ushered in the plastic tradition that is known as the Indian classical art idiom\textsuperscript{17}.

The classical idiom of art evolved in Sarnath from the later part of the fourth century onwards was a unique expression in the sense that it was shared by almost all centres of Indian sculpture right up to the beginning of the 6th century. This unified vision as sculptural art is noticed not only in the lithic examples, but also in the productions in metals.

The early art of Mathura and Gandhara is usually thought to be the contribution of Kushana dynasty, and the remifications of the style and form in South India are usually associated with the Satavahana dynasty. How far these dynastic affiliations are valid, and whether these dynasties were only agencies to patronise the sculptural art of the India cannot be ascertained with solid historical evidence\textsuperscript{18}. Similarly it is also doubtful whether the sculptural art of India of the 4th to the end of the 6th century should be ascribed to the credit of the Gupta and Vakataka dynasties. But it is generally believed that the classical Indian sculpture is
a contribution of the Gupta cultural ethos.

From about the 7th century onwards the sculptural vision which was universally shared by almost all centres throughout the length and breadth of the country, started to disintegrate in terms of various regional expressions. And this trend in various degrees and proportions continued right up to the end of the 14th century. During this period we hear of art expressions with various dynastic affiliations, like the sculpture of the Palas, Senas, Gangas, Pratiharas, Chandelas, Chaulakyas, Palavas, Cholas etc. Also we now come across the styles referred purely in terms of the geographical or regional distribution, like the art of Eastern India or of Bengal, Bihar or Orissa, the art of central India or of Khajuraho etc., the art of the south India or of Kanchipuram, Tanjore, etc. In other words, the homogeneity of the classical Indian sculptural idiom no longer existed. Not that medieval sculpture of India was a debased form of Indian classical art, but the former is an extension of the ideas and techniques evolved during the period when the classical Indian art was using a uniform mode of expression.
Although the development of Indian sculpture through the centuries show similar trends and forms, the above survey basically pertains to the stone sculptures, and to some extent the sculptures made in terracotta and wood. Stylistic developments in metal sculptures follow similar trends, but the technique being somewhat different. The course that this form of sculpture took were distinctively singular. The best forms of Indian metal sculpture however, came into the picture only in the medieval period. In this count reference may be made to the sculptures made in South India during the Palava and Chola periods. In the eastern sector, the metal sculptures from Nalanda, Kurkihar, Bodh Gaya and Mainamati, mostly with the patronage of the Pala rulers show the excellence of this art. In Western India also several hoards of metal sculptures belonging to the medieval period have been found. Metal sculptures from the Punjab Hills, particularly those from Chamba and other centres are also noticable.

Terracotta art in India has shown two distinctive trends. One trend seems to be the stream of the folk art tradition in clay modelling which persisted since the days of the Indus Valley civilization. This is known as
the timeless variety of terracotta art in which the changes due to the circumstance of time and space are not effected. It is difficult to determine the date of such representation on the criteria of style, because in this type of plastic expression there is no impressions of the time of their execution on them. The determination on chronology for such timeless type of terracotta sculptures rests primarily on the archaeological data about their discovery and other related matters.

But there is also another variety of terracotta sculpture which is known as the time bound type. In these sculptures, the impresses of the time of their execution are very much there in terms of the stylistic features. These terracottas also show iconographic characteristics relatable to various time sequences. The determination of the chronology of these terracotta is not very difficult because the stylistic and iconographic trends usually are those noticeable in the plastic expressions in stone.²⁵

Indian sculptural art, like the other forms of artistic expressions of the ancient period, are basically traditional. That means there is a continuity of ideas and modes of expression. Deviations and novilities are met with on many occasions, but they are only to set the trend for the next stream to follow. In that sense Indian
The art of sculpture is also a picture of continuum. The sculptural art particularly of the medieval period, that means from about the 7th century onwards, pertains mostly to the representation of cult images of various Gods and Goddesses. These images are mostly in the frontal orientation and with prescriptional element as laid down in the canonical texts known as the Silpa Shastras. The sculptor seems to have very little liberty to innovate new expressive ideas because they were restricted by the injections of the religions and cults. In view of this, many scholars have expressed the view that ancient Indian sculpture was but a hand made of religion. But although one cannot deny the predominance of religious themes in ancient Indian sculpture, there were many secular themes represented in this art. Apart from this, there are examples of certain thematic motifs in the art of sculpture which were shared by various religions and cults. In view of this, some scholars suggested that there existed also a secular approach to the representation in plastic traditions.26

