GRAPHIC SECTION V

Plates: 94–108
URBAN DESIGN
As noted previously, Urban Design -- architecture of the cities -- has been the least understood and most neglected discipline in the planning and construction of Chandigarh. The results have thus been dismal, if not disastrous.

Relationships of built masses, and elements of landscape, colours, textures, materials, street furniture, urban scene and much else that could have been imaginatively designed was left to chance. Therefore, one sees everything everywhere -- in a state of colourful confusion occasionally relieved by the massiveness of built volumes as a reminder of the fact that Chandigarh is a "planned" modern urban complex.
Violation of "Architectural Controls"
The Congress (I) Bhavan on the southern side of Madhya Marg is a typical example of the wilful violation of "architectural controls" laid down by the Department of Architecture for the design of buildings along this major arterial road (V2-Horizontal). Few architects in private practice in the city have learnt to appreciate, much less respect, the urban form vaguely envisaged by Le Corbusier.

Oddly enough, such are the buildings which have become unintended landmarks either by virtue of their institutional prestige or on account of their nonconformist architectural character.

The saving grace in their case is that they make little or no urban impact on the commuters using Madhya Marg because these buildings are too far spaced and too deeply set from the main circulation artery.
Commercial Establishments along Madhya Marg

Although designed by Le Corbusier himself, the showrooms in Sectors 26 and 7 along Madhya Marg (V2-Horizontal) are inadequate buildings from the point of view of Urban Design. When one comes close to the edge of V2 (top), the "showrooms" appear raw and overwhelming, with the random and congested parking adding insult to injury.

Viewed from the main circulation artery, the visual impact is considerably weakened (bottom). The position will further worsen when the trees have attained their full growth. The built volumes will be almost hidden behind the green masses. Tree-guards and light-posts comprise the scanty street furniture on this prestigious road.
Planned Landmarks
Location of Kiran Cinema (top) is appropriate from the Urban Design point of view, acting as it does as an important landmark of Sector 22. But its performance adversely affects the function of Circulation on the V4 shopping street when cinegoers' queues in front of the booking windows extend over to the road. Siting of the local bus stop creates similar problems. The halting bus blocks the movement of traffic at a point just next to the junction of V5, the interior traffic distributor.

Change of Urban Scale
The "booths" liven up the urban scene by a change of scale. But, ironically, it belies Jane Drew's Urban Design intention that the shopping complex should dominate the residential part of the neighbourhood. Note in the lower picture this contradictory reversal of scales between shops (front) and residences (behind).

Scanty street furniture is another unignorable feature of the city's Urban Design.
Neighbourhood Shopping Facilities
The Shopping Centre in Sector 23 (top) makes little departure from its prototype (below) designed by Maxwell Fry originally for Sector 22. It is in this complacent repetition that many an opportunity was lost on Chandigarh architects so far as Urban Design is concerned. With a little more initiative, imagination and effort, it should have been possible to vary the solutions to develop for each neighbourhood the now-missing individual identity.

Such an exercise would have improved the urban imageability of the city without impairing Le Corbusier's basic concept in any way.
Street Furniture
The scanty street furniture -- tubular railing, no-parking sign, lamp-posts -- shows little attempt at well-integrated Urban Design (top). Both in terms of product design and their placement, these items leave much to be desired.

Built Masses vs Landscape
The lower picture shows the slow carriageway on V2-Horizontal, Madhya Marg, a major arterial road. Note how the intervening plantation on the green verge is obscuring the view of showrooms designed by Le Corbusier. Linear parking lots are inadequate for accommodating the rapid increase in the number of vehicles.
Recreation and Health

As previously stated, little conscious effort was made to create landmarks in the city. Kiran Cinema, however, shows Maxwell Fry's somewhat inarticulate desire to do so (top). Though this movie theatre has become an important landmark in Sector 22, its location right on the V4 shopping street is not satisfactory from the traffic point of view.

The Health Centre designed by Jane Drew (below) has emerged to be a useful landmark, if unintentionally.
ART
IN
CHANDIGARH
ARCHITECTURE
**Sculpture**

An interesting feature of the Chandigarh experiment is that the architects consciously introduced art into the city's architecture. Although examples of this Urban Design initiative are few and far between, the effort is, indeed, commendable.

Of the Chandigarh Capital Project team, Le Corbusier was the most prolific architect to dabble in urban art. Perhaps, the best-known example of his contribution in this area is the Open Hand monument in the Capitol Complex. Unfortunately, this has been treated by critics and architects alike more as an emblem than as a work of significant art.

The Open Hand monument (top right) is an outstanding piece of modern sculpture which came as a climax of Le Corbusier's animated studies of 20 years in well-modelled contours, evocative shape and deft details.

**Enamel Painting**

Le Corbusier's reveals his mastery in the enamelled door (25 ft. by 25 ft.) of the Legislative Assembly. It is a repertoire of his distinguished graphic symbols, signs and icons: sun path, seasons, bird, man, animals, reptiles, amphibian, trees, clouds -- creating a monumental work of contemporary art.

**Mural**

Pierre Jeanneret has created a unique bas-relief mural on the end-wall of MLAs Hostel. A stylised form of Chandigarh Master Plan invokes the stirring charm of aesthetics inherent in ordinary materials.
Bas-reliefs
Six examples of Le Corbusier's several bas-reliefs motifs which were cast in shuttered concrete as part of the architectural design he developed for various buildings. The Modulor Man is a persistent symbol, a carryover of the master architect's oeuvre in Europe.

The cart-wheel and the camel-pair were developed from observations of activities on sites of construction in Chandigarh. The fish and the serpent are also products of his encounters with Indian sensibility and surroundings.

The abstract motif looks like a cave drawing incised with raw passion and primitive perception.

These and many other bas-reliefs reveal beyond doubt Le Corbusier's predilection for the art of sculpture. This should explain why the master architect transcended the "functionalism" in architecture to create pure sculptures of the intellect. The inviolable artistic freedom which these works demonstrate is indication enough that Le Corbusier's growth as a master architect was a natural transformation of his genius from the fairlandish world of art to the orchestrated lyricism of architecture.
Creativity: "A Habit of the Mind"

These and scores of other sketches and drawings show Le Corbusier's obsession for human hands which finally blossomed in the creation of the Open Hand monument.

Perhaps, if he had had his way he would have loved to design the hand as a human habitat as is indicated in the sketch above.

The mystery of creation, as grasped by the human genius and expressed in artistic forms by the human hands, must have been the cause for Le Corbusier's unmitigable fascination for the latter, and impelled him to express them as instruments of creativity in passionately-modelled sculptural forms.
Humour in Artistic Creation

Le Corbusier had a puckish sense of humour, his mannerist curtness notwithstanding. He is reported to have remarked that this time it actually is "a square peg in a round hole" when he leaned back his rump on the Great Pyramid for a photograph during his tour in Egypt.

In the above drawing, which he dedicated to Jane Drew, Le Corbusier has portrayed in moments of light-hearted gaiety the essential character of each member of the Chandigarh Capital Project team. He has depicted himself as a "crow" with a drawing roll -- a favourite symbol he had chosen as a visual counterpart for his adopted name: "corbeau" meaning crow.

The other caricatures in the drawing are akin to "transmigrated" souls. The goat is Jane Drew, and the dog, Maxwell Fry. Despite her "weaker sex" she has been shown as a domineering "personage".

Pierre Jeanneret has been captured as an aloof, if not exactly oblivious, character in the icon of a "cock" nonchalantly picking food from the soil of Chandigarh.
The two illustrations at the top are rubber stamps which Le Corbusier was very fond of making. He would use a knife to cut out symbols and signs in the large-sized erasers which formed part of his "tool-kit" as an architect.

"Dedication for (Sukhna) Dam" is an abstract sign. The other design symbolises day(sun) and night(moon) in an inseverable astronomical relationship.

Tapestries
All the other sketches are preliminary studies for the High Court tapestries which Le Corbusier designed as wall-hangings. Trees, natural elements, the balance (Symbol of Justice), tree, wheel, sun, serpent, hand, feet, etc. are all sketched with great graphic skill which the master architect had acquired over long years of arduous auto-didactic exercises in drawing and painting.
METAPHYSICAL DIMENSION
Chandigarh’s Cultural Life
"Metaphysical Dimension"

Why Chandigarh's Cultural Life has been called the city's "metaphysical dimension" should be apparent from these two pictures of the City Centre's Neelam Plaza. What is most of the time a vast desolate concourse of concrete paving begins to throb with life on festivals such as Dewali when several rehri and theri shops are set up to cater to the seasonal needs of the citizenry. It is both the colour of shamianas, readymade garments (top) and of the eatables (bottom) which imparts a lively charm to the place. Colourful crowds jostle to fill out the yawning voids of emptiness with infectious human presence and transform the City Centre into an event worth experiencing and remembering.

Perhaps, a lesson from this successful "unplanned" experiment is that such activities should be permitted more frequently, say, every weekend or so. The chummy informal nature of this experience attracts huge crowds largely to rehri and theris, leaving Le Corbusier's monumental SCOs in a state of muffled embarrassment.
Transformation of V4s

The sector-level shopping suddenly becomes abustle with joie d' vivre when the shopkeepers extend their "formal" shops outdoors into "informal" rehri and tharlis. One could perhaps call it the seasonal Indianisation of an essentially Western concept of single-loaded bazaar street. The "Indian" element is characterised by a couldn't-care-less attitude -- a large-hearted tolerance for all forms of disorder -- which lets go restraint for the love of colourful confusion. Mixed parking in complete disarray underscores this delightful laissez-faire.

Whether it is the shopping colonnade or pavement (top) or space next to the parking lot (bottom), the sector-level commercial activity overspills to transform the V4s into streets of infectious charm and enthusiasm.

Colourful clay toys and other souvenirs (bottom) awaken the child-in-adults and prompts them to act on impulse for savouring life's earthy fullness. This transformation must be seen in evenings to be believed. Crowds come in gay attires for the soulful experience of mass "urban rub".
The most distinguished "secular" event of Chandigarh's Cultural Life is the Rose Festival, which has been regularly held for the last 20 years. While Asia's largest Rose Garden is abloom with its roses of over 1600 varieties, the festival partakes of their sweet aromas and soulful hues. Several events and contests are held during the day. Some of them, like on-the-spot painting competitions, have gained an overwhelming popularity in recent years.

If there is anything which is uniquely Chandigarh's own in its repertoire of diverse cultural activities, it is the Rose Festival. And if its popularity with the citizenry is any indication, Chandigarh will come to be associated as much with the festive aromas and hues of its roses as with their silken softness which symbolises the city's nascent culture. At any rate, the Rose Festival is a marvellous product of contemporary culture created by an aesthetic consciousness rooted in Chandigarh's "Sun, Space and Verdure".