

RAM NATH SAHNI

LAHOUL

The Mystery Land In The Himalayas



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Ram Nath Sahnî



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Foreword

When I first visited Lahoul Valley in 1980, the grandeur of its mountains, the serenity of its land and the tranquility of its massive glaciers pouring milky white water through the mountain ranges fascinated me and my imagination. The beauty of this valley is entirely different from those of the other parts of Himachal Pradesh. And then I came to know that each sub-valley or subsection of this valley has a different culture, different dialect, different background and different roots, which most of them do not know themselves. This further aroused my curiosity. I then wrote an article on my visit to this valley, while I felt and wished someone could do a thorough research on it and write a book.

No doubt there are several books already written, wholly or partly, about this valley, mostly by outsiders with very little research done in depth. Most of them are in the form of travelogues of those people who visited this place and became fascinated and felt compelled to write whatever they noticed or heard from the natives. Now Shri Ram Nath Sahni, a native of the valley, has painstakingly done a deep research on its history, culture, languages, festivals and celebrations, its mythological stories, folklores and tales, and its religions. I am glad that at least someone has spent a tremendous amount of time in researching his roots and uncovered the mysteries of all these diversities in a tiny valley of Lahoul. It, however, does not mean that this exhausts all the possibility of further research on it; on the contrary, this should serve as the beginning and foundation for further research people could carry on. I only wish such research work was done and books written about each part and nook and corner of Himachal Pradesh which has so much to offer with rich heritage and culture.

At the end I wish a great success to Shri Sahni and hope this book will attract the attention of scholars and good readers from all over India and abroad, and I wish a happy reading to all the readers of this book.

SHANTA KUMAR
Former Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh

Preface

In 1971-72, when I was in India, a new magazine called *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika* came out. Rather than dealing with a variety of subjects as most magazines do, this magazine had the peculiar format that each issue was dedicated to a single topic. The second issue was entitled *Hill India*; the subject matter was the people and places in the uplands of India, which are otherwise often neglected.

I contributed an article entitled 'Girijan of Himachal' to this issue, about the land and people of Lahoul. At that time I came across barely a handful of references to this area. This provoked me to consider writing a book about this place, since I was already facing the difficulty of what to include and what to exclude in a short article. After finishing the article, I continued to collect material for the book, but at a slower pace, owing to my various other commitments and interests.

A few months later, during the summer of 1972, a series of sensational articles, reviewing a book entitled *Himalayan Wonderland* began appearing in the *Daily Tribune*. This book was about Lahoul Spiti. The author, M.S. Gill, had worked in that area as a Deputy Commissioner for some time. After reading the book, I felt more compelled to write a book with much wider treatment of the subject.

Lahoul is a small valley with a population of scarcely twenty thousand, yet it has so many dialects, religions and cultural distinctions that one is forced to wonder why it should be so. People do not know their own history and background and the reasons behind so much diversity within this tiny valley. My intention was to do a thorough investigation to find its history and the reasons for the wonders which inspired Gill's description of Lahoul as a "wonderland". He had taken a few instances which in many cases apply to some parts of the valley only, and presented them as the general

rule. It requires a native and a trained researcher to dig deeper, rather than an outsider to glance over and make generalisation from a few exceptions.

In the meantime, I returned to the United States in 1973. Other interests forced me to postpone the book again, although I never really gave up on it. Whenever I visited New York city, the skyscrapers always reminded me of the Himalayan peaks. On the other hand, the sleazy entertainments of the theater district always made me think of the serenity of the Himalayan valleys. Someone once told me that as soon as he crosses Rohtang pass, all his lust and greed seem to vanish, and as soon as he returns to the outside world it is as if a switch is thrown back on. All these served as constant reminders to me to fulfill my ambition to write this book.

And finally, I am convinced that a Divine Will was at work, forcing me to complete this task. Any time I tried to put it on the back burner in favour of other ventures, everything began going against me. Whenever I gave priority to this work, my world ran smoothly again. Thus I dedicated my major effort to this work, outside my regular 8-to-5 job.

I would like to point out here that when transliterating Sanskrit or Tibetan words into English, I have adopted the method of writing those words as they are pronounced, rather than letter for letter. The reason for this is that there are many words—especially in Tibetan—which have silent letters. Sometimes the written and spoken words seem entirely different. For example, the word Spiti, a valley neighbouring Lahoul, is supposed to be pronounced as Pitti. But it is written as Spiti in Tibetan, where the “s” is silent. When it was adopted into English and other Indian languages as it was written in Tibetan, the “s” was no longer silent. Now no one, except the natives, pronounces it “Pitti” any more. To avoid such confusions and misrepresentations, I have tried to eliminate the silent letters wherever possible. This might cause specific confusions, but I hope it will keep many things straight in the long run.

In this book, I have tried to explore this valley, its history, religion, culture, languages and its overall situation. I hope most readers, even outside this valley, will find it interesting and enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

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Section I

LAHOUL VALLEY, ITS MOUNTAINS AND GLACIERS

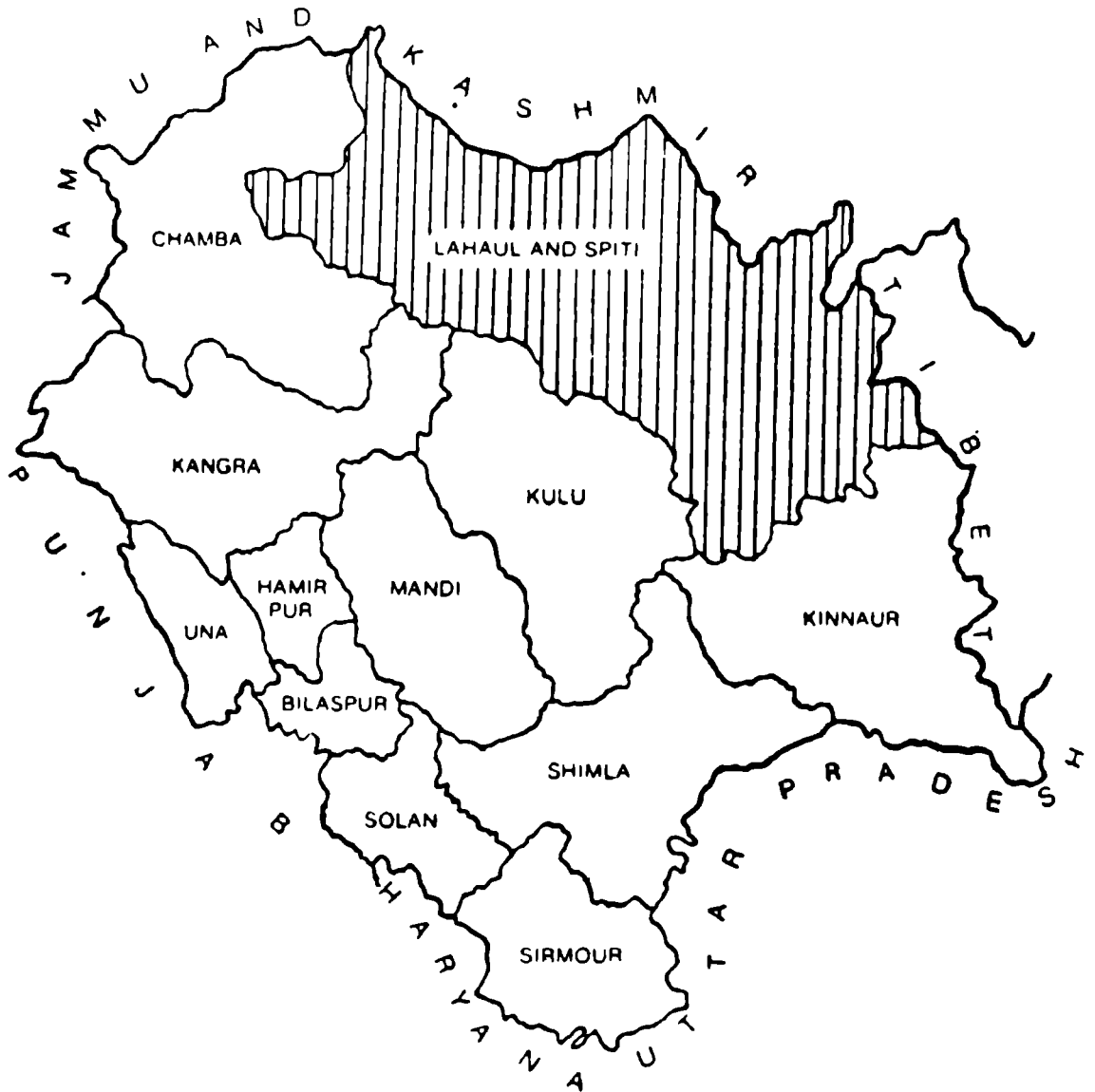
Chapter 1. The Valley Called Lahoul

Chapter 2. Rohtang Pass—The Gateway to Lahoul

Chapter 3. The Mountains and Glaciers

Chapter 4. The Avalanche of 1979

HIMACHAL PRADESH



Map of Himachal Pradesh showing the district of Lahoul & Spiti.

1

The Valley Called Lahoul

In the *Sakanda Purana*, one of the ancient scriptures of India, it is written, "He who thinks of Himachal, though he should not behold it, is greater than he who performs all the worship in Kashi. In a hundred ages of gods I could not tell you of the glories of Himachal. As the dew is dried up by the morning sun so are the sins of mankind by the sight of Himachal."*

I would like to make it clear here that the word "Himachal" mentioned in these passages is not merely the modern day state of Himachal Pradesh. It applies instead to the whole Himalayan range of which Himachal Pradesh is just a part.

In a mythological story it is said that the river Ganges was brought to this earth by Bhagirath from *Swarga* (heaven) to wash away the ashes, or sins, of his ancestors who were burnt to ashes by the curse of Kapila Muni, for accusing this sage of stealing the sacrificial horse of *Ashava-Medha-Yagya*. The river has its present origin in the Himalayas at Gangotri. The myth says that when the Ganges was to descend on earth, it would cause havoc, the whole earth would be submerged in its waters. In order to save the earth, Shiva held the Ganges in the matted locks of his hair.

Mythological stories generally present certain truths, but in symbolic form. Perhaps the Himalayas have been called the *Swarga*. One can very easily imagine that when a river is diverted from its course by a dam, especially in the mountains, it can cause a havoc of floods under its forceful fall and tumbling flow. In order to stop this disaster, one would certainly need to build a bed of rocks or a

* English translation by E.S. Oakley in *The Holy Himalaya*. The same appears in the *Himalayan Gazetteers* as well.

basin which could bear the force of the fall and control it to a smooth flow. Such a solid rock basin might have been called Shiva in this context.

E.S. Oakley in his book *The Holy Himalaya* has written that Huan Tsang, a famous Chinese pilgrim of the 7th century, had described Mount Meru, conical in shape, as forming the centre of the world lotus. To the south of Mount Meru there are three ranges of mountains, the southernmost being the Himavat or Himalaya adjoining Bharat. To the north of it there are also three ranges, the northernmost bounding the country of Uttar Kurus, which is regarded as heaven.

In the classic *Mahabharata* also, the victorious Pandvas are said to have left for the Himalayas during their last days. It is said that all of them except the eldest brother Yudhishtira, left their mortal bodies in the Himalayas. When Yudhishtira was left alone, a dog appeared who acted as his guide. Finally he met the chariot of Indra, the king of gods, which took him to *Swarga* in his mortal body.

Thus there are many instances and legends of ancient India in which the Himalayas figure as the holiest of places. Since the Vedic age the great *rishis* and *munis* (sages) like Vashishta and Vyasa lived and meditated in the Himalayas. In the present age also some of the most holy places like Badrinath, Kashi and Triloknath are in the Himalayas.

In the lap of the Himalayas in the northwestern corner of India there exists a small valley called Lahoul. The word Lahoul presumably is composed of two Tibetan words: Lah + Yul. Lah means "god" and yul means "the land". Thus Lahoul means "the land of gods, or the abode of gods".

Deep down among lofty mountain ranges there flourishes a valley called Lahoul, situated between 31.44.57 N and 32.59.57 N latitude, and between 76.46.29 E and 78.41.34 E longitude. The average altitude of the valley is about 10,000 feet above sea level, while the mountain peaks surrounding it soar upwards of 20,000 feet. Major Cunningham, a British army officer, who travelled extensively in this area during the 19th century, computed the average altitude of the valley to be 10,535 feet.

It is a very narrow valley, or in fact a collection of three separate valleys formed roughly in a 'Y' shape, if we stand facing east. The river Chandra forms the right branch of the 'Y'. This valley is called the Chandra valley, which includes Gondhla and Ranglo area. The Bhaga river forms the left branch, and is called the Bhaga valley, constituted of the Gahar and Tod valleys. Together they become Chandra-Bhaga, forming the lower stem of the 'Y', including the Pattan valley and the Chamba-Lahoul area, also known as Goonam. The average width of each of these valleys is barely a couple of nautical miles, while the total length is about sixty nautical miles of populated area and another fifty nautical miles of barren mountain slopes. The current *District Gazetteer* of Lahoul claims the total area to be about 12,210 square kilometres. The *Imperial Gazetteer* published in 1908 shows the total area as 2250 square miles. Evidently a major portion of the present valley was excluded from the measurement, or only the populated area was taken into consideration.

The valley of Lahoul is surrounded by the districts of Kangra and Kullu in the south, the valleys of Spiti and Kinnaur to the east, Ladakh and Zaskar to the north, and Chamba and Kishtwar to the west.

Chandra-Bhaga

The river Chandra-Bhaga, also known as the Chenab, is the heart of the Lahoul valley. Dr. N.N. Godbole mentioned in the book *Rigvedic Sarasvati* that in the *Rig Veda* the river Chenab is called Asikeni. In the *District Gazetteer of Chamba*, it is mentioned that the Greek version of Asikeni was Askesines. Major Cunningham wrote that the Greek Ptolemy called it Sandalbal, but the historians of Alexander called it Askesines for the original name Sandalbal was a bad omen. He also added that Askesines in Pashtu would mean "the river of Akasha" (Akasha means the Ether or the sky). Moorcroft felt that the name Chenab came from the Urdu word Chin + Aab, which means "the water from China". Perhaps the Mohammadens thought that the river came from China. However, the name Chandra-Bhaga has been mentioned in many of the ancient scriptures of the Hindus, such as *Shiv Purana*.

Within Lahoul, as mentioned earlier, this river appears roughly as a 'Y' shape. Both Chandra and Bhaga originate from the same lake called Chandratat near Baralacha, but from the opposite corners. Huan Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who came to India in the seventh century, called this lake Lohitya Sarovar. The word *sarovar* in Sanskrit means lake. This lake is situated on the Baralacha pass at the eastern corner of Lahoul. The altitude of this lake is over 16,000 feet from mean sea level. The latitude is 32:45 N and the longitude is 77:22 E. The river Chandra initially flows to the south for about fifty miles towards the Spiti valley and then it suddenly changes course to northwest for about sixty miles upto Sangam, the junction point of the Chandra and the Bhaga between the villages of Tandi and Gushal. Major Cunningham as well as Harcourt claim that the average fall of this river from its source to this junction point to be about sixty five feet per mile or a total fall of about 7500 feet. The river Bhaga rises from the same lake at a place called Suraj Dal, but flows first to northwest for about thirty miles and then southwest until it reaches the junction. The total distance travelled is about sixty miles, and the river has an average fall of 125 feet per mile. For a considerable distance both rivers pass through barren, snowy mountain. Harcourt writes:

“... it passes through a wild and barren land where there is no sign of life, the solemn mountains capped with eternal snow lying on either side and thus ushered into existence under such awe-inspiring auspices, it dashes its foaming waters by glacial banks of snow, vast reaches of gravel and decomposed rock and here stretching into a mighty flood, again subsides into more stealthy strength as its icy tide flows onwards through a country famed for sterility and that colossal grandeur that can only be imparted by vast mountains”.

From Tandi, the junction point, the rivers Chandra-Bhaga or Chenab flows west for about 25 miles within Lahoul and then enters Chamba through breaks in the mountains. Keeping a north-westerly course it then enters Kishtwar, about 115 miles further on. Finally it meets the Indus river at Mithankot about 950 miles down in Pakistan, in its southwesterly course.

Nomenclature

As human beings, we always like to adopt or interpret things to our own best interest, or liking. So is the case with the name 'Lahoul' and its meaning. There are several meanings that can be derived or are already assigned to the word Lahoul, yet the most common one among those who have investigated it, is "land of the gods". Major Cunningham has written that the Tibetans called it *Loh-Yul*, which means "the southern land", since it lies to the south of Tibet. Another possibility is that it could have been *La-Yul*. The word *La*, in Tibetan means "pass" and *La-Yul* would therefore mean "the land surrounded by passes". The valley of Lahoul is surrounded by high mountains on all sides. The only way to get into the valley is through one of the passes—Rohtang adjoining Kullu, Baralacha adjoining Ladakh, and Kugti pass adjoining Chamba. Huan Tsang called this valley *La-hu-lo*. I wonder if he assigned any meaning to it, since the Chinese is written in pictorial ideograms.

However, the most interesting point is that neither the people of Lahoul, nor the Tibetans, nor the Ladakhis call this valley Lahoul although all the meanings given above are derived from Tibetan. The people of Ladakh and Tibet call it *Garza* or *Garsha*. The people of Lahoul call it *Swangla*. There is no specific meaning for any of these words, apart from their use as proper names. Of course, it is possible to derive any number of meanings by breaking the words into syllables, as done before. In Lahoul particularly in the Patten valley, the word *Swangla* is also used to denote the Brahmins of Lahoul. This could indicate that the Brahmins were the original settlers of the valley. The name *Garsha* has been used in Pali Buddhist literature, where it is mentioned that the famous Buddhist missionary Padmasambhava visited and preached Buddhism in *Zahore* (Mandi) and *Garsha* (Lahoul).

The word Lahoul thus seems to have been used in the neighbouring valley of Kullu and consequently in the rest of India, where it entered the Hindi, Urdu, English and other languages as a proper name.

2

Rohtang Pass—The Gateway to Lahoul

The valley of Lahoul is surrounded by lofty ranges of the western Himalayas. These ranges go up to 6300 metres or 21,000 feet above sea level. It is like a house with the walls formed out of snow-peaked mountains and a roof of shining blue sky, unmolested by human beings. One can not get into the valley from any side one may wish to. Instead, one has to use the few gates (passes) provided by nature in its grandeur.

Rohtang pass to the south, is the main access to the valley. Besides Rohtang, there are a couple of side entrances, or one may call them the back doors, which are not so frequently used. Thus I call Rohtang the main gate of the valley. This pass links the valley with Manali, the famous hill resort of India, a favourite of late Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. Manali is the last hill station of the Kullu valley. The ancient name of Kullu was Kulant Peeth. Hitendra Shastri translates this as, "The end of the habitable world" which Penelop Chetwood found to be a perfect title for her book *Kulu, The End of the Habitable World*. Thus one might say that Rohtang links Lahoul, the uninhabitable world with rest of the habitable world.

In my school days we were taught that the height of Rohtang pass was 14,000 feet above sea level. William Moorcroft, the first British traveller to cross this pass, calculated its altitude to be 13,300 feet. Ten years later Dr. Gerard on his geological expedition calculated it as 13,000 feet. The height recently calculated by the Survey of India is 3955 metres or 13,050 feet above sea level.

Moorcroft called this pass Ritanka Jot. 'Jot', however, means pass. Dr. Gerard called it 'Rohtang'. Later Harcourt, who travelled

in the 1860s, also called it 'Rohtang'. It is not known how and when this change came about. I suspect the differences came about simply due to the difficulty in understanding the pronunciation of the local people. It was not possible to determine if 'Ritanka' has any meaning in any language. For Rohtang, all the writers who mention it, use the meaning "heap of corpses", derived from Tibetan. This may be because of the number of people killed on this pass every year. Here again I may point out that neither of these names are used in any of the local dialects of Lahoul.

Until the 1960s there was no road for vehicular traffic on Rohtang and consequently, in the Lahoul and Spiti valleys, transportation and travel was limited to trekking or ponies, mules, donkeys or sheep. As a matter of fact, Lahoul had not seen a wheeled vehicle until about 1964 when a couple of four-wheel drive jeeps were disassembled, carried over Rohtang pass on mules and were then reassembled in Lahoul.

It was really the Chinese attack on India in 1962 that forced the Indian Government to realise the strategic importance of these mountains and valleys. Thus, major road construction started in 1962-63. Prior to that, there was a zig-zag mule track about four to six feet wide. This track still exists, but is not used any more. Harcourt mentioned in his book *Kooloo Lahoul and Spiti* that this mule track was constructed in 1863 after a trade report issued by a Mr. Davies, who was the Secretary to the Punjab Government at the time. This report drew the government's attention to the advantages that might accrue from fostering trade with Ladakh and Tibet through Lahoul. This mule track was completed by Mr. Theodore* who worked as a district engineer. Before that there was only a footpath for people, barely wide enough to keep one's footing. However, people walking on foot follow all kinds of shortcuts even today.

There exist a series of steps—though badly deformed at present—made of flat stones, that ascend from Rahla, the base of Rohtang, an altitude of about nine thousand feet. They end at Marhi, a plateau at an altitude of about eleven thousand feet, nearly half-

* Mr. Theodore is called "mysterious" by Ms. Penelop Chetwood, since she could not trace his origins. He established the Dobhi estate in Kullu.

way to the top. Moorcroft wrote that these steps were laid out by a Guru called Kilat Bhagat of Banua, a small village between Goshal and Palchan. The name of the person may be right, but it seems that there must be a misprint in the name of the village. It could have been Burua or Barua, since there is no village with the name Banua.

According to local legend the man who constructed these steps had no son. So he prayed to Shiva and promised to construct these steps as a gesture of his faith in the Lord, and of goodwill towards the people, if he were blessed with a son. These steps end slightly below Marhi, where there are some temporary hotels and restaurants for travellers, open only during the summer. This place is also the treeline of beautiful pine of the Kullu valley. About two kilometres above there is a stream, presently known as the Rahni Nallah. In Lahoul dialect this is known as Magarsa Nallah. Magarsa or Makarsa is a name used for Kullu at different times. It is mentioned in several places that Makarsa was once the capital of Kullu. Moorcroft and Trebeck think that the old name of Nagar must have been Makarsa. Hutchison establishes that the old name for Makarsa was actually Makarah, which according to him is near Bajoura where the Kullu Rajas kept a temporary headquarters while at war with Mandi or Suket. Dr. Francke of the Moravian Mission in Lahoul mentioned that this word was found by Miss Duncan of the same mission in the Teenan Chronicle. According to her, Makarsa was derived from Makarsang which in the Teenan dialect means the country of Makar. In this context I may add that the word Makar in Lahouli dialect means "the monkey". There are no monkeys in Lahoul, while the Kullu valley is full of them. For this reason the people of Lahoul might have called Kullu the country of monkeys. In any event, whatever the reason or the meaning, this Magarsa Nallah has been the border between Lahoul and Kullu for most of the recorded history.

About a kilometre further up there is the top of the pass. From here rises the river Byasa (Beas). At this point there is a spring trickling underneath a mica slate that forms a small pond or rather a rill about five feet across and about six inches deep. This spring is considered the source of the river Byasa. From this point the river runs down the hill to the southwesterly direction. The tourists often climb up to the top of Rohtang pass, visit the source of Byasa, and

set a record of their own mountain climbing. They often inscribe their names on the rocks at this place. Alas! who knows the innumerable times the unfortunate people of Lahoul and Spiti cross it on foot with a forty or fifty kilogram load on their backs and sometime carrying a child on top of it. For them it is not a question of setting a world record for Guinness book, but one of necessity and survival.

The rill is called the Byasa Kund by most people. But this is not the real Byasa Kund. Instead, there is a big pond or small lake over one of the mountains to the side, which is supposedly the real Byasa Kund. Harcourt named this mountain the *Peak M*, perhaps for its outline which is M shaped. The height of this peak is 20,366 feet above sea level. There is a stream flowing out of this lake which follows a southwesterly course for about thirteen miles, after which it joins the river Byasa near the village of Palchan. It is said that when the Sikhs conquered Kullu in the 1840s, Lahna Singh—a general under Maharaja Ranjeet Singh—had some work done to improve the condition of this lake. Every year on 20th of the local month of Bhadon (sometime in the first week of September) a fair is celebrated here. It is believed by the people of Kullu valley that a dip in this lake on this day sheds all sins.

It is believed that Rishi Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata*, *Bhagwat Geeta*, and several *Puranas*, meditated on Rohtang at the source of the river Byasa. There is an interesting story of Vyasa's compilation of the epic of *Mahabharata*. When he was ready to compile this epic, Vyasa looked for someone who could write as fast as he could dictate. Ganesha was suggested for this purpose. Vyasa approached Ganesha, who accepted his request under one condition—once he started writing he would not stop till the end. If there was even a single pause, Ganesha would quit. Vyasa accepted this condition with a counter condition. He asked that Ganesha would not write down any verse without first understanding it. Thus when the writing started Vyasa dictated ninety-nine verses fast and fluently, but made every hundredth verse very difficult. By the time Ganesha comprehended the hundredth verse, Vyasa had composed another ninety-nine verses. In this manner they compiled one hundred thousand verses.

Moorcroft mentions a small image of the genius Vyasa about

eighteen inches tall standing near the wall of the rock at the source of the river, along with another smaller figure sculptured out of a hard stone, which were very much worn out by time and exposure. He also observed many flowers offered to the Rishi by Hindu pilgrims. These images, unfortunately, do not exist there anymore. It is hard to say whether they were stolen or destroyed by vandals.

On top of the pass there is a collection of stones and furling prayer flags hung in homage to the resident deity Kali. On the Lahoul end of this plateau, as the descent begins, one can see the roaring waters of the Chandra river tumbling down the rocks. This river is much larger in size than the Byasa river on the Kullu side. The source of the Chandra is far from this place near Baralacha pass.

Rohtang remains snowbound for a period of eight to nine months each year. Out of these eight months, it remains totally closed for a period of about three months during the winter. At other times it can be crossed, but only at the risk of one's life. There is hardly a year in the known history when it has not taken a human toll.

Legends and Myths about Rohtang

There are many different legends and myths about Rohtang based upon various religious beliefs. Under the Shiva-Shakti doctrine, or the Tantric sects, Kali or Shakti is believed to dwell on this pass. In her destructive mode she wears a garland of human skulls. In Lahoul she is also called Rohtang Wali, which simply means "one who dwells on Rohtang" where she takes her toll every year.

There is a legend among the Hindus of Lahoul that is based on the *Mahabharata*. It is said that in their last days the five Pandva brothers left their kingdom—which they had recovered from the Kouravas—to their grandson Parikshit, and accompanied by their wife Dropadi and mother Kunti, came to this part of the Himalayas on pilgrimage. According to this legend, when they reached Rohtang on their journey, mother Kunti got tired and could not make the climb. Seeing this, Bhim, the strongest among the five brothers, was upset as he did not want to leave his mother behind, nor did he want to end his journey there. So, he gave a mighty kick to the mountain and caused a big dent in it. He was just about to kick it

again when Kunti stopped him. She said that if this mountain became too low, then the people of Kullu and Lahoul would become one, which was not destined. Thus a pass was formed and they all crossed it to reach Lahoul. Along their route, they died one by one, except for the eldest brother, Yudhishtira, who was said to have never sinned, and therefore did not die.*

There is a beautiful waterfall on the left side of the pass (while facing towards Kullu valley) across Rahni Nallah. This fall has been named Bhim Fall, based on this story.

The Buddhists' Story

The Buddhists of Lahoul have a different myth about the formation of this pass. This is based on a Tibetan epic, *The Story of King Gyab Kayser*, which runs as follows:

“Long ago a king named Gyab Kayser from western Tibet rode out with the desire of expanding his kingdom. He started his journey towards Lahoul on his famous horse *Thuru Kyangmo*, or *Kyang Norbu*. This horse could fly like Pegasus of Greek mythology. Gyab Kayser conquered Lahoul and finally reached Khoksar, at the end of the valley near Rohtang pass. Here he faced a huge mountain, impossible to cross. This mountain kept Lahoul cut off from the rest of the world. Gyab Kayser was not ready to accept defeat from anyone or anything. He was determined to conquer even nature. So he gave a powerful blow with his magic whip. This blow of the whip caused a big dent in the mountain, shaping it like a saddle. He was just about to give another blow when the goddess *Ane Gurman*, who always stood by his side, stopped him. She said, “If you make this mountain too low, the Buddhists of Lahoul will easily mingle with the people of Kullu. This will spoil the

* In the books on *Mahabharata*, it is mentioned that Kunti did not accompany the Pandvas to the Himalayas. She, along with Dhritrashtra and his wife Gandhari, retired to the forest as penance. While they were there, the forest caught fire. When they found they could not escape the flames, they sat together in meditation facing east and were consumed by the fire.

purity of Buddhism, which you should not do. You are to preserve this religion at every time and every place.”

At this Gyab Kayser stopped further whipping. He noticed that he could climb up the mountain, so he crossed Rohtang and went to the other side, to the base Rahla. There he met a beautiful girl referred to as a *Rakshasni* (demon) for her loose character. The king's *kama manas* (lust mind) overpowered him and he fell in love with her. He forgot his kingdom, his family and his responsibility towards them. Meanwhile, the Chinese king attacked Tibet and plundered Gyab Kayser's kingdom, and kidnaped his wife. The people were desperately hoping that Gyab Kayser would return, but he was nowhere to be found. At last they sent their famous messenger, a bird called *Thung-thung*, in search of the king. *Thung-thung* reached Rahla and found Gyab Kayser lost in love. The bird came and sat on his left shoulder. Gyab Kayser immediately realized that the bird brought bad news, otherwise it would have alighted on his right shoulder. He found the message tied to the wings of the bird, and came to know of the sad story. When he prepared to leave, the girl would not leave him unless he would take her along with him. Finally he asked her to catch hold of the horse's tail and tag along. When he took off, the horse gave a kick with such force that the girl was hurled against the cliff on the other side. There appears a black mark on the cliff, where the girl was supposedly thrown.

Myth in Kullu

The mythological story about Rohtang in Kullu goes as follows.

“The people living beyond this mountain barrier knew about the other world across it, but they had failed to find the way to cross it. When all efforts failed, they resorted to *Tantrism*. They requested a priest to ask Lord Shiva to solve this puzzle. The priest after returning from his trance told them that a sacrifice of a virgin was needed. On the verdict of this priest, the ritual was performed. The priest then left his physical body and went to talk to Shiva. Shiva

at first was angry that the people came to him only when they could not succeed by themselves. The priest lamented and begged his pardon. It is often stated that Shiva is like a child, who gets upset very quickly, and can also be pleased very quickly. On the apologetic request of the priest, he put his anger aside and agreed to help the people in finding the way. He also warned him that the people should be careful of the winds and storms.

After giving this warning, Shiva started beating the mountain with his whip. This whipping caused a lot of wind and storm. Soon the mountain began to crumble. Rocks tumbled down with each blow of the whip. After some time the center of the mountain became lower and formed the shape of a saddle. When he stopped beating and things returned to normal, the people happily started climbing up the pass. They forgot about the warning given to them and many lost their lives in the wind and storm. When they reached the top they did not know where to go next. So they prayed to Shiva again. He appeared in human form and asked them to watch and follow him. Saying this he leaped from the top of the pass down to the base at Rahla. Suddenly the way appeared to the people and they followed it down the hill. From then on the valley of Lahoul got linked to the valley of Kullu through the pass.”

A Recent True Story of Crossing Rohtang

As mentioned earlier, Rohtang remains snowbound for a period of eight to nine months each year. Of these eight months, it remains totally closed for a period of about three months during the winter. At other times it can be crossed on foot, but only at the risk of one's life. There is hardly a year in recorded history when it has not taken a human toll. Many people lose their lives on this pass either due to excessive cold or fierce wind. Some meet their end under falling rocks or avalanches. Some lose their way in the fog or mist and storm. One might pause to wonder why people risk their lives so willfully. Are they fools? Who knows what compulsions or emergencies arise in one's life.

So it happened one day in late March 1973. Dorjai, a young man from the village of Sumnam in Lahoul was crossing Rohtang along with five or six fellow travellers. A soldier in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police stationed in Lahoul, his destination was Kullu to visit his wife and children. He had not seen them during the four or five months when Lahoul was cut off due to Rohtang under sub-zero weather. With great zeal and zest he climbed the pass successfully along with others, his heart full of unexpressed pleasure at the prospect of the coming reunion. On reaching the top they celebrated their success with drinks and snacks, then prayed to the goddess of Rohtang for their continued safety. After a short rest they began their descent. I might add here that at this time of the year there is not even a trace of a road or a footpath here. People make their way from whatever points seem easiest and safest, and frequently are not well equipped for a difficult climb.

This group also began climbing down at random. They had covered scarcely half the distance to the base at Rahla when Dorjai disappeared down a narrow crevasse. The other members of the group saw him slip down into the glacier and rushed to him, but could not reach him. Although it was mid-day, at the bottom of the fault it was pitch dark, impossible to see anything. So Dorjai was gone and they were helpless to do anything. They did not have with them so much as a rope to lower into the crevasse to gauge its depth, or to reach Dorjai. They called to him, but hearing no reply, assumed he was probably dead. Some shed a couple of tears, while others moaned silently. Finding themselves helpless and thinking Dorjai dead, they finally left for Manali before it was dark.

Dorjai had fallen far enough into the crevasse to be out of sight, but had landed in the river Byasa flowing about fifty feet below. Knocked unconscious, he could not respond to the cries of the other travellers, and was washed far downstream beneath the snow. The cold water eventually revived him and he found himself sliding down the shallow rocky stream. He jumped up, looked around and tried to figure out where he was. When he realized what had happened, it was enough to make him quiver. Then suddenly noticing a beam of light shining through a small opening high above, he followed it where he found a dry patch on a large rock.

From the pack still firmly attached to his back, he took out a blanket to wrap around his shivering body, and sat on the little dry spot. He tried to call for help, but it was too late. His friends had long since left and it was growing dark. Dorjai was petrified at the thought of spending the night there, or even worse, of being left there for days starving and freezing until *Yamraj*, the god of death, took him into his lap. There was nothing he could do, except be bold and hope for the best. He thought perhaps his friends had gone to the nearest village, Palchan, about four miles down, for help. As ill-luck would have it, they had not even thought of the village, but instead rushed to Manali to inform the divisional headquarters of the Border Police about the incident.

On reaching Manali, the travellers were helped by the local people to contact the commandant at Babeli by telephone to request a rescue party; or rather, to request a team be sent to dig out the body, as most people who heard of the accident assumed. Although the rescuers rushed from their head office, it was quite impossible to reach the site that night without endangering more lives. They arrived Palchan at about four in the morning, and so were able to reach the scene quite early the next day, but how to proceed was a hard nut to crack.

Under the snow Dorjai had saved himself from the severe cold and hunger with some '*Bagpini*'—roasted barley flour mixed with a local drink—from his knapsack. He had added some hard liquor to the mix to give a little more potency. This served to both fill his belly and keep him away from freezing. But how long could he go on like this, he wondered. The very thought made him tremble. He could see his death dancing naked before his eyes, but he could do nothing except to pray the Almighty who had already shown him His might by saving him from such a fall. Waiting far below the surface, hours seemed like eternity. Suddenly he heard a voice up above. At first he could not believe his ears; he'd already spent about twenty-four hours straining and hoping to hear just this. It, however, did not take too long to assure him that the sound was not a hallucination, but a real team of rescuers searching for him.

The rescue team was looking for him in the crevasse he had fallen into, but he was not there. He had been washed quite far down by the gushing stream which also prevented him from climb-

ing back uphill to the original opening. So he yelled at the top of his lungs for them to come to the lower crevasse. The frustrating part was that because the sound waves from outside were being reflected and echoed within the crevasse, Dorjai could hear every word they said clearly, while the sounds he made were lost in the open air and went unheard by the rescue team. After a fairly extensive search, they all sat down discouraged and ready to abandon the effort, when someone heard a faint voice coming from an opening. Some even thought it must be his ghost. Listening carefully, they followed his instructions to look for a crevasse farther down and soon found the right one. Dorjai's joy knew no bounds when he saw the thick rope descending towards him. He quickly grabbed it and called for them to haul him out immediately. They could not believe their eyes, for here was Dorjai safe and sound on the glacier after spending more than a day under it. In the excitement and confusion, he had forgotten to pack up his knapsack. However, it was too dreadful and dangerous for anyone to go down beneath the glacier to retrieve it.

Well, this was the story of Dorjai, a young man from the army for whom the rescue team would come without hesitation. But how is it for a common man? Heaven only knows how many others lose their lives on Rohtang every year.

3

The Mountains and Glaciers

The Himalayas have always been the dream and the delight of mountaineers. Even though the highest peak, Mount Everest (29,400 feet), is far from Lahoul, there are still high enough peaks in Lahoul to satisfy any professional or amateur climber. There are several peaks over 20,000 feet. While many of them have been successfully climbed or at least attempted, there are still many more that have not even been attempted. Lahoul also has some of the biggest, year-round glaciers. The snow in these glaciers never seems to diminish even after several dry winters.

For those who have the interest, but do not consider themselves skilled in mountaineering, even a trek to Lahoul or up to Rohtang pass is no mean feat. Although buses and trucks negotiate Rohtang during the four or five months when it is open each summer, yet for the sake of an expedition, one can trek from Manali at 6000 feet up to Rohtang top at 13,050 feet, a distance of less than 15 miles one way. Alternatively, one could go to Marhi at about 11,000 feet in a vehicle and then trek the remaining distance to Rohtang top. This involves less than two miles of steep climbing if one does not follow the main road. This, however, is not possible for more than ten months out of the year, because there are a few months when the vehicles cannot even reach Marhi.