An interesting aspect of the medieval Indian sculpture is that this art was intimately associated with architecture. Many important temples were built in the
North and in the South. Reference may be made to group of temples built at Khajuraho in central India and those built in Bhuvneshvara in Orissa. Similarly, many temples of importance were built in Rajasthan and Gujarat. In South India too, the temples of Kanchipuram, Elora, Patdakal, Tanjore, and Madurai are the magnificent examples of art of architecture. It is a matter of interest and significance that almost all these temples are lavishly decorated, mostly in the exterior walls, with beautiful sculptural representations. These temple sculptures pertain to the representations of images of Gods and Goddesses and also of the legends and myths associated with various Hindu form of devotion. There were five major cults, namely the Shaivas (having Shiva as the lord), Shaktas (The Goddess as the supreme being), Vaishanavas (having Vishnu as the lord) Ganapatyas (Ganesha or Ganapati as the most important one). The Saurya (The Sun God as the supreme). Apart from these there were the cults associated with Buddhism and Jainism in their later forms of development. All these cults had their elaborate pantheons with their sculptural representation for the depiction of the members. Each of the divinity is characterised by specific iconographic cognizance, and the gods and goddesses are identifiable
by those characteristics. Sometimes a few of the divinities share similar features, although it is possible to distinguish them by means of the context and association in which they appear. In view of the multiplicity of the divinities, and their variety of presence, Indian Sculpture offers a panorama of various subjects, concepts and ideas represented through visual forms of diverse nature.
Section - IV

The present proposition
SECTION - IV

The preceding survey gives a glimpse of the variety of themes, particularly of the religio-cult affiliation, noticed in the Indian sculpture. There are numerous other themes drawn from the stories and mythologies of the Epics and the Puranas of the Brahmanical fold and the Jatakas and Nidana Kathas of Buddhism. The Jain literature like the Adipurana and Kalpa Sutra also narrate various legends and they are too occasionally noticed in Indian sculpture. Apart from this Indian sculpture represents a variety of themes of the secular nature. The entire gamut of Indian sculpture is a testimony of the geneous and skill of the Indian master sculptors.

Indian sculpture is essentially naturalistic and idealistic. Its naturalism is based on its purely conceptual rendering. In Indian art the perceptual characteristic are but the visual aids to convey an idea. In view of this the importance of the idea in Indian sculpture is more than its structure. What is seen in Indian sculpture is what is meant by it. The conceptual character of the Indian sculpture art has been highlighted time and again by many scholars. In view of
the conceptual character the representative of a god or goddess with multiple hands and heads is not an oddity. By the multiplicity of the limbs is meant not only the composite nature of the imaginary but also is conveyed an idea of the power, strength and grandeur of the personages represented. Each of the attribute in the hands of the deities has a symbolic meaning of its own. If this aspect is not properly appreciated, the essence of Indian sculptural art will remain out of our reach. Even the vahanas are not ascribed arbitrarily. They are indicative of the associations an conceptual bearings of the images represented.

Indian sculpture also represents an ideal of the visual idiom. The concept of beauty, particularly in the female figure is quite distinctive. Beauty in Indian sculpture is in terms of the transformation of the natural elements in the nature with appropriate visual vocabulary. Various limbs of the body are represented in terms of symbols and similitudes of natural things or phenomena. Thus the eyes are like lotus petals, the figures like the chompaka flowers, the torso of female figures is like the kettle drum and some of the male figures like that of a lion, the thighs like the trunk of the plantain trees and so on and so forth.27
The ornaments of the body are not given as something superfluous, but as the elements that add to the beauty of the form. The postures of the body are indicative of the temperament or attitudes of the figures. There is always a preference for the representation of the figure with a serene and composed expression. This is why even in the representation of the Goddess Durga killing the buffalo demon hardly any expression of wrath or anger is shown in her face. In fact, the understanding of the essence and ethos a deep and comprehensive grasp of Indian philosophy, ethics, racial conventions and the over-all cultural background should form the basis of an approach to Indian Sculpture.

In our attempt to expose these cultural messages as obtained from the study of the collection of sculpture in the State Museum at Shimla we have, therefore, thought that the correct approach to the study of these sculpture would be not only to take note of the descriptive features of these sculptures but also to see them in the context of the entire Indian cultural heritage. Of course, the descriptive analysis of the sculptures should be of prime importance. We will do that in the next chapter in which all the important sculptures in the
State Museum at Shimla will be taken note of with the details of the description. In the chapter that will follow the second section we will go into an analytical assessment of some of the sculptures providing glimpses of distinctive cultural highlights. Our study will be concluded with an overview of the artistic and aesthetic import of the sculptures which form the source materials for this dissertation.