Beside Rohtang, there are other passes leading into Lahoul, such as the Kugti pass or Chobia, bordering Chamba; and Baralacha between Lahoul and Ladakh. These passes are up to 18,000 feet high and trekking over them is also quite a feat for ordinary people.

However, for those interested in mountain climbing—as opposed to trekking—there are several peaks worth attempting. Lahoul

is a valley surrounded by high mountains on all sides, like walls around it. Each side or each range has several peaks over 18,000 feet suitable for amateurs and quite a few over 20,000 for professionals. The best part of mountaineering in Lahoul is that one can travel in a jeep fairly close to the base of the mountain or the glacier. This not only makes mountaineering attempts easier and more economical, but also saves a lot of time, leaving more for the actual climb. Also the climbers feel fresh for the attempt at the mountain itself, not having to trek a long way to the base first.

Many peaks in Lahoul have never been named, except perhaps locally. Mountaineers not only have the pleasure of climbing these peaks, but also the honour of naming them. Presently, many peaks are known by the name of the mountaineer or the party that first scaled it, or by the name they gave it.

The following section briefly describes some of the glaciers, mountain ranges and peaks, and the attempts made to climb them. Some of the names mentioned here might differ from the names some mountaineers may be familiar with, since I have tried to use the local names in many cases.

Pir Panjal Range

The Pir Panjal range extends on either side of Rohtang pass. There are several peaks over 19,000 feet and a few over 21,000 feet in this range. I am not aware of many mountaineering attempts in this range. One of the highest peaks in the range, perhaps the highest, is Mulkilla at 21,380 feet. This peak was summited by a group from the National Defence Academy, led by Flt. Lt. Venu Gopal in 1970. Another attempt was made by John Millar and Ravi Chandra in 1972, but their party turned back from about 21,000 feet. They climbed another peak 19,777 feet high, which they named *Wangyal Peak*. Wangyal is a local man who accompanied several mountaineering groups as a porter, or as head porter. He has probably climbed more peaks than any of the mountaineers in this area. Unfortunately, the porters' successes are not generally recorded, even though they not only climb the peaks, but also lead the parties, guide them, and carry their luggage. This time, however, John Millar called him *Sirdar* (headman) Wangyal, and wrote, "Nobody can

appreciate more the service rendered by Sirdar Wangyal to mountaineering than myself". As a tribute to this outstanding Himalayan climber, Millar named the peak after him.

There is another peak, which Harcourt called *Peak M*, in the western extension of this range. Andrew Wilson wrote in his book, *The Abode of Snow*:

“ . . . halfway on the road to Sisu magnificent avalanches of snow may be both heard and seen. On the opposite side of the Chandra river, there rises to the height of 20,356 feet the extremely precipitous Peak M of the Trigonometrical Survey, and from the great beds of snow upon it, high above us, avalanches were falling every five minutes . . .”

I do not know if anyone has ever climbed this peak. Further down the range there are the Mooling and Gushal glaciers. I have not found any mention of an attempt on either of these glaciers.

Shigri Glacier

Located on the southeastern end of Lahoul, the Shigri glacier has been a center of attraction for scores of mountaineers for a long time. There are a series of ranges, each with several peaks over 18,000 feet. These ranges separate the Lahoul valley from the Spiti valley. There are several ways to approach them depending upon the range one is interested in. For example one can approach these ranges going upstream along the Chandra river after crossing the Rohtang pass. Another way to get to these ranges is through the Hampta pass in Kullu valley. A third approach is from the Parvati valley in Kullu.

There have been several attempts on these peaks. Each of the successful expeditions climbed several peaks and gave their own names to most of the peaks. Some of these expeditions are described below.

In 1953, A.E. Gunther climbed a peak 20,000 feet high that he named Concordia.

In 1955, Trevor Brahm and Peter Holms went from Cambridge on a scientific expedition. They climbed one peak of 18,500 feet that they named Virgin Peak, and two other peaks one of 19,500

feet and another of 19,720 feet. They did not name these peaks at the time, however, later they came to be known as Holms' Peaks. In the same year another party constituted of Mr. and Mrs. Hamish McArthur and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Solari went to Chandratat area. They penetrated a large glacier, but there is no mention of their having climbed any peak.

In 1956, Holms returned to the area along with G.W. Walker. Prem Nath, a security officer from India also accompanied them. This time they climbed peaks of 18,000, 20,500, 20,705 and the highest one of 20,710 feet. They climbed a total of ten peaks and discovered twelve passes.

Another party that went to Bara Shigri in the same year, consisted of four ladies lead by Eileen Gregory and accompanied by Joyce Dunsheath, Hilda Reid and Frances Delany. They climbed Cathedral, a peak of 20,500 feet, but I am not certain if this name was given by them or it had been named already. They did, however, name another peak 'Chapter House', which they did not climb.

In 1958, a party lead by J.G. Stephenson and accompanied by J.P. O'F Lynam, D.T. Osselton, J. Stopford and an Indian security officer, Captain R.K. Malhotra went to the Bara Shigri and Gyundi area. They climbed a peak of 18,000 feet that they named Hog's Back, another one 18,500 feet called Brahm's and Holms' peak, and a fluted peak of 20,200 feet. They also climbed a 20,570 feet peak, again called Holms' Peak, and one of 20,570 feet called Berril's Peak. Another expedition in the same year was a women's group lead by Ann Davies. They climbed an 18,500 feet peak which they named Biwi Giri, which means Wives' Peak, for the group consisted of wives on vacation.

In 1961, J.P. O'F Lynam came back to Bara Shigri with Peter Harvey, Herold Mellor and J. Stephenson. They climbed a 21,800 feet peak which they named Shigri Parbat (parbat in Hindi means mountain). They wrote that during the trip they called the mountain 'Moby Dick'. Another party of women, lead by Eileen Gregory and including Eve Sims, Barbara Spark and Josephine Scarr, summited two peaks of 20,000 and 20,495 feet in the Shigri glacier area.

Most of the expeditions came from Europe, but there was one party consisting of all Indian women that went to the Shigri glacier in 1972. This party lead by Mrs. Sujaya Guha included Ms. Kamla

Saha, Ms. Sudipta Sen Gupta, Ms. Nilu Ghosh, Ms. Shefali Chakraborty and Dr. Purnima Sharma, all from Calcutta. They climbed a 20,130 feet peak, which they named Lalana. This group met a tragic end. Later in the expedition, Kamla, Shefali and Sujaya were trying to cross the fast flowing Karcha Nallah. The porters accompanying them had gone ahead, asking the women not to attempt crossing the nallah until they returned. Unfortunately they did not pay attention to it. Kamla and Shefali slipped and were carried away by the tumbling waters. Shocked and exhausted by her unsuccessful attempt to pull them to safety, Sujaya suffered heart failure. When the porters came back and found Sujaya dead and the others missing, they searched frantically and sent word of the accident to the base camp. In the darkness of the night they found Shefali still alive, but no trace of Kamla. Sujaya's body was later cremated at Sitingri in Lahoul. I was visiting Keylong some time after this incident, where my cousin Dr. Kishan Dass, the medical officer at Keylong, gave me this tragic news. While I would not discourage mountaineering enthusiasts, especially women, this kind of adventure is always fraught with risks from avalanches, rock falls, freezing wind and rain, snowstorms and roaring rivers.

Ghepan Peak, Drilbu, Kulti and Milang Glacier

There is a mountain range between Chandra and Bhaga rivers. The lower section, close to the confluence of the rivers is locally known as Drilbu. Ghepan peak, though only 19,259 feet high, is the most well-known peak in this area because of its visibility from many places in the valley and its appearance. It is shaped somewhat like the Matterhorn in Switzerland, and is snowclad throughout the year. The name Ghepan peak is taken from the local deity Ghepan. As far as I am aware, no one has conquered it so far. Although there are several peaks rising over 18,000 feet in the Drilbu area, most of them have not been climbed.

The first glimpse of Lahoul which one gets when crossing the Rohtang pass is Kulti glacier near Khoksar, the first village beyond the pass. An expedition of the Royal Air Force Mountaineering Association of England, lead by Capt. A.J.M. Smyth climbed this glacier in 1955. The group accompanied by two Indians—Flt. Lt.

Nalini Jayal and Dev Datta—climbed and named several peaks: Asha-giri (Mount of Hope) 20,000 feet; Akela-kila (Lonely Fort); Jori (The Pair); Tambu (The Tent); Tila-ki-lahar (Wave of Tila) 19,567; and Tara-giri (Star Mount) 21,000 feet. A few years ago a group of college students from India went to this same area, one of them lost his life.

Milang glacier is north of Kulti, between Khoksar and Darcha. Milang Nallah originates from this glacier and flows towards Darcha village. First climbed by the National Union of Students Expedition of 1939, this area includes several peaks exceeding 18,000 feet. Tara-giri is actually closer to this glacier than to Kulti.

Looking towards this section from Keylong, the district headquarters of Lahoul, one can see a huge glacier with several peaks. The glacier is always snow covered, but right in the middle of it there is a dark bare patch, which looks like the figure of a woman walking with a load on her back. I learned that the Geological Survey of India named this spot '*The Lady of Keylong*', and used it as a benchmark for its aerial survey.

North and Northwest Ranges

The northern ranges separate Lahoul from the Zanskar valley of Jammu and Kashmir State, while the northwestern ranges separate Lahoul from Pangi Tehsil of Himachal Pradesh's Chamba District. There are several peaks and glaciers in this area also, many unnamed. Rev. Gordon Jones trekked in this area in 1958, noting a few names such as Darcha peak, Baroh-Goh and others. Darcha peak takes its name from the nearby village Darcha. I am not sure if the peak is north of the village, or if it is south or southwest of it. If it is on south, then it should be considered part of the Milang glacier. As for Baroh-Goh, I can just imagine Rev. Jones asking some local villagers for the name of the mountain to the north. These people probably did not know it by any name in particular, and puzzled but wanting to oblige, looked from one to the other until someone suggested the name Baroh-Goh, 'upper mountain' in the local Pattani dialect.

Several tributaries rise from the glaciers in this area. Mayar Nallah, Thiroth Nallah, and Barsi Nallah being the three largest,

along with the smaller ones such as Jahlma, Shansha, Lote and Beeling Nallahs. Bordering each glacier are peaks rising upwards of 18,000 feet.

An expedition lead by Hamish McArthur which included his wife Margaret Munro, Emile Bayle and Mr. & Mrs. Frank Solari, went to Thiroth Nallah in 1958. They climbed one peak over 18,000 feet high and charted several others, such as White Pyramid peak, beyond Barsi Nallah at 20,218 feet, Dark Truncated Cone peak at 20,730 feet, Phabrang peak at 20,250 feet, another flanking Thiroth Nallah at 20,020 feet, and a final one at 20,042 feet. This party also met an unfortunate fate. Hamish McArthur suffered a cerebral haemorrhage. In this remote corner of the world it is impossible to get any kind of immediate medical attention, and he died soon after.

Dark Truncated Cone had been scaled by an Italian party in 1945 using an approach from Gangthang glacier. Phabrang was summited by a Japanese expedition of the Shiga Prefecture Mountaineering Association, lead by S. Ibayashi in 1972. They also climbed another unnamed peak with an elevation close to 19,400 feet. In the same year another Japanese team from Tokyo Denki University lead by T. Ohtake climbed Phabrang South, at 20,144 feet, and another peak of about 19,000 feet. This team made an attempt on another peak at 20,100 feet in Thiroth Nallah, but did not succeed. In 1960 an Indian team led by Mr. Reece climbed Gangthang, 20,730 feet high.

West and Southwestern Ranges

The southern range is an extension of the Pir Panjal range discussed earlier. It separates Lahoul from the Bara Banghal area of Kangra District and the Bharmour area of the Chamba District in Himachal Pradesh. Kugti pass at 16,530 feet, Chobia pass at 16,441 feet and Kalicho pass permit entry into Lahoul from Chamba. There are several peaks in the 17,000 to 18,000 feet range in this area, but few exceed 18,000 feet. One that does is Mani Mahesh Kailash, also known as Chamba Kailash, at 18,556 feet. I am not aware of any expedition that has tried to conquer the peaks in this area, however, several parties have trekked through the passes.

4

The Avalanche of 1979

The people of the Lahoul valley had seen plenty of snow many times. They had seen avalanches and glaciers. They had seen snowstorms and disasters, but never in their history have they seen such a horrible disaster as the one that occurred in March 1979.

Once in the late 1940s a huge avalanche fell in Jobrang village that wiped out many houses and killed many people, but it was confined to one or two villages only. Lives have been lost here and there in avalanches many times, but those incidents are taken as lightly as car accidents—while they are probably the single most frequent cause of death in the world, still people ride in car without a second thought. This was the first time in the history of Lahoul that avalanches came down in every corner of the valley, wiping out many villages, and killing hundreds of human beings and thousands of animals. This incident has become an unforgettable page in their history for the villagers of Lahoul, particularly for those who witnessed it. A brief description of this catastrophe is given in the following paragraphs, most of which is taken from the diary of Sham Lal Thakur of Tholang village, who witnessed the avalanche and was involved in the rescue efforts.

The festival of Fagli, one of the most important celebrations in Lahoul—the New Year's Day of local tradition in lunar calendar—started on 27th of February that year. In the midst of the festivals, in early March, it snowed continuously for six days and nights. By the end of the sixth day about fourteen feet of snow had fallen. As always, the residents took the precaution of regularly clearing the snow from their roofs, to save the houses from crumbling under its weight. The snow piles became so high that to cross to the next

house, people had to go up the roof of their three storey houses and then walk over the snow pile. The spaces in-between the houses were completely filled up with snow.

On March 6 it stopped snowing. The festive mood of the season had not yet completely faded away as the people began clearing the snow in the early morning, thanking God that it had finally stopped snowing. No one suspected the impending disaster. They were just happy that after a long time they would finally see the sun. Of course, avalanches are nothing new to Lahoul. Whenever and wherever the danger was imminent, people took care to go to safer lodgings for the night. Triloknath was one of the places where people always took such precaution because Triloknath is very prone to avalanches. The Thakur, or Rana of Triloknath has some large rooms in his basement built as public shelter specifically for this purpose. Realising the danger, whenever there is more than a few feet of snow, all the villagers gather there. Perhaps these precautions are taken because of the memories of past disasters. The Rana perhaps built these shelters because he accepted it that part of his duty was to protect his subjects from natural disasters. Unfortunately in other places where avalanches are not so common, the people forgot to take such precautions.

Around mid-morning, while most people were on their roofs clearing away the snow, avalanches suddenly fell in all parts of the valley. They could see them coming, but there was no escape. They felt as if the sky were falling on them. A powerful wind raced ahead of the avalanche, followed quickly by a wall of snow. For a day or two it was impossible for villagers in less affected areas to make any rescue attempts. There were no means of communication in the valley. Even today, Lahoul does not have a telephone, or any other means of communication, even a walkie-talkie or a CB radio, not to mention a radio station or any other means of warning people of danger. The villages of Garang and Waring were wiped out, while the people of Lote, only three miles away, learned about the disaster days later when a school teacher from Lote, stationed near the disaster area, came home and spread the news. Only then could they go for rescue. Others who learned about the disaster earlier, had to wait until the snow had stabilised and the danger of avalanche was comparatively less, before they could rush into the

affected areas. But then it was too late despite their best efforts.

The rescue parties were astonished to find that a number of villages had been completely swept away. At Garang and Waring in the Pattan valley, not a single house was spared. Sixty people were buried under the snow and debris in these two villages, and eleven homes were completely demolished. In the initial rescue effort six people were saved, although some were badly hurt or severely frost-bitten. In these two villages alone, forty-eight people died and fifty were left destitute. Hundreds of animals were lost and nearly three thousand cultivated willow trees were uprooted.

The dead were cremated wherever possible in the vast snow piles. As each new body was uncovered the air was filled with cries and wails. All the familiar faces of friends and relatives! In one house a couple was found with their arms around each other, together sheltering their three small children, but all were dead. In another, *halwa* (a sweet pudding) had just been prepared for breakfast when the avalanche buried everything. Two legs were found at different places, but the torso was never found and they could not be identified. Several bodies were carried all the way across river Chenab and not found until several months later.

Many asked where did so destructive an avalanche come from. In the case of these two villages, earlier snowfall higher up on the mountain at Shiya had become solid ice. The fourteen or fifteen feet of new snow could not hang on to this ice base and began to slip. It pushed everything before it, including rocks and uprooted trees, as it slid down the mountain.

In the same manner more than a dozen villages were badly ruined. The villages affected most, besides the two already mentioned, were Jispa, Yurnad, Guskyar, Gumrang, Yangling, Yanglay, Joondha, Galing, Bardang, Shikoli, Hinsa and some smaller, scattered settlements. About three thousand animals and 204 villagers were lost, and the property damage ran into millions.

Many of these villages are gone forever. Only their names will remain alive in the valley's history, along with the stories of pathos and horror of this disaster.

Destiny and Miracles

For a variety of reasons, possibly just from ignorance, we hu-

mans often do not believe in miracles, destiny or fate. We ordinarily attribute many happenings to chance, yet the way several things happened in this incident, one cannot help pondering upon destiny. Some of these unusual circumstances and events are listed in the following paragraphs.

One girl from Waring told her parents and the other members of her family that she had a feeling that they might face an avalanche. The family ignored her warning, saying that they'd never had avalanches there before, why should they have one now? She left the house by herself and went somewhere else, and thus she was saved. Similarly, her sister-in-law left Lahoul of her own accord that winter and went to Kullu without first seeking permission from the elders, which is highly against the norms, and thus she also was saved.

In the same village there was a nursemaid from Tholang village. A day or two prior to the avalanche, she ran away in the middle of the snowstorm, and this saved her life. There was another girl, who was married and living in Waring, but her parents lived in Tholang. The nursemaid asked this girl to go with her, but she refused, saying it was impossible for her to go out in such a snowstorm with her child. Both mother and child lost their lives.

Two brothers from Garang had finished clearing the snow from their own house and were going to help their neighbours. Their family asked them to come in and have something to eat or drink before going to help their neighbours. They refused, saying that they were in the mood to clear all that damn snow first. No sooner had they arrived at the neighbour's house, than the avalanche came and swept the house away, and them along with it, while their own house was spared. A cup of tea would have saved their lives.

In one house there was a ladder reaching from the second floor roof to the third floor roof. A man clearing the snow on the higher roof saw the avalanche coming and quickly tried to climb down the ladder and get inside. The avalanche overtook him before he could climb down. Not knowing what to do, he just held on to the ladder, and prayed. He was thrown far away, along with the ladder, to a safer place while his house was demolished.

One man had lived with his uncle in an apple orchard in Kullu

most of his life. That year after a disagreement with his uncle he had left the orchard to spend the winter in Lahoul for the first time in twenty-two years. Unfortunately he too became another victim of this avalanche as a result. His brother, who had been living in Lahoul, went with his family to replace him in Kullu, although it was not essential. This move saved their lives.

At Yurnad, the avalanche took a strange zig-zag course. With one zig it flowed away from a house, and with a zag returned to its original course just below the house, sparing that one house in a strange manner. A rich man's house was demolished, killing the entire household except for one small boy who was not at home. There the gold ornaments and silver coins were scattered all over. In another incident, a man was found far away across the river, the end point of the avalanche. A small box full of money was found lying next to the dead man, its lid open but the rupee notes intact.

A girl from Tholang was a Sanskrit teacher at Gaymur. She, along with several of her students were spared in her classroom, while the rest of the school-house was destroyed. A similar incident happened to another teacher at Udaipur.

At Triloknath, the main part of the temple, where the idol is kept, was left intact while the rest of the structure was wrecked along with many other houses nearby. It was reported that in several places, the rooms in which pictures of Shiva, Rama or Krishna were hung were spared, to the extent that the pictures on the wall were still intact, while the rest of the rooms were razed. Many such incidents forced people to think more carefully before denying the existence of God and the higher powers. This was particularly true for those who saw many of these things with their own eyes. New temples were erected after this incident in several places.

I hope I am not adding insult to injury for those who lost their families and friends, by reminding them of all these unfortunate events. I omitted specific names and references in order to make the blow a little softer, lest their wounds be reopened. However, I feel that these events must be recorded in order to preserve the history of this unfortunate mishap.

I received news of this disaster on March 15th from a friend who heard it on a radio broadcast in Ohio. He had recently returned after visiting the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, and so he was not

only familiar with, but also interested in that area, leaving little chance of his being mistaken. However, I thought that the press coverage must have been either mistaken or sensationalised, because nothing like that had ever happened in Lahoul's history. I thought that perhaps some people had died on Rohtang pass, which often happens, and the news reporters had mistakenly located it within the valley of Lahoul. I also thought that this time there must have been an unusually large number of victims for it to have made the news outside of India.

I rushed to the Cornell University library to check the Indian newspapers but without luck; it takes a fortnight for newspapers to reach Ithaca. Later, when I did see the papers, I was shocked. Next I tried to phone Thakur Devi Singh, Forest Minister of Himachal Pradesh, and the representative of Lahoul Spiti. The first night I was told that he was on a tour of Lahoul. He had gone by helicopter to inspect the scene. The second night I reached him in the *Vidhan Sabha* at about 3.00 A.M. (New York time). When I heard the details from him, a cold wave of shock passed through me at the thought that some of Lahoul's villages had been erased from the face of the earth forever.

I pondered upon the situation. There was nothing that any one could do for those who had lost their lives, except to pray for them. However, something could and must be done for the survivors left homeless and without family. Many of them were students who were studying at high schools, colleges or universities far from home. Besides the shock of losing their families, they might have to abandon their studies for lack of financial support. I felt we should raise a fund to help them continue their studies. To this end, I wrote a letter to the paper *India Abroad* and the newsletter of the Cornell India Association. I also tried to distribute leaflets of appeal personally. The result was terribly disappointing. I thought that even if only one percent of the readers would respond with a few dollars each, a fairly good amount could be raised, but I was wrong. I considered it a duty and the responsibility of Indians to do something for their fellow countrymen in distress. Under FISI (Friends of India Society International), we had made such efforts before when there was a typhoon in Andhra, floods in Bengal and a dam burst in Morvi, Gujarat. Unfortunately in this case, scarcely a dozen

people responded. After adding our own contributions, we were able to send only a few hundred dollars, barely a token of sympathy. Perhaps it is true that bad days never come alone. The disappointment was so overwhelming that I was not able to even write a note of thanks to those who came forward and sent contributions. I would like to thank them now. I even lost my interest in the Friends of India Society from that day.

I was told that the support from the local people of Lahoul was tremendous. Everybody tried to do whatever they could. The students of Lahoul in various places like Shimla and Chandigarh devoted a lot of time lobbying the bureaucratic governments of India and Himachal Pradesh to send help to the disaster-stricken people. They also accompanied the parties in the helicopters that dropped relief supplies to the disaster areas. Their effort was commendable. Of course we are thankful to the Governments of Himachal and India for whatever they did to help the victims. The efforts of Thakur Devi Singh were particularly commendable.

A few years later when I was visiting India, I met a man, Shiv Dyal of Waring, who had lost his leg in that avalanche and was walking on crutches. He thanked me for sending money. At first I did not understand what he was talking about. On further inquiry I learned that the small collection we had sent, was given to him. The collection being meager, we had not specified where it should be used.

Section II

THE HISTORY OF LAHOUL

- Chapter 5. Prehistory
- Chapter 6. Ancient History of Lahoul
- Chapter 7. Ranas and Thakurs—The Local Rulers of Lahoul
- Chapter 8. Origins and Transmigration
- Chapter 9. Modern History of Lahoul

5

Prehistory

No written records remain of the earliest history of Lahoul. In those distant times important events were retained in the form of epics, legends, songs, folk traditions, *Banshavali* or *Rajtaragani* etc. That is why the history of India presented to us today remains vague and incomplete. Centuries, even thousands of years may have elapsed for which we have no reliable, contemporary account. Thus history of India produced in the Western tradition, primarily by the British, tend to foreshorten our view, placing events that may have occurred tens of centuries ago, much nearer to the modern era. Indian historians themselves seem to have accepted this interpretation of events, declining to investigate the sources and think independently.

Unfortunately, there is no acid test for research in a field such as history. Historians' hypotheses are full of "maybes" and "must have beens", unlike scientific researchers whose theories can be developed mathematically and then proved in the laboratory. Errors, misreadings committed by one author are too frequently perpetuated unquestioningly by those who base their own work on others. There is a saying, "A lie told a thousand times becomes a truth"; so seems to be the nature of histories.

Thus the history of Lahoul presented here is, at some points, a divergent view of the antiquity of India, disputing many currently popular datings, and will also therefore, be full of "maybes" and "must have beens".

Much of my research is based on the chronicles of the neighbouring areas of Chamba, Kullu, and Ladakh, and is substantiated by languages, dialects, legends, folklores, and traditions

handed down orally from generation to generation. For the largest part of this history, Lahoul has been a battleground for these three kingdoms, with occasional forays by Tibet, Kashmir, Jammu, Yarkand, Baltistan and Punjab. A history of Lahoul must, therefore, include the rising and waning fortunes of Chamba, Kullu and Ladakh. At many points, the chronicles of all three neighbouring kingdoms claim Lahoul simultaneously, indicating that the area was partitioned repeatedly, claims easily substantiated by cultural similarities in the bordering valleys. Occasionally, one kingdom would grow powerful enough to overrun all of Lahoul, and even its rivals, holding them in suzerainty. The most common arrangement seems to have been for Ladakh in the northeast to rule the Tod and Gahar valleys, Chamba in the west to rule Chamba-Lahoul beyond Thiro, and Kullu in the south to dominate the Ranglo and Gondhla valleys. The Pattan valley in western Lahoul, especially from Sangam (at the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga) to Jahlma was disputed by all three.

No doubt it is very difficult to establish even an approximate dating for ancient India, yet to conclude that her history must extend several thousand years in the past requires only a consideration of the maturity of her culture, along with such internal evidence as exists in her great epics. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* in their scope and philosophical subtlety could only be the result of thousands of years' of experience and experimentation by the researchers and sages known as Rishis and Munis. Yet, they predate the Christian era. Dr. N.N. Godbole in his book *Rigvedic Sarasvati* offers his theories, based on evidence of geographical and other changes extracted from a description of *Sapta-Sindhawa* and the river *Sarasvati*, that the *Rig-Vedic* age may have been fifteen thousand years ago!

In the epic *Ramayana*, we encounter similarly suggestive material. Here, the exiled Prince Rama obtained the help of *Vanar Sena*, an army of apes, led by Hanuman and Sugreev whom he had met deep in the forests of southern India. If we take this to be more than social commentary on the natives, it could indicate the *Ramayana* is of such antiquity that parts of India were in that era, still inhabited by anthropological ape-men, existing at the same time and at no great distance from a highly civilized culture in the kingdoms of

Raja Janak and Raja Dashrath.

While there is no agreement on the dates of the Ramayana's composition, it is conventionally placed anywhere from 2000 to 10,000 B.C. If we, for a moment, tend to accept the later date, then this may even coincide with the latest findings of Dr. Leaky and his pupils about the anthropological ape-man in Africa, which they date only 10,000 years back. Indian scriptures name this period *Sat-Yuga*, the "Age of Truth", while our own times are known as *Kal-Yuga*, the "Machine Age", being fourth in succession from *Sat-Yuga*. The division of *Yugas*, however, is not based strictly on a regular cycle of years. Rather, certain prescribed patterns in world affairs, such as the decline and fall of a dominant civilization signal their culmination. The Chamba Gazetteer offers a clue in its report of an inscription on a local fountain at Sai which gives the date as 4270 of the *Kal-Yuga* (1168-69 AD), with 4,27,730 years remaining until the end of the era. Thus the whole *Kal-Yuga* was reckoned as 4,32,000 years. If we were to assume that this is a "typical" length, *Sat-Yuga*—the era of Rama's exploits—would have ended about 8,70,000 years ago. On the other hand if third world war breaks out tomorrow, in which it is likely that most of this earth will get destroyed; then certainly it will be the end of this era. Thus *Kal-yuga* will be only about 5000 years long. In the same manner certain ages might have been even shorter.

Another epic, the *Mahabharata*, recounts the struggles and eventual victory of the Pandvas. Their terrible, final battle and its destruction of an Indian civilization also mark the close of *Dwapar-Yuga*, the era immediately preceding our own. Most historians regard this as an actual event, placing this period at about 2000 B.C. Although I have not been able to find documentary proof to support the claim, I have heard that the star pattern described in the *Mahabharata* could only have occurred astronomically at about 4000 B.C. This would tend to support the Sai fountain inscription.

Recorded History

Chamba

The earliest references to Lahoul in recorded history appear in

the writings of Chinese pilgrims. The most famous of these, Huan Tsang, who came to India about 640 AD, names Lahoul as "La-hu-la" and Kullu as "Kiu-lo-to". An earlier pilgrim, Fa-Hian, travelling about 400 AD noted that King Ashoka's missionaries were converting people to Buddhism, which was flourishing in the little state of Kia-Chhe (Ladakh), but does not mention Lahoul directly.

According to Hutchinson and Vogel, and also the Gazetteer of Chamba, the city and kingdom of Chamba were established in 920 AD by Sahil Varma. Previously the district had been known as Brahmpura, with its capital at Bharmour, founded in 550 AD. Here we find a conflict in our sources. Huan Tsang reports witnessing the establishment of several new cities, among which was "Champa". The district gazetteer further corroborates that the original name was indeed Champa, after Sahil Varma's daughter. Yet we find ourselves with a discrepancy of almost 200 years.

Huan Tsang* was no simple wanderer, but a scholar, writer and spiritual seeker who maintained a detailed diary of his travels, which he later transcribed as "Hsi-Yu-Chi", the Record of Western Travel. His journey of 50,000 li** required seventeen years to complete, and his diary has become the subject of both popular usage and scholarly research, most notably by Bhikshu Tich Minh Chau, president of Van Hanh University of Saigon. In his book *Tsuan Tsang, Pilgrim and Scholar* he expresses surprise over the thoroughness of detail and accuracy of the "Master's" work. Unfortunately, Huan Tsang's diaries were composed in Chinese ideograms. A literal translation is impossible, and we must rely heavily on translations which in many cases do not even agree on the proper transliteration of Huan Tsang's own name. Alexander Cunningham based his geography of ancient India on Huan Tsang's account, just as most histories of the period rely heavily on his descriptions. If

* The name Huan Tsang has been spelled differently in different references. Most Indian history books spell it as 'Huan Tsang'. A. Cunningham spells it 'Huan Tsang', while Bhikshu Tich Minh Chu spells it as 'Tsuan Tsang'. I preferred to use the first one.

** One Li is about 1/3 mile according to Webster's dictionary. Cunningham translated 6 Li = 1 mile, while Bhikshu Tich Minh Chu puts 5 Li for a mile; and a Chinese friend of mine told me 1 Li to be approximately equal to 1/2 kilometre.

we accept the translations as accurate, Chamba must have been established in the mid-600s, with the dating of the earlier Brahmapura state pushed back to the 4th century.

The rulers of Chamba claim to be Suryavanshi, descendants of Lav, one of Rama's sons. There are, however, references to Brahmpura kings—Vishnu Varman, Vrish Varman, Sri Agni Varman and Dvij Varman—who are supposed to have originated in Som Vansha. These names are not included in the Chamba chronicles and may, therefore, predate the Suryavanshi dynasty, also substantiating an earlier founding date.

The origin of the name "Champa" is given by the gazetteer as follows:

Champavati, Sahil Varma's daughter, was religiously inclined. But, her visits each evening to a *Sadhu* for religious instruction eventually aroused suspicions of evil-doing in her father. One day he followed her to the hermit's hut, his sword drawn and ready to punish any impropriety. Entering, he found instead that the place was deserted. A voice arose from the empty air upbraided him for his evil and suspicious mind, and told him that his daughter had been taken from him as punishment. In her memory, he was directed to erect a temple in the very place he stood.

This Champavati temple, with an image of the goddess Durga slaying the buffalo demon, still exists in Chamba.

Kullu

The history of Kullu may be traced to a much earlier period than that of Chamba. Although most historians place its founding in the first or second century A.D., a careful study of the Pal and Singh dynasties suggests it to be the first century B.C. instead.

Seventy-seven kings reigned in the recorded history of the Pal dynasty, from Behanga Muni Pal to Kailash Pal, who is said to have ruled from 1428 to 1450 A.D. They were followed by twenty Singh rulers, extending from the collapse of the Pals with the reign of Sidh Singh, to Bhagwant Singh in power at the time of India's independence. If we can attribute an average reign of twenty years to each of these ninety-seven kings, we must assume that the first Pal leader established his throne roughly in 100 B.C. Hutchinson &

Vogel contend that Kullu was founded no earlier than 100 A.D., tracing Behanga Muni's origins to Prayag or Allahabad, but do not offer support for this assertion.

Cunningham, in his *Ancient Geography of India*, writes:

“The *Vishnu Purana* mentions a people called Ulluta or Kulluta, who are most probably the same as the Kaulutas of the *Ramayana* and that of *Brihat Samhita*, as this form of the word agrees precisely with the Chinese Kiuloto. I can only conclude that the modern Kullu must be an abbreviation of this ancient name.”

Another reference to this area occurs in the epic *Mahabharata*. It is believed that Hidimba, the wife of Bhim Pandva was from Kullu; and indeed, Kullu is full of Hadimba temples, although she is called *Rakshasni*.

Further physical evidence of the early history of Kullu is presented in *Tribal History of Ancient India*. Its author, K.K. Dasgupta writes:

“The coins of Kuluta have disclosed the names of two kings, Vijya Mitra and Virayasas; Marshal has sought two other names, Satya Mitra and Arya on the basis of Allen's readings . . . These coins of Kuluta are found to have legends in both the Brahmi and Kharoshti alphabets. The characters of Brahmi and Kharoshti on these legends tend to place all the coins in the first century A.D. or round about 100 AD.”

Dasgupta also, therefore, seems to resist placing the establishment of Kullu before the Christian era. But returning to our records of Pal and Singh rulers, the kings cited by Dasgupta may imply an even earlier period in Kullu history.

Ladakh

The only available written history of Ladakh begins in the 9th century with the reign of Kyide-Nima-Gaon, and so can shed no light on our investigation of the ancient origins of Lahoul and its neighbours prior to 9th century A.D.

6

Ancient History of Lahoul

Rajas Versus Ranas and Thakurs

In the book *History of Punjab Hill States*, Hutchison and Vogel state that in olden times India was ruled by Ranas and Thakurs. They also add that Raja was a term that came much later, perhaps during the Muhammadan period. I would like to refute this claim. The title Raja, which essentially means king, has been used from time immemorial. From the *Ramayana* period one can find the title Raja used for Raja Dashrath and Raja Janak and others. Hutchison and Vogel must have confused the word 'Raja' with the word 'Baadshah' in its origin. Baadshah is certainly an Urdu or Persian word and must have been introduced during the Mogul period. In my opinion the Ranas and the Thakurs were the petty chiefs and the fiduciaries of some Rajas. They might have replaced or acted as Rajas and become full-fledged chiefs on some occasions, when a Raja was killed or defeated in battle by some other Raja, who in turn appointed the Rana as the chief of state under his suzerainty.

In Lahoul also, several petty chiefs called Ranas and Thakurs existed. With a few exceptions, most of these petty chiefs were directly or indirectly under the Rajas of neighbouring states of Kullu, Chamba, or Ladakh for the major part of recorded history. At times all these states have claimed to have dominated Lahoul simultaneously, only indicating that each perhaps held a part of it. The Ranas or Thakurs exist even today, but with the title as a surname only. They hold some *jagir* (land holding) with no other powers attached to it. The earliest of these petty chiefs in Lahoul seem to have

existed at Triloknath in Chamba-Lahoul and at Gyamur in Tod valley. In the *History of Punjab Hill States* Gyamur Orr appears as a small kingdom. Hutchison and Vogel could not place it. They wrote that it is perhaps somewhere in Ladakh. Nevertheless I feel confident that this Gyamur may be nothing but the Gaymur in Lahoul. From this Gaymur, or later Kolang, the Thakurs ruled a part of Lahoul until the independence of India. Their original title was Jo. This kingdom at times might have included Rupsho and perhaps some part of Ladakh and Zanskar along with the Tod valley of Lahoul.

Hutchison and Vogel and also Harcourt mention that the Ranas also existed in Tindi, Salgraon, Margraon, Lota (Lote) and Gus (Gushal) in Lahoul. They also add that chief among them was the Rana of Triloknath, whose barony was comprised of the greater part of Chamba-Lahoul which his family had possessed from time immemorial. The others seem to have been established at a much later stage and in different periods. They further add that the baronial families seem to have also existed in Kardang, Barbog and Darcha.

Gyamur and Triloknath seem to have been independent more often than the others, especially in the earlier periods. Since it has been difficult to establish the exact dates of the existence of these Ranas and their association with specific kingdoms, the description of these Ranas is given in a separate chapter. Also in earlier times the valley of Lahoul was scarcely populated, therefore the history presented in this chapter mainly concerns the main valley and parts of it. The history of its inhabitants is given in the subsequent chapters. In this chapter we shall discuss Lahoul in general with reference to the kingdoms of Kullu, Chamba, Ladakh and other neighbouring areas.

Lahoul's Association with Kullu (before 600 A.D.)

As established in the previous chapter, the traceable history of Kullu begins much earlier than the other states. Therefore it is possible that most of Lahoul was under Kullu in its earlier days, though there is no mention of it anywhere. It is also possible that the two extreme corners—Triloknath and Gyamur—were each

independently ruled by these Ranas, while there was not much population or other activity in the area in between the two territories, and therefore no one had real claim to it.

Lahoul is first mentioned in the Kullu chronicle during the reign of Rudra Pal, the 18th Raja of the Pal dynasty in Kullu. This seems to be sometime between 400 and 500 A.D. During this period Rajendra Sen, the Raja of Spiti, attacked Kullu and defeated Rudra Pal. At that time Chamba is said to have seized Lahoul from Kullu. Here we face a problem. According to the District Gazetteer of Chamba, the kingdom of Brahmpura (the predecessor of Chamba) was established some time around 550 A.D., while Chamba itself was established in the 9th century, as described in the previous chapter. Accordingly, there is no question of Chamba seizing Lahoul at that time. The Gazetteer, however, mentions that during the reign of Meru Varman, the eighth ruler of Brahmpura, Lahoul and even Kullu came under Chamba (Brahmpura). Now as established in the previous chapter from Huan Tsang's mention of Chamba, if we put the earlier history of Chamba back by 200 years, then Meru Varman might have ruled some time around 480 A.D. This almost coincides with the history of Kullu in saying that around that time Brahmpura conquered Lahoul from Kullu. Here Lahoul seems to have included the Chandra and the Chandra-Bhaga valleys only. Gyamur seems to have been independent at that time, which might have included the whole of Bhaga valley, that is, Tod and Gahar.

Kullu, from the time of Rudra Pal to the time of his son Hamir Pal, had been paying tribute to Spiti. Hamir Pal's son Prasadh Pal—the 20th in the Pal line—however, refused to pay this tribute, which was 6 annas out of each rupee of revenue, which means 6/16th of the total revenue of Kullu. His opposition to the Spiti chief resulted in a battle, in which Chet Sen the Spiti king was defeated. This battle, according to the *History of Punjab Hill States*, “. . . must have been fought somewhere near Rohtang.” I think that it might have been Hamta pass instead of Rohtang, since most of the Kullu-Spiti confrontations had been through this pass.

Prasadh Pal also recovered Lahoul from Chamba. In Chamba, Meru Varman was succeeded by Mander Varman and Kantar Varman. Very little is known about them, from which it can be assumed that they were weak and thus during the reign of one of

them Lahoul was lost to Kullu. After suffering defeat from Kullu, Spiti was invaded by Gyamur Orr. In this fight Chet Sen was killed. The ruler of Gyamur is said to have then granted some villages to Chet Sen's son as *jagir*. He also returned three villages to Sansar Pal of Kullu, who assisted him in this battle. We face another flaw at this point. Sansar Pal was the 24th Raja in the Pal line and 4th from Prasad Pal. It seems impossible that this same Chet Sen of Spiti could survive five generations of Kullu rulers. Either there was a mix-up in the names of Kullu rulers from Prasad Pal to Sansar Pal, or each ruled for a very short time, and at the same time most of the successors of the throne were not the sons of the preceding rulers. Or else it must be a different Chet Sen, since repetition of a name within a family is quite common. It is believed that this was the final overthrow and thus the extinction of the pre-Buddhist Hindu dynasty in Spiti. This was around 600 A.D.

Chamba Recaptures Lahoul from Kullu (7th-8th Century)

In Kullu, Sansar Pal was succeeded by Bhog Pal. His claim to the throne was contested by his brother Vibhay Pal. A war ensued between them, resulting in Bhog Pal's death. Vibhay Pal was succeeded by Brahm Pal. This Raja left no legitimate son. On his death the Rajas of Chamba, Suket, Busher, Kangra, Bhangal and Ladakh are supposed to have agreed to name Ganesh Pal, an illegitimate son of the Raja, as his successor. During all these periods Kullu must have been very weak because at some point Chamba took over Lahoul. Suvarn Varman or Lakshmi Varman are the most likely victorious Rajas of Chamba.

A 12-Year War Between Kullu and Chamba

During the reign of Dadeshwar Pal, the third Raja of Kullu after Ganesh Pal and 31st in the Pal line, there was a war between Kullu and Chamba. This battle was fought over Rohtang in which the Kullu Raja was killed. Upon his father's death Amar Pal took command of the Kullu forces and with his two sons opposed the advances of Chamba. He too, along with one of his sons, was killed.

The second son, Sital Pal, then fled to Busher. For five generations they remained in Busher, during which time Kullu remained a subject of Chamba. This war seems to have been with Sahil Varman, the founder of Chamba city, if our correction of the dates is legitimate. The Chamba chronicle substantiates that during this period Chamba took over Kullu. Sahil Varman seems to have been a very powerful king, who extended his kingdom up to Ravi river. It seems that during Sahil Varman's reign all Lahoul was part of Chamba, including the Gahar and Tod valleys, as there is no evidence otherwise.

The battle was fought at Rohtang which indicates that Rohtang must have been the border with Kullu. The Chamba forces had built a fort at the foot of Rohtang pass on Kullu side, perhaps at Marhi or Rahla. When Raja Ganesh Pal was killed, the Kullu forces accepted the defeat and peace was concluded. The Kullu people, however, were only looking for an opportunity to drive the invaders back. Thus the whole truce was just a trick. They invited the Chamba forces, also known as Gaddi army, to a social gathering ostensibly to celebrate the truce. The place was fixed near Kothi on the other side of the river Byasa. The river at this place is barely a stream, but flows through a narrow gorge at a depth of more than 100 feet with solid rocks on both sides. A simple bridge made out of wooden planks spanned the gorge. At night in the midst of the feast some men from Kullu went to the bridge, removed the planks and spread long straw between the beams in place of the planks. After the party the unsuspecting and mostly drunken Chamba forces returned to their fort. As they crossed the bridge, many of them fell into the gorge. The deceit was discovered when the drummers fell through, silencing the band, and those that remained then fled. Thus, nearly the entire Chamba army stationed at this fort was destroyed.

Chamba, however, was very strong at that time. So reinforcements were sent immediately, fully prepared for revenge. Thus the war went on for twelve years. In this war Ganesh Pal, his son Amar Pal and his grandson all were killed. Three generations of Kullu rulers were eliminated and five generations were exiled due to this war.

The Downfall of Chamba (8th-11th Century)

In the 6th generation of the exiled Kullu Rajas, Jareshwar Pal, with the help of the Raja of Busher, succeeded in driving out the Chamba garrison from Kullu. The Kullu chronicle puts this event somewhere around 780 to 800 A.D. It also adds that around that time "Kiras or Tibetans" attacked Chamba, in which the Raja of Chamba was killed. This perhaps made it easier for Jareshwar Pal to win. Since he barely succeeded in freeing Kullu, Lahoul must have remained under Chamba.

In Chamba, the sixth in succession after Sahil Varman was Salavahan Varma. The Chamba chronicle states that during his reign the "Kiras" attacked Chamba. However, according to them, the Kiras were the Kashmiris. According to Kashmir history, Raja Anant Dev of Kashmir attacked Chamba, in which the Raja of Chamba named Sala was killed, although Chamba history puts this event sometime around 1050 A.D. Since we are relocating Chamba's dates back by about 200 years right from the beginning, this again coincides with Kullu's history, even though the meaning of Kiras is stated differently. At that time Chamba remained under alien rule for about twenty years. Perhaps during that time most of the Ranas of Lahoul were independent.

Som Varma and Asat Varma (Varman also became Varma in later years) must have been the Rajas of Chamba at that time, since their names have been omitted from the *Rajtarangani* (the list of rulers). It seems that the names of the Rajas, who were not independent rulers, were omitted from the *Rajtarangani*. In the Kullu chronicle also, the names of five generations of Rajas who were in exile are not given at all. On Chamba side such omissions are not even mentioned. Thus we might have several names missing, which would compensate for our correction of 200 years. As evidence for these omissions we have the *Rajtarangani* which calls Udai Varma the 5th successor after Jasat Varma, while the Gazetteer names only one ruler, Dhal Varma, between the two.

The Second War Between Kullu and Chamba (or Triloknath)

Jareshwar Pal succeeded in recapturing the Kullu throne from

Chamba, but after that there was not much activity for five generations. However, the sixth generation, that of Narad Pal, the 45th in the Pal line, was again marked by a war between Kullu and Chamba. According to Kullu history, the Chamba forces advanced to Majankot (?), a village near the foot of Rohtang pass (perhaps Kothi). Chamba history on the other hand recounts this war and the one earlier with Ganesh Pal of Kullu, as one and the same, occurring during the reign of Sahil Varman. From this we may conclude that this Kullu war might not have been directly with Chamba. Instead it might have been with the Ranas of Triloknath, since these Ranas had several battles with Kullu, which are not mentioned in Kullu's history. Also because Chamba itself was very weak during this period, the Ranas of Triloknath might have fought independently with the Rajas of Kullu. In this war the Kullu Raja Narad Pal was taken prisoner, but later was released on the condition that he will pay tribute and feudal service. This incident seems to be around 900 A.D.

The Kullu Suket War

Around 1000 A.D. during the period of the 49th Pal, Kullu had a war with Suket in which Kullu Raja Hast Pal was killed. The Raja of Suket, Bikram Sen, advanced to Kullu and took possession of it. He allotted a small *jagir* to Hast Pal's son. After that a few more *jagirdars* followed in Kullu. Thus for quite some time Kullu had lost complete control over Lahoul.

Ladakh's Involvement with Lahoul

Since the history of Ladakh is not traceable before the 9th century, Ladakh's involvement with Lahoul prior to that period is not clear. If our conjecture of Gyamur Orr being same as Gaymur in Lahoul is correct, then it seems that this part of Lahoul in earlier times was not under Ladakh, instead some parts of Ladakh might have been under Gyamur.

By the end of the 9th century, central Tibet became involved in endlessly protracted hostilities. Around 900 A.D. Kyi-de-Nimagaon, a descendant of the old Tibetan dynasty was forced to flee across

the Myun pass into west Tibet. Only about one hundred followers accompanied the refugee prince in exile. His livelihood depended on the goodwill of the local rulers of west Tibet. He was, however, well received by the king of Purang. Within a short period Kyi-de-Nimagaon, with the help of the king of Purang, became not only the master of west Tibet but also of Ladakh to the west, and Zanskar, Spiti and Lahoul to the south. However, this kingdom could not stay intact very long. Around 930 A.D., presumably after Nimagaon's death, his kingdom was divided among his three sons. The eldest son Palgyi-gon received Ladakh and Rudok area; the second son Trasi-gon received Guge and Purang, while the third son Dretsuk-gon was given Zanskar, Spiti and Lahoul. Rgya (Gya) was the frontier town between Ladakh and Lahoul-Spiti, apparently the border between the first and the third son. The Lahoul mentioned here must be mainly the area which we defined as Gyamur, i.e. the Tod and Gahar valleys. It is possible that a part of the Pattan valley also came under the sway of this king. This gave a chance to the people of Ladakh and Zanskar to migrate to this valley.

Around that time in Kullu, Hast Pal's son Hashir Pal declared independence from Suket. His son Santokh Pal then conquered Gyamur and a part of Ladakh. The next Raja Teg Pal conquered Baltistan, killing Muhammad Khan, the chief of Baltistan. Teg Pal's son Uchit Pal then invaded Tibet. Thus it seems that Kullu might have seized most of Lahoul from the Ladakhi domination. Chamba had constant pressure from Kashmir and thus was not in a position to maintain control over Lahoul.

About 1080 to 1110 A.D. Lhachen Utpala, sixth in the dynasty established by Kyi-de-Nimagaon, invaded Nyungti (Kullu) through Lahoul. In this battle the Raja of Kullu lost and was forced to conclude a treaty in which he promised to pay tribute in *zo* (a female crossbreed yak) and iron. Harcourt et al presume that since there were no *zo* in Kullu, they must have come from Lahoul. The agreement was written such that as long as Tre-tse, the glacier of Mount Kailash, did not melt away, or Ma-phan, Lake Mansarovar, did not dry up, the tribute must be paid.

According to the history of Ladakh this treaty remained in force until the reign of Senge Namgyal, who ruled in the mid-17th century. The Kullu history, however, puts the attack of Lhachen

Utpala around 1125 to 1150. It further adds that the next Raja, Sikander Pal, around the end of 12th century, sought help from Delhi, complaining that Tibetans had invaded his country. The king of Delhi came in person with an army. He passed through Kullu, and went on to conquer Gyamur, Baltistan, Ladakh, and Tibet as far as Lake Mansarovar. All of them had to pay tribute to Delhi through the Raja of Kullu. The Raja of Kullu was thus restored to his dominion. A major part of Lahoul was taken over by Lhachen Utpala, along with Kullu. However, it must have been restored to Kullu when the king of Delhi came through.

12th-13th Century

Vijay Varma, the Raja of Chamba, again gained power around 1175 A.D. and invaded Kashmir and Ladakh. It seems that he might have taken over at least Chamba-Lahoul and the Pattan valley. This was the period when Muhammad Gouri repeatedly attacked India, and Prithvi Raj, the king of Delhi, pardoned each incursion until his 17th attempt. That time, due to the defection of Jai Chand, the king of Kanouj, Prithvi Raj lost; and thus the Muhammadans gained a foothold in India. Sometime in the 13th century, the Muhammadans attacked Ladakh and Lahoul through Kashmir. Ladakh had already been attacked by the Mongols in 1207 and had accepted the suzerainty of Ganhiz Khan (Changez Khan?) and his successors. It seems that neither Ladakh nor Lahoul were ever ruled by the Mongols or the Muhammadans. Graves and dead bodies found in Lahoul must substantiate these attacks, since Hindus and Buddhists do not bury their dead.

14th Century

From 1300 to 1450—beginning with Sansar Pal, 56th in the Pal line, to Kailash Pal, 76th and the last in the Pal dynasty—Kullu had been in a constant struggle with Suket, Busher, and Bhangal. This put Kullu under terrible strain. Following Kailash Pal there was no Raja in Kullu for about 50 years. The state was ruled by several Ranas and Thakurs. This period may also be attributed to the Spiti chiefs, known as Pitti Thakurs, who ruled over a part of Kullu and

had established a capital at Jagat Sukh in the Kullu valley. One of these Spiti chiefs had a very bad reputation of drinking human milk and performing human sacrifices. Sometime around this period, while Kullu was under Spiti, Lahoul seems to have come under Guge, a petty Buddhist kingdom extending from Chhumurti to upper Kinnaur. Around the middle of 15th century Guge also attacked Kullu. It is described in Kullu history as, ‘‘Robed by the splendour and glory of the town of Kuluta, it was invaded by Gogadesh.’’

Chamba also had become weak after Vijai Varma’s reign. The next Rajas—Vairasi Varma, Manikya Varma, Bhot Varma and Sangram Varma—had no remarkable achievements. The next Raja, Ananda Varma, was religiously disposed and possessed many occult powers, but in the political sphere, had no outstanding achievements. Apparently during these centuries the Ranas of Triloknath were independent, while most of the other parts of Lahoul were controlled by Guge.

15th Century Onward

Around 1410 A.D., the Gelugpa sect of Buddhism founded in Tibet by Tsong Khapa (1357-1417), known as the Yellow Hats, spread rapidly into these areas. Trak-Bumde, the king of Ladakh, received this sect enthusiastically in 1420. A number of monasteries were built all around Ladakh and parts of Lahoul. The king adopted the new doctrine of this reformed sect, and issued the famous Mulbe edict, aimed at abolishing the ritualistic practices of the Dards, in particular animal sacrifice. It is not clear whether he did this to counterbalance the powerful Red Hat sect, already existent in Ladakh and Guge, or if he was trying to strengthen his position with respect to the threatening developments of the newly established Islam dynasty in Kashmir. King Sikander of this Islam dynasty had already invaded and conquered Baltistan in 1405 forcing the Buddhist population to embrace Islam.

Upsurge of Kullu

After 50 years without a king in Kullu, Sidh Pal, who later came to be known as Sidh Singh, suddenly appeared to claim the

throne around the end of 15th century. Like the originator of the Pal dynasty, Behung Muni Pal, Sidh Pal is also said to have come from a place called Maya Puri. It is difficult to say whether his story was simply confused with that of Behung Muni, or if the family had actually fled to some far-off place during trouble, and after a couple of generations returned to regain their throne.

After coming from Maya Puri, Sidh Pal visited the temple of Bijli Mahadev. This temple is situated on top of a hill at the confluence of the rivers Byasa and Parvati. The word *bijli* means electricity or lightning. There is a *lingam* of Mahadev (Shiva) in this temple. It is believed that whenever there is lightning and a thunderstorm, this *lingam* is shattered into pieces. When the *pujari* (worshipper in charge of temple) puts the pieces together, joins them with butter and worships it, the *lingam* becomes whole again.

Sidh Pal had heard that anyone who carried water from the confluence of these rivers and washed the *lingam* with it, would have his wishes fulfilled. Sidh Pal did accordingly and spent the night in the temple. At night he saw the god in his dreams, who told him to go to Jagat Sukh village where he would receive the promised reward. At Jagat Sukh (which means, the pleasure of the world) he met an old woman carrying a *kilta* (a conical basket of bamboo carried on the back) going to the village fair. Sidh Pal helped the woman by taking the *kilta* from her. Just before reaching the fair-ground, the woman asked him to put down the *kilta* near a big stone, and then ordered him to get on her shoulders. It was the goddess Hidimba disguised as an old woman who carried Sidh Pal on her shoulders. She suddenly became 32 kos (about 8 miles) tall and then asked him how far he could see. Sidh Pal replied that on one side he could see as far as Dalashni, on the other side he could see Chorot plain, on the third side he could see as far as Kale Kanouri, while they themselves were standing on the fourth hill. Hidimba then said, "You will acquire all the land you have just seen," and then she disappeared.

From that day his struggle began. People immediately gave him recognition. Soon, after defeating and killing various Ranas, he became the king of Kullu. Jhinna Rana was one of the most powerful Ranas. Sidh Singh—as he was known after becoming the king—had him killed through Jhinna's own strongest man named

Muchhiani (for his unusually long moustaches). Jhinna had several wives. On his death all, except the youngest one, became *sati* by burning themselves alive on his funeral pyre. The youngest one was pregnant, and therefore she was allowed to escape the ritual. The eldest Rani is believed to have become a *jogin* (a deity), who had control of the weather. A shrine was built in her name and people worshipped her to get rain. Thus around 1500 A.D. Sidh Singh re-established the Kullu kingdom and the Singh dynasty began.

Sidh Singh was succeeded by Bhadur Singh, who completed his father's work of extending the kingdom by eliminating the Ranas and Thakurs. Between 1532 and 1559 Bhadur Singh reversed the earlier situation of Lahoul's being under Guge or Ladakh. He first captured Teenan or the Gondhla valley and then expanded towards the Gahar valley. The Teenan chronicle called him the Dharma Raja, meaning the king of virtue and justice. Bhadur Singh appointed Tsering Angrup, the Thakur of Barbog as his regent in the Gahar valley. Tsering Angrup, however, being Buddhist, actually favoured Ladakh.

Bhadur Singh was succeeded by Partap Singh in 1559, who ruled until 1575. While not much has been written about the achievements of Partap Singh in Kullu history, there is, however, an interesting coincidence here. Partap Singh also succeeded Ganesh Varma in Chamba ruling it from 1559 until 1586. There was also a sudden change in the name of the Chamba kings at this point; from then on they also became Singhs. The same name and date in both Chamba and Kullu histories would lead one to assume that same Partap Singh ruled both kingdoms. The Singh dynasty's having begun earlier in Kullu, coupled with the abrupt name change to Singh in Chamba, could easily be construed as Partap Singh of Kullu ruling over Chamba also. The evidence, however, refutes this conjecture. The Chamba history states that Ganesh Varma had six sons, namely Partap Singh, Jit Singh, Bir Bhadur, Hari Singh, Shatrughan Singh and Rupanand Singh. Unlike Kullu's Partap Singh several achievements such as the discovery of a copper mine and a war with Kangra are attributed to Chamba's Partap Singh.

In Kullu there is an interesting story of Bhadur Singh having issued a title deed to Ram Pati, the Rajguru of Chamba, granting

him a piece of land in *sasan* in 1559. Though the word *sasan* means reign, here it designates a freehold of land to be enjoyed by Ram Pati and his offsprings for as long as the sun, the moon, the pole star, and the earth endure. This land, in Hata near Bajoura, was given in recognition of his services in negotiating a marriage for three Kullu princesses to Partap Singh, Ganesh Verma's heir to the Chamba throne. This makes one wonder if Bhadur Singh had three daughters but no son, and thus by marrying all three princesses, Partap Singh of Chamba became the heir of the Kullu throne as well. If so, then that could also explain giving all three daughters to the same man rather than to three different princes or even to three sons of Ganesh Varma. Doing so could divide the Kullu kingdom. Later perhaps the eldest son of one queen took over Chamba, while the eldest son of the other queen took over Kullu. Unfortunately there is no proof for any of it. It might be sheer coincidence that the same name and same dates came about.

During Partap Singh's reign Trashi Gyapo of Barbog was the foremost chief of those parts of Lahoul which were attached to Kullu. It is felt that if not the whole of Pattan, at least the area beyond Jahlma and Chamba-Lahoul must have been a part of Chamba at that time.

Following Partap Singh's reign the order of succession in Chamba covering the period up to 1641 was Vir Vahnu, Bala Bhadra and Janardan, without any significant events. Janardan had difficulties first with the Rajas of Nurpur, and later with Moguls, who were advancing towards Chamba after capturing Kangra and Nurpur. Janardan was killed by Raja Jagat Singh of Nurpur, when Janardan's son Prithvi Singh was just a child. His life story thereafter was pathetic. In order to save his life the prince was taken to Mandi, where he was brought up. There is a folklore in Lahoul which says that the Raja of Chamba, a child, was hiding in a cave, where the rats brought food for him; and so he was later known as Mushoon Raja, that is the rat-king. It is not certain if this tale is about Prithvi Singh or not.

Establishment of Deity Raghunath as Ruler of Kullu

In Kullu, Partap Singh was followed by Parbat Singh, Prithi

Singh and Kalyan Singh in succession, again with no major events. The next Raja was Jagat Singh, whose reign from 1637 to 1672 was one of the most notable of Kullu history. During his time the kingdom was further enlarged and consolidated. He conquered Seraj and the territory on the right bank of the river Byasa in Kullu, which was under Lagh. Two brothers Jai Chand and Sultan Chand ruled the Lagh valley. Jai Chand resided at Dughi Lagh and Sultan Chand at Sultanpur Kullu. Jagat Singh invaded Sultanpur through Dhalpur and conquered it. In this battle the story of Sultan Chand's bravery is narrated as being such that while fighting his head was severed from his body, but still remained in place, and he kept on fighting until he reached a platform called Padka, where the head fell off. Since then Jagat Singh established his capital at Sultanpur.

The most important incident in Jagat Singh's reign was the fetching of the idol of Raghunath (Rama) from Ayodhya and its installation at Sultanpur Kullu. The story told is as follows:

There was a Brahmin residing at a place called Tippari near Jari in the Manikaran valley. He had a *pattha* (a volume measurement, roughly one kilogram in weight) full of pearls. The Raja came to know of it and demanded it for himself, but the Brahmin refused. One day the Raja was going to Manikaran. On his way he again sent a messenger, this time with a warning. The Brahmin became upset and told the messenger to inform the Raja that he would get the pearls on his way back from Manikaran. On the approach of the royal party, the Brahmin set fire to his house and perished along with it.

After this incident the Raja faced an awful situation. In the food served to him, rice would appear to him as a heap of worms, and drinks would appear to be blood. This caused him great alarm. The Raja then sent for a Brahmin from Suket, who was reputed to be of great piety and in possession of the powers of mediumship. He pronounced it to be the curse of the Brahmin's murder. He further suggested that it could be cured only if the image of Raghunath was brought from Avadh and the kingdom was surrendered to him, with the Raja himself acting as a servant of the deity.

The Raja then sent Mahant Damodar for this task. Damodar was a *Gutka Sidh*, and could disappear when he would put the *Gutka* (a kind of ball) in his mouth. Damodar went to Avadh and

stayed there in the temple for a long time, seeking an opportunity to steal the image. One night when no one was around, Damodar appropriated the image and proceeded towards Kullu. On discovering the image and Damodar both missing, the Brahmins of Avadh suspected him of theft and started a search. They caught him at Haridwar, where Damodar was worshipping the idol. On being accused of theft Damodar said, "It was the wish of the god himself, who told me to take him to Raja Jagat Singh of Kullu. If you don't believe me then take the god back if you can." The Avadh Brahmins tried to take the idol back, but could not lift it, while Damodar could lift it with one hand. The Avadh Brahmins were then convinced and returned empty handed. Thus Damodar brought the idol to Kullu. The Raja placed the idol on the throne and promised to act only as vice regent of Raghunath.

From that day onwards every Raja of Kullu maintained this tradition. Every year on the first day of the Dussehra festival, which is celebrated in Kullu for a whole week, the idol of Raghunath is taken on *rath yatra* (a procession by chariot). The idol occupies the seat in the chariot instead of the Raja, while the Raja follows it on a horse, along with several other deities. Damodar was fully rewarded, which the Mahants of Kullu still enjoy in the form of large land holdings.

During Jagat Singh's reign a major portion of Lahoul was within the Kullu kingdom.

Ladakh Regains Power

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Buddhist Gyalpo Jamya began extending his territory. He captured Spiti, but there is no mention of his capturing Lahoul. Later he was, however, attacked and defeated by Ali Mir¹ of Baltistan. Taking advantage of this, Spiti and other outlying provinces revolted and regained partial independence. After Jamya's death, his son Senge Namgyal overcame the Baltis. He again conquered Spiti in about 1635.

Senge Namgyal is reputed to be Ladakh's only king who pur-

¹ Cunningham writes that Ali Sher Balti attacked Ladakh in about 1600 A.D. on the west by Indus valley. I think both of these events are one and the same: the names must be mistaken.

sued an ambitious policy of aggrandizement. Not only was he a great warrior, but also a great patron of Buddhism. He founded many monasteries including Ladakh's famous Hemis gumpa. He granted land estates to *Lamas* and their establishments. It is believed that some of the monasteries in Lahoul and Spiti also might have been established at that time. At least the Tod and the Gahar valleys of Lahoul may have been captured by Ladakh at this time, even though Harcourt thought that the Gyalpos never actually ruled Lahoul.

Senge Namgyal was succeeded by his son De-den Namgyal in 1645 who ruled until 1675. In 1663 Aurangzeb, the Mogul ruler, threatened Ladakh with war. De-den Namgyal, having no hope of victory, immediately surrendered and recognized Mogul suzerainty. In 1673 when Aurangzeb was involved with the Afridi chieftain Akhmal Khan, De-den Namgyal took advantage of this situation, seizing Purig and the Shyok valley. Like his father he also extended his kingdom to include Nubra, Drass, Purig, the lower Shyog valley, Guge, Purang, Rudok, Spiti, Upper Kinnaur, Zaskar, and Lahoul. The Lahoul mentioned here must be only the Tod valley directly, while most of the other parts were with Kullu. In the Gahar valley, though the Barbog Thakur had an inclination towards Ladakh, it was formally under Kullu.

Attack by Mongols

In 1671 the Mongols, under the leadership of Golden Tsewang attacked Lahoul, which was known as 'the attack of Segpo'. It is believed that they remained in the area for only a couple of years. This Mongol force is supposed to have stormed the Kolong fort. After that they crossed the Bhaga river and attempted to capture the Gondhla valley on their way to attack Kullu. A misfortune, however, struck them and most of the force was annihilated in an avalanche near Ropsang in Gondhla valley. Human bones are said to have been found there even in recent years in a place called Rolang-thang, where this disaster occurred. Perhaps this place was named Rolang-thang only after this disaster, since the word "rolang" means the rising of the dead.

Evidently these Mongols did not reach the Pattan valley. In

1672 after the retreat of the Mongols, Raja Budhi Singh, son of Raja Jagat Singh of Kullu seized the opportunity to influence the people of Lahoul. Budhi Singh married the daughter of the ruler of Kishtwar, on the occasion of which he himself went to Kishtwar through Lahoul. Evidently most of Lahoul, especially the Pattan, Gahar, and Tod valleys were under Guge at that time. Budhi Singh tried to convince people to throw away the yoke of Guge and give allegiance to Kullu.

In Ladakh, king De-den Namgyal was succeeded by Delek Namgyal from 1675 to 1705. During this time forces from central Tibet attacked Ladakh. Delek Namgyal sought the aid of the Moguls from Kashmir and thus the invaders were driven back after being defeated at Bagso.

In return for their help, the Moguls began squeezing Ladakh. Delek Namgyal was forced to a nominal acceptance of Islam, taking the name of Iquabat Muhammad. This title was used by his successors until their disposition by Dogra conquerors in 1842. The Moguls forced Ladakh to have its coins struck in the name of the Mogul Emperor, thus defining Ladakh's political allegiance. Ladakh also had to agree to some political concessions to the semi-autonomous principalities which had assisted the Moguls in their wars. Tsepal Namgyal was the last independent king of Ladakh—though paying tribute to Moguls—who first ruled from 1790 to 1834 and then again from 1840 to 1841.

Final Partition of Lahoul Between Chamba and Kullu

By the later part of 17th century the Guge government had become weak. Therefore first Budhi Singh and later Man Singh of Kullu tried to capture most of Lahoul. On the other side, Chattar Singh of Chamba acquired considerable influence in the western part of Lahoul. Later Chamba and Kullu joined forces in getting Lahoul out of Guge's clutches. Thus for some time Triloknath and rest of Chamba-Lahoul along with some part of the Pattan valley came under Chamba. For many years a nominal tribute was regularly demanded, a part of which consisted of twelve large dogs. At the same time certain leading men were accustomed to levying certain dues, such as home-made woollen clothes, ropes etc.

The Gondhla valley, Gahar valley and a part of the Pattan valley were under Kullu. The Tod valley which for most other times remained either independent or under Ladakh and Guge, was also annexed to Kullu by Man Singh. During his reign, from 1688 to 1719, Kullu once again became very powerful, comprising upper Lahoul, Bara and Chhota Bhangal, Kotgarh, Kumharsen, Balsan, Shangri, and the area up to Shimla to the south, besides the Kullu valley itself, an area totalling at least 10,000 square miles.

Some time around 1689-90, Man Singh of Kullu and Chattar Singh of Chamba made an agreement to make Thirot in Lahoul a permanent demarcation between the two states. Thus from that time onwards the area beyond Thirot remained under Chamba and therefore was called Chamba-Lahoul, while the area to the east of Thirot remained under Kullu and was called Kullu-Lahoul, though the word Kullu was not commonly attached to this part of Lahoul.

The Thakur of Barbog was the regent of the Kullu Rajas for the Gahar valley. These Thakurs, however, were inclined towards Ladakh due mainly to their being Buddhist, and also perhaps due to an earlier obligation incurred by Ladakh's permitting settlers to migrate to the Gahar valley. This is discussed more in the chapters on 'Ranas and Thakurs', and 'Transmigration'. Because of this inclination, they resisted the Kullu rulers, resulting in their loss of power. Bilchung was the last of the Barbog Thakurs.

Nono Chhogan was the chief of the Tod valley, and the Thakur of Gondhla was in charge of the Gondhla valley. Both of these chieftains submitted to Kullu's authority and, as a result, received *jagirs* and the title Thakur. Raja Man Singh also married the daughter of the Gondhla Thakur. It is not very clear who was in charge of the Pattan valley at that time. Obviously it must be one of the Ranas or Thakurs who will be discussed in the next chapter, but there is no indication of which one.

Man Singh's reign came to a tragic end. He had fallen in love with the wife of the Rana of Kumharsen. The Rana enticed the Raja to come to Sirikot across the Satluj river, where he had armed Busheris waiting to kill him. Thus his reign came to an end in 1719.

Final Decline of Kullu, Chamba, and Ladakh Kingdoms

After Man Singh's death, Raj Singh succeeded to the throne. During that time Muhammadans were spreading everywhere. Guru Govind Singh, the 10th and last guru of the Sikhs, visited Kullu seeking an alliance against the Muhammadans. Raj Singh was unfavourably disposed and treated the guru inhospitably. Thus instead of helping him drive the Muhammadans away, he created another enemy.

After Raj Singh, Jai Singh, Tehri Singh and Pritam Singh succeeded each other in Kullu. During Pritam Singh's time, in about 1800 A.D., a Lahoul contingent fought a war for him against Mandi at Bajoura. They used the banner of Ghepan, the chief deity of Lahoul.

At the same time Chamba had become fairly weak. Udai Singh, Ugar Singh, Dalel Singh and Ummed Singh, the Rajas in succession went through a long struggle with the neighbouring states as well as within the family. The next Raja of Chamba, Raj Singh signed an agreement in 1778 with Surma Sen, the Raja of Mandi, and Sansar Chand, the Raja of Kangra. The agreement was to jointly attack Kullu, seize Bhangal and divide it equally among them, each taking the area nearest to its territory. Evidently they succeeded, since two years later Pritam Singh of Kullu formally requested the Raja of Chamba asking for the return of Bhangal and one of his ministers, Bhag Chand, but was rejected. Later Bhag Chand was released upon payment of fifteen thousand rupees, under the security of two men—Tulsi Ram and Jassi Ram.

Pritam Singh's reign in Kullu was a long one, from 1767 to 1806. In 1801 he sent a letter to Jit Singh, the next Raja of Chamba, proposing a joint attack on Kangra, saying that Sansar Chand, the Raja of Kangra had become very powerful and was a threat to everyone. This proposal was rejected. In about 1800, the Gurkhas of Nepal had conquered most of the hilly areas northwest of Nepal as far as the Satluj river. Kullu paid tribute to them for the Shangri part of its territory. Kullu was also paying tribute to Sansar Chand of Kangra for Kullu itself. The resentment against Sansar Chand's arrogance had reached a climax among all the other hill chiefs. This resulted in opening communications with the Gurkha leader

Amar Singh Thapa. He agreed to cross Satluj river and attack Kangra.

Ladakh, after the last Gyalpo Tsepal Namgyal, also had become weak. In 1821 a strong Balti force invaded, plundering the villages in Ladakh and returned home with the loot.

Thus following this last partition of Lahoul between Chamba and Kullu, no other major political re-alignments seem to have occurred in Lahoul until the time of Charat Singh who ruled Chamba from 1808 to 1844. During his time a powerful governor of Padar in Chamba invaded Zanskar, perhaps through Mayar Nallah in Lahoul, and made Zanskar a tributary of Chamba.

Around the same time Kullu forces invaded Spiti through Lasar valley. Meeting no resistance, they returned with yaks, horses and a lot of other loot. Raja Ajit Singh of Kullu was only ten years old when his father Bikram Singh died in 1816, leaving Wazir Sobha Ram to run his administration. William Moorcroft and George Trebeck passed through Lahoul on their way back from Ladakh between 1819 and 1825. They mention that they had to comply with an urgent application of the court to interfere in the dispute as a friendly remonstrance with Sobha Ram the *Wazir* of Kullu. Some Kullu traders had been caught illicitly trading in *pashmina* (cashmere) on the Ladakh frontier and their goods had been seized. In response to their complaints the Wazir sent an armed party to Ladakh who retaliated by seizing large number of horses and other cattle. They also violated the sanctity of the temples by mutilating the images etc.

Moorcroft has also written that the peasantry in Lahoul held their land by the authority of the Raja of Kullu except for four villages—'Barkalanak' and three others—they passed on their way to Tandi. He added that while these villages acknowledged military fealty to the Raja of Kullu, they paid rent to the state of Ladakh. I assume that 'Barkalanak' must be upper Keylong, having misunderstood the local name 'Bhare Keylong'. This indicates that the Gahar valley while being under Kullu paid rent to Ladakh, because of previous affiliation or settlement.

The Sikhs Attack Kullu

In the early 1800s the Sikh regime became very powerful in

Punjab. In about 1810 a Sikh force advanced to the Kullu valley and demanded a tribute of forty thousand rupees, which was paid. Three years later another demand was made, which was refused. On this refusal a Sikh army under Diwan Mokham Chand entered the valley by Dulchi pass. The amount of fifty thousand rupees still being refused, the Sikhs plundered the capital of Kullu and looted the treasury. Bikram Singh, the Raja of Kullu fled to the mountains, but ultimately had to pay a much larger sum of three lakh (3,00,000) rupees to free the country. Of this sum, one lakh was intended as a bribe to Mokham Chand. Bikram Singh ruled only for ten years, from 1806 to 1816.

Shah Shuja, the deposed Amir of Kabul, after his flight from Lahore, found two years' asylum in Kishtwar in 1815. The Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh demanded his surrender. Shah Shuja next fled over to Zanskar, through Lahoul, over the high ranges of Baralacha and Rohtang, then entered Kullu, and from there passed into British territory in 1817. On hearing that Shah Shuja had been allowed to escape, Ranjit Singh imposed a fine of eighty thousand rupees on Kullu, which was paid. Shah Shuja, however, noted in his diary that the people of Kullu treated him inhospitably. Raja Ajit Singh of Kullu was just a child then.

In 1839 a Sikh army marched into Mandi state under general Ventura. The Raja of Mandi was taken prisoner and was sent to Amritsar. A portion of the Sikh army was sent from there, under Sindhwala Sirdar, to invade Kullu. The forces advanced to Kullu with almost no resistance. For some time friendly relations were maintained, but later Raja Ajit Singh of Kullu was deceived by a friendly invitation to Sikh headquarters, where he was taken prisoner. He was released on the condition that he give up his country, and in return was granted *Waziri-parole* in *jagir*. Ten days later an army was sent to Seraj and the Raja was forced to accompany it in order to make his people surrender. The Raja was treated badly, which aroused and angered his people making them determined to rescue him.

As the Sikh army returned from Seraj, after completing their mission, it had to pass through Basloff pass and a narrow footpath in the wooded ravine near the fort of Tung. Here the Serajis under the leadership of Kapuru, the *wazir* of Seraj, had laid an ambush.

When the contingent of the soldiers holding the Raja passing in single file reached the ambush point, the Serajis suddenly attacked. They seized their Raja, carried him swiftly up the mountain and then rolled rocks down on the Sikh army from all around. Taken by surprise and panicked, the army fell back to the fort of Tung. They stayed at the fort for two days without provisions and then attempted to march down; again they were attacked. Finally they tried to go up the mountainside through Kothi Nohanda, hoping to get supplies from the village above. However, they did not know the country very well, and found themselves on a steep barren hill where they could hardly keep their footing. Meanwhile the light-footed hillmen kept always above them, knocked down rocks wherever they went. Finally the Sikhs were driven down the valley again. Here they were induced to give up their arms on the promise that their lives would be spared.

But the Serajis tricked them. Three cobblers who were dressed as Brahmins, made the promise while holding the tail of a cow. For a Brahmin an oath on a cow would be impossible to break, while it did not mean much if taken by a cobbler. Thus as soon as the Sikh army laid down their arms, they were massacred mercilessly. The outcome of this, however, was very unfortunate. The main Sikh army stationed at Kullu came to know of it, and marched into Seraj, burning or plundering many villages. Raja Ajit Singh was forced to retreat across the river Satluj to his small state of Shangri, which already had been taken by the British. Thus the Raja stayed under British protection, while his two queens remained at Sultanpur, the capital of Kullu. The Seraj valley was then farmed out to the Raja of Mandi for 32,000 rupees, while rest of country was kept under a Sikh *Kardar* to manage the revenue. Raja Ajit Singh died in Shangri in 1841. After his death, the Sikh Maharaja Sher Singh made Thakur Singh the Raja of Kullu, but with only *waziri* Rupi as a *jagir*. In 1834 the Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, conquered Ladakh also. Ladakh accepted the suzerainty of the Sikhs.

Attack by the Dogras of Jammu

From 1825 three Jammu princes seem to have dominated the hill tract between the Ravi and the Jhelum rivers. Raja Gulab Singh

had total control and exercised the chief authority. He thus came to be considered the greatest chief in the Punjab area after Ranjit Singh. Having become the *de facto* ruler of all the hill country, he still sought to further extend his power to the north. Various mercenaries had been attracted to his court in the hope of employment. Among them was Zorawar Singh Khularia, son of the Raja of Kharur (Bilaspur). He was taken into service and placed in charge of Kishtwar and the countries to the east of Kashmir. At that time Ladakh was being ruled by a Tibetan king living at Leh.

Kashmir was held by the Sikhs at that time, making it impossible for the Dogras to advance to Ladakh through this region. Therefore it was decided to start from Kishtwar. Accordingly a force of ten thousand men was placed under the command of Zorawar Singh, which ascended the Maru Bardhwan valley and crossed the passes to the western Himalayas into Suru. The Dogras were opposed at many places by Ladakhis, but ultimately the Ladakh king was deposed and the country annexed. In 1840-41 Baltistan also was conquered, and Raja Ahmed Shah of Balti was sent as a prisoner to Kishtwar, where he later died.

In 1841 Zorawar Singh conceived of a bold design for conquering eastern Tibet. The Dogra army composed of ten thousand men assembled at Leh in Ladakh, but did not leave Leh until October when the favourable season was nearly over. The Tibetans fell back before the invaders, knowing that every day's delay was in their favour. Soon winter came and the snow fell. The Dogra army became benumbed and helpless. At last, on the 10th of December the Tibetan army engaged the Dogras and in two days' battle all was over. The battle took place at a height of 15,000 feet. On the 12th of December Zorawar Singh was wounded in the right shoulder, but changing his sword to his left hand, he kept on fighting. At last a spear pierced his chest and he died. The Dogra army broke up and fled. Only one thousand reached Leh. The rest were either killed or taken prisoner. It is said that the upper part of Zorawar Singh's skull is still kept in one of the Tibetan monasteries.

It is safe to say that Lahoul never came under the Dogras, but there was perhaps some influence of it in Lahoul, which will be discussed in the chapter on 'Origins and Transmigration'.

Takeover by the British

The British hardly ever fought for territory; instead they conquered by stealth, taking piece by piece through negotiations. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs also became comparatively weaker, while British influence increased. In the treaty of March 9, 1846, Gulab Singh, the Dogra Raja of Jammu was recognised as an independent ruler by both Sikhs and the British. The Sikhs were forced to cede the territory between the rivers Byasa and Sindh (Indus) to the British including Kashmir and Hazara. The British (East India Company) in turn transferred them to Gulab Singh for the sum of 10 million rupees.

This deal was later changed. The British wanted to keep Kullu and Mandi, and therefore the sum was changed to 7,50,000 rupees. Lahoul followed the fate of Kullu. In fact the change was made to keep Lahoul, for the sake of trade with Tibet. A week later the treaty was formalized in greater detail, and signed by Gulab Singh and the British Government in India. Gulab Singh was guaranteed all the hilly or mountain country including Chamba, which took Chamba-Lahoul along with it.

The part of Lahoul that came under the British, previously a part of Kullu, included the Gondhla and Gahar valleys, Tod valley up to Darcha, and the Pattan valley up to Thiroth. This part was henceforth called British-Lahoul also and made a part of Tehsil Kullu, which in turn was made a part of the Kangra district. The total area of Lahoul that came under British control was reckoned at 2255 square miles.

Captain Hay was the first Assistant Commissioner of Kullu. Bali Ram, the head man of Lahoul, was given the title of Negi. Somehow, it seems differences erupted between him and the British Government, and Bali Ram was forced to relinquish the position, though it was claimed that he himself declined it. As a result Tara Chand of Kolong was made the Negi of Lahoul.

The British Lahoul was divided into fourteen *kothis* (counties?). Each kothi was assigned a *Lambardar* (the head man) and a *Chowkidar* known as *Krounka*. The duties of the *Lambardar* were to collect the land revenue, and make arrangements for visiting officials by providing horses for their use, hay for the horses and

porters to carry their luggage. The porters were paid four *annas* (about 2 U.S. pennies) per day. The duties of the *Chowkidar* were to assist the *Lambardar* in making all those arrangements, and informing the public when any official visited the area. He also kept a record of births and deaths in his *kothi*. The wages of the *Lambardars* and *Chowkidars* were paid by the public in the form of grain.

The *Negi* of Lahoul was also an honorary magistrate, who was vested *ex officio* with the powers of a subordinate magistrate, second class. He could therefore imprison a criminal up to one month, and fine or entertain civil suits of up to fifty rupees. Tara Chand *Negi* was allowed twenty-five rupees per month to establish the office. Tara Chand resided at Kolong.

Lord Elgin, the Governor General of India, crossed Rohtang in 1863 and returned on the same day. Harcourt called it a feat that few Englishmen would care to undertake and it indeed proved unfortunate. This excursion was blamed for causing Lord Elgin's heart trouble, which shortly afterwards led to the demise of the statesman.

Tara Chand was succeeded by Hari Chand as *Negi* of Lahoul in 1876. He was conferred with the title of *wazir* of Lahoul. He exercised the entire administration of Lahoul until 1914 when Amar Chand took over from Hari Chand. In the First World War, Amar Chand was appointed as *Jamadar* in the British Indian army with five Lahoulis under him. He was given a title of Rai Bahadur in 1917. This began the tradition of *Thakurs* joining the Indian army. He died in 1921, while his son Abhe Chand was still a minor. Therefore the administration was vested upon his younger brother Mangal Chand. He was the last ruler of Lahoul before the independence of India.

Struggle for Liberation

During 1920s to 1940s when rest of India was fighting for freedom from the British rule, a group of people in Lahoul fought for liberation from the tyrannical rule of the *Thakurs*. It is said that at one time the public was so much suppressed that no one dared open his mouth in front of the *Thakurs*, no matter what happened.

People had to prostrate, literally lie down flat on the ground any time the Thakurs happened to pass through. Wherever the Thakurs rode their horses, passersby had to rub their foreheads on the Thakurs' feet or else stand a whip on the back.

Those who had been ruled by Thakurs for a long time had become accustomed to it, but it was a little too much for the people of the Pattan valley who had never suffered oppression like this before. They were proud people who cared for self respect, and this kind of behaviour was beyond their tolerance.

In this situation, one man named Saja Ram from the village of Lote, revolted against the wazir's tyranny. Saja Ram was among the very first ones to have the modern education, and although it was only a primary education, he served as a *Munshi* (office secretary) for the *naib tehsildar*, a class III magistrate, when this office opened. For that reason he later came to be known as Munshi Saja Ram. He had a great personality and a face like a lion. He took a stand against the ruling Thakurs, who had power, wealth, and position.

Although most people of the Pattan valley were sympathetic to him, very few had guts to stand by him openly. Only a few followed him bravely.

This struggle took a multifarious form, from direct disobedience to open demonstration to physical violence, to fist fights. They had several direct encounters. Munshi Saja Ram had six sons, of which the three youngest were in school in those days. He gave them special physical training to prepare them physically and mentally for direct encounters. The boys of the ruling Thakurs were in the army. Any time they would come on leave, it was sure that there would be a fight between them and the children of Munshi, wherever they came across each other.

This struggle went on, and became a serious issue. In 1938, Mr. Arthur Lall, the Assistant Commissioner of Kullu, recommended to the government the posting of a *naib tehsildar* in Lahoul to serve during the winter when the *wazirs* were called for military duty. Thus began the transition to the permanent posting of the *naib tehsildar*, without giving the *wazir* the feeling that his powers were being abruptly eroded. In 1940, Lall's successor, Azim Husain, re-emphasised the need for a change in the administrative set up. He

observed that the atmosphere of Lahoul had become a terror. People by then were resisting the administration of the *wazir* very openly. The demonstrations and the disobedience had become a daily affair. The Thakurs had lost both control and respect from majority of the masses. Azim Husain, realised that the arrangement suggested by Arthur Lall was no longer adequate, so he suggested for more drastic step to prevent the situation from getting completely out of control. The government accepted his recommendation and appointed a *naib tehsildar*, thus bringing an end to the *wazarat* in 1941. With the addition of a seasonal police post in 1943, the struggle for liberation also came to an end.

Thakur Partap Chand held the position of *naib tehsildar* after retiring from the army as a captain. As a *naib tehsildar*, however, his position was quite different from being a *wazir*, and it was not possible for him to act like an independent ruler.

7

Ranas and Thakurs—The Local Rulers of Lahoul

The existence of Ranas and Thakurs in Lahoul valley has been mentioned in earlier chapters. They were, in essence, the practical rulers of the various sections of the valley. However, but for a few occasions, they were not totally independent rulers; instead they were the representatives or the regents of the Rajas of either Kullu, Chamba or Ladakh. At times they were the subject to one while paying tribute to the others.

Since it has been difficult to establish the exact dates for each of these Ranas, their names and their affiliations with various Rajas or the states, their inclusion at each stage of the history presented in the previous chapter has been avoided. Hence they are individually listed here without attempting to place them exactly. Except for a handful of them, none of the other families maintained any family history at all. Only the folklores and word-of-mouth passed from generation to generation are the sources of this collection.

The Ranas of Triloknath

The Ranas of Triloknath seem to be the most prominent among all the Ranas and Thakurs of Lahoul. Even though at present they are known as Thakurs, in early written documents they appear as Ranas.

This family has existence in Lahoul since time immemorial, yet

the present generation does not know much about their own background. They believe that their ancestors came from Jammu. The District Gazetteer claims that they settled in a place called Tundeh in Bharmour and later crossed the Pangri range and came to Triloknath before the idol of Triloknath was set up at that location. However, from the folklore narrated in the chapter on 'Temples and Monasteries', it seems that Tundeh was the original name for Triloknath itself, which was changed after the establishment of the temple.

These Ranas ruled over most of the Chamba-Lahoul. They were independent at some times, while being under the Rajas of Chamba at others. They were never directly controlled by Kullu or Ladakh, although they had several encounters with them. A mention of their independence also appears in the history of Kashmir when they helped Bhikshachar regain the throne of Kashmir in around 1112 A.D.

Twice in the course of history, invasions from Tibet or Ladakh seem to have reached this place. The first occurred in the 12th century when Lhachen Utpala invaded and conquered most of Lahoul and Kullu. The second time was in the mid-17th century during the reign of Senge Namgyal. It seems that these Ranas did not lose their sovereignty even at that time. There is also no evidence of their having been influenced by Buddhism in that area, except for their acceptance of the Triloknath temple as a Buddhist shrine as well. Another piece of evidence implies that during one of these invasions perhaps some of the Buddhists were made to settle in this area. However, as soon as these Ranas had the chance, these Buddhists were driven out of the main valley; they in turn settled in the side ravine of Mayar, also known as Mewar at present.

Mayar valley is a very narrow ravine along the Mayar Nallah, a tributary of the Chenab. There is hardly a footpath here even today, not to speak of a road, where one could walk without having to pray at every step one takes. Very recently some road construction has been initiated in that valley. A narrow, single-step path existed along the nallah, from which one slip meant a 200 feet drop into the tumbling stream. There is a funny story about this place. Once two Mayaris were walking along this path when one of them slipped and started rolling down the hillside like a soccer ball. The

other one standing at the footpath yelled to him, “Gong-gong la ma song-e, gyang-gyang la song.” He was trying to tell the falling man not to roll like a ball, but to stretch out flat and then roll, so that he could catch on to a bush or something. People say that when you fall and start rolling down a slope, your head will get caught between your legs, and you’ll tumble head-over-heels like a ball, out of control. This is what was happening to the man who had slipped, while his friend stood on the road-side telling him how to roll.

Mayar valley is typically inhabited by Buddhists who have migrated mainly from Zanskar and perhaps some from Ladakh. In later years some came from Busher as well. In the whole of Chamba-Lahoul, this is the only area where one finds Buddhism. The origin of the people can be observed to be distinctly different from the rest of the people of Chamba-Lahoul. A mention of this place comes in the following story of one of the brave Ranas of Triloknath in earlier times.

This folktale is told in a local dialect in praise of these Ranas. Hamir and Bardhwan (also called Bardhani) were two brothers who defeated the Raja of Kullu when the latter attacked Triloknath and tried to carry off the idol. In this battle Hamir was killed and Bardhwan wanted revenge. With this idea, he went to Kullu posing as a poor man and obtained a job in Raja’s palace. He stayed there for a long time before finding his chance to take revenge without risking his own life.

One day, when the Raja was away on hunting, Bardhwan killed the Raja’s son and fled. The Raja’s men followed him all the way to Lahoul and caught up with him at a place called Nhylamshag, across from the village of Mooling. This place is a steep hill, at the bottom of which there is a big river. Bardhwan was surrounded from both sides of the road. This hill is also covered with tiny pebbles, which makes it difficult to keep one’s footing. Finding no way to escape, he drove his horse straight up the hill along the slippery gravel. On reaching the top the horse breathed its last. Bardhwan put the drums around his own neck and started on foot across the mountain on to the Gahar valley and from thereon towards Zanskar, and through Mayar nallah he re-entered Lahoul in Mayar valley.

The Mayar nallah was huge, almost impossible to cross on foot, and had no bridge. Suddenly noticing a monk riding a horse on the other side, Bardhwan prayed to his deity, "Mother Bhagvati, if you really exist then make that horse throw the monk and run to me." No sooner had he said this than the horse kicked off the monk, crossed the nallah and came straight towards him. He then crossed over on the horse's back and reached Mayar.

In the village he found the people shooting at a target with bow and arrow. They were so busy that they did not notice his coming. Bardhwan hid himself in one corner, picked up a bow and an arrow and shot a bull's eye. Startled the villagers looked around, but could not see anyone. Scared, they prayed aloud, "Whether you are an angel or demon, please come forward and show us your face." These people were so isolated and ignorant that they did not know there existed any world outside their own. Bardhwan came forward and told them who he was. The people of Mayar accepted him as their Rana and promised to render the services to him, collecting his wood and performing other duties. The Rana replied, "I accept you as my subjects. Now tell me when you come to do my work, what would you like to have, *ete-tela* or *groonzhoo*?" They knew *ete-tela* was a kind of bread and butter, but did not know what *groonzhoo* was. So the villagers chose the latter, thinking that it must be something better. It is said that from then on any time these people go to Triloknath to render free labour to the Rana, a pair of drums are taken out and played for them. That is what the *groonzhoo* is, a tattoo on the drums. The pair of drums he brought from Kullu is said to still exist in Triloknath.

Since then Bardhwan fought several battles with Kullu and never lost. One day the Kullu people played a trick. They asked for a truce and invited him for a dinner to celebrate the truce. This dinner was arranged at Tandi which was, perhaps, the extreme end of Kullu territory at that time. Bardhwan always remained laced within his armour, which he never removed outside his home. When he had it on, no one could kill him. On the other hand he never ate a meal without first bathing. The Kullu people invited him to remove his armour and take a bath, but Bardhwan became suspicious of foul play. He demanded that they take an oath by touching a sword to the neck of a cow, that they would not deceive him.

They took the oath, but when Bardhwan removed his armour, they caught him and tied him to a tree. Bardhwan reminded them of their oath. He was told that the person who took the oath was a cobbler, whom they had disguised as a Brahmin by putting a *janeo*—the sacred thread—around his neck. Thus by deception, they captured Bardhwan and chopped his head off.

There is another story about the Ranas of Triloknath. A certain Rana who was a strong devotee of Durga, had a special bird named Paji. Once he tried to sell it to the Raja of Chamba. The price set was a *farar* (a big pail) full of gold and another one full of silver, but the Raja could not pay this. The Rana tried a few more places, all unsuccessfully, and finally went to the king of Delhi.

The king of Delhi, instead of buying the bird, agreed to pay him the gold and silver if he fulfilled three conditions. The first was that the bird would be tied to the horns of a cow and the Rana must shoot the bird while the cow was walking. The Rana shot an arrow, which pierced it and took the bird along with it. Similarly he fulfilled the other two conditions, also, but unfortunately the king reneged, refusing to pay. The Rana was very upset at having made a fool of himself. He pulled out his dagger, meditated on his deity Durga and stabbed the table in front of the king with it. To the astonishment of the king, his palace started cracking and a crevice appeared through the roof and the walls. Scared and begging for mercy, he paid all the gold and silver as promised.

These Ranas, now known as Thakurs, simply act as managers of the temple. They hold considerable land as their *jagir*, but have no other ruling powers.

The Ranas of Margraon and Salgraon

The Ranas of these places are also known as Thakurs today. The Ranas of Margraon are related to the Ranas of Triloknath through marriages. Whether they actually ruled the people or not is hard to say. If they did it would only have meant sharing part of the territory of Ranas of Triloknath. Nevertheless these Ranas possessed fairly big land holdings. It is said that they owned the biggest single piece of flat land—called *Seri*—in the whole valley of Lahoul. It used to be ploughed by six pairs of bullocks at the same time.

I had a chance to visit this place during 1972 general elections of Himachal Assembly, when the Chamba-Lahoul was merged with rest of Lahoul. This was the first time these people had been solicited for an election campaign. Prior to this it was with the district of Chamba; no one had campaigned among them specifically before an election. Previously government officials (according to them) would come and order them to vote for the ruling Congress party. They had assumed that this was what they were supposed to do as a part of being a democratic country instead of being under a king. Thus no one had paid any attention to the improvement of this area.

During this visit, I asked them to show me Seri which was then divided between two families. It did not look as big as I expected, in fact it could not have been more than four acres. Of course in a narrow valley in the midst of high mountains a four-acre plot of flat land owned by one person is big enough to become the subject of general interest.

Despite their being illiterate and underdeveloped, one could see a royal tinge on their faces, particularly by the moustaches of these Thakurs. The way they talked bore witness to their having belonged to the ruling class.

Not much is known about the Thakurs of Salgraon. They are supposed to be the cousins of the Ranas of Triloknath and perhaps acted directly under the Rajas of Chamba. Also I doubt they ever ruled over any place, though I never had a chance to talk to anyone of that family.

The Thakurs of Barbog

The Thakurs of Barbog were originally called *Jo*. These Thakurs acted as the chiefs of the Gahar valley, mostly under the Kullu Rajas. This may have been the arrangement when the Gahar valley was under Kullu, while the Tod valley was either independent or was under Ladakh. As a result the Gahar valley could not be ruled by the Kolong or Gumrang Thakurs.

The Barbog Thakurs might have acted as chiefs under the rulers of Ladakh as well, when Ladakh took over this area. The term *Jo* is of Ladakhi or Tibetan language, while they were called Thakurs by the Kullu Rajas. Even while under Kullu, they had an

inclination towards Ladakh, mainly due to religion. This ultimately became the cause of their ouster from power. Bilchung was the last Thakur of Barbog. He was a Buddhist, while the Kullu Rajas were against Buddhism. This made Bilchung turn his back on Kullu, at which the Kullu Rajas stripped him of his powers.

Barbog genealogy dates back to Tsering Anrup, who was a contemporary of Raja Bhadur Singh of Kullu in the 16th century. However, the family tree which is available—obtained from them by Dr. Francke—does not go as far back as that. Another name, Tsultum Thakur, of this family is mentioned in the folklores. This story describes several fights between Tsultum and a man named Hira from Tholang village. In this story, Tsultum says, “People call me Tsultum Thakur, the ruler, while Hira calls me Bhotura, the Tibetan”. This name also does not appear in the family tree given in appendix B. Apparently this tree was put together at very late stage, when many of their ancestors were forgotten.

The Ranas of Kardang

Although there is no written document available, a ruling family is believed to have existed at Kardang. It is also said that at one time Kardang was the biggest village in Lahoul. This must have been a long time ago when all the other villages were much smaller. Evidently, Kardang has not grown very much since then. Alexander Cunningham, who passed through Lahoul in the 1860s, also pointed out that Kardang was the largest village. It is not known today which of the present families belonged to the historical Ranas, or if they vanished altogether.

The rule of these Ranas must have been very tyrannical. Even today in one ceremony called Halda, the people of Keylong yell war cries and curses at the Kardang Ranas, saying, “Kardangpe Rana-e shosha haisha”. Haisha is a gesture for biting, and shosha means heart. Thus they yell towards Kardang saying that they would bite the heart of the Kardang Ranas.

Since Rana was a title mostly used in Chamba, while Thakur was used in Kullu and Jo in Ladakh, it is assumed that the Kardang Rana represented the Rajas of Chamba when Gahar valley came under them. Perhaps most of Gahar valley—especially the villages

of Keylong and Beeling—resented this, and as a result they started this tradition of crying curses at the Ranas of Kardang and Gushal.

The Ranas of Gushal

The Rana family still exists in Gushal village. In most earlier books by Moorcroft, Cunningham, Harcourt, and others, Gushal has been called Gus. Obviously they must have picked up this word from Gahar or Tod valleys. The Gushal Rana was the representative of the Rajas of Chamba. There are a very few traces of Buddhism in the left bank of Chenab, from which we can infer that there was little influence of Ladakh or Guge in the left bank. It seems that they had never been controlled by Ladakh. Whatever little influence there is, it might be due to marriages and some late settlers.

Besides the lack of Buddhist influence on the left bank, other evidence for concluding that this area was not under Ladakh is the river Chenab itself. This is a big river—swift and cold—quite impossible to cross without a bridge. Building a bridge to span a couple of hundred feet is not easy. Even until recently only a couple of suspension bridges, locally called *tcham*, made of manila twigs existed. Crossing these bridges was a test of one's courage. Most people would not dare take even a step on it because of its swinging motion.

Geographically and culturally also, it seems that Gushal might have been the extreme end of Chamba territory for most of its history. During times when the rest of the Pattan valley on the right bank was tossed around among Ladakh, Kullu or Chamba, the left bank might have remained under Chamba consistently. Later when Kullu took over this part, they confiscated the Gushal Rana's copper plate, which was given to them by the Rajas of Chamba. These Ranas were related by marriage to Chamba.

There are a few folklores and stories about these Ranas. In one story it is said that a festival called Yor was celebrated in Gushal. In the festival, they had a musical instrument called Pown, but nobody knew how to play it. The instrument is like a two-sided drum, but it was not supposed to be played like a drum. The celebration was incomplete without playing this instrument, causing the

Rana's head to split in seven pieces. When all efforts to play it failed, a beautiful pigeon appeared on the roof and started singing and flapping its wings rhythmically. People watched it carefully and by copying the tune found a way to create similar sound on the *pown*. Slowly the Rana's head healed. Since that time, Yor was celebrated all over Lahoul until it lapsed sometime in the 1940s. In this celebration they used masks, called *mohras*, to cover their faces like Halloween masks.

One folk song relates that Rana Birbal of Gushal was in trouble. He was asked to construct a *choura*—a sort of platform—in the village. For this they needed a medium called *gura*, who they brought from Wari. The song is actually more about getting the medium than about the Rana. This story and the song are described in more detail in the chapter on 'Folklores, Songs and Dances'.

There is a tragic folktale about the sacrifice of a Rani (queen) named Rupi Rani of Gushal that begins:

Oorana shooki, moorana shooki, pani nahi teepu je;
 Ghusheri panugana shookara geye ji,
 Udho mama Teetu Maita manasuba keeti je . . .

and so on—the complete song is given in Appendix A.

In this story the source of water in the village of Gushal was exhausted. All the springs and fountains had gone dry. There was not a drop of water available. One day a Sadhu (hermit) came from Chamba and stood in the courtyard of the Rana. Consulting his astrological books and charts, he told the Rana that a sacrifice was needed to restore the water. First he suggested the Rana's black dog. At this Udho Mama and Teetu Maita remarked that if they sacrificed the black bitch, who would guard the gate? Then the hermit suggested the black cat. Udho and Teetu again conspired. If they sacrificed the black cat, who would guard the fireplace? Next the hermit suggested the sacrifice of Prince Ghungru. Udho and Teetu argued against it saying that no one would be left to become the next ruler. Then the hermit suggested the princess Ghoongru. Again, Udho and Teetu conspired. If they sacrificed the princess, who could they send to Chamba in marriage?

Finally the hermit suggested sacrificing the queen. This time, however, there were no excuses offered by Udho and Teetu, and

preparations for the sacrifice began. The queen was to be buried alive. The poor queen lamented, but to no avail. When she saw that there was no escape, she made a request, "Oh my villagers, if you have to bury me, go ahead bury me, but do not bury my breasts. My son will come and I should be able to give him milk." When even her breasts were buried, then she said, "Do not bury my eyes, my daughter will come to play hide-and-seek and I should be able to see her." This request also fell on deaf ears and she was completely buried under ground.

It was believed that out of her breasts two fountains sprang up. Out of her hair, green grass called *shilim*, soft like hair, came up. It is also said that when Rani's every request was denied, she left a curse that these Ranas should never grow taller than the door latch. The conspiracy between Udho and Teetu is clear, but why Rana did not say anything is not clear. Was he involved in the conspiracy, or was he stupid, or was he so interested in his people's need for water that he was ready to sacrifice even his queen?

There is a very similar story in the Kullu history. I am including it here, because the similarities are too close to accept the two incidents as different stories. It is possible that both incidents are the same. As time passed, and the story was repeated many times orally, people might have confused about its happening in their own place. The Kullu story follows:

When Keral Pal ruled Kullu, the Raja of Suket captured Kullu territory as far as Siunsa. He left Rana Bhosal in charge of this territory. Bhosal's wife, the princess of Suket, was extremely beautiful. They had a son named Tika Ghungru and a daughter named Dei Ghunderi.

Rana Bhosal, well known for his stupidity, was commemorated by the saying, "Bara peethe, athara dane; Bhosal Rana sar na jane." Meaning, "Twelve pumpkins and eighteen tax collectors; Bhosal Rana does not know what the hell is going on." His *wazir* (minister) Teeta Mehta was infatuated with the queen, but his advances were rejected. The *wazir* wanted revenge. A new water course was being built for Rana's rice paddies, so the *Wazir* had the downstream gradient kept higher than its head. He then convinced the Rana that until the Rani was buried alive in the water course, the water would not flow.

A tomb was built by Kalu, who was Rani's *dharam bhai* (a foster brother). Seeing no escape, she asked Kalu to build the tomb big enough to allow her to move easily. That night *wazir* Teeta came to see her. Finding her alive, he tried to grab her by the hair. The Rani crouched down and eluded his grasp. The *wazir* then cast down a big stone and killed her. In this story the Rani is said to have been nursing her child while she was being buried.

Returning to the palace, the children asked Teeta Mehta what had become of their mother. The *wazir* told them to ask the workman Kalu. Kalu then told the prince to go to the stable, mount his horse and carry word to his maternal uncle in Suket. The prince went to Suket, dropped his turban at the feet of his uncle, the Raja of Suket and told him the story. The Raja himself came with an army and captured both Rana and his *wazir*. He cut and flayed the body of the *wazir*, sprinkled salt and red pepper on his wounds. Finally they cut him into pieces and besmeared the leaves of trees for the crows. The Rana was not killed, instead a necklace of cowdung and shoes, and a dress of hemp was put on him and taken around the boundary of his territory. The children were then taken to Suket.

A very similar story is narrated in Chamba also. Again it is hard to believe that each one of these stories are different ones occurring in each of these territories.

The family tree of the Ranas of Gushal, obtained from Rana Amar Singh, is given in Appendix B. This tree is extracted from the land record started by the British Government of India. Thus it does not go back very far. Even the name of Rana Birbal mentioned earlier in one story does not appear here.

The Ranas of Lote

Hutchison and Vogel as well as Harcourt mentioned that Ranas existed in Lote. It seems that they must have existed a long time ago, since no one today knows anything about Lote Ranas except for traces in stories and hearsay. A trace of a fort existed in Lote or Lope, as it is called locally. It is said that there were two forts, one on each side of Lote Nallah. They were connected with iron chains, such that one could open or close the doors of these forts from

either side. One side of the nallah where one of the forts was supposed to have been, has the name Charu-bog, the fort-hillock.

The other side, near the village Lote, the place where the fort supposedly existed, has been ruined by floods. This nallah or tributary is famous for its floods. Recently one junior engineer and a truck driver lost their lives in a sudden flood at this place. The first time I saw a flood here, during 1950s, it shook the whole area. The water carried boulders as big as a small house. The danger was that these boulders might form a dam across the river Chenab, making it swell, and endangering crops and lives. These floods have created a canyon hundreds of feet deep. Any trace of a fort is lost. A few years ago, a trace of a wall made out of small flat stones was found.

There is no documentary evidence as to which of the present families living in this village descended from the Ranas. One possibility is that the ancestors of the Bhutungru family might have been the Ranas. The reason for this conjecture is that in earlier times these families are said to have resided in Bhanlope, which means the upper Lote, where the fort existed. Later they moved down where the present village is located, perhaps to escape the floods or even the avalanches as this location is prone for it. It is also believed that the Ruringba family, residing in a village on the other side of Lote nallah, acted as the priests to these Ranas. Both the Bhutungru and the Ruringba families hold a considerable amount of land.

It is presumed that if this conjecture is true then these Ranas must have been under Chamba, because of the title Rana. Also when Chamba lost this area to Kullu in the 18th century for the final time, it might have resulted in their loss of title and power, and after a few generations it was forgotten altogether.

If the first conjecture is not correct then another possibility is the family named Shasni living in this village. The word Shasan in Hindi or Sanskrit means rule. The Kullu Rajas traditionally awarded this title to those who had performed some extraordinary deed for them. One such award, mentioned earlier, was given to a man named Rampati of Chamba for arranging the marriage of three Kullu princesses to Partap Singh, the heir of Chamba throne. This award was in the form of big land holdings. It is said that one of

the ancestors of Shasni families was also given this award. It is possible that because of this title there was confusion about the existence of Ranas in Lote.

There are two versions of the story of how this title was awarded to this family. In one version it is said that there was a very famous *vaidya*, a Buddhist doctor, in this family. He was famous for his ability to make diagnosis by feeling the pulse of the patient. This method of diagnosis is still used in Tibetan Buddhist medicine. Once the Raja (or some say Rani) of Kullu was sick in bed. When no other treatment seemed to help, they called for this doctor. In order to test his ability, they kept him in a separate room from the patient. The Raja's caretakers then tied a thread to the leg of the bed, handed the other end to the doctor, and asked him for his diagnosis. The doctor held the thread in his hand and told them that there was no life in the patient. Next they tied the thread to the legs of a small bird, at which the doctor told them that there was a very feeble life in it like that of a small bird. Finally they tied the thread to the wrist of the patient. The doctor then told them that this was the pulse of a sick man and told them what the trouble was. The Raja was very much pleased with this and awarded him Shasan when he recovered. From then on this family was known as Shasni.

In other version of this story, it is said that the doctor belonged to a different family. There is a group of families in Lote known as Lharjaun. The word Lharjaun seems to have been derived from Lharje, which means the Buddhist doctor. Some say that the doctor belonged to this family. The man on whom the title was conferred was only doctor's companion. There may be some truth in this. This man might have arranged for the doctor and convinced the Raja of his capabilities. As in the earlier case of Rampati also, the title was given to him for arranging the marriage rather than to the person who married the princesses. There was a very famous man named Gyamzo in the Shasni family, who is said to have acted as an advisor to the Ladakh Rajas. If the second version of the story is true, then it is possible that he might be the one on whom this title was conferred. It is also possible that he might have acted as a regent of Kullu Rajas when they controlled this part of Lahoul.

Thus because of the title Shasan, the authors of the books mentioned earlier might have confused them with Ranas. In any event

whether the Bhutungru family was entitled Ranas or the Shasni family was, it would have associated them with either Chamba or Kullu. Both families were also under the influence of Buddhism. Both branches of these households possessed the sacred Buddhist scriptures such as *Dobang* and *Padma Thayig*, even though they do not seem to have represented the Ladakh kings at all.

Chambak Wazir

There is not a single reference to the Wazir of Chambak in any available document; nor is anything heard of their having ruled any area at all, yet someone must have given them this title as they are still addressed by it. There is a folklore praising this wazir, which goes as follows:

Vadi e wazira-e, vadi tere nawen;
Vadi e wazira-e, vadi tere prouri;
Prouri upuru-e, siah mukha likhi . . .

And so on. Directly translated this verse becomes:

Great art thou oh wazir, great is thy name;
Great art thou, and great is thy courtyard;
In the courtyard there is sculptured a lion-face . . .

There is a story of these Wazirs having fights with the Rajas of Kullu. One of the Kullu Rajas once visited Lahoul. He met two brothers of the Chambak Wazir family at a place called Kwang. The Raja told them that he had heard a lot about their brave deeds and expressed his desire to witness some. There was a yak grazing in a field across the river. Pointing at the yak, the Raja told them that if they could shoot that yak with the very first arrow, he would be convinced and they would be rewarded. If, however, they could not do so, then they would be punished.

Accepting the challenge, one of the brothers picked up his bow and arrow, shot and killed the yak right there. The Raja was dumbfounded and at the same time worried. So he came up with a scheme. He asked them to join him for dinner that night, where they would receive their reward. At the party, they were only two among a room full of Raja's own people. Instead of rewarding

them, they tried to kill them there. One of them tore apart the roof of the house and escaped, while the other one was killed.

Since the area borders Chamba-Lahoul, although it was within British-Lahoul territory, and also since they were fighting with the Kullu Rajas, I conclude that the title must have been given to them by the Rajas of Chamba for some reason, such as representing them in collecting taxes from the local people.

The Thakurs of Kolong (or Gyamur) and Gumrang

The Thakurs of Kolong ruled some parts of Lahoul for a long time. Gyamur Orr, a small kingdom, and its skirmishes with Spiti, and Kullu etc have been mentioned in the previous chapter. If our conjecture that this Gyamur Orr is none other than Gaymur in the Tod valley of Lahoul (as presented earlier) is correct, then the existence of the ruling chiefs there goes further back than written history. This conjecture is supported by the fact that a part of the ruling Thakur family still resides in Gyamur, while the other part resides at Kolong.

In Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, there is a story of a great king Gyab Kayser of Tibet. Gyab Kayser was the king of Horr in Tibet. Although there are several myths attached to this king, as mentioned in the chapter entitled 'Gateway', yet there is a belief that this king actually existed. He came out of Tibet in order to conquer the neighbouring countries. Lahoul was one of those countries which he attacked. This leads us to think that some of his forces might have settled in the Tod valley of Lahoul, with their headquarters at Gaymur and called it Gyamur Horr. Later the word Horr (or Orr) might have been dropped. This kingdom might have constituted of Tod valley of Lahoul, Rupsho, Zanskar and a part of Ladakh.

The names of these earlier chiefs are not available anywhere. One name, Boldor, of the Kolong chiefs was discovered by Mr. Howel in an inscription on an old stone. Another name, Tsepar Namgyal, a contemporary of Raja Parbat Singh of Kullu—some time around 1575 A.D.—appears. These names do not appear in the family tree that later Thakurs compiled. Out of that family tree the earliest name that appears in the Kullu history is that of Nono

Chhogan, who was a contemporary of Raja Budhi Singh around 1700 A.D.

Dr. A.H Francke of Tibetan Archaeology, who was also associated with the Moravian mission in Lahoul, collected and compiled the chronicles of these Thakurs. In his book *Antiquities of Western Tibet*, he wrote that he asked Thakur Amar Chand of Kolong to show his family chronicles. Amar Chand gave the chronicle to Francke and told him that his father Hari Chand had compiled it from old documents and further updated it. This document was in Urdu, a copy of which still exists in Lahoul. Not satisfied with this, Francke again in 1906 tried to obtain the original document, nonetheless, he found that the original document was simply a pedigree in Tibetan. Francke's opinion was that this document also was compiled not earlier than 1680, and therefore doubted its accuracy.

The chronicle claimed that the family came from Bhangal, which was a part of Kullu kingdom at that time. According to the chronicle:

“ . . . there existed two independent ruling families of Pals and Raos, controlling various mountain districts. About 800 years before the chronicle was written one of the Pals had become very powerful, defeating the remaining rulers of Pals and Raos (Ranas?). At that time one man, Rana Nil Chand—alias Thakur Chandla Surat of Surya Vansi, Kashatriya caste—who was the ruler of Kolong in Bhangal escaped to Lahoul, where he used to go for hunting. He came to Ajav Pal Totiya, who was an independent ruler in one area of Lahoul.

“This Totiya Thakur had a daughter but no son; therefore he took Nil Chand as his son-in-law. After Totiya's death Nil Chand became the ruler of Totiya's territory. He called this territory Kolong, in memory of his former home Kolong in Bhangal. This territory was reported to extend from Lingti in the east to Jagilwari in the west, about 60 miles in length with frontier at Kothi Thari, and about 20 or 30 miles from north to south. Then it went on to list nine successors of Nil Chand from Surat Chand to Dyal Chand, listed in the family tree (given in Appendix B), without any further comments on any one of them, except to say that

they were independent rulers.

“During the time of Fateh Chand, the successor of Dyal Chand, the Raja of Tibet took possession of Lahoul, which continued for about one hundred years down to the rule of Karam Chand. During this time lamas and gurus were introduced in this country; that is why the names of ancestors since Karam Chand appear to be Tibetan. Later during the reign of Man Singh in Kullu, Lahoul came under Kullu”.

The chronicle further mentions that although it was the family custom that the eldest brother should become the ruler. Since Nono Chhogan and Singe were equally powerful, the territory was divided between the two. They were both Jagirdars under Raja Man Singh. Singe took possession of Gumrang and Nono Chhogan took Kolong. From thereon the two branches of the family appear in the tree.

Neither Francke, nor Hutchison believed this story. They are of the opinion that these Thakurs were of Tibetan origin. Francke asserts that there is no evidence to support the family history from Nil Chand to Karam Chand. Hutchison thinks that these Thakurs altered their chronicle simply to become closer to the Kullu Rajas. Thakur Rup Chand of the same family, who now lives in the United States, also thinks that there is no evidence of their ancestors having come from Bhangal.

William Moorcroft wrote that when he travelled through Lahoul in 1920, Dharam Singh was the *Negi* (head) of Kolong. After Dharam Singh, Bali Ram is said to have become the *Negi* of Kolong. His name also does not appear in the chronicle. It is said that he could not get on well with British administration, and therefore Captain Hay, the first Assistant Commissioner of Kullu, deprived him of the position pretending that Bali Ram himself declined. It is possible that Bali Ram was the son and a logical heir of Dharam Singh, since this branch ends after Dharam Singh in the family tree. Hay then appointed Tara Chand (from the other branch of the tree) as the *Negi* of Lahoul in 1853. It seems that somewhere around that time the title *Negi* was coined for the head man.

Tara Chand was succeeded by Hari Chand in 1876. He was given the title of Wazir of Lahoul. Next came Thakur Amar Chand,

who took over the administration in 1914. He joined the British army during the First World War in the position of Jamadar, a non-commissioned officer with five Lahoulis under him. After the death of Amar Chand, his eldest son Abhe Chand being a minor, Mangal Chand, the younger brother of Amar Chand became the Wazir. Later Abhe Chand became insane and therefore never attained power or title.

Thakur Jai Chand, a cousin of Thakur Amar Chand, was appointed as a British trade agent in Rudok, by the British Government. Charles Sherring in his book *Western Tibet and British Borderland* writes, "Jai Chand is on intimate terms with Garphans and frequently witnessed the administration of justice in the Tibetan supreme court." Sherring also published Jai Chand's photo in his book. Jai Chand being the younger brother did not get much *Jagir* in Lahoul. He had three sons, Lal Chand, Neel Chand and Rup Chand. They settled in Kullu at a place called Shima.

Thakur Rup Chand later joined an American professor, Dr. Kals, who had come to Lahoul to research plants and birds. In 1934 he came to America along with the professor to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. After a couple of years he went back to India and spent several years in Assam, Afghanistan, Persia and other countries northwest of India, collecting plants and herbs. In 1952 he came back to America with thousands of specimens. Since then, he has remained in Michigan, to work in the herbarium of the University of Michigan, cataloging his collections.

Abhe Chand had two younger brothers, Partap Chand and Prithi Chand. Both of them along with Khushal Chand, the elder son of Mangal Chand, joined the army. Partap Chand retired from the army as a captain. He was later appointed as Naib Tehsildar of Lahoul at Keylong. He also remained a member of Punjab Tribes Advisory Council until his death in 1964. Both Khushal Chand and Prithi Chand stayed in the army and rose to the rank of colonel. Both these Thakurs earned laurels during the Second World War, during the partition of India, and later when China attacked India in 1962. Khushal Chand died in an air crash while returning from Indo-China in 1964. It is said that he was then being promoted to brigadier. Thakur Prithi Chand retired with the rank of colonel.

Thakur Nihal Chand, younger brother of Khushal Chand, did

not maintain the family tradition of joining the army. Instead he became involved in politics. He remained member of Punjab Tribes Advisory Council until 1966, when Lahoul was merged with Himachal and this Council was dissolved. In a trade off for this Council, a seat in Himachal Assembly was allocated for Lahoul Spiti. Nihal Chand vied for this seat, but could not succeed. In 1975 he mysteriously died; it is claimed he had a heart attack.

This was the last generation of Thakurs who enjoyed the title or power of ruling Thakurs, and maintained a distinction from the common public. The present generation, though enjoying the land holdings as *jagir*, are treated as commoners.

The Gumrang *jagir* founded by Singe in the 17th century is not known very much for any specific deeds. Thakur Prem Chand, the present Thakur and eleventh in succession, always sported a revolver and a belt of bullets around his shoulders. These Thakurs of Gumrang perhaps were the representatives of Ladakh kings in Gahar valley, while the Kolong Thakurs had the Tod valley. They hold a considerable *jagir* at Gumrang.

The family tree of the Kolong and Gumrang Thakurs is given in Appendix B.

The Thakurs of Gondhla

The Thakurs of Gondhla were the regents for the Rajas of Kullu during most of their known history, ruling the Gondhla valley. They might have represented Ladakh also at those times when it dominated them. Dr. Francke notes that this is the first time the word Rana appended to a Tibetan name was found by Miss Duncan in the Teenan (Gondhla) chronicles. The chronicle says that the family was established by Rana Pala from Guge. Hutchison points out that the word Pala is just the Tibetan word Dpal, where the letter 'D' is silent. Here again it may be suspected that the source of the title Rana might have been Chamba during a period when this area came under its control.

Dr. Francke tried to obtain the Teenan chronicle, but did not succeed. So in 1908 he sent Miss Duncan, who was also attached to Tibetan Archaeology, to obtain it. She somehow succeeded in convincing Hira Chand Thakur to let her borrow it. This chronicle was in Tibetan, so Miss Duncan had to get it copied and translated.

Thakur Mangal Chand translated a major portion of it, but left out a portion which listed the names of guests who attended the death ceremony of chief Hariya, thinking that it was not important. Francke, however, was not satisfied. He wanted each and every word of the chronicle. Since Miss Duncan had died in 1909, he asked Mr. Hatasche, who was in charge of the Moravian mission at Keylong, to send his *munshi* (clerk helper) Zodpa to procure it again. To the utter frustration of Francke, Zodpa stopped his translation even earlier than Mangal Chand had.

The chronicle entitled 'Golden Mirror', begins with a mantram, "Aum-mo-Aum swati sidham". It then pays homage to Buddha and his teachings, to the holy religion which purifies from attachment, to Amitabh revealed as *Dharma Kaya*, to Avalokiteshvara who as *Sambhog Kaya* serves the good of the world, to Padmasambhava who as the *Nirman Kaya* subdues the eight demons. The homage continues on to include Sron-batsam-zangpo, an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, to the goddess Khritsum, an incarnation of Khromner, and to the goddess Konjo, an incarnation of Green Tara.

It next states that among all the countries the most eminent country is Bur-rgyal-bod (perhaps Tibet). The holy religion spread particularly in this snowy region, while the extremely lofty palace of the capital Magarsa (Kullu) was held by the great religious king Bhadur Singh. In this castle Nal-rtse (of the Gondhla Thakur) the most eminent in the country, there lived a family of undefiled origin called *Hod-gsal*, which was descended from the gods. It originated at Lcagsmkhar in Gunde (Guge?). The chronicle next lists the names of the members of this family starting with Rana Pala.

This chronicle was composed at the time a Chhorten was being built in the memory of chief Hariya after his death. At the end of the chronicle it adds that the chief of Teenan (Gondhla) said that Gunde is situated in Bir Bhangal and his ancestors came from there. Perhaps the name Gondhla was derived from the word Gunde at some later stage, but it is difficult to say if Gunde was really Guge.

Dr. Francke did not believe this last assertion. He felt that the origin was Tibetan and the word Gunde was Guge. In his opinion both Kolong and Teenan Thakurs altered it simply to become closer

to the Kullu kings by calling themselves Rajputs.

A castle still exists in Gondhla, about eleven storeys high, built with small stones of uniform thickness of about two to four inches. Until some time in the 1960s the living quarters of the Thakurs were attached to this castle. At present the Thakurs have built a new house and the living quarters attached to the castle were demolished.

This castle was built when Raja Man Singh, who later married the daughter of Gondhla Thakur, ruled Kullu. It is said that the hands of the mason, who built this castle, were chopped off so that he could not build other like it. The Gazetteer of Lahoul and Spiti attributes the building of this castle to Senge Namgyal of Gumrang. I do not see any logic behind this assumption.

The Gondhla Thakurs also possess a considerable amount of land as their *jagir*. After the independence of India, Thakur Nirmal Chand, the younger brother, was made *Daroga* (excise inspector) for this area. The elder brother Fateh Chand also served as a member of Punjab Tribes Advisory Council.

One branch of the Gondhla Thakurs settled in a nearby village called Khangsar. While they have never been rulers, nonetheless, they possessed a large land holdings. Rup Singh a member of this family used to run a mule train for transportation, when there were no roads for vehicles in Lahoul. Justice William Douglas of U.S. High Court used his mules and horses when he visited Lahoul, Ladakh, and surrounding area in 1953. In his book *Beyond the High Himalayas* he called Rup Singh a man of strangely independent mood, who would not care for anybody.

The family tree of Gondhla Thakurs is given in Appendix B.

Jahlma Thakurs

There are a couple of families of Thakurs in the village of Jahlma also, but there is no evidence that these Thakurs had any ruling power or held jagir etc. These Thakurs are presumed to be the cousins of the Gondhla Thakurs. Two members of these Thakurs—Shiv Chand, and Angrup each from a different household at present—remained in the Punjab Tribes Advisory Council for Lahoul Spiti during the 1950s and 1960s.

Thakurs of Shashan

The village of Shashan or Sisu also has a Thakur family. Though there is no documentary evidence, yet it seems that these Thakurs led the people in this area. They might have ruled over these people under the name of a deity, Raja Ghepan, in earlier days. The reason for this supposition is that this deity is called the Raja, and is worshipped all over Lahoul even today, while there is no evidence of these Thakurs being the rulers. Also there was a tradition of having the deity, rather than a man, as the ruling authority, while the head man only served on behalf of the deity. This happened in Kullu's history also, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

The Ranas of Linger

This might sound very funny to the valley's present residents to say that Ranas existed in the village of Linger. This is a very small village, with only five or six families, on the left bank of the river Chenab, completely isolated from the rest of the villages. The nearest crossing for these people is either Gushal bridge about ten kilometres away, or the Jobrang *jhoola*, which has recently been converted to a suspension bridge, about six kilometres away. Both these bridges are connected with a path not wider than a foot on either side of the village. Yet there are stories about the Linger Ranas. These Ranas worshipped a deity named Jatadhar. They fought several battles with the Ranas of Gushal, but they never lost due to the powers of this deity. The Ranas of Gushal were surprised about their defeat every time, since they were much stronger. Finally one day they came to know the secret. Before the next battle, the Gushal Rana went to the temple of Jatadhar and put a ring on her nose. This time the Linger Rana lost the battle. Exasperated, he went to the temple and he found the ring on the nose of his deity. Upset and angry, he hit the image with his sword and cut a big chunk out of it. From that day on, the people of Linger no longer worshipped that deity.

Thunu and His Kamdari

Thunu's *kamdari* is a famous proverb in Lahoul. The word

kamdari means deeds or actions. There lived a man named Thunu not too long ago—perhaps a century or two—who is said to have ruled over a major part of Lahoul. Many people know the story, but not how he came by this authority and power, since he did not belong to any of the Ranas or Thakurs mentioned earlier. It is my guess that perhaps he was an appointee of the Kullu Rajas for the Pattan valley, before the Kolong Thakurs were declared *wazirs* for all Lahoul by the British.

Thunu is said to have belonged to a family named Koras in Jahlma village. His reign was extremely tyrannical. He levied taxes of anything and everything that people had or did. Sick and tired of his behaviour and attitude, the people decided one day to rid themselves of him. Villagers from all over Lahoul gathered at his headquarters at Tandi. Two men from Jobrang are said to have invited the deity Kali as a remonstrance of strength in fighting his authority.

Thunu came to know about the plot, and locked himself up in a room of his office. The people were very angry and determined to finish the job that day, so they tore off the roof, jumped in, and tied him with a rope. Then they brought him outside in front of the public gathered there and tied him to a tree. Seeing the angry faces of the crowd, Thunu was petrified and asked for mercy, but no one was ready to listen to his plea. One man from Tholang village brought human excreta on a piece of slate, and placing it near Thunu's mouth said, "Here your majesty, this is a treat for you; eat." At this Thunu said, "I have had enough of everything, with the grace of the public; all this time, what more could I ask?" Then they took him to Jahlma, his own village, and locked him up in a room.

At this point there are two versions of the ending. In one version it is said that once when his wife brought food for him, she put a barber's razor inside a *bhutura* (a kind of bread). Thunu took the razor and cut his throat. In the other version, they say that when his nephew went to see him, Thunu asked him to get a knife to cut his bonds. Obeying his order, his nephew brought the knife and cut the rope. As soon as Thunu's hands were free, he grabbed the knife and cut his throat. Thunu's tyrannical rule thus came to an end.

8

Origins and Transmigration

In the earlier chapters, I made an attempt to present the ancient history of Lahoul, in regard to the land and its rulers. In this chapter I shall try to present the history of the people living in this valley, their origins and their migration to this land, thus making an effort to unfold the mystery of having so many different dialects, cultures, religions and beliefs in such a tiny area.

Basically there had been three types of settlers. First those who invaded this area, conquered it and then settled here. Next those who escaped to Lahoul when their native areas were attacked. Finally those who came for business purposes or just for a visit and later settled here. This is not to say that every one in this valley came from outside, which is normally presupposed by the historians. There were probably people living in this area from the time immemorial, before any history was recorded, and we shall start this section with those people.

The People of Chamba-Lahoul

The people of Chamba-Lahoul, that is around Triloknath, seem to be either the original inhabitants or the earliest settlers in this valley. We can go as far back as 300 B.C. in known history, the time when Alexander the great came out of Greece with the idea of conquering the world. After victories over some European and Middle Eastern countries, he proceeded towards India, where right on the northwestern frontier he faced a tough opposition from Porus or Puru. Even though Alexander won this battle, his army lost all hope of further conquest and turned back. It is possible that some

of his people never returned and stayed here. The reason for such a conjecture is as follows. In the *District Gazetteer of Chamba*, it is written, "In Bhardwan, Chura, Pangi, Kullu and western Kumaon an ethnic strain related to eastern Iran and Pamir Hindukush region (Galchas, Wakhnis, Kafirs) can be recognized."

In Rudyard Kipling's story '*The Man Who would be the King*', two English men start from India for Kafristan with the idea of conquering its petty chiefs and becoming kings themselves. When I saw the movie that was made from this story, it stunned me. Hollywood movies are known for authenticity in their presentation, and however they got the idea, the petty chiefs of Kafristan are depicted just like the Thakurs of Triloknath and Margraon. These people call Alexander (Sikandar) their god, and at the same time call Inbra their highest god. This Inbra may very well be Indra, the king of Hindu gods.

The movie makers show suspension bridges made out of manila ropes just like the ones that existed in Lahoul at Jobrang and Nalda until recently. There is a strong resemblance in the house structure with flat roofs. All the musical instruments shown in the movie exist in Lahoul including a pair of drums called Nyishan, a flat drum called dub, an 'S' shaped trumpet called Ranshingha, another drum called gNah, cymbals and a big brass trumpet called Gyadung. All this is far from sheer coincidence. If the presentation in the movie is even half authentic, one would be forced to conclude that the people of Kafristan and other countries northwest of India are of the same ethnic background as the people of Chamba-Lahoul.

Thakur Rup Chand, who travelled extensively in Afghanistan, Persia, Pamir and the Hindukush areas, also found many similarities. He is of the opinion that the Lohars (blacksmiths) of Lahoul must have come from Chatral. Apart from their physical resemblance, they are called Domb in that area, while in Gahar valley of Lahoul, they are called Domba, and in Gondhla valley they are called Dompha.

Often historians trace the history of people from one place to another. I do not know if we can say the same thing about the people of Chamba-Lahoul, but under the light of the above resemblances, we might be inclined to conclude that these people are of

the same ethnic background as the people of the Pamir and Hindu-kush regions.

Here an objection might be raised that the people of Chamba-Lahoul are all Hindus, mostly Brahmins and some Harijans, while the countries in northwest of India are mostly Moslems. To answer this question, I will have to say that in ancient times most of these areas were Hindus. When Huan Tsang came to India from China, he passed through these areas including Sinkyang before he entered India at Gandhar (present Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir area). The name of the king of Sinkyang that he reported was a purely Hindu name. Late Mr. Apte, the general secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, also mentioned that when he travelled in Afghanistan and other areas in the northwest of India, he noticed people with complete Hindu faces and features. Later when Moslems from the Middle East started spreading, they converted most people into Islam.

So far Lahoul is concerned, this basically covers the people of Chamba-Lahoul. At some later stage, however, some of them spread towards the Pattan valley, the other part of Lahoul. This, we shall further discuss along with other people of Pattan valley.

The People of Tod Valley

Another group whose history may reach far back in time are the people of Tod valley. There is no doubt that the origin of a majority of people of Tod valley is Tibetan. Besides their features and general looks, the language is more than 90 percent Tibetan, perhaps closer to the one spoken in the southern part of Tibet. There may be some influence from other dialects of Lahoul and also of other languages of India, mainly Hindi and Urdu, but this is insignificant.

If our assertion, made in the previous chapters, that Gyamur kingdom was located in the Tod valley is correct, then the origins of the people in this valley go far beyond the written documents available, before the Christian era.

In the later part of its history, this area had usually been directly or indirectly dominated by Ladakh or Guge, off and on. Therefore there may not have been any particular periods when

settlers migrated in large groups. Instead there might have been slow trickles of migration. William Moorcroft has written that the fort at Kolong (the headquarter of Tod valley) was necessary to encounter and protect from the infiltrators. He also adds that later friendly relations or at least trade with Ladakh and Tibet was established, which might have given more freedom for migration. Even now the Thakurs of this valley have marriage relationship with the Raja of Ladakh.

The people of Tod valley seem to have maintained their identity even though annexed to Kullu kingdom or may be even to Chamba. The only influence on this area was the trend of changing the names from Tibetan Buddhist names to Indian Hindu names, and also a trend of joining the Indian army during British rule.

The People of Ranglo

Though not quite early settlers, the people of Ranglo are included in this sequence mainly because of their origin. A majority of the people of this area also are of Tibetan origin, although perhaps from a different area than their counterparts in Tod valley. These people seem to be from Kham district in Tibet, from where many tradesmen came to conduct business between India and Tibet. These people did not maintain their identity quite intact. This might indicate that they did not migrate en masse, instead they came individually as a businessman or as a servant of some tradesmen, and intermixed with people already settled there. This area also experienced much influence from Gondhla valley as well as from Kullu valley resulting in a mixture of culture and dialect.

The People of Gahar Valley

The origin of most people in Gahar valley seems to be Baltistani. The original people of Baltistan were Buddhists. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the 14th century Moslems extended their influence over Kashmir. Later in 1405 king Sikander of Kashmir attacked Baltistan, and forced these people to embrace Islam. Some accepted it while others could not. Those who refused found the pressure intolerable and left Baltistan.

Most of those who left, seem to have come to Lahoul and settled in Gahar valley, while others seem to have gone to the Sugnam valley in Spiti. During that period a major part of Lahoul—particularly Gahar and Tod valleys—was under Ladakh kings, who were themselves Buddhists; as such they might have allowed these people to settle here without causing them any problem. This might have been the obligation that caused the Barbog Thakur to remain faithful to Ladakh to the extent of losing his powers when this area came under Kullu. These people must have migrated en masse, for they have maintained the identity fairly intact. The gritstone vessels from Baltistan were quite common in Lahoul in earlier days; a sample of which can still be found in some houses.

From the point of view of language, the dialect of Gahar valley bears great resemblance to that of Sugnam valley. If we remove the influence of Urdu and other aspects of Moslem culture from the Balti dialect, we can find enough resemblance with it also.

There are some blacksmiths and goldsmiths in this valley. It is difficult to say whether they also came from the same place along with others or if they came from different places, like Chatral, as suggested in the previous section.

The People of Gondhla Valley

The groups described earlier have been of more or less unique origin and background, in spite of their mixing with other groups at later stages. This is not the case with the people of the Gondhla and Pattan valleys. In these areas there has been much intermixing of different races and bloods.

The people of Gondhla valley seem to be a mixture of the people from Malana (a tiny ravine in the Kullu valley at the back of Nagar), Buser, Zanskar and perhaps some from Ladakh as well. The following are the reasons for reaching to this conclusion.

Deities

The chief deity of Gondhla valley is Ghepan, also called Raja Ghepan. The use of the term “Raja” with the deity seems to indi-

cate the acceptance of this deity as their ruler, rather than any human being. This has been a tradition in some parts of India at different times, as was mentioned in the Kullu history in the previous chapter. The chief deity of Malana is Zamlu, who is regarded as the elder brother of Ghepan. Every third year Ghepan is taken to Malana to visit and pay his respects to Zamlu. This clearly indicates the relationship between the people of Malana and Lahoul, especially the people of Gondhla valley.

Now a question could be raised whether the people of Lahoul came from Malana or the people of Malana came from Lahoul. Here we can appeal to a local tradition. Traditionally, the eldest brother maintains the family home and the younger ones leave for jobs or go into business. Also younger brothers go to pay respect to the elders, not the other way around. Calling Ghepan the younger brother who goes to pay his respects to Zamlu might be an indication that some people from Malana left to settle in Lahoul, particularly in Gondhla valley.

G.C. Howel, who was Assistant Commissioner of Kullu from 1907 to 1910 thought that the people of Malana were of Tibetan origin. He equated them with those called 'Pitti Thakurs' in Kullu. The Pitti Thakurs were not Tibetans, instead they were the chiefs of Spiti valley, who at one time attacked and ruled Kullu after establishing their capital near Jagat Sukh. Since it is not our intention to investigate the history of Malana here, it will suffice to say that whatever its origins, some of its people migrated to Lahoul at one time.

Besides Ghepan, there are other deities in the Gondhla valley. There is a story that five other deities came along with Ghepan. Milang Tete settled at Gondhla village, Lung-khorbar at Khale, Tangjar at Piyukar, Gyungrang at Sakar, and Lhorang (which means blacksmith) settled at Rhaling. I think this is a clear indication of the settlement of various groups of people in this valley. Ghepan, considered to be their leader, settled in Shashan or Sisu, as did the Thakur of Shashan. This must mean that this Thakur was the leader of these settlers. It is said that every third year these deities get together and a great celebration called 'Kaisander' takes place.

Language

The language of Gondhla valley seems to be a mixture of the languages spoken in Malana, Buser, Chamba-Lahoul, along with some Tibetan and Zanskari. The comparison of these dialects is made in a separate chapter on 'Languages or Dialects'.

The language can be one of the best sources for discovering people's origin, if it has been properly maintained. Unfortunately this generally does not happen, especially if they did not migrate in large groups. Since the dialect of Gondhla valley is a mixture of several different dialects, we may conclude that the people of this valley did not migrate in a large group from a particular area, instead they migrated from several different places in small groups or individually at various times.

Repetition of Names

When people migrate to establish new settlements, and have the opportunity to name them, they often repeat the name of the homes they left. America is full of such examples. In Lahoul also, the Thakurs of Kolong and Gondhla claimed to have done this. In the same manner there is a village called Phugtal in Gondhla valley, while the capital of Zanskar was Phugtal. Therefore some people of this village, if not all, must have come from Zanskar. This was later confirmed by Chaman Lal Phugtal who recalled hearing that his ancestors came from Zanskar.

The People of the Pattan Valley

The Pattan valley of Lahoul has the maximum mixture of people. One of the major reasons is that this area has been most vulnerable and it has been tossed around among different kingdoms at different times, each leaving its own mark and its own group of settlers.

The Name Pattan

Pattan is not very old name and does not appear in too many

documents. My father Som Dev once came across an intriguing question regarding this name while travelling by train to Delhi. In conversation with some fellow passengers he learned that they came from Pattan, while he himself came from Pattan in Lahoul valley. Further discussions revealed that this Pattan was in Jammu and Kashmir, a neighbouring state. He always wondered if a connection existed between the two names.

In the previous chapter it was mentioned that in 1841 a Jammu force of ten thousand men, under the leadership of Zoravar Singh attacked Tibet, but only about one thousand returned to Leh. Later, others who were taken prisoner by Tibetans, were also released. It is conceivable that some of these prisoners came to Lahoul from Tibet rather than going to Ladakh and then to Jammu. In this case they might have called this area Pattan, after their own Pattan in Jammu. Moorcroft and Trebeck travelled through Lahoul in 1819-20. They never mentioned the word Pattan in their writings, while Harcourt travelling in the 1850s used it a few times. This may tend to support the above conjecture.

Pattan in Urdu, however, means a flat land. The Pattan valley in Lahoul is slightly flatter than rest of the valleys. It is also possible that it was called Pattan just because of that.

Division by Cast

The caste system in the Pattan valley certainly sheds some light on different groups of people with different backgrounds. One might try to discard this factor simply by saying that this is a typical Hindu caste system, yet if one analyses it a little deeper, one will find interesting background history behind it. There are three groups of people by caste—the Brahmins, the Kashatriyas or Bodh, and Harijans or Chinal.

In an article entitled 'Girijan of Himachal Pradesh' for the *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika* (1972) I had indicated a temptation to equate the castes of Lahoul with the history of Kols, Dravids, Mongols and Aryans, which may still be taught in Indian schools. In this comparison, the Harijans who are also called Kolis may be Kols; the Kashatriyas, known locally as Bodhs may be Mongols; and the Brahmins may be Aryans. There were no Dravids in this

area. This kind of history of India is rejected by a majority of non-historians and some historians as well. There may be many arguments pro and con, so instead of going to that unknown period of Indian history, here we shall try to establish the more recent settlements of the people in this valley.

The Brahmins

The Brahmins of Pattan valley share the same origins as those of Chamba-Lahoul, discussed earlier. They can be found only as far as Tholog village, and live mostly away from the main road. This may indicate that either these people were driven out of the main valley, or that they settled at a much later stage when this area again came under Chamba. The second conjecture is more likely since this area had been tossed around so many times. They might have spread from the Chamba-Lahoul area slowly at a very late stage when the main roadside area was already occupied.

On the other hand, the Brahmin caste in Lahoul is called *Swangla*, and the valley of Lahoul itself is called *Swangla* in the local dialect. This might indicate that the Brahmins had already settled in this valley before the other settlers came, and the new comers then gave the same name to the people as well as the valley of Lahoul.

The Brahmins consider themselves superior, called all others untouchable and refused to eat from their hands. Later some intermarried with others to produce a new class called *Garu*. The *Garus* did not consider *Kashatriyas* or *Bodhs* as untouchable. Thus with the exception of these *Garus*, others kept their caste identities intact.

The Harijans

The Harijans or Chinals, who were considered the servant class, can be divided mainly into two groups. The Chana or Chinal had a direct master-servant relationship with the upper class groups. The second group consisted of artisans—blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters—who were not attached to a single master but rather performed their trades for everyone. The Chinals were not direct slaves or household servants. They performed certain menial jobs such as

hauling away the dead animals, playing musical instruments at funerals, delivering messages of death to relatives, and so forth, for their specific masters. While they were not paid directly for doing these jobs, they did share in every festival or marriage or funeral or any other occasion, irrespective of whether their services were used or not.

This one-to-one relationship might indicate that some of the Chinals accompanied other settlers, especially the Ranas and Thakurs. However, their dialect, their facial looks, and some of their customs indicate their origin to be in Chura, Pangi, or other parts of Chamba; while some might have come from Kullu as well.

The Harijans have their own story. They say that in the beginning a Brahmin and a Harijan were two brothers. When one of them started eating beef, the other brother called him *dagee* and branded him untouchable. Often this story is taken as a joke. Nonetheless, the significance of this story might hold an insight into the ancient Hindu caste system of Manu. The story must mean that both the Brahmins and Harijans are Hindus and equal. When Manu devised the caste system, it was not meant to create untouchability, rather it was strictly a division of labour. He felt that it is far easier for a teacher's son to become a teacher and a cobbler's son to become a cobbler than for them to take up other professions. Later, people created untouchability, ignoring the very idea behind this division.

The blacksmiths' job was to make or repair tools. Since they were very few in number, they divided the masters among themselves and were paid in kind at every occasion regardless of services rendered. Goldsmiths and silversmiths, unlike the others, were paid directly only for the work done. In the previous chapter it was suggested that some of these blacksmiths might have come from Chatral and other northwestern frontiers. There is no other definite indication of their origin.

The Kashatriyas or Bodhs

While this group considers itself to be Kashatriyas or Rajputs in the Hindu caste system, yet locally they are known as *Bodh*. The significance of the term 'Bodh' seems to indicate their adherence to

Buddhism, and in some cases their origin in Ladakh or Zanskar or western Tibet. This group seems to contain the greatest amalgamation of peoples of different origins such as Malana, Buser, Bir Bhangal, Kullu, Chamba and Bharmour, besides Ladakh and Zanskar. One of the reasons for this conclusion is the dialect, which is a mixture of the dialects of Chamba-Lahoul, Malana, Buser, Balti, Tibetan, and a little of Hindi and Urdu. It seems that the dialect of Chamba-Lahoul had been the base on which all other dialects have been superimposed. Further details are given in a separate chapter on 'Languages or Dialects'.

Writing in 1860s, Harcourt noted, “. . . within the last sixty or seventy years there had been a considerable immigration into Lahoul from Bara Bhangal, Chamba, Zanskar, and other parts of Ladakh.”

Certain families also remember being told that their ancestors came from Zanskar or Ladakh, although under today's changed conditions they themselves do not believe it. The method of tracing the family roots is termed *rhus*—literally, the bones. It seems strange to equate the bones with roots rather than the blood. There is another term *bhagyar*, which also means family roots or blood relationship. It is considered important to know one's *bhagyar*, as one is not supposed to marry within one's own *bhagyas*.

The influence of Buddhism in this area indicates that some people from Ladakh and Zanskar must have settled in this area probably during the 11th and 12th centuries when Lhachen Utpala invaded and controlled most of this area; and later during the 16th and 17th centuries when Senge Namgyal attacked and recaptured this area.

As far as migration from Malana is concerned, it seems that most people settled in Gondhla valley while others might have moved to Pattan valley also. The reason for this conclusion is the commonalty of the words between the dialects of Malana and Pattan valley. Also the deity Ghepan is honored in Pattan valley as much as it is in Gondhla valley. Another indication is that in earlier times, the people of Lahoul used to go to Malana to buy milk cows. It was believed that Kullu cows do not survive in Lahoul, while Malana cows were more suitable.

Regarding migration from Buser, Harcourt wrote that the 1868

census reported 277 Buraras, or weavers from Busher. Evidently some of them must have settled there, while others came from Busher during the summer for temporary jobs in weaving until 1940s or '50s.

In the villages of Gushal, Mooling and Bargul there are some families known as *Gaddis*. The *Gaddis* are generally the shepherds of Bharmour, some of whom still come to graze their sheep in Lahoul during the summer. It seems very likely that some of them might have settled permanently in Lahoul, and are still called *Gaddis*. Some of these families possessed large herds of sheep which they took to Sirmour and other places to graze during the winter. The Ranas of Gushal were related by marriage with Chamba, which might also indicate their having come from Chamba.

Regarding migration from Bir or Bara Bhangal, the ravine between the mountains of Lahoul and Joginder Nagar, Palampur etc., we have already mentioned the claims of the Thakurs of Kolong and Gondhla. Whether their claim was valid or not, other people have certainly migrated from this area. In particular the majority of Tholong village might have its roots in Bir Bhangal.

The Story of Tholong Village

In one story about the establishment of Tholong it is said that a man from Kullu came to Lahoul and decided to settle in Tholong. With this in mind, he planted a willow cutting in the ground, saying that if his future generations were to flourish here, the stick would grow into a tree. If he was not supposed to settle here, the stick should wither away and die. This tree still exists there and is known as *koozo boota*—the tree of the man from Kullu. It's a very old tree; only the outer shell is in good shape while the whole inside has decayed. For that reason it is not possible to establish the age of this tree today. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be older than four hundred years. This would mean that the settlement must have been sometime in the 17th or 18th century, perhaps during the reign of Raja Jagat Singh or Man Singh in Kullu. From the story it might seem that anyone could come and settle, as if the land was up for grabs. This is not true. Even in very early times the Rajas or the Ranas allotted the land to People. Therefore, a stranger could not

just have come and settled there. This man must either have been sent by the Kullu Raja, or at least he must have obtained permission to take possession of the land there.

There is another story that a man named Baba Dundu came from a place called Bundil, supposedly near Palampur (presently in Kangra district), and settled in Tholong. Baba Dundu is said to have had four sons. The eldest son stayed in Tholong, the second one died young without any issue, the third son named Thama settled in Waring, or rather he might have established the village of Waring, and the fourth son, Hira, settled in Tozing.

From the two stories we can conclude that this man Dundu must have come from Bir Bhangal, since it is geographically near Palampur, while it was under Kullu domination during most of the 16th through 19th centuries. Thus in the first story he was called a man from Kullu—without specifying the name of any village—and in the second story the name of a village is given whose location is said to be near Palampur.

In a folklore, Hira, the fourth son, has several fights with Tsultum, the Thakur of Barbog. It seems that the cause of their fight was a beautiful girl named Zilzom. The song says:

Just as among a flock of lambs a kid is the smartest,
Just so in a bevy of damsels Zilzom is the prettiest.

In the next stanza, the Thakur complains that while everyone calls him Tsultum the Thakur, Hira calls him Bhotura the Tibetan. The subsequent stanzas describe their various skirmishes; the first fight was at a place called Grango, the next fight was at Tandi and so forth. Apparently both Hira and the Thakur were crazy about this girl and it seems that in the end Hira got the girl.

Although the progeny of this man constitutes the major part of Tholong, there are a couple of families whose origin must be Ladakh or Zanskar; a few Brahmin families whose origin, as stated earlier, might be Chamba-Lahoul, and some Harijan families as well. These Harijans also might have come from Kullu, though there is no proof of that.

The Story of Tandi Village

Being situated at the junction of the rivers Chandra and Bhaga,

Tandi has its own importance. It is said that this village was established by a man named Chandi, which later became Tandi, but there is no clue as to where he came from. In another story it is said that the name Tandi was derived from the word *tan-dehi*, which means "giving up the mortal body". Dropadi, the wife of the Pandvas in the *Mahabharata* is supposed to have died at this place during their last pilgrimage to the Himalayas.

Tandi was the headquarters of the Rajas of Kullu or their representatives. Moorcroft mentioned that there was foodgrain storage at Tandi that belonged to the Raja of Kullu. This foodgrain collection was the taxes paid by the peasants.

There is a Shashni family at Tandi also. Although no specific story is known about this family's having received any such title from any ruler, it is possible that they might have represented the Kullu Rajas in collecting taxes from the local people and thus the title might have been given to them.

Besides the Shashni group, there is another group of families in Tandi known as Lharje, which means Tibetan Buddhist medicine man. This would mean that their roots must be in Ladakh or somewhere in Tibetan Buddhist country.

There are some Harijan families also in this village, perhaps with same roots as the Harijans of Tholong and Gushal. The Tandi Harijans are famous for their wittiness and bluff. There is a story that once a member of this family met a princess, the daughter of some ruling Thakurs, and enticed her to marry him through his sweet words. He said to her, "In my house there arise seven suns, and whenever it rains, seven springs come up. I never eat in the same plate twice. After every meal I throw away my plate," and so forth. The girl was impressed and married him. When he brought her home, to her dismay she found that he was a very poor man. There were seven holes in the roof of his house through which one could see the sun and when it rained, it poured in through those seven holes. He did not have any plate, but instead ate on the *patara*, made out of tree leaves that he threw away after eating.

9

Modern History of Lahoul

The period beginning on 15th of August 1947, the day of India's independence, to the present, we shall call the modern history. With the end of local struggle in Lahoul, people like Munshi Saja Ram and Som Dev and others had joined the Indian National Congress in the struggle to free the country from British rule, but only on local basis. During mid-1940s an old Congress leader named Nagardass Patel came to Lahoul and stayed in our village for several months or perhaps even a year. Every day he would distribute sweets to the children. Although he had run out of money, he wanted to continue this routine as the children would gather expectantly around. So my father would buy sweets and leave them there for Mr. Patel to do his ritual.

I was too young to understand why he was there and what he was there for. I now suspect that he might have been on the British Government's wanted list, and had come to this remote corner, just like Ras Bihari Bose. Bose also had escaped to Lahoul under some disguise, where no one knew him. Recently a Bengali Deputy Commissioner stationed in Lahoul, had a statue of Ras Bihari Bose erected at Keylong, the district headquarter of Lahoul, to commemorate his heroic deeds.

Finally, in 1947, this struggle came to an end with the declaration of independence of India, only to confront yet another horrible situation. This was the partition of India and Pakistan, which brought the calamity of *fasad* between Hindus and Moslems.

There were no Moslems settled in Lahoul, and therefore no real reason for any kind of fear, yet it was impossible to live in peace. Some Balti (Moslem) labourers engaged in the construction

of kuhl or water channels for irrigation in Lahoul were stationed in our village of Lote. We, the children of Lote ranging in age from four to ten, made some wooden swords dyed in red, and some bows and arrows. Carrying these we would go to the Baltis' camp and try to scare them, while competing among ourselves to see who was the bravest by going closest to them. They were, of course, not scared of us. Yet they would keep quiet, perhaps realizing that a minor trouble with the children might become a major issue with the adults and could become a question of life and death.

Finally one day they lodged a complaint with the "Wolf" of Lahoul, Munshi Saja Ram regarding this daily event. Munshi then asked the parents to warn their children to refrain from such acts. The knowledge of this mischief scared the hell out of our parents, and so that was the end of it.

Nevertheless, this was not the end of the real *fasad* that was going on all over the country. Many people had relatives in Kullu, where the *fasad* was in full swing. Every day there would be rumors that Moslems were going to attack Lahoul. The Baltis in Lahoul also realized that it was high time for them to get out of Lahoul and go to their own homeland, before the situation flared up in Lahoul also. Fear and the rumors of attack forced people to raise a volunteer force by compulsorily drafting one male member from every household. All the ammunition available in this tiny valley was collected, which was perhaps nothing more than a dozen guns and a few swords and daggers. People gathered stones on the roofs of their houses consoling themselves that something is better than nothing.

Not having enough of it, another rumor started that an American traveller, who was missing—supposedly from Lahoul—was suspected to have been murdered. In the midst of bloody civil war he also became a victim of some unfortunate accident. Rumors spread fast that the American's wife had declared that she would destroy the whole valley with a single bomb.

Finally by the end of 1947 this whole affair came to an end in Lahoul, though it was not quite over for the rest of India. In the spring of 1948 when the first group of people crossed Rohtang, they brought the sad news of Mahatma Gandhi's murder. During those days there was no radio or wireless or telegraph arrangement

in Lahoul, through which people of Lahoul could remain in touch with rest of the world. Whatever happened during winter anywhere, would be known in Lahoul only in the spring when the people would start crossing the mighty Rohtang. Thus even though Gandhi was killed on 30th of January, it was not known in Lahoul until sometime in the month of March or April.

Struggle for Development

India's independence proved quite costly due to partition and the Hindu/Moslem feud. When all this subsided at last, the reorganization of the country depending upon the locations, languages, standard of living etc. was started, with the declaration of Republic on 26th of January, 1950. Five year plans were laid out. A plan to uplift India's underdeveloped people or areas was chalked out. Certain areas were declared backward. Certain untouchable castes were declared scheduled castes, and certain races were declared scheduled tribes, requiring an accelerated pace of development to bring them up at par with rest of the country. These groups were to be given preferential treatment in education, jobs, and promotion.

During the first phase of these decisions, Lahoul was not placed in any of the above categories, although it was certainly backward from every point of view. If backwardness were a distinction, its name would have topped the list. The leaders of Lahoul realized the situation and recognized an opportunity. In this case two young men, Thakur Shiv Chand and Devi Singh, freshly graduated from Lahore (Punjab University) and also Lahoul's first graduates, took the initiative and played a leading role.

A demand was put to the new government of sovereign India that Lahoul and the neighbouring valley of Spiti should be declared scheduled areas or tribes. No one paid any heed to this demand at first. Thus it became a key issue for the people of this area. The struggle took the form of demonstrations. In those days many people would move from Lahoul to Kullu for the winter, to make a living when Lahoul was covered by a white blanket of snow. Hundreds of such people took part in the demonstration carrying black flags. The fiery speeches of Shiv Chand and Devi Singh proved very

effective in bringing the people together in this struggle. Most of other leaders like Munshi Saja Ram, Som Dev and Basant Ram joined hands.

The State Government tried to suppress this struggle, but failed. Seeing this disturbance in the border area, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India got worried. Therefore he sent his special messenger Mr. Shrikant, the Tribal Commissioner of India, to look into the matter personally, with instructions to negotiate at any cost.

Shrikant visited Lahoul. He was given warm welcome with full decorum, a band, and reception. Almost all the men, women and children joined in this welcome procession, the like of which he might never have seen before in his life. As a result of negotiations with him, Lahoul and Spiti were declared tribal areas. It was scheduled for ten years at first and at the end of every ten-year period the situation and progress would be reassessed for further extension of this status. This area was a part of Punjab state at that time.

Formation of the Punjab Tribes Advisory Council

A special advisory council, known as the Punjab Tribes Advisory Council, was to be set up, which would make most of the decisions regarding the development of Lahoul and Spiti. The Chief Minister of Punjab was made the chairman of the council. Every three or four months a meeting of this council would be held in which all the decisions were to be made. Such was the greatness of these leaders that during negotiations with Shrikant every demand they made concerned only the improvement of the area. If any of them had wanted, they could have demanded any personal privilege, in the form of position, status, or money for themselves at that time.

The whole area of Lahoul and Spiti was divided into several constituencies such that the council was constituted of five elected members from Lahoul and three from Spiti. Later two more members were added who were nominated by the Chief Minister, being the chairman of the council.

The selection of the members for the first council was more or less trivial. The obvious choices were Thakur Devi Singh and Thakur

Shiv Chand. Thakur Partap Chand the former wazir of Lahoul also became the obvious choice from his own constituency. Another obvious choice should have been Munshi Saja Ram, but in his case certain factions were not in favour, who in turn put forth the name of Thakur Som Dev, since both of them belonged to the same village and therefore the same constituency. Som Dev, however, declined it saying that as long as Munshi-ji was alive, it was his right. He regarded Munshi as his political guru. Pundit Basant Ram was another member from Lahoul among the first ones.

Bhim Sen Sachar was the Chief Minister of Punjab then. He visited Lahoul and held the first meeting of this council at Keylong. In a speech delivered by Devi Singh at that public meeting he said, “. . . In our legend it is said that when the Pandvas came to the Himalayas, mother Kunti could not cross Rohtang. At that time Bhimsen, the strongest of her sons, kicked the mountain and created this pass, thus enabling mother Kunti to cross it. Today another Bhim Sen has come here, who I hope, will do the same to bring us at par with rest of the country.”

Unfortunately the positions on this council were honorary. The members were paid only three hundred rupees for every meeting they attended as a fixed reimbursement for the travelling and other expenses regardless of where the meeting was held. This was perhaps a big mistake made during the negotiation, since selfless service was the prime motive. They could have very well fixed a certain amount in the form of a regular salary or an honorarium or a fat sum for every meeting. The reason for my declaring it a mistake is that a man can not live on honour and respect alone, he needs bread and butter too. A hungry stomach does not care for honour, it needs food. As such the two young dynamic members became the first victims to necessity, since they were fresh college graduates and had no other source of income. Thus Thakur Shiv Chand first dropped out and joined a government service in the capacity of a social organizer. Some time later Devi Singh fell in the same trap and took up a job as Block Development Officer. As it is said, “Money makes a mare go”, so was the case here. They had to give up the prestigious position with no money and instead take comparatively down-to-earth position that had a salary to go with it. It is heard that some of their friends commented, “How

come they were riding the elephants just a while ago, and now they came down onto the ground like rest of us?"

On their resignation from the membership of the advisory council, Thakur Lal Chand of Fura replaced Thakur Shiv Chand and Thakur Fateh Chand of Gondhla replaced Devi Singh. Soon after that Munshi Saja Ram died and Som Dev took his place. By the next election, Thakur Partap Chand withdrew from running in the election, preferring instead to be nominated directly. Thakur Nihal Chand took his seat. During most of the life of this council, Partap Singh Kairon was the Chief Minister of Punjab. He was quite generous and took some bold steps. He often ridiculed the officers who pointed to the rules and regulations, saying that there were no rules and regulations for the tribes. He would also add that he was the one who made the rules. He was too proud of his position and a shrewd politician.

Initiation of Development

Several phases of development were started. The field of education was the one which was given the greatest acceleration. Until around 1930, there was hardly anyone who had gone to college or even to high school from this area. Of course people used to study Bhoti (Tibetan) or Tankri, a language mostly used by the businessmen at that time for keeping their accounts. In this respect Francke noted that in the 19th century there were many nuns in the monasteries in Lahoul who were well educated in Bhoti, including one who could calculate solar and lunar eclipses. I wonder if Carl Sagan can do that without using a computer today.

In any event, during 1920s and 30s there were only two primary schools of so-called modern education, started by the Moravian mission in Lahoul; but nobody was ready to send the children to school. Under these circumstances, the government applied pressure to make this schooling almost compulsory for children of rich or well-known families. Funny things happened. Some rich people borrowed the children from poor families and sent them to school as substitutes for their own children. Perhaps one reluctance was that the new kind of education was unknown to them. Another reason may have been a resentment against enslavement and Chris-

tianity. A third reason may have been that even until recently school teachers used to beat the children, and these people loved their children too much to let anyone beat them. Thus many poor children received their education as substitute students in the late '20s and early '30s.

As already mentioned, the students did not start going to college until 1940s. However, once it started everybody was psyched up and eager to get into higher education. The people were awakened by then, the country was free, and the schools without slavery and proselytism. The schools and colleges were inundated with students. In fact it became almost taken for granted that the topmost positions in studies as well as in sports and other activities in the Kullu high school were meant for the students from Lahoul at least until the 1960s. Later it seems that vigour and that enthusiasm was lost somewhat. Almost every line of education was tackled, such as engineering, medicine, veterinary, agriculture, besides liberal arts. As mentioned earlier, Devi Singh and Shiv Chand were the first graduates from Lahoul. Dr. Prem Chand became the first medical officer, Sukh Dyal Verma became the first electrical engineer, while Ram Nath Vidyarthi became the first civil engineer and Shiv Dass Thakur became the first mechanical engineer. Dr. Chhangrup Kapoor became the first veterinary doctor. Sukh Dyal Verma also was the first engineer from Lahoul to go to America for higher studies. Another Ram Nath became the first pilot officer in the Indian Air Force. Amar Nath Vidyarthi became the first I.A.S. (Indian Administrative Service) officer. All these events occurred during 1950s and '60s.

Partap Singh Kairon, then Chief Minister of Punjab, was generous in general, yet he could be very strict in certain respects. He demanded that if anything be done, it should be his way or no way. He could not stand any kind of opposition; and he would use any means to rid himself of opposition. In this tribal advisory council, Som Dev was a very outspoken member. He stood against anything that was not for the benefit of the area. He fought against any injustice done to anybody, anywhere. Kairon did not like Som Dev's courage in speaking up in front of him. His association with RSS and Jana Sangha was in particular a sore spot for Kairon.

Government officials, stationed in Lahoul, had two distinct

views of Som Dev. The sincere and honest workers thought he was like an angel, to whom they could appeal for any help, any time. For the corrupt and work-shirkers, he was a terror. A funny story once came up. My cousin was an assistant engineer in the electricity department, stationed at Kullu. A plan for small hydroelectric power houses in Lahoul was initiated, for which he was transferred to Lahoul. On hearing the news of his transfer, a colleague of his came to give him a piece of his advice. He told him that he heard one has to watch for one man named Som Dev in Lahoul. Anything done wrong means getting into trouble with him. Evidently his fearsome reputation was quite wide-spread. Yet his popularity among the people is evidenced from a letter from the Speaker of Punjab Legislative Assembly. How I wish there were such people in every corner of India today, the most crucial problems of corruption, inefficiency and bureaucratic hindrances would cease to exist there.

Kairon tried to use every possible way to get rid of him. He tried to change the election rules every time. He made several people run against him. When all the normal ways and means failed, he came up with a new plot. He abolished the constituencies and made the election open to the whole of Lahoul valley. Each voter would vote for five members. Here again Kairon showed his shrewdness in politics. He knew that even this was not good enough to get rid of Som Dev, since he was well-known in the whole valley. Therefore he introduced a weighting factor on each vote such that the voters would mark first, second, third, fourth and fifth choice against five names for whom they wanted to vote. The first choice carried five points, the second three, third choice two and fourth and fifth choices carried one point each. The total points for each candidate would be added up, and the five candidates with maximum points would get elected. Thus by making several candidates run from his area, the number of first and second choices would be reduced for him, compared to those who were the only candidate from their respective areas. Even if he received the maximum number of total votes, but fewer with first and second choice, the total points would not be enough to get elected. Thus Kairon succeeded in his mission that time and no one from Som Dev's constituency could get elected.

During all these periods several other people got the chance to become members of the Punjab Tribes Advisory Council. Among them were Thakur Angrup and Phunchog Angrup both from Jahlma at one time or another. Lama Paljor from Keylong, Captain Bhim Chand from Jispa, and Ram Dass Koupa from Moorung. A harijan member Shiv Dyal also was nominated to represent the harijans.

By mid-1960s most of the old veterans had passed away. Munshi had already died in the 1950s. In early '60s, first Thakur Partap Chand passed away, then soon after that Pundit Basant Ram died. Around 1964-65 my father Som Dev also fell sick. At about the same time as I was starting work as principal of an industrial training institute in Kullu. By September 1965, I was supposed to come to the United States for postgraduate studies at Cornell University. Because of the curse of bureaucracy, not only I could not get a study leave from my job, but I also could not get my last four or five months' salary. Fighting the bureaucracy, unsuccessfully, did not leave me any time even to bid farewell to my friends and relatives.

I was expected to reach Cornell by 12th of September. On the 4th, I finally resigned from my job. That left me with six days to go to Lahoul, bid farewell to my family, friends and relatives, and return to Delhi to catch Air India flight on 11th. Right around that time a war between India and Pakistan broke out. On September 5th I reached Lahoul and on the morning of 6th I heard on the radio that Pakistan had bombed several cities of India. My plans had been to leave Lahoul on 8th and go straight to Delhi, passing through all those cities which had been bombarded several times. I was at a crossroads, facing a tough decision. On one side I had resigned from my job, and part of me was already in America. On the other side, my father was sick at home, one brother was studying in Amritsar which had already been bombarded seventeen times leaving little hope of his survival, and then on top of that if I left I would be passing through the cities which were the targets of Pakistani bombs. On the morning of 8th, I decided to leave anyway as planned, saying goodbye to everybody. My eyes met those of my father and tears welled up in them, as if both of us knew that we were seeing each other for the last time. My father tried to be bold and reiterated the famous verse from the Bhagwat Geeta, "We

have to do our duty, and not to worry about the consequences. Therefore go and do what you must.”

On June 8th, 1967, my father Som Dev left for his heavenly abode, while I was in the United States. Thus by the middle of 1960s most of the advisory council of Lahoul was constituted by new faces. Thakur Lal Chand Fura was the only old veteran left, who should have been the leading figure, but somehow he had gone very much in the background, perhaps because of personal or family problems. As such Thakur Nihal Chand was the most active and leading member.

Extension of Tribal Status

Seeing the progress of individuals of Lahoul, it was quite natural for the people of neighbouring areas to get jealous. As individuals the people of Lahoul had made good progress in previous two decades, compared to what it used to be. Now the question was whether Lahoul deserved further extension of its tribal status or not. Every effort was being made from various corners to remove Lahoul from this privileged status. While certain individuals had improved their lot, that did not necessarily mean that whole valley had progressed. The fact was that the valley had still not seen a wheel rolling on its roads. Although a wireless station was set up for sending and receiving the telegrams, other than that the people were still cut off from rest of the world. Even within the valley there was still no mail service during winter. The mighty Rohtang stood like a gatekeeper, not allowing anyone to pass from one side to the other, except for about eight months of the year and then, too, on their own two legs.

Before one could see wheels roll in Lahoul, it was necessary to conquer this section of the invincible Himalaya. It was a hard nut to crack and beyond the capacity of the Public Works Department of the state. In this respect, China's attack on India proved a blessing in disguise for this area. It drew the Central Government's attention to it. The border roads department of the army was asked to survey Rohtang to make a truckable road over it. In any event, the progress made by the valley was in no way enough to call it at par with rest of the country.

A committee was sent to assess the progress of Lahoul. Based on their recommendation, a decision for further extension of the tribal status was to be made. This committee came to Manali and tried to decide the fate of Lahoul while sitting in a rest house at Manali, a famous hill resort of India, and the last town before reaching Rohtang Pass. Thakur Nihal Chand, the only representative of Lahoul present could not plead against all the outsiders trying to dislodge Lahoul from its privileged status.

It was, however, the luck of Lahoul and particularly the good luck of future generations, that Devi Singh reached there in the nick of time. Once again the savior of Lahoul, he convinced the committee that they must go to Lahoul if they want to see the progress of the valley. They should look at the condition of the common masses, instead of looking at the few selected individuals who came out of Lahoul. In fact the ones who had achieved a good position might never return to Lahoul, and therefore the valley would not benefit from their progress. Even if they wanted it, there would not be any position for them in Lahoul to serve the valley. The real progress should be of those who are living there now and whose families will live there forever. Thus, he succeeded in securing the future of Lahoul for at least another ten years.

Merger with Himachal

In 1966 Punjab was divided into Haryana and Punjabi Suba, which later again came to be known as Punjab, while all the hilly areas—the present districts of Kangra, Hamirpur, Una, Kullu and Lahoul-Spiti—were merged with Himachal. Himachal Pradesh was given a status of full state, which had been until then a union territory. With this merger, the Lahoul Spiti Tribal Advisory Council also was dissolved, and instead the area was allotted a seat in Himachal Legislative Assembly. An election was to be held to elect a member for this new position. The Congress party chose Thakur Nihal Chand as its candidate. However, some people did not think Nihal Chand a suitable candidate for this position. The public eye once again fell upon Devi Singh. He was forced to resign from his magisterial position to run for the election as an independent candidate. Devi Singh at that time was working as a District Deve-

lopment Officer. He accepted the offer and kicked his job. The first election was held in 1967, in which Devi Singh was elected with flying colours.

The merger with Himachal, however, did not prove very beneficial, or at least it was felt that way for some time. The reason for this feeling was that Punjab was a rich state, where if the Chief Minister was willing, he could give anything to this area. The only trouble with Punjab was that the people of Lahoul suffered from an inferiority complex and they felt run over by the Sikhs. The Sikhs held most of the important positions even in a place like Lahoul. Unfortunately for Himachal, most of it was as underdeveloped as Lahoul or even worse. Also Himachal being a poor state, even the ongoing projects of road construction etc. were slowed down. This in some ways reflected on the M.L.A. (Member Legislative Assembly) as well. Many selfish people turned against Devi Singh, quickly forgetting all the good things he had done for them.

The five year term was soon over, and the next election was to be held in 1972. At that time I also had returned to India from the United States and was making an effort to settle down there. Some people asked me to consider running for the election against Devi Singh. I told them that any young man from Lahoul running against Devi Singh would be most selfish and foolish, forgetting what he had done for the valley. Nonetheless, I added that any day Devi Singh fell from his dignity and fell short of our expectations, then on that day if they still wanted me, to the best of my capabilities I would not let them down.

The Woman Power

During those days a wave of women's liberation was going on all over the world. India was in no way behind in this movement, no matter what the world thinks of women in India. Mrs. Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. For Lahoul also the Congress party, instead of choosing Nihal Chand or any other man as its candidate gave its ticket to Lata Thakur, the wife of Nihal Chand Thakur.

The election campaign began. Ram Lal, the Education Minister in Himachal Government at that time, spent more than a month in

Lahoul campaigning for Lata. Dr. Parmar, the Chief Minister, spent an entire week in Lahoul for the same reason, while he had never visited Lahoul before in his 25 years as head of state, even though Chamba-Lahoul had always been a part of Himachal. Nor had Ram Lal ever shown his face in this valley before.

Lata was my classmate in high school, though we were not in the same school. Thakur Nihal Chand also was a good friend of mine. This made my position very awkward, since Lata was running against Devi Singh. Nonetheless, I had to take the side of Devi Singh mainly for his capabilities and his contributions as mentioned earlier. Somehow I not only ended up giving him my personal support, but also had to work as his right hand man in this election campaign, mainly because the whole ministry of Himachal Government was working for the other side, which I thought was very unfair and unethical.

I was a novice in the field of politics; particularly concerning the tricks and crooked means most politicians use. On the other hand even if I were well aware of them, neither would I have used them nor would Devi Singh have let us use them, since the very reason for our supporting him was his sincerity, honesty and his capability. We wanted to base our election campaign strictly on the foundation of capabilities, experience and character. We wanted to educate the people and make them understand the value and purpose of a vote in the democratic system. For this purpose we prepared a booklet detailing all the deeds and achievements of Devi Singh to show to the innocent public what he had done for them so far, and what more they could expect from a capable leader, without trying to sling mud on the other candidate. We made an effort to get this booklet, along with some other posters and leaflets, distributed in every nook and corner of the valley.

The effect of this campaign strategy was overwhelming. Most educated people became his unshakable followers. Miles-long processions were taken out by volunteers at their own expense. This unsettled the Congress party, which in turn made us over-confident. As a result we neglected the neighbouring valley of Spiti and left it in the hands of a few local volunteers. But when the final results of the election were declared, to the dismay and utter surprise of everyone, Devi Singh lost the election. People of Lahoul could not

believe it. We tried to analyze the situation to find out what went wrong and where. The post-mortem showed that we did very well in the new area of Chamba-Lahoul. We did very good in the Pattan valley and the Gahar valley. We did not do as good as we expected in the Gondhla valley, while the Tod valley was obviously Lata's base. Yet over-all we had enough margin in Lahoul for victory, if only Spiti had not surprised us. A record was set in Spiti, first by having an unprecedented poll of 90%, when it had never gone above 50% before. The whole Himachal was surprised. Many people commented that Lata, a woman, an outsider had defeated an iron man like Devi Singh, and in a place like Lahoul, which boasted of its high morality.

Soon after, a union, under the name of *Lahoul Spiti Tribal People's Union*, was formed. Thakur Devi Singh was chosen as its President and I was forced to become the General Secretary. The primary aim of this union was to fight collectively against any injustice done to any individual. The secondary aim was to help and provide guidance to the people in general, and the younger generation in particular in their career development. During this time I had an opportunity to meet the then President of India, V.V. Giri, the Vice President, Mr. Pathak, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in delegation or individually to discuss development possibilities for these hilly areas. There was not a single instance when I discussed any personal matters with any of them. I also had a chance to discuss these issues with Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, an M.P. and President of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh. All these meetings occurred when they visited Lahoul or Manali.

Time rolled on. Nothing spectacular happened, neither good nor bad. Personally, my own frustrations kept on increasing mainly due to the corruption and bureaucratic hindrances in doing anything. I felt it was impossible to take a single step forward without corrupting myself, which was the last thing I needed. My only interest in staying there was to do something for the country or for the poor and helpless. If I could not do anything for them, then there was nothing for my own interest. So I felt myself compelled to leave the country at least for a while, to gain some strength and courage to face the situation. Therefore I returned to the United States by June of 1973.

In Himachal Government, Lata was gaining popularity with the Chief Minister and others in power in Himachal cabinet. Rumors were that she might get a cabinet position in the Himachal ministry. In early 1976 the news came that her husband Thakur Nihal Chand died of heart attack. Sometime in 1977, Lata also died in a jeep accident. It is said that she was driving on Mandi-Kullu road, when she was a learner. This road was barely wide enough for one vehicle with a mountain on one side and the river on the other—certainly not fit for a novice driver. This brought an end to woman power in Lahoul.

A See-Saw in Politics

In early 1977 the state of emergency was rescinded and elections were held in India. In the parliamentary election, Mrs. Gandhi, along with most of the old veterans and her cabinet colleagues, lost the election. The Janata party, formed by the coalition of several opposition parties, formed the Central Government under the Prime Ministership of Morarji Desai.

Shortly after that, state elections were held. In Lahoul, Devi Singh was at first a little reluctant to run for election again. He said that he was sick and tired of politics and wanted to lead a simple peaceful retired life. Nevertheless, his friends would not spare him again and he was given the Janata ticket. The Congress party tried to play another trick this time. Realizing that there was no one in the political arena to defeat him, they enticed Thakur Shiv Chand, the old veteran and colleague of Devi Singh, to run against him. Just like Devi Singh in the first election, Shiv Chand also resigned from his job as District Development Officer and ran for election. Since the Congress party was in decline everywhere, there was no chance of its winning in Lahoul no matter who was running.

The Janata party won a majority in the Himachal assembly also. It formed the government under the Chief Ministership of Shanta Kumar. Shanta Kumar picked Devi Singh also in his ministry and he was given the Forest Minister's portfolio. Thus Lahoul, for the first time in its history, had the honour of having a representative in the cabinet of the state assembly, one of its aspirations in

wanting to be merged with Himachal, since it was impossible in Punjab.

In 1979, after just two years, the Janata government collapsed in the centre due to its own party differences. The Janata party coalition was like a herd with sheep, goats, cows, and even cats and dogs in it. It was doubtful right from the beginning if such a party could remain intact. The only common purpose which brought these parties together was to defeat Mrs. Indira Gandhi, to end her dictatorial rule during the emergency. Once that was accomplished, they had nothing in common and power hunger raised its head.

The internal troubles of the Janata party were limited not just to the Central Government, but soon reached to the state governments. In Himachal also this trouble was going on and as a result Devi Singh also resigned from his cabinet post.

Not commanding an absolute majority, the government in the centre was dissolved, and new elections were held. This time Mrs. Gandhi's party came in with flying colours again, capturing about two thirds of the seats in the parliament. Mrs. Gandhi once again became the Prime Minister of India.

In Lahoul, some of Devi Singh's selfish followers forced him to join the Indira Congress at this time. Perhaps the reason was that on one hand they did not want to desert Devi Singh, and on the other hand they did not want to end up in a powerless opposition party. By then Devi Singh also had a taste of power. So he also jumped the wandwagon, even though he had nothing in common with the Congress party. The only consolation he had and gave to his well-wishers that all the political parties are same, selfish and corrupt. The Janata government in Himachal also was dissolved and the Congress party once again formed the government. This time Ram Lal became the Chief Minister. Devi Singh, however, was not offered a cabinet position in his government, leaving many people to feel sorry for themselves and for Devi Singh, for having importuned him to switch parties.

In 1982 the state elections were held in Himachal, along with a few other states. In Himachal Pradesh the Congress and the Bhartiya Janata party came very close, but neither could form a government of its own. Bhartiya Janata party was a new party under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishan

Advani, separated from the Janata party. A majority of the members of this new party were earlier in Jana Sangh. In Himachal this party was lead by Shanta Kumar, the former Chief Minister.

The Congress party, under the Governor's instruction, formed the government taking some independent members along with it. In this new government, Devi Singh again received the cabinet post as Forest Minister. Sometime later there were charges of corruption against the Chief Minister Ram Lal or his family. As a result he was forced to resign from this position. Bir Bhadra, a former Raja of Busher and a member of parliament, replaced him as Chief Minister of Himachal. Devi Singh also came out to be one of his first seven ministers holding the portfolios of Forest and Health Ministries.

Upon Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination on 31st October 1984, her son Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of India. Most foreign press, particularly the Americans doubted the capability of Rajiv Gandhi in handling the problems of a massive and diversified country such as India. They called him, "The happy go lucky guy, a pilot of Indian Airlines, with no experience in politics." But Rajiv surprised everyone with the dexterity he handled the situation in the initial years. In Lahoul, Devi Singh, a candidate from Rajiv Gandhi's party got elected unopposed this time. Unfortunately he could not become a minister in Bir Bhadra's ministry this time. The whole five year term was wasted only with assurances of his being given a berth in Bir Bhadra ministry.

On 11th of November 1989, Devi Singh on his way to Kullu from Shimla—after a hectic tour of Spiti on election campaign for the parliament—had a heart attack. He died before he could reach hospital.

In the centre Rajiv Gandhi's popularity declined fast. In the parliament election of 1989, Rajiv Gandhi's Congress party lost the election. The National Front, constituting of Janata Dal and other parties formed the government at the centre with the outside support of Bhartiya Janata Party and others. In the state assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh, Bhartiya Janata Party received the absolute majority, with 46 seats out of 68, and formed the government again under the Chief Ministership of Shanta Kumar. From

Lahoul this time Col. Dogia became the BJP candidate. However, he lost the election to an unknown candidate Phunchog Rai from Spiti, a Congress candidate. His victory was attributed to late Devi Singh for whom people of Lahoul had so much regard as to vote for an unknown candidate considering it as his last wish.

Section III

SOCIAL CUSTOMS, OCCUPATION, FESTIVALS AND LANGUAGES

- Chapter 10. Social Customs and Beliefs**
- Chapter 11. Occupation and Livelihood**
- Chapter 12. Festivals and Celebrations**
- Chapter 13. Folklores, Songs, and Dances**
- Chapter 14. Languages or Dialects**

10

Social Customs and Beliefs

FAMILY STRUCTURE

The family structure is usually dictated by the culture and traditions of a country or an area, although in some cases economics becomes the driving force in building those traditions. The family system in Lahoul has been more or less dictated by the circumstances and the economic conditions. Basically the joint family system—like the one prevalent in most Asian countries—is in practice. In this system, living under one roof may not be the necessary criterion, instead common wealth is the foundation of a joint family. For example, there may be four brothers in a family. Out of these four only one may be living in the ancestral home, taking care of the ancestral property, while the others may be in some service or job or attending to some business away from home. Yet the parental home will always remain the nucleus for all of them.

As stated in the earlier chapters, farming is the main source of livelihood in this valley. As such some members of the family must stay at home, which often, though not necessarily, turns out to be the eldest brother. Now the question arises how this joint family system is maintained when everybody is living apart. Here the idea of a joint family system must be the common wealth rather than a common roof. The joint family structure is maintained when the ancestral property, which belongs to all the brothers equally, even though they live apart, is yet maintained intact without dividing and selling the shares. Besides the parental property, whatever new property is acquired, even though it might have been acquired by only one or two members, is kept as a common property in the

name of all. Also whatever can be saved by any one of them after the normal expenditures is pooled at one place, generally the parental home. No one claims anything as his own, instead when everything becomes “ours” rather than “mine”, then the spirit of the joint family system is maintained healthily. This is not easy. It needs a tremendous amount of sacrifice and selfless feeling, since no two people are the same or equal. As soon as selfishness creeps in, the whole structure collapses.

Running a family system is like running a government. Every country needs a government and a head of the government to run it, no matter what system it is. As long as the head of the government is capable, strong and selfless, the country progresses and runs smoothly. Any time the head of the government is weak, corrupt and selfish, the government collapses and the whole country is in shambles. Exactly in the same manner, maintaining and running a healthy joint family primarily depends on the head of the family. As long as he is selfless and strong enough to keep everything in order, it runs well. As soon as he becomes selfish and starts treating his own wife and children differently from the rest of the family, the division of the family becomes inevitable and the joint structure crumbles.

Common understanding is another factor on which the joint family structure depends. This common understanding may also create an exception to the rule of the eldest brother staying at home and acting as the head of the family. This may be due to a greater interest in pursuing a job or profession, or he simply may not be capable of handling the burden. In such cases one of the younger brothers, the one most suited, will stay at home and act as the head of the family. If any of the younger brothers of the father’s generation is still alive and young enough to hold the responsibility, he may automatically be chosen to run the family.

The question might arise why the joint family system is necessary, especially if it is so hard to maintain. Every system has its own advantages and disadvantages. Yet under the circumstances the advantages overwhelm the disadvantages of the joint family system. There is a saying, “*Ek mard khare kya, ek lakri jale kya?*” This means, “How can a single man stand alone (in this hostile world) and how can a single log burn (in the fireplace)?”

Being alone in this hostile world makes it difficult not only financially, but also psychologically. When one can not find anyone to depend upon or trust, one can become miserable and feel overpowered by helplessness. The feeling of incapability and fear can keep one from achieving many things which otherwise could have been done in a routine manner with a slight help or simple encouragement from another.

Besides this the joint family system is of utmost importance when real property such as land is involved. Let us take an example. If a man owns sixty-four acres of land (which is close to the upper limit in India), he can make a fairly good living. If he has four sons and they divided the land, each would end up with sixteen acres. If this goes on for two more generations, each one in the fourth generation would end up with one acre, from which it is impossible to make a living. Yet if they wanted to hold on to it, it would need their full-time effort. Even if each of them had just two sons, it would take only two more generations to reach to the same situation. However, if the joint family system is maintained, only one or two need to take care of the land while others could pursue business or professional careers and thus the whole family is much better off. Divided they could not afford to build even a hut for each, but living together and pooling all their income they could afford to build one decent house for everybody. This result can easily be seen all over Lahoul.

This was the financial aspect of it. Now let us consider other facets of this system. On the side of education, it costs a lot of money to send a child to college these days. In the case of a disjointed family system where everyone is on his own, a poor man cannot afford to send his children to college or even to school in some cases, and there is no one else he can turn to for help. Or suppose he could afford to send one child to college, but not all. Then a further disparity among the children would arise which would be difficult for a parent to bear. On the other hand in the joint family system if the father of a child cannot afford to send him to college or if he has died, the child's uncles, brothers or other family members would support his education. It would be an investment, for they know that whatever the child becomes, he would become a part of the family's resources and in turn their own. In

the case of a disjointed family even the brothers do not help each other, because they know that as soon as they are grown up, and get married, each will be on his own and will not benefit from the others' education or wealth. This is the difference between the two adjacent valleys of Lahoul and Kullu. In Kullu the joint family system is not in vogue, which is one of the major reasons for the lack of higher education among the youth of Kullu.

The joint family system has its own disadvantages. It is not very easy to get along, especially if all are living under one roof. Trifles can become big issues. Human beings are basically selfish by nature. No two people are the same or equal. If one who is better qualified or is capable of earning more than the others, but does not have a sense of self-sacrifice, justice and equality, then a rift is inevitable and everyone's life can become miserable. There is a saying that a brother can be your best friend or your worst enemy. So long as a healthy joint family is maintained there is no one else whom you can trust more than your own brother. At the same time if two brothers have a dispute over property no one can harm them more than they themselves harm each other.

It has been noticed that these differences often crop up among children and the women favour their own children, on insignificant issues. In olden times they found a solution to this problem by having only one woman in the family. They used the polyandry system, which has been a much talked issue. Economic conditions were the main driving force in using the polyandry system. The polygamy system was also in practice, not for the sake of pleasure but for practical reasons. One of the major reasons was the question of children. When a woman could not bear children, her husband with full consent from his wife married another woman. However, the first wife was not divorced, instead she still retained the upper hand in family matters. For this reason she often preferred to have her own sister as the second wife of her husband. This made it easier for them to get along.

There are plenty of examples in history about the use of such customs. Polygamy has been used all over the world at one time or another, especially by kings. However, the polyandry system might not have been that common. It was used at the time of the *Mahabharata* when the Pandvas had Draupadi as their common wife.

These customs, however, are almost nonexistent among the present generation in Lahoul also. Generally considered a social evil, it gradually fell into disuse. Besides that, economic conditions improved and circumstances changed, which made it easier to turn away from these customs. Not having to stay at one place and under one roof added to the ease in doing away with such systems. Selfishness and individualism became further autonomous force in getting rid of these customs.

There was another custom in use which was an old Buddhist or Tibetan custom, in which the eldest brother became the householder and all the younger ones became monks and lived in the monasteries. This custom also is very rare, almost nonexistent these days. Due to the availability of modern education no one cares to become a monk and lead the life of a celibate in the monasteries.

Due to selfishness perhaps, or for other reasons, the joint family structure seems to be breaking up. To those who are running away from this system I would remind them of the advantages of the joint family system. Let polyandry or polygamy not be its basis. Let the common roof not be its foundation, but rather common understanding, mutual respect and the attitude of helping each other be the central theme of it. This can be the secret of progress and well-being for everyone within the family circle. The government of India is giving so much importance to co-operative societies and is putting so much emphasis in forming such societies. I would like to ask what can be a better form of co-operative society than a joint family system where everyone can trust completely every other member? There are joint families with more than eighty members in Lahoul and they are some of the most prosperous families in the valley.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM

It is my personal opinion that the marriage system in Lahoul is far better than those I have seen anywhere else, although it is admittedly far from ideal. It includes the best of both worlds, East and West.

In the custom prevalent in most of India, the girl's parents must find a husband for their daughter. Keeping an unmarried daughter

at home is not socially acceptable. As such the parents must get all their daughters married come what may. This seems like a good idea, but it has become the root of another social evil. A huge *dowry* is frequently asked for, making marriage more of a business transaction than a life partnership of a man and a woman. In many cases it becomes impossible for the parents to afford the asked-for *dowries* that would allow all their daughters to marry reasonably decent partners. There may even be cases where a nice girl has to marry a hopelessly undesirable man just because she has to get married and her parents cannot arrange enough money for the *dowry*. The extreme of this evil is that from her very birth, a daughter puts her parents in a miserable state. At the same time, once married, divorce is almost impossible since it is considered unworthy of a respectable woman.

This is the kind of social evil that women's liberation must fight. It is only women who can do away with such things. In order to uproot such deep-rooted social evils, Indian women must first rid themselves of guilty feelings if they are not married, and abolish the social stigma on their unmarried sisters. After that they need to take the stand of preferring to remain unmarried, rather than marry a man who is interested in the *dowry* only and not in the woman. Women will have to do these things themselves rather than expecting society as a whole or the government to do it. Laws cannot abolish such social evils.

In the West this problem does not exist, because their young people have to find their own partners. However, I have seen many times where a decent girl has to demean herself. In order to find a partner she has to make herself available even though she hates doing so, and go out with several men before she can find a man decent enough to marry. Even then the marriage may not last too long. Partly for this reason computer dating is becoming popular. Would the parent's choice be worse than that of a computer? At the same time marriage is becoming more like a child's play rather than a life-time commitment. There are cases where a person might be divorced half a dozen times. One should pause to think and ask whether it is one's own judgment as opposed to the parents' judgment that is wrong? Or is marriage not taken seriously enough to consider it as a life partnership, instead of simply a license for an

intimate relationship.

Once a friend of mine—an old man—while arguing with me over the subject of love, said, “There is nothing which you can call love. It is all sex. As long as both the partners need sex, they think that they are in love. As soon as one finds sex somewhere else, one’s love is lost.” Although I never agreed with him fully, and felt that the poor man had never found real love, yet I can see a lot of truth in his statement. It is in fact the major cause of the high divorce rate. For this reason I feel that in the West also, if it is to be changed, it is only the women who can change it. Often it may be the man’s fault, he may not be able to change his animal nature. However, man is like a fuel that burns, but a woman is like oxygen that makes it burn. If there is no oxygen, the fuel can not burn by itself. In the same manner if women would become more chaste and if a man could not find sex with anyone other than with his wife, he would come back to her from anywhere under any circumstances. History bears witness that women can make men do anything in the name of love and sex.

Returning to the marriage system, it seems that the custom in Lahoul blends the best side of both of the above systems. Here the engagement is arranged through the parents and the relatives. Boys and girls do not have to go out looking for their own partners and thus the woman’s honour is also preserved. Premarital sex or love affairs are greatly looked down upon. Women in particular are very careful of their social status, and this automatically debar men from engaging in premarital sex. The women are further given a respectable status. It is not the girl’s parents who have to go looking for a boy, instead it is the duty of the boy’s parents to go and look for the bride, unlike the custom in the rest of India. The girl’s parents are requested with honour rather than being humiliated. The girl has full right to accept the offer or reject it. After the selection, both the parties have plenty of time to know and find out about each other before the engagement is finalized, a process described in detail later. There is no compulsory *dowry* system, yet a small *dowry* is given, but totally at the free will of the girl’s parents.

Whatever is given as a *dowry*, is meant only for the girl. The boy hardly gets anything out of it other than a wife. This relieves

the financial pressure on the girl's parents and therefore a girl is never considered a burden. The best part is that since the *dowry* is not a consideration at all, the selection is mainly on the basis of the compatibility of the boy and girl and the family relationship. Last but not the least, although the marriage is always considered to be a lifelong partnership, yet if for some reason they can not get on together at all, then a divorce is perfectly acceptable and both become eligible for remarriage. Since the intention is always to have a lifelong partnership and both try their best, the divorce rate is perhaps less than five percent.

Of course this system also is far from being perfect. The first drawback is that the girl's parents consider it degrading to go looking for a bridegroom and get their daughter married. As a result of this, some girls are left unmarried because there were no inquiries. However, it is perfectly respectable and socially acceptable for a girl to remain unmarried and stay in her parents' house for her entire life. One may feel sorry for them, yet I think it is still better than having to marry somebody totally undesirable. The second drawback is that since the marriage partner is the parents' choice, sometimes different social status may become an obstruction between two people who love each other and would like to get married. In extreme cases where it becomes a question of choosing between the parents or the intended spouse, more often the balance swings towards the parents' side.

The Marriage Ceremony

The wedding ceremony also is unique in Lahoul. There are several different ways a marriage may be consecrated, depending upon the economic conditions, the availability of time, and the importance given to a particular marriage. The ceremony used also depends upon the customs of a particular area and its historical background. The most popular one is *Mhore Byah*, which means the 'big wedding'. Generally the marriage of the eldest son is performed in this style, though not necessarily. If the parents could afford it, they would like to perform every marriage like this, but it turns out to be very expensive, and therefore it is avoided if possible.

Mhore Byah, The Big Wedding

The Engagement

When the boy's parents find a suitable girl for their son, they send a close friend or a relative to inquire of the girl's parents if they would consider the relationship. If they seem to be congenial to this offer, then two senior men, either relatives or men from the boy's village, are sent with a bottle of liquor and flowers as a token present considered as an official inquiry. If the girl's parents are willing to accept this relationship, then they will accept this present. They will also call a couple of their own friends and relatives, open the bottle of liquor and do a kind of opening ceremony called *Shagun*. The liquor will then be consumed by those who drink. If the girl's parents or the girl herself is not willing to accept this relationship, then they will not accept this offer and will send the token gift back untasted.

If the relationship is accepted, then enough time—usually from one to three years—is given for both sides to make up their minds to avoid a hasty and wrong decision. In the meantime a token present of a couple of bottles of liquor and a kind of cake, called *Marpini*, made of butter and roasted barley flour, is repeatedly sent to the girl's family at least two or three times as a reminder, and to keep the interest alive. The first offer is a sort of temporary engagement. During this period both the boy and the girl and also the parents try to find out more about each other, generally through friends. However, in modern times young people write to each other or meet each other and thus fall in love. During this time the engagement can be broken without any social and moral obligations. After accepting this offer two or three times the final engagement is settled and a date for the wedding is fixed.

Wedding Preparations

The marriage ceremony is quite involved. Arrangements for a huge amount of rice, wheat, ghee (purified butter), drinks and meat—wherever used—has to be made. The ceremony lasts four or five days during which the relatives, friends and all the residents of that particular village are invited. Thus in most weddings there could easily be a few hundred to a thousand people, depending

upon the size of the village and the number of friends and relatives the family has. Two days prior to the wedding all the close relatives get together at the bride's and the bridegroom's houses respectively. The next day the rest of the friends, relatives and the villagers also join. This is called the *Nata-Gota* which means the gathering of the relatives and friends.

The Ceremony

On the day of the marriage, the bridegroom's party leaves early in the morning in a marriage procession for the bride's home. Prior arrangements are made in which the bride's side is asked how many people they would like to entertain in the bridegroom's party, and also what time they would like to receive them. If the bride's parents are rich and like to make a big show, then they ask for a large number, otherwise the party generally consists of twenty to thirty people. In modern times the procession is accompanied by a band. Also vehicles such as jeeps, cars, and buses are used. In earlier days the band did not accompany the party. When there were no vehicles plying this valley, the party used to go on foot the whole way, whatever the distance.

The party is led by an elderly man—often a distant uncle of the groom—called the *Shirdar*, followed by *Bagtipa*, who is somewhat like the best man at a Western wedding, but here the *Bagtipa* becomes the god-brother of the bride from then on. They are followed in turn by the bridegroom. These three men are dressed in a special marriage costume. Following them are the prescribed number of the groom's friends and relatives. Along the way the party either dances with the band or sings some special marriage songs throughout. As presented in a later chapter, special songs called *Ghure* are commonly sung during the wedding. The most popular among them is the song narrating the story of the *Ramayana*, supposedly the ideal of married life in the Hindu tradition. While the song narrates most of the epic, the complete story is rarely sung because it is too long, and in most cases people do not remember all of it.

Each line is sung twice by one group and then repeated by another group, to give each a time to breathe. The song begins:

Rama o Lachumana duye sonduru bhai
-repeat-

Rama o Lachumana baruye mangai

-repeat-

Seeta o Rani baruye mangai

-repeat-

Triji barushe byahe bati ani

-repeat-

And so on (see appendix A for further lines). A direct translation of the song is as follows.

Rama and Lachhman (Lakshman) were two handsome brothers. They were looking for wives for themselves. Rama found Sita. After three years they were married (then exiled). They didn't know where to go. If they went to *Naga-loka*, the nether world or the land of serpents, then the *Nagas* would be after them. If they went to *Surga-loka*, the sky or heaven, then the sun and the moon would be after them. Thus they built a palace in the mid-air. They also built a garden, called Nou-Lakha-Baag, there. One day Rama and Sita were playing a game of dice. Rama's dice were always showing a good aspect, but Sita's dice were showing a bad aspect. Glancing towards the garden, Sita suddenly noticed a deer with golden horns, was turning the upright trees upside down and the upside-down trees straight. Seeing this Sita said, "Damn your dice, Rama, look at that deer. I want that." Rama shot an arrow but the deer ran away. He gave a chase, but suddenly he had a thought and turned back home. He put a cup full of milk on the window sill and told his brother Lachhman that when the milk turned into blood, then only should he go looking for Rama. He also left him a lit butter lamp and a green leaf from a *peepal* tree. He told Lachhman that when the lamp went out and the green leaf withered, only then should he go looking for Rama, otherwise not. Giving all these instructions Rama again went after the deer.

By the time they reached this passage, most of the singers would be too tired to go on. Sometimes they make it to Ravana's kidnapping of Sita or sometimes even up to Rama's attack on Lanka.

Thus singing and dancing the party reaches the bride's house. There before they enter the house, a *Gura* sometimes performs a ritual to drive away all the evil forces that might have come along with the party, especially when they come singing and dancing and

making all kinds of noise. Sometimes the medium feels it necessary to sacrifice a sheep or goat to pacify the demons and evil spirits. This is a horrible scene and it is presently being done away with. The whole day is spent there, eating, drinking, singing and dancing. While the singing and dancing is going on, the marriage ritual is performed in one of the rooms. The *Bagtipa* escorts the bride to a seat beside the bridegroom's and then rituals are performed, one of which is '*Forog charchi*'. *Forog* is a king of crow, considered in mythology to be a messenger. In this ritual an imaginary crow is sent in all the four directions to inform the whole world of the marriage.

By evening the party leaves for the groom's house. Before leaving, the bride's parents present dozens of dresses and ornaments for the bride as a *dowry*, which the groom's cousins are supposed to carry home. Most of the people from the bride's side go to see her off, forming a huge party called the '*Pichara party*'. This time it is their turn to sing and dance and make as much pomp and show as possible. Again similar songs are repeated. There are several songs describing the stories of various famous marriages. A song of the marriage of Lord Shiva and Parvati is also popular one. In this song they are called Ishwara (God) and queen Gouri. The song, which is given in its entirety in Appendix A, runs like this . . .

Manyi jamela poota je, babu jamela dheewa je;
 Manyi jemela poota je, badhayi lagi je;
 Badhyi lagi e, nawana rakhi je;

This song is about the mythological story of Lord Shiva and Parvati. The song begins by saying that a mother had a son, who was named Ishwara Beera (God, the brave) and a father had a daughter whose name was Gouri Rani. Here, only one parent on each side is mentioned instead of both parents on each side. The reason for this is, since Shiva is considered to be the eternal Being or Godhead and Parvati is the *Prakriti* or Nature, they are not really born from any parents. The Ishwara then asked Gouri for marriage—the eternal marriage of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, the source of universal manifestation. On Sunday they are engaged and on Monday they marry.

Some time later they have a fight and Gouri runs home to her parents. After that a stanza says that Gouri sees the face of the moon, supposedly that of Rama.* On the way Gouri meets mother Jambu (not clear who she was).** The song then goes on to say that mother Jambu asks Gouri what is the matter and where she is going. Gouri tells her that she had a quarrel with Ishwara and she is going to her parents. Mother Jambu then tells her of a famine there and that even during the festivals a rationed quantity of food was served. And the story continues on.

Thus, singing and dancing, the party proceeds, but this time with more pomp and show, especially because now the party is at least four times larger. On the way if the party happens to pass through other villages where there are relatives of the bride or the groom then these relatives have their own reception and offer flowers and drinks. On reaching the bridegroom's house a similar ritual is repeated as the one at the bride's house. Along with those welcoming them, a *Gura* or a *Lama* does a ritual to pacify the evil spirits that might have tagged along with the noisy party.

The burden of all the arrangements falls on the shoulders of one senior and experienced man called the *Sehnu*, who acts as an advisor. He is expected to calculate all the supplies needed and estimate the number of people expected to be present, and supervises the preparation of food, drinks and the seating arrangements. Those who drink liquor are seated in a different room, separated from the teetotalers. Separate arrangements are made also for women and children. Here it is the duty of the friends and relatives of the bridegroom to provide every comfort to the bride's party. When everything is settled then dinner is served. After the dinner again some rituals are performed similar to those performed at the bride's place. When this is over then the bride and the groom remove the

* Shiva and Parvati being eternal, are believed to exist age after age. In *Shiva Purana* it is stated that when Rama was wandering in the forest in search of Sita, at that time Parvati appeared to him disguised as Sita to test him. If he were the reincarnation of Vishnu then he would recognize her as Parvati, otherwise not. Perhaps this passage of the song refers to this story.

** Again in *Shiva Purana* there is a reference to Jambu dweep (big island or continent). I do not know if the song refers to that.

marriage costumes and return to their normal dress. This performance is called '*Shireri lhechi*', meaning the costume-removing ceremony. In olden times the bride had to put on jewelled collar called '*dogar*' over her shoulders or neck. This *dogar* was a ring about six inches in diameter and three inches wide, studded with turquoise, garnets and other gems. It symbolized that the bride was no longer an independent girl, but that now she had a great responsibility of household on her shoulders. Nowadays since people have forgotten its symbolic meaning, and as a decoration it has little aesthetic value, it is not used anymore.

Luncheon arrangements for the next day and its expenses are the responsibility of the bridegroom's maternal uncles. At this luncheon the *Shirdar* (the leader), the *Bagtipa* (the best man), the *Byohu* (the bridegroom), the *Byohuthiri* (the bride), and the *Byouthiri-sathi* (the bride's mate) are expected to sit in their proper places, in that order. Later the same afternoon, all the presents—mostly cash or clothes—from the friends and relatives of the bride are collected. The money collected is entrusted to the bride's father, who either loans it on behalf of the bride or puts it in the bank in her name. It is generally the responsibility of the bride's farewell party to sing, dance and have fun that whole day. Before dusk, the friends and relatives of the bride return home. They leave behind one woman, the bride's mate, to provide company to the bride in her new home. The farewell party goes back to the bride's parents' house and the party continues at both places. The next day the friends and relatives depart, but the close relatives are expected to stay one more day. The bride's companion stays with the bride until the day the new couple return to bride's home to pay their respects to the bride's parents. This is called *Fairouni*, which means the return visit (of the bride). The bride and the groom also have to visit other close relatives. Only then is the whole marriage ceremony completed.

Perhaps this whole affair is made so elaborate that the bride and the groom will never forget this day. Whenever they have differences, this memory could make them forget their difficulties and reconcile, aware of the commitments they have made. The details described above are strictly from the Pattan valley. Certain rituals vary in each of the other valleys.

Quachi Byah, The Small Marriage

As one can see the *Mhore Byah* is quite involved and very expensive. It is very difficult for a poor man to meet such expenditures, particularly if he has several children. For such cases a less involved ceremony called the *Quachi Byah* is celebrated.

For this wedding, many of the rituals and customs are almost identical to those of the Big Marriage. However, in this case fewer people are invited, usually only close friends and relatives. The residents of the village may also be invited for only a meal or so, or sometimes they may not be invited at all. In terms of the ceremony, the biggest difference is that the bridegroom sends his sister to the bride's home with a small marriage party, rather than going himself. She is called the *Mechami Byohu*, literally the lady bridegroom. The bridegroom waits at home, but takes charge and replaces the lady groom when the marriage party with the bride reaches home. From thereon the rest of the ceremony is the same as in the case of big marriages.

Thus in this case the expenditure is quite reasonable. Also the bride's dowry is far lesser, a loss to the girl. However, the groom's side adds some money to the dowry to compensate for the loss. This compensation is called *chheti*.

Khampa Byah

In the kothis of Sisu and Khoksar, there is a marriage custom which may be called the *Khampa Byah*, since this tradition is almost the same as that among the *Khampas*. The *Khampas* are nomad tribes, perhaps originally from Kham in Tibet. Until China took over Tibet, these people used to conduct trade between India and Tibet; and never settled down in any one place, instead spent all their time in travelling and residing in tents. This business was lost when China took over Tibet. Since then they have settled down mostly in the Kullu valley.

The background of this tradition may be found in the ancient marriage customs among the *Kshatriyas*, where bravery and meeting challenges were the prime considerations for *Swayambar*, which means a self-selected marriage. For example, in the *Ramayana*, the

pre-conditions to marry Sita was being able to bend and string the bow that belonged to the mighty Parshu Ram. In the *Mahabharata* the marriage condition of Droupadi was to pierce the eye of a fish put on a revolving wheel, while looking at its reflection in the boiling oil placed underneath. Along similar lines, in the *Khampa* marriage also, the bridegroom's party that goes to get the bride, has to overcome several obstacles before they can enter the bride's house. It is not an open contest like the *Swayambar*, however. A prior engagement like that of any other marriage is arranged without any kind of conditions or contests. It is only at the time of marriage that the party has to overcome such hurdles as unearthing huge stones half buried in the ground that block the road. While removing each obstacles they are also required to recite certain *Mantras* or songs or old sayings. Not knowing or not remembering them could be another problem. At the same time people from the bride's side make it much harder for them to succeed by teasing, making fun and jokes, and preventing the groom's party from getting any tools or other help in removing them. Apart from this aspect of the custom, the rest of the ceremony is almost the same as those described earlier.

Koozi Byah

There is another strange marriage custom, although not much used. This custom may be called marriage by kidnapping. The word Koozi literally means stealing. Although very rare, it is used in peculiar circumstances when the wedding has to be performed on very short notice without much preparation. One reason may be that the parents want the girl to marry someone else, while the girl prefers to marry the man who kidnaps her. For this wedding the girl is literally kidnapped by the bridegroom and his party. It may seem very awful and unbecoming of a gentleman, however that is not exactly so. As a matter of fact this is a form of a love marriage. The girl is asked either directly by the boy himself or by some of her friends. When the girl has given her consent, she is given some money or jewellery as a token of their engagement, called *Nya*, literally, 'the nose'. In most Indian languages, the word 'nose' signifies honour or respect. There are several phrases connected

with the nose such as “keeping the nose” meaning maintaining credibility or honour, and “cutting the nose” meaning to be discredited by doing some shameful act and so on. In the same context, accepting the *Nya* means accepting the offer of marriage or in other words a form of engagement.

Other than in the Gahar valley, this custom, if used, may mean that the girl’s parents were either not willing to consent to the relationship or it was suspected that they would never allow it. In that case the parents may not be aware of the engagement and the kidnapping may come to them as a surprise. However, in the Gahar valley often the parents do know and may be willing to give their consent also, yet often they pretend to be ignorant of it. Once this understanding between the boy and the girl is reached, if they can not have a proper ceremony for whatever reason, then a time and a place is generally fixed where the girl will be present under some excuse. These occasions may be either a fair or a celebration of someone else’s marriage, from which the girl is then kidnapped.

This may sound very strange, especially to the Western mind. If both are willing then why not just go and get married—why this kidnapping? There are two reasons. First, the girl has to show that she did not offend her parents and did not marry somebody against her parents’ will and secondly, the girl has to be careful of her honour. Offering herself to a man, even in marriage, is not considered very respectable. I do not know anywhere in the world where a respectable woman would take the initiative to propose to a man. It always has to come from the man’s side. In places where this inhibition is strong, to leave with a man even to get married is considered shameful on the part of the woman. As such this act of kidnapping is arranged.

In the Gahar valley, the girl’s side is supposed to fight the kidnapers, to show their outrage. Once the bride is brought home then a simple marriage ceremony takes place. The next difficult task is that the girl’s parents have to be placated. Thus a couple of elderly and respectable people are sent with some presents for that purpose. Most of the time the girl’s parents at first show great resentment, saying that it was a terrible offence against them. However, later on they say that they would pardon them if the girl is happy, otherwise they would take their case to a court of law. This

of course is just a threat, since there would not be any occasion when this kidnapping was done against the will of the girl.

I think there is again some historical background and precedence for this custom. For example, in Sanjogta's marriage in the 11th or 12th century, Prithvi Raj Chouhan, the king of Delhi, was not invited because the bride's father Jai Chand did not like him. An effigy was created to insult Prithvi Raj and kept near the door. But Sanjogta liked Prithvi Raj more than anyone else, and in the *Swayambar* she put the wedding garland around the neck of this effigy. Prithvi Raj was aware of this situation, and was waiting with his army to kidnap her.

FUNERAL RITES

I do not know of any religion that denies a belief in something vital and psychical, beyond the physical body that survives the death. The Hindus call it Atma, the Christians call it Soul, or spirit, the Moslems call it Ruh, and the Buddhists call it Dharmakaya. Accordingly each religion prescribes certain rituals and rites for the soul of the dying person. We as humans are very well aware of the half cycle from birth to death, but are totally ignorant of the other half of the cycle, that is, from death to rebirth. Therefore the funeral service is supposed to guide the soul through its journey in the unknown after death or release from this physical body.

Carl Jung, the renowned psychologist, in his commentary to Evans Wentz's book *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* wrote:

“ . . . It must seem very strange to the educated European of the 20th century to enlighten the dead on their journey through the region of the Bardo. The Catholic church is the only place in the world of the white man where any provision is made for the soul of the departed. Inside the Protestant camp, with its world affirming optimism, we find only a few mediumistic ‘rescue circles’, whose main concern is to make the dead aware of the fact that they are dead.”

Whether it believes that the soul returns in a cycle of rebirths or not, or waits for Judgement Day, every religion regardless of

these beliefs has some provision for the departed soul. However, the most extensive study of this has been done by Tibetan Buddhism, where the book, *Bardo Thodol*, written by Padma Sambhava in the 8th century, deals with this subject. *Bardo* either means suffering, or between the two, that is between death and rebirth. Dr. Evans Wentz edited this book from the translations of Lama Kazi Dawa, and it is entitled as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

In Lahoul funeral ceremony is performed differently in different sections of the valley, based on religious persuasion and traditions carried from generation to generation. They may be grouped broadly into three categories—Buddhist, Lungpe Chhos and Hindu—although Christian burial also existed when Christian families resided there. In the first three systems the corpse is cremated. The following is a description of how each ceremony is performed.

The Buddhist System

The Buddhist funeral ceremony is adopted not only by those who are currently Buddhists, but also by those who are in the category of *Bodhs* or *Rajputs* of the Pattan and Gondhla valleys. In other words it is common among all non-Brahmins and non-Harijans. This would seem to indicate that most of these groups were under the influence of Buddhism at one time or another. Later when their beliefs changed for all practical purposes, perhaps they could not find a ready replacement for the funeral ceremony, while their belief in having a proper ceremony performed by a qualified person could not be dropped very easily.

In the Gahar and Tod valleys, although there are several monasteries full of Buddhist monks, this ceremony is performed only by a few selected ones. In the Pattan valley there are only two monasteries one at each end of the valley. One of them is the Guru Ghantal monastery located on top of the hill between the rivers Chandra and Bhaga, while the other one is at Lindoor, at almost the other end of the valley. One Buddhist lama resides in each of these monasteries whose principal function is to perform this ritual. When somebody dies, the lama for that area is called. He, and any others who may accompany him, bring several Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and instruments such as *gNah* (drum), *Bugjal* (cymbal), and *Drillu* (bell) along with them.

According to Tibetan Buddhism, the soul ordinarily takes three and a half to four days, from the time the symptoms of death appear, to be freed from the mortal physical body, unless a spiritual lama assists in releasing it earlier. This process is called the *phowa*. Even if it is released earlier it takes time for the soul to realize that it does not possess a physical body anymore. Until then its attachment to the body continues and it sometimes tries to re-enter the body. There are a few stories about the rising of the dead.

The mystic chant for the *phowa* contains the instruction for the soul to seek the direction of the paradise of Amitabh, if *Karma* permits. Meanwhile the astrologer-lama is supposed to cast the death horoscope to determine the proper time and method for disposal of the corpse. In Lahoul, soon after the death, the body is removed from the bed and is laid on the floor with its head towards the temple of Triloknath. An oil lamp is lit near the head. In the Gahar and Tod valleys this is conducted as instructed by the scriptures. They keep the lamp lit for three and a half to four days, if they are not sure that the soul has been released properly. In the Pattan valley the corpse is cremated as soon as the lama arrives and performs the funeral rites. Until then nobody eats or drinks anything.

In this ceremony the corpse, after cleaning, is wrapped in colorful clothes and is laid on a carrier. In some cases they prefer to carry the body in a seated position, in which case a chair may be tied to the carrier. The lama chants the *Mantras* from the *Bardo Thodol* and goes round the corpse seven times chanting and playing the instruments. Also he performs a ceremony called *yangkhug* (Spyang-ku, as written in Tibetan), in which an effigy of the deceased is drawn on a piece of paper, which is later burnt. Besides helping the dead, the *yangkhug* is meant to protect the family's fortune and keep its luck from being swept away along with the deceased. When the lama finishes his rituals, the corpse is carried to the funeral pyre and then set on fire by the closest kin of the deceased. Besides the ceremony performed by the lama, the Chinal or the Harijans also provide their own funeral music. There are *ragas* dedicated for such occasions, which are played on the flute, *nyishan* or *nagara* (a pair of drums) and also a *poun* (a different type of drum with a humming sound) where available.

On the morning after the cremation the *astu* (remaining bones) from the funeral pyre are collected, wrapped in clothes and made to look like an effigy. Some simple rituals are performed after which the effigy is taken to *Sangam*, where the remains are scattered on the holy water. A few pieces are saved, which are taken to the holy river Ganges at some later date.

So far as the ordinary masses are concerned, this is the end of the immediate funeral rites. However, for those who are rich and are staunch Buddhists, mainly in the Gahar and Tod valleys, a really elaborate series of ceremonies start after this.

According to the *Bardo Thodol*, the soul has a forty-nine days' journey through the plane of the *Bardo* until re-entering the next life cycle. These forty-nine days constitute the seven degrees of *Maya*, or the seven gods or principles of manifestation, or the planetary chain, each having seven rounds of evolution, thus making forty-nine states of active existence. Dr. Evans Wentz states:

“As in the embryonic state of the human species the foetus goes through every form of organic structure from amoeba to man, so in the death state the embryonic state of the psychic world the soul anterior to its re-emergence in gross matter analogously experiences these psychic phenomena”.

Accordingly certain rites and ceremonies are prescribed to help or guide the soul in its journey through that unknown. Among them one is called ‘*Dewa-Chan-kyi-Molam*’, the prayer of Dewa Chan, which is chanted by several monks, sometimes day and night for several days. This prayer (*molam*) is supposed to assist the soul to reach the paradise of Amitabh. Another ceremony is called the *Tamba Rigya*. In this ceremony an elaborate pagoda similar in shape to a *Chhorten*, but temporary, is built inside the house. Lamps and incense are lit at every level of it, all around. Several cups full of different grains and different liquids are also placed all around it. The lamas then chant the *Bardo Thodol* and other scriptures.

There are three planes of existence experienced in the *Bardo*. They are the *Chhike Bardo*, the experience of death; *Chhos-nyid Bardo*, the state of experiencing reality; and *Sridpa Bardo*, the state of rebirth consciousness. The *Chhike Bardo* part is read during the funeral ceremony to make the soul realize that it does not possess

the physical body any more and it should not have any attachment to it, which is the experience of death. After the funeral, perhaps during the *Tamba Rigya*, first the *Chhos-nyid Bardo* is read, in which the soul is helped to realize the reality and try to attain to the heaven of Amitabh. This reading lasts up to fourteen days. Finally the *Sridpa Bardo* is read, which is to help the soul to find its path to rebirth. During the *Tamba Rigya*, a ceremony called the burning of the *shugu* is also performed. This is a piece of paper on which an effigy or picture of the deceased is drawn along with some other symbols, such as a conch, a mirror, a flower vase and a holy cake called *tsog*. These symbols represent the five kinds of sense perception: sight, smell, taste, touch and sound, indicating that all the senses along with the physical body are dropped and do not go along with the soul. After reading the scriptures and performing the rituals this paper is burnt to let the soul go free.

Another ceremony is the reading of various other scriptures. They are the *Yum*, which has 21 volumes, or the *Tangyur*, which has 108 volumes, or the *Kangyur* which is supposed to have 226 volumes. Having the *Yum* read is perhaps within the means of many people, but the expenditure in going through the *Tangyur* and *Kangyur* is definitely not. Moreover, as I understand, all the 226 volumes of the *Kangyur* do not exist in Lahoul.

The importance of all these ceremonies, rituals, or funeral rites is to help the soul find its proper path. Otherwise it might get lost or linger around haunting people. There are several stories about lost souls or what is called in Hindi the *Bhatakti Atma*. One such story is about the village of Rangbe in Lahoul. In the late 1940s or early '50s an old lady in the house of Tashi Chhering died. It is said that for years she haunted them. Everybody in the house would frequently see the door open, even though bolted from inside, but no one enter. They could hear the sound of somebody walking around but saw no one. The family was traumatized, and also experienced extreme poverty. They would always run short of supplies when their foodgrains should have lasted much longer. In the beginning they were petrified, but after a while they became used to it and were not afraid at all. They tried several mediums, but in vain. Finally they brought Lama Kunga, the head lama of Kardang monastery, who was considered to be a highly spiritual and realized

man. He performed some simple rituals, after which the whole thing subsided and the family found peace in the household. More about this lama is given in the Kardang monastery section of the chapter on 'temples and monasteries'.

There is another story of a similar nature, which happened only very recently. A man named Tursi died in Lote village. He was later seen entering the house several times. Most of the time he came and went straight to the place where the lambs were kept. Each time a lamb was found dead, its neck wrung. Only women and children were living in the house at that time, so when they saw him coming they called an old man from the neighbouring house. This man, Nand Ram, then scared Tursi and after some time the whole affair subsided.

The Lungpe Chhos Ceremony

Among the Brahmins and the Harijans, the funeral ceremony is performed by a medium called the *bhata*. This is a family profession and in such families generation after generation one man, usually the eldest son, is designated and he performs all the mediumistic functions. Two such families, one from the village of Kirting, known as Kirbhata, and the other from the village of Joondha, known as Yombe-bhata have been well-known for a long time.

Unlike the Buddhist lama, a *bhata* does not possess any books or scriptures from which to read. He recites *mantras*, which have been passed down from his ancestors. As stated in the chapter on religion, the Lungpe Chhos is a deformed Shiva-Shakti doctrine. Accordingly most of their *mantras* relate to Kali or Shakti or Bhairav. Many of their *mantras* do not make much sense except perhaps as pure sound or through vibratory power, as suggested by Sir John Woodroffe, in his book *The Garland of Letters*. Goudan, or the donation of a cow—one of the best donations possible according to certain Hindu beliefs—also forms a part of the ritual but is not a necessary condition. In this ceremony a cow or a calf is taken three times round the corpse or the effigy, while the *bhata* chants the *mantras*. The cow is then donated to the *bhata* himself. There is no waiting period, unlike in the Tibetan Buddhist ritual, and the corpse is cremated as soon as the *bhata* has completed his

rituals. The Chinals or the Harijans also provide the funeral music as described in the previous section. Other than the substitution of the lama by the *bhata*, most of the rituals are the same as in the other system. The remains, in the form of an effigy are taken to the holy *Sangam* and to the holy Ganges. There is also a custom of composing eulogy, in the form of a song called *sugili*. It is not sung in all cases, but often it is a spontaneous volunteer effort on the part of some lady friends or relatives in praise of the deceased.

There is a belief that when somebody dies, Yamraj, the god of death, sends two messengers called *yamdoots*, or locally called *jamdwar*, to fetch the deceased. There are some stories about having seen these *jamdwars* by some people. One such story is narrated in the chapter on festivals and celebrations.

Another story was told by the *gura* of Yangtozing who lived until the late 1930s or early '40s. It is said that one spring when he was training with the *gura* of Shansha village, the whole community had gathered in the house of Shoundas. Suddenly the *gura* of Shansha, named Dhombara, asked the people to be quiet and told them that the *jamdwars* were coming. Every one was surprised and looked at each other and wondered what the devil he was talking about. In the meantime the door opened and they saw a giant with long, flowing hair in the doorway. He was barefoot, though a pair of straw shoes, called *poola*, were tied to the tip of a steel rod he carried over his shoulders. The giant said to the *gura*, "Dhal *gura* (greetings). Here is a gift for you from Yamraj." People saw an empty hand extended towards the *gura*. The *gura* received it in his cupped hands and put this 'nothing' in the fold of his round hat. He invited the *jamdwar* to sit down and join them for the meal, but he replied that he was not allowed to eat there. The *jamdwar* told them that he first had to go to the *Sangam* where he was going to take a bath and after that he had an invitation at Chanda's house at Tandi. Saying this he left. People tried to find him, but he had vanished into thin air. The *gura* then asked his wife to get up very early in the morning and clean the house as if for some special occasion. Everybody was surprised and could not understand what was going on. When they arose the next morning, the *gura* asked his wife to fetch his hat which was kept in a safe place overnight. When the lady brought the hat, to everybody's surprise there were three corn

plants growing from the fold of the hat, even though corn did not exist in that area at all.

There is another story about a case of mistaken identity. It is said that a deceased woman in the village of Dhwansha came back to life during her funeral. She then told the people how she was taken to *Yamraj*, where it was declared that she was not the right person. They put a seal on her body and sent her back. Later, people found another woman in the same village, with the same name, dead in her house.

The Custom of Sanatan Hindu Dharma

This custom is not very old and also not very widespread. Around 1930 Rishi Brahma Prakash came to the village of Gushal and preached the *Vedanta* and *Sanatan Hindu Dharma*. The people of Gushal village and some neighbouring areas soon gave up all their orthodox beliefs in Lungpe Chhos, described in the previous section. Among other things they dropped the funeral ceremony and turned away from Buddhism also. From that time onwards the funeral ceremony is performed in their own way. Reading passages from the *Bhagwat Geeta*, the *Vedas*, and the *Upanishads* replaced other forms of *mantra* recital. The *Shanti Pada*, or the 'peace prayer' from the *Vedas* also is recited. Often *havan*, the sacrificial sacred fire ceremony is performed. However, the Chinal or the Harijans still provide their own funeral music in this case as well. Most of the other rites are performed in more or less the same manner as by the Rajputs of the Pattan valley.

The people here are perhaps not aware of the *Garuda Purana* where the funeral ceremony of Hindu custom is supposed to be given in the *Pret-khand* section. This is supposed to be somewhat similar to the *Bardo Thodol* of Tibetan Buddhism and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

A couple of weeks after the funeral, the final rites of the deceased, called *sama*, is performed in all the above systems. In this the friends and relatives are invited and a meal and drinks are served. After that some *marchu*, deep fried bread, is distributed to every household taking the count of family members.

11

Occupation and Livelihood

Farming

The primary occupation of the people within the valley of Lahoul is agriculture. There is hardly any family which does not possess some land, even though it might be less than an acre. Only a few families of blacksmiths and goldsmiths do not possess any land at all.

Under the joint family system some family members may be farmers while others may be engaged in business or some service. As such their occupations are not confined to any one particular profession. At present professional opportunities for young men range from medicine, engineering, administrative services to all other government jobs. Nevertheless, farming has been the backbone of the valley since time immemorial. The type of terrain, the altitude of the valley, the shortage of rainfall, and the excessive snowfall make the life very tough indeed. The question of mere survival forces these people to extreme hard work up to sixteen hours a day, no matter how rich or poor, young or old, they may be. One might pause to ponder as to how these people, especially the women, can work so hard day and night tirelessly, without a day off in their schedule. Nature has forced them to be diligent and punctual as laziness or delay can prove fatal. An untimely snowfall can sweep away a whole year's effort in a few hours.

From time immemorial these people have learned to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. When the snow falls and farm work is not possible, they spin and weave. Every household maintains sheep for wool as well as for manure for the fields. Besides sheep, they

keep cows for milk, and bulls to plough the fields. These cattle are essential for the farmers, who have relied upon organic farming for centuries. Thus they produce by themselves most of the items needed for living. However, this self-sufficiency is changing fast under the wave of modernization.

The members of the family engaged in business or service simply supplement the family income while maintaining the joint family system which is the key to the success of the people of this valley. The average per capita farmable land may scarcely be half an acre, with only a single crop season, yet the economic condition of the people is far better than the average by Indian standards. One might be tempted to compare their situation with that of the Israelis, who have made so much out of desert land.

Whether one likes it or not, one has to work hard if one wants to live in this valley and survive. The farming is totally dependent upon irrigation and thus they are not at the mercy of the rain. So far there has hardly been any mechanization, although it is quite evident that it is the only solution to alleviate such hard work, which future generations may not be willing to put in. Modernization is encouraging them to adopt the "Westernized" Indian definition of progress to have everything without hard work. The trend of running after government service is gaining popularity where it seems a lot of people are paid simply for sitting on their chairs.

The farming is limited to a very few crops. In the following section a brief description of the main crops is presented.

Kuth

Much of the credit for the prosperity of this valley goes to this crop. As the older people used to say, the modern, young, educated people should be thankful to Kuth. But for Kuth, few could go to college.

Kuth is an herb which grows in only a very few places in the Himalaya and only at a particular altitude. In Sanskrit its name is *Sasurina Lapa* or in short *Sasu*. It is called *Costus* in English, although the word *Kuth* is more commonly used. There is an opinion that this herb is the same as *Cassia*, mentioned in the Bible.

Prior to 1962 dried costus roots were exported to China. No-

body really knew what the Chinese did with them. It is said that once a Buddhist monk from Lahoul went on a trip to China along with some other monks from different countries. They were taken on a visit to a factory in which he saw a heap of this herb. Pointing at it the monk told them that this item was produced in his home town. As soon as he mentioned that, they were quickly escorted out of the factory. As such he could not see what they made out of it.

It was obviously used in some very expensive products since it had been selling at a fairly high price, but nobody knew in what for sure. It was suspected that it was used in some medicines, as there is a very small consumption of it within India primarily for medicinal purposes. People smoke it when they have a bad cold or fever. An extract or paste made from its roots is rubbed in to cure arthritis, rheumatism or warts. I can not say for sure how effective it proves, though I've heard that some people really like it. It has been used extensively and very successfully for centuries to protect the clothes from moths. For this purpose it is quite safe from the point of view of its use around children since it is harmless if swallowed in small doses and because its bitter, unappetizing taste does not encourage them to eat it.

There is a folk story about this herb. It is said that once long ago a gnome* couple appeared in Lahoul; locally the gnomes are called *baloo*. People caught them and tied them to a tree in the village of Tandi. Suddenly they heard some funeral music from the village of Gushal across the river. The gnome woman asked the villagers what the music was. The people told her that somebody had died. Hearing this she said, "It is funny that anyone should die in a place where Kuth, Sunth, and grow." She named three things but the people could not remember the third item she named and they did not know what the second item was. My guess is that the second item was perhaps ginger, since its local name is Sund or

* In general we consider the gnomes as mythical characters. The description of these gnomes given by the people in this remote corner of the Himalaya is that they are one *haath* (about 18 inches) tall, wear a cap of the same height, carry a stick of the same length, and wear felt shoes called *babcha*. Surprisingly these descriptions match exactly the pictures in the book *Gnomes*, published by Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York, though a fairy tale for children. The only difference is in height, 15 to 30 cm.

Sunth. She was just saying this when the gnome man hissed, “Shhhhhhh . . .”, to shut her up. After that people tried their best to make them talk, but the gnomes would not utter another word. So it has remained a mystery.

In earlier times kuth was found in the jungles of Kashmir, where people collected it to sell to the local merchants. In the 1930s a man named Dhanwantri Prasad brought the seeds of Kuth to Lahoul and since then it has been cultivated regularly. One of the most important crops in Lahoul, it was in fact the only cash crop until recently. In 1962, because of the war between India and China, trade relations were broken off and export of kuth to China was stopped. After some time, the export business was established with Malaysia, from where it is rumoured, it again went to China, thus adding another middle man. With some effort and investigation a few more avenues to trade were opened and it was exported to a dozen other countries. France and the United States were perhaps its biggest secondary markets, although the consumption was still very small, and its use still remained a trade secret.

In the early '60s its essential oil was extracted with the help of the Chemical Research Institute of Poona. From a business point of view, however, this did not do any good. In 1967 I started my own investigation of possible markets and uses. I had a sample of the essential oil extract as well as some raw herb roots. Since it was suspected that medicine was perhaps its only use, I contacted several pharmaceutical companies in the United States. Among them Norwich Pharmaceutical Company showed some interest and they began researching it. However, they stopped after finding a paper by Chopra et al. entitled, *Chopra's Indigenous Drugs of India*, that provided the chemical analysis of it that they had conducted in the Drug Research Lab at Jammu and Kashmir. They also listed some of the uses as summarized by Baden Powell in the *Punjab Products*.

- Dried and powdered as a hair wash . . .
- A stimulant in cholera, an infusion made of cardamom . . .
- Protector of Kashmir fabrics from the attacks of moth and other vermin . . .
- Exported to China, where it is used as incense. No mandarin will give an audience until patchak incense smokes

before him, in every Joss house it smolders before the tri-budh deity . . .

After enumerating some of its uses and listing its chemical contents, they concluded their paper by saying that there is nothing of significance in it, although they also wrote that the drug has a remarkable effect in controlling bronchial asthma, especially that of the vagotonic type. Thus this paper proved fatal to my investigation. However, I was not satisfied with their research at all. The chemical analysis does not mean much. A lot of people know the chemical ingredients of Coca Cola, but how many could make it? However, at that time I could not see any other avenue to pursue my investigation and I had to give it up. Several years later I found out that the major use of costus oil was not in medicine, instead it was used in very expensive perfumes. According to unconfirmed rumours, besides its peculiar smell, it also works as a preservative in the perfumes.

The market in costus fluctuates regularly, with a slump always following a period of good demand. France seems to be the main exporter of the costus oil. In 1976 the Lahoul Kuth Cooperative Society sent two delegates to investigate and search for new markets throughout the world. This delegation reached the conclusion that the French oil, popular in America and many other countries, has slightly different quality and fragrance than that extracted in India. Customers demand this same quality and unless it could be matched, it would be impossible to sell Indian costus oil. The question was how to match the quality as the Indian oil was already in the purest form that they could extract. For that reason the matter was not pursued further. Since then I have discovered that costus oil is often adulterated with the oil of another plant called *Elecampane*, at the time of distillation. Possibly this is what makes the French oil different from the one extracted in India. Once people are accustomed to a certain quality or flavor, even if it is adulterated, they will not accept another product even though it is purer.

Because the market remains quite uncertain and also because the people have found that growing seed potato and peas etc. are more profitable than cultivating Kuth, this crop is rapidly disappearing from the fields of Lahoul.

Potatoes

At present potatoes have become the main cash crop and the most profitable produce of the Lahoul valley. The altitude makes it the best quality seed potato that one can produce, and as a seed, it is being supplied throughout India. The popular varieties are the Kufri-Chandermukhi and Kufri-Jyoti. Up-to-date was another variety that was very popular a few years ago.

Although many people used to think that once trucks began plying the Rohtang pass and the valley, potatoes would prove to be a very profitable item, yet the credit for implementing this idea goes to Thakur Devi Singh, then Block Development Officer.

Besides being profitable for the seeds, the potatoes grown here serve as one of the staple foods of the local people. Boiled potatoes often constituted the principal item for lunch a few years ago. Plain boiled potatoes, eaten with salt and pepper, taste so good that I often miss them. I tried to prepare them the same way in Punjab and in America, but I never found them the same and I gave up after only one trial. In terms of quantity also I think that Lahoul must hold a record in per acre production of potatoes.

Grains

Among the foodgrains, wheat, barley and buckwheat were produced here earlier. Barley and buckwheat constituted the only dual crop that can be produced in one season in this valley. The period April to July was used for barley, while July to September was used for the buckwheat crop. The transition period from one crop to the other was very critical. Even a difference of a few hours in the time of sowing sometimes makes a difference whether one reaps a crop or not. The month of October is very uncertain as far as snow is concerned. Many times people lose their crop due to an early snow-fall.

Buckwheat is used for pancakes, which is another staple food. There was a time when a stock of buckwheat pancakes could be found in any house at any time. Since buckwheat is not grown in significant quantities anywhere else in India, one can not find it anywhere in the Indian market. For this reason the people of Lahoul have to produce their own. Barley is mainly used for

making *Yud* or *Sattu*. *Yud* is a flour made from roasted barley, and since it does not have to be cooked again, it can be mixed with tea or butter milk and eaten without further cooking. This makes a very good companion for travellers. Barley is also used in making *Chhang* or *Chakti*, a local drink. Of late these two crops also are not seen much in Lahoul fields.

Lahoul also has a very good record for growing wheat. Some of the latest varieties are produced here. The variety called Triple Dwarf was first produced here, which became very popular in Punjab for a short while. Due to acute shortage of land, the production of wheat is barely enough for local use. In some cases people are trying to avoid sowing wheat because the potatoes are more profitable, and since wheat can be purchased from outside as well.

Besides these crops several different varieties of vegetables are grown here. People always like to experiment with new items. Pea is another item that is catching up fast as a cash crop of Lahoul, since it reaches the market during an off season.

Hops

Lahoul is a typical example of progressive farming. Whenever anyone of them finds a new crop or a new seed that would improve the quality, or production, or increase the income, in no time it spreads all over the valley. The hop plant is one such example, while many other experiments in chickory and others are going on.

In the mid-seventies a friend of mine in the USA, Dr. Sirinath, suggested that I convince the people of Lahoul to experiment with growing hops. He thought that a highland area such as Lahoul might be suitable for this plant since it wasn't successful in hot climate. He promised to get me seeds or seedlings, whatever was necessary to get started. A year later when I visited Lahoul I talked to a few people about it. One of them told me that an experiment was already going on in the neighbouring valley of Kinnaur.

Two years later when I visited the valley again, I saw that a lot of people had hops planted in their gardens or in a small plot in their field. Today many farmers grow hops, but in small quantity mainly because of the lack of proper marketing facility. The eradication of hops from the fields of Kashmir has increased the demand

of Lahoul hops. As a result this crop is being propagated very fast in Lahoul.

Hop plant (*Humulus lupulus*) is a creeper that produces green flowers shaped somewhat like a solidly filled rose bud, but more rounded in shape. It turns yellowish when over-ripe. These flowers are used in beer as a bittering or flavouring agent as well as a preservative. In fact it was originally used as a preservative, but over time its tingling bitter taste and aroma became the typical flavour of beer. Today perhaps without this taste a beer would not be called beer. The hop flowers are dried, compressed into pellets and then sold to the breweries. The varieties of hops cultivated in Lahoul are the Hybrid and Late Cluster. The aromatic hops has also been tried. Lahoul should be best suited for it, since anything grown at this altitude contains an extra aroma and taste.

Trade With Tibet

Trade relations have existed between Tibet and Lahoul since the earliest recorded history. When the British took over this part of the country, they kept Kullu and Lahoul just because of this business, while they sold the rest of the area to the Maharaja of Jammu. This trade had been a livelihood and a source of income for several families for generations. It was a typical business of its own style. Since no common currency existed between the two countries, trade was conducted mainly by barter. Rather than an open marketplace, trading was a one-to-one relationship. Each businessman from Lahoul had a counterpart in Tibet. Personal trust was one of the key ingredients of this business. The businessman from Lahoul carried cotton clothes, steel goods, tea, and sugar from India and returned with wool, Pashmina (cashmere), butter, and cheese from his counterpart in Tibet.

The people from western Tibet known as Byangpas or Chagpas were very poor, while the richer ones from central Tibet exploited them by selling things at a very high price, a matter about which these people had no say at all. Therefore most of the time these Byangpas were in debt and the tradesmen of Lahoul loaned them money without interest, considering it an advance for the next year. Because of this relationship an outsider could not just barge in and

as such the number of these businessmen was quite limited, perhaps one family per village on the average. They were considered a sort of privileged elite. Besides this special relationship, poverty of course, was another barrier to others from entering into this business.

There was no good road between the two countries and therefore no vehicular traffic. The means of transportation were the beast of burden, mainly ponies, mules, sheep, or sometimes donkeys as well. There were no other means of communication, such as telephones, a wireless, or a postal system. From the day these people left home until the day they returned they were completely cut off. Until then, neither side could know if anything had happened to anyone. Nature provides a span of about four months to complete this barter business in a year. Of these four months it took about one month to reach the marketplace and one month to return, so they had barely two months to complete their transactions.

The main attraction for this business from India's point of view was the Pashmina (cashmere), which is used to make shawls. Wool, though not less important, could be obtained from other sources, while cashmere did not exist in too many other places. The Lahouli tradesmen would bring these items as far as Kullu in India, where another group of businessmen from Amritsar (Punjab) awaited them.

I feel sorry for these tradesmen of Lahoul, who perhaps showed themselves to be very smart and shrewd businessmen to the Tibetans, while in their own country they were robbed. Although these people were involved in this trade for generations, their economic condition hardly ever improved. Every spring they had to make preparations for their journey to Tibet, which involved purchasing and stocking all the goods mentioned earlier. Each time they had to borrow money from these so-called "big businessmen" of Punjab, who settled in Kullu more or less for this very business. Many times they are said to have paid up to 24 percent interest. Every fall when the traders came back from Tibet, they handed over almost everything they brought directly to their patrons. Even if someone tried to be canny and sell it elsewhere for a better price, most of the profit would still go to pay the loan and the interest. Whatever little they did make for themselves also often depended upon the mercy

of these professionals. The Lahouli traders took pride only in being addressed as *Seth-ji*, a term of respect to address a rich man. They perhaps never thought that hidden beneath the "*Seth-ji*" was "you idiot".

So far as the journey to Tibet is concerned, it was certainly the most horrible journey anybody would venture to repeat year after year. During more than a month's journey they rarely had a decent meal. They slept outdoors among the sheep and ponies, which also suffered the same trudge and drudge as the humans. In the course of entire journey they might not have a chance to bathe, because time and weather would not permit such a luxury, or should we call it a necessary evil. Often they travelled day and night because it was not possible simply to camp anywhere they wished. Only at certain spots could one find the wood and water to cook, and pasture for the animals. They had to reach those points whether it took ten hours or thirty-six hours.

Along the way they also had to ford the Indus river. Discussing this journey, Sonam Dawa of Lote mentioned that when he made the trip for the first time, his colleagues showed him the river from a distance and told him that he would have to cross it. He thought they were joking and said, "I will wager anything you ask if you cross that river. How can anyone cross that huge river without a bridge or a ferry or a boat." He was told not to bet on it and just to wait. He replied that if that was true then he was not going any farther and instead was going to return home. Of course to cross such a river one has to find a shallow spot with smooth flow, if one does not know how to swim. "After walking a few more miles I noticed that there was a place where people were crossing the river and were shouting "*Solgo-solgo*". I was petrified, but there was no way out except to hold my breath and jump in. Fortunately the flow was not turbulent like rivers here. One barely notices the flow of water. In the middle as soon as the water level rises above the heart, your mouth automatically opens up in a gasp. The shore seems miles away. O my God! What a life," he said shaking his head.

Besides the journey being so rough there was always the danger of bad weather, snow, avalanches, and falling rocks. Although the probability of such occurrences is very less, yet they do happen.

In the year 1955, there was an unprecedented snowfall in August. Most of the pack animals on this journey lost their lives, along with some people. The story of that trip is narrated in the following pages by Arjun Gopal of Tholang village.

“Ram Nath-ji, you have travelled around the world, but I bet you have not seen a more horrible way of making a living than this business of ours that we had going with Tibet. Every spring our preparation consisted of filling up the *fachetoos* (double-sided bags carried by sheep) with foodgrains, dyes, cotton clothes and so forth. Sheep and ponies were our “four-wheel-drive vehicles” that could go places where their mechanical counterparts could not. Load them and you are on your way to that God-forsaken journey. The owners or masters would ride the ponies while the junior partners and the *gelbas* (servants) had to make the entire journey on foot. It is surprising and I still wonder how we could get the *gelbas* for such a treacherous job, but somehow we always managed to.

“During the journey we would sometimes start as early as 3 in the morning. Sometimes we would have to go thirty or forty miles before we could find a suitable place to camp, while at other times we had to halt after just eight or ten miles. During the short breaks for tea, the animals remained loaded because it took so long to unload and reload them that we could not afford the time, even though it seemed cruel. The poor sheep would lie down so that the ground would support the load rather than their backs, to get some relief.

“After about a month’s journey like this, we reached a place called Rabang, our trade centre, a small town in western Tibet. Some of the Tibetan government officials called Zong-Labrang are posted there. This is a beautiful place surrounded by high mountains with four monasteries. In the middle there is a large plain where all business takes place outdoors. It took us about a month to complete our transactions.”

Arjun picked up his *hookka* and had a puff while he collected his thoughts and then continued.

“About the third week of August, after finishing up most of our business there, we started on the return journey. The first day we came to a place called Lhogpo about seven or eight miles from Rabang. Here we had to clear up our old accounts and leave some money for them without charging any interest. That was our security or advance for the next year. Finally from there we started on our journey back home. Our next stop was at Lhogsing, and then Rogsung. Three roads meet at this place, one from Rabang, the other from Rudok and the third one from our direction.

“Rogsung has a historical importance. An event that took place sometime around 1950 is still remembered by most people there. A *zong* (commissioner) who was posted there by the Tibetan government was very cruel. He began to murder the elite, learned, outspoken or otherwise capable people. When this had continued for a long time the public finally became sick and tired of him and revolted. Among them was a man called Barba, an excellent marksman who supposedly never missed his target. At that time the only weapon they had was the old muzzle-loader. He told the others that if he were allowed to try, all he would need was one bullet to shoot that *zong*. The Byangpas replied that since the *zong* was their officer, Barba should aim the first bullet at his feet as a token of respect. Accordingly, he shot the first bullet at the *zong*'s feet and the second bullet through his long sleeve as a warning that the third bullet would pierce his chest. The *zong* was frightened and pleaded for a truce. The cunning *zong* told them that they were very dangerous people and he was afraid of them. The talks could begin only if all of them had their hands tied behind their backs. The innocent Byangpas agreed to this. They were to meet in a large building called Khar. But as soon as the *zong* had all of them with their hands tied, he took out his pistol and started shooting. Some of them escaped, but most of the others were killed. After that the rest of the people went to Lhasa to complain to the

Dalai Lama about the deeds of this official. The Dalai Lama responded by sending an army. It is said that their discipline was so strict that once Tibetan soldiers put on their boots and belts, they kept them on until they reached their destination and had completed the job, even if this took several days. When the *zong* heard of this he ran away, perhaps to India.

“The *zong*’s wife, who was educated in America, also came to India later, accompanied by the *zong*’s minister, Jholak Norge. He was a giant about seven feet tall. The Indians, hearing of the cruelty these officials had perpetrated on the Tibetans, attacked Norge near Rahla. They beat him with wooden poles until his skull was fractured and he was bleeding terribly. Jholak Norge exclaimed that if only he had known that the Indians would be hostile, he would have come prepared. Then he would see how they would face him. He died the following winter.

“Besides this incident, Rogsung is famous for the vitality of its grass. After grazing for a few days at Rogsung, the ponies become so strong that they break their ropes and run away. This place is also famous for its cold weather. Huge icicles form there as if some giant manufactures and erects them all over.

“After Rogsung we reached Chhurgiang and then a place called Dud. After that we crossed a small pass and reached Shingong. There the road divides, and the one leg heading towards the upper nallah leads through a thick jungle. At this place there is a famous rock of yellow and red clay, that people use as a marker. According to a local myth, when Chocho Drugu the wife of Gyab Kayser sat here to urinate, she was also menstruating, which colored the whole rock.

“From Shingong we climbed down to the Indus river. By following the river one can reach Ladakh, but we did not go that way. Instead we came to a place called Kagjung in Indian territory.

“After another five or six days’ journey we reached a place called Tsogyar. There are two big lakes there, one on

each side of the road. There is a myth about these two lakes. It is said that in ancient times there was only one huge lake. When Gyab Kayser passed through, his horse Kyang Norbu was very thirsty and drank the whole lake. As the horse lifted its head, two drops fell from its nostrils and formed the two lakes. These lakes are quite large; it would take one whole day to walk around each one.

“Next we reached a place called Kyangchhug where there are two huge rocks with holes in them. According to myth again Gyab Kayser was practising archery there alone. He was so skillful that with one arrow he would spread mustard seed all over the ground, and with the next arrow sweep up every single grain. As he practised he noticed that in every feat he was falling a little short of the mark. So he suspected that someone must be watching him. Since he was an incarnate, he did not want anyone to witness his feats. He looked around and discovered his beloved wife Chocho Drugu watching him. He asked her to leave and not to watch him by any means as he practised. He described all sorts of indirect ways of looking at him, and made her swear that she would not use them. Chocho Drugu turned back, but her curiosity would not let her go straight home. On the way she came across a pile of *drong* (wild buffalo) dung. Suddenly she remembered that among all the oaths he had sworn her to, he had forgotten to mention *drong's* dung. She picked up two dry pieces, made holes in them and watched him through these holes. These two pieces of dung later became the rocks with holes through them. Historically, a battle was fought at this place. People still find steel arrow-heads here and there.”

Arjun shook his head as if he had committed a blunder and continued.

“I forgot to mention that before reaching Kyangchhug we had to stop at a place called Puga. At Puga there are ores of sulphur, and lime or marble. The Byangpas say that this mountain keeps changing colour. Puga is in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and I heard that the government is

prospecting for the mines there. At Puga there are stones placed at regular intervals for a long stretch as if someone had placed them after careful planning. Mythologically each stone represents one jump of Gyab Kayser's horse.

“Next we crossed a small pass called Bong-la and descended into a narrow valley in an area called Toche-Firche. This is the place where we were stranded during the unprecedented snowfall of August 1955. The exact place where we were held up is called Ponga. One morning as we were getting up, one man looked out, then jumped up and yelled to us, ‘Damn you guys get up and look out, it’s snowing!’ No one believed him, but when we looked out we received a shock. We saw a huge pile of snow and it was still snowing. From that day it snowed continuously for sixteen days and nights, a record snowfall. We were in a place from which it was not possible to either go back or go on. We just stayed there counting the days. Each day seemed like a month. Eventually we ran out of our rations and many of us began to lose hope of surviving. We were stuck there for forty-one days. A herd of about three or four hundred sheep, belonging to Barongpa, stuck there along with us, all died one by one. Thus we had at least their meat to fill up our stomachs. We had nothing else left. But eating just meat that had been leftover for days, started giving us stomach trouble and dysentery.”

The memory of the incident started to choke Arjun. He paused and ordered some tea for us. After a minute's silence he began again.

“One day we found an abandoned camp of another party and searched it for provisions. Although it was theft, under these circumstances we did not really feel it was. We found a *fachetu* (sheep's load) full of *yud* (roasted barley flour). It weighed barely ten kilograms and we were twenty-one people. We divided ourselves into two groups of ten and eleven people each and split up the *yud*. One party wanted to turn back and left with their share. We did not want to go back, so we kept on waiting there.

“After a few days’ wait, a group of people suddenly appeared. They were from Ladakh and Rupsho, and had gone to Lahoul in pilgrimage to the temple of Triloknath. They were stuck between the two passes of Longlacha and Baralacha, each about 18,000 feet high, on their way back. Seeing them arrive after crossing the pass gave us immense courage and pleasure. Among them there was an old man named Thungla, who taught us an excellent trick. He told us that we would need plenty of fuel, but carrying wood would be almost impossible. He advised us to make charcoal and carry that instead. This turned out to be the most valuable innovation. In order to make charcoal, first we had to collect wood and so we crossed the cold, icy river to look for some. Slabs of ice floating in the water would hit our legs while we crossed. We ended up with a lot of bloody legs. We spent a couple of days collecting bamboos and any other wood that we could find. One morning as I came into camp carrying some wood, I saw one of my maternal uncles sitting near the fire. I noticed smoke apparently coming out of his head. I went closer and found that his hat was burning. He had left it near the fire to dry and a spark had gotten in it, but he did not see it when he put the hat back on. I thought this was a bad omen. Later that winter he died in an avalanche.

“Three or four days later, after making enough charcoal, we started on our journey, each carrying an additional eight or ten kilograms of charcoal on our backs besides our usual luggage. We had a lot of *ghee* (purified butter) in *kogs* with us. A *kog* is a ball of *ghee* or butter about the size of a soccer ball, wrapped in a sheep skin. When we left Firche we had to climb up a steep hill about ten or twelve miles. I was trailing behind when suddenly I saw the *kogs* rolling down the hill towards me. The older members of the group, saying that survival was primary and to hell with the rest, threw the heavy *kogs* away. I picked up a couple and each of the younger members carried one or two extra.

“That night we reached a place called Drongze-Chan.

There we found a small room hardly big enough for one person, where we all had to spend the night. We tried to burn the charcoal and prepare some tea. Our cheeks were swollen while blowing the wet charcoal. The water was barely lukewarm when we prepared the tea. We mixed some *yud* with the tepid tea and that was our supper.

“The following day we reached Chharab where we noticed the merchandise—wool, Pashmina, etc.—belonging to a man named Thabaku, abandoned helter skelter. It was so cold that even with all the clothes in our possession wrapped around us and sleeping tightly close to one another we were still almost frozen to death. The cold felt like a needle or a surgical knife piercing through our skin. We could not sleep at all. As they say, ‘necessity is the mother of invention’, so an old man came up with an idea. He said, ‘Let us start kicking one another to keep ourselves warm and alive.’ We did that the whole night and thus survived. Next morning when we got up we were so pale that there was hardly a trace of colour on anyone’s face. Then Shiv Dyal Kirpu and myself went in search of some bushes to make a fire with. First we had to clear away three or four feet of snow wherever we hoped to find a bush. Many times after clearing away all the snow it turned out to be a rock, to add insult to injury.

“It was in Serchhu that evening that we found the most extreme damage done by the snow storm. About four to five thousand animals were dead. Only a few goat and dogs survived. The goats were able to reach every nook and corner to dig out roots and bushes and survive. The dogs had been eating dead animals and had become quite fierce after eating so much meat. When we tried to get water, they would not let us go close to the stream. The donkeys were frozen stiff where they stood. The damned crows would not even wait for them to die, but would come and pick at their eyes while these animals were still alive, but unable to move.

“We felt safe when we reached Zing-zing-bar and that night we sang some songs to celebrate our survival. From

there we came to Patseo and Dozam. This area was warm, which created another problem. The snow was so wet that it was difficult to walk on. Our legs sank to the knees in the snow, making it very tiring to walk even a couple of miles. Somehow or other we reached Darcha, where there is a small village. Two of us went to the village for rice and we were also asked to get some buckwheat flour. At one house I noticed an old woman frying *marchu* (fried bread like *Poori*). Not having had a decent meal for a long time, my mouth began to water and I could not resist begging the woman to spare me one. She got upset and raised a burning stick at me, calling me mannerless. I then said to her, 'Dear old lady, if only you knew what we have survived and how we reached here, you would know where to put manners.' We then bought one goat from her. Thus that night we had plenty to cook, such as rice, flour, and fresh meat. Having a good meal after such a long time was something strange and everybody ate too much. By the next morning all of us were sick. Like the gluttoned crows and vultures we sat there staring at each other, rolling over but unable to stand straight and walk. We all wondered what had happened. One of the older men told us that it was the effect of eating heavily after such a long fast. We had to stay there for three or four days to recuperate.

“On the fourth day we reached Sitingri, more or less our own territory. At a house where we sought shelter there was an old man who knew my grandfather Dasso. When he learned that we belonged to Dasso's village he gave us a warm welcome. However, his daughter-in-law turned out to be a shrewd. She even pulled wood out of the fireplace, saying that we were burning too much. In a place like Sitingri there is no scarcity of wood, it is only a matter of collecting it. The old man was helpless before her. We kept him amused and interested by telling him stories about Tibet and our journey. Indirectly he tried to tell his daughter-in-law that she should give us something to eat and drink. He praised Dasso and remarked that whenever he went to Dasso's house, he was always offered plenty to eat

and drink. One fellow among us also tried to throw some hints here and there, saying that in our village a guest is treated like a god. However, there was no effect on that woman. Suddenly an older *chomo* (nun) appeared. She was the daughter of the old man. I took two rupees from my pocket and said to her, 'Sister, I know you people always keep a stock of *chhang*. How about getting us two rupees worth?' She was a nice lady and brought a jug-full along with something to eat and did not even accept the money.

"The next day we reached Keylong, the District Headquarters of Lahoul. Upon receiving the news of our arrival a lot of friends, including our respected (late) Sri Som Dev ji, came to receive us. They invited us to their homes, but we were in horrible shape. After reaching here, our appearance again became important. We had not shaved or taken a bath for months. Our beards had grown long. Because we were not presentable at all, we requested that they let us stay in the monastery at one end of the village. The first thing we did was shave, brush, take a bath and make ourselves presentable, although weak and skinny. They brought a huge pail full of tea and one full of *chhang* and many things to eat right to the monastery. Finally on the next day we reached home. Then we really celebrated our survival and home-coming."

Arjun heaved a sigh of relief, as if he had just been through the journey again and made it home safely. Now he was less serious and continued.

"As a matter of fact the Indian Government had tried to send some help. Two men were sent in search of the survivors. They were paid twenty-four rupees a day, which was about three times their regular wages. Some people were picked up by helicopter, but we were in such a narrow valley that nothing could reach us.

"The next May we started again, this time in search of what we left behind. See the greed and the destiny of man! In spite of what we went through only a few months before, we were again on our way to the same hell. On the

way we noticed heaps of animal bones everywhere. The scene was like a horror story, where a ghost appears and eats up all the living beings leaving behind only the skeletons. In a few places there were piles of dead sheep. The ones on the top and bottom were spoiled, but the ones in the middle were in good condition, having been in a natural refrigerator. Some of the wild animals survived. The *nvan* (wild sheep with big horns) could run very easily over the snow, while the *kyang* (wild horse or mustang) had some trouble. Most of the *nhabos* (wild ass) were snow-blinded. At one place we surrounded eleven of them. They could not see us until we came very close but when they sensed our presence they jumped over us and ran away. We were too weak to hold them. Some people had caught *nhabos* and used them to carry their luggage. Most of us found our goods quite intact where we had left them. Some lost a few things and certain things were destroyed. There was enough honesty among the people that they only picked up what belonged to them.

“In 1959 China took over Tibet and we lost our business. I feel sorry for the Tibetans that they lost their country, but for our own sakes I am glad that we lost this business. Is there any fiercer hell than what we went through? It was not only a relief for us, but also for the poor animals. Man suffers due to his own greed and deed, but the innocent animals suffer for no reason.”

During the same period another man named Sonam Ram from Tholang spent one whole week in a small cave with hardly any room to turn around. Because the entrance to the cave was completely covered by snow, he could not even see out to know what was going on. All those days he had nothing to eat or drink. He had a stick with him and on the seventh or eighth day he poked a hole in the snow. He looked through and found that it had stopped snowing. Only then did he make his way out and continued on his journey.

After going through all this what did these traders gain? Others reaped the profit, not the ones who suffered. With the end of this

business, however, the loss of Pashmina is felt by and large. Only a small quantity of it still comes from the areas within the Indian borders, where such goats are found and some people still do this business. The others had to change their business to something else.

Apple Orchards

After losing the trade with Tibet, people diverted their attention, effort and their meager capital towards other businesses. Apple orchards in the Kullu valley seemed the most promising business. This business was not limited to a few elite, instead any resourceful person could enter into it and try his luck. In the beginning most of the people purchased barren, far-flung, unused pieces of land in the Kullu valley. The hard-working nature of the people turned this wasteland into beautiful orchards. Because of the money they were making, they became the talk of the town. Seeing this many other people jumped into this venture, investing all their fortunes and savings of generations of their ancestors. Sometimes people became very suspicious and wary. In most cases the only land they could find was in a hopelessly barren and uncultivated area, yet they spent all of their savings on it. There is a story about a piece of land, which presently contains two of the most profitable orchards. It is said that at one time this piece of land was offered free of cost, but was refused. Later when the orchard buying frenzy started, the present owners bought it at a fairly high price. However, these hard working people converted this wasteland into a dream orchard.

12

Festivals and Celebrations

In the earlier days there were many festivals and celebrations connected with ancient rituals and beliefs. As time passed and modernization began, most of them were abolished one by one. Some were replaced by new ones while others were simply dropped due to changes in social and economic structures. Whether they had any social value or not, they were quite unique and not celebrated anywhere else in the world. Some of these celebrations are described in the following pages, starting with the most ancient ones, many of which are no longer observed.

Punya and Runah

The word *Punya* is definitely Sanskrit, meaning an act of good *karma* or a good deed, especially of charity. As a matter of fact the words *dharma* and *punya* often go hand in hand. The word *Runah* does not seem to have any meaning in any language. Nevertheless, both of these celebrations were of a similar nature. The *Punya* was celebrated by those of the Brahmin caste, while the *Runah* was celebrated by those of the Bodh or Rajput caste. In one sense both of these celebrations were merely a show of wealth by a few selected families.

These celebrations were generally in the autumn when everyone was almost through with their farm work for the season. Often these celebrations were not voluntary, but instead they were celebrated when someone in the family fell sick and a *gura* (a medium through whom the deity speaks) pointed out that the only cure was to perform a charitable act like a *Punya*.

The last of these celebrations was performed by Taintas of

Shansha in around 1940 or 1941. A brief description of one of the Punyas celebrated by the Ruringba family, narrated by those who attended it, is given in the following passages. This celebration was in late thirties.

The Punya

The preparations for the celebration of a Punya consisted of collecting the following items: a Kharshod (about 800 kilograms) of wheat or barley, almost 100 tins (about 1600 kilograms) of ghee (purified butter) and honey in a suitable ratio, about 100 to 120 goats for meat and many other essentials in smaller quantities. Besides these items for eating and drinking, a pile of clothes and a cow for donation were also among the essentials.

A pundit known as a Swahr would then be invited and he would take complete charge of the whole performance. The Swahr was often from the village of Delda. The whole house was placed in his hands during the celebration. He had full authority to do anything he wanted, or use anything available in the house. The cooking would start about ten days to two weeks in advance. About forty to fifty people would be engaged in the process of cooking. Thousands of roties (a thin whole wheat bread) and eta (similar to chapati, but thinner, like tortillas) would be prepared. All these items would be kept in a room called manwa. The cooks were fed either a full tin of ghee or a whole goat alternately each day during the cooking.

When all the preparations were completed, then the household's Harijan, called Mu-Chana was sent to extend invitations. In the folklore about punya, the description of inviting the people is quite elaborate. It says "Go Chinala, first call the Brahmin, then go call the gura and finally go and invite the whole public of Lahoul." The valley consisted of fourteen kothis (counties), each of which was expected to bring a procession with full band. They would come shouting, screaming, whistling, yelling and asking all the gods and demons to come and join, saying that there was an invitation for everyone. Two processions, one from the village of Jahlma and the other from Jobrang, were usually the biggest and most glamorous.

When the processions had reached their destination, the head

of the household would come out to receive them. Often one or more goats would be thrown to the procession to pacify the demons and hungry men. These goats were killed on the spot, the meat consumed raw and the blood drunk. Camp fires were lit against the cold night air. People would sit around them the whole night, since it was impossible to accommodate everyone inside the house.

It would be almost dusk by the time all of the processions reach their destination. By the time everyone was seated and the supper was served it would be almost midnight. The supper would consist of roti, eta, ghee, honey and meat. The Brahmins were seated inside the house while others would stay outside. The custom was that no one should go hungry at the *Punya*. If anyone did not eat then the whole ceremony would be considered incomplete. The master was expected to fulfill all requests that day.

As a part of the ceremony, a small inn for travellers was erected each time the ceremony was held. The people would gather at this inn, which was called a *mara*. Then, all the relatives would join in unfurling the *Dhaja*, a family flag wrapped around a stone. The *Dhaja* would then be erected as a memorial. A pile of clothes were then distributed among the people and a cow donated to a Brahmin. This donation of a cow, *Gowdan*, in the Hindu custom, is supposed to go to the *Pundit*. A stone was erected on which the names of the family members and close relatives were carved. After that, all formed a ring and sang a special song, *La-la*. When the singing was finished, a drink of ghee was provided for all, signalling the end of the ceremony and the celebrants returned home.

The last of these *Punyas* was performed by a family known as *Tainta* from the village of *Shansha*. In that *Punya* they appealed to the *Swahr* (*Pundit*) for a change in the tradition. They felt that killing so many goats was a sin. In the place of meat, they offered to give one rupee each to every person present at the ceremony. In those days, one could perhaps buy half a goat for one rupee, and it would be enough for one person's food for a week. However, the *Swahr* refused to take responsibility for changing the tradition. He told them that he never heard of such a thing, but if they wanted to, they could go ahead with their idea, but he would not sanction it. In the end, the family did not dare change the custom on their own authority, so they continued with the goats. After World War II, the

whole tradition of *Punya* came to an end by itself. Today, no one could afford such an expense, of course.

Runah

In concept, *Runah* was similar to *Punya*, but the proceedings were conducted differently. It was observed by the non-Brahmins of the *Pattan* valley. Instead of a *gura* or a *pundit*, a Buddhist lama was invited to the rituals. This lama had to be a calligrapher or an artist, locally known as a *Pon*. He would write down a brief description of the celebration, including a chronological list of the friends and relatives attending, along with the presents they brought. This document was called the *Karshog*.

One of the differences between the *Runah* and the *Punya* was the use of liquor. In the *Punya*, no liquor was consumed, while in the *Runah*, about 1600 kilograms of grain was used to brew *chakti*, a local beer made without hops. Besides that, liquor was commonly presented as a gift, and much was consumed.

The *Runah* also differed in the use of musical instruments. One called a *bugjal* (cymbals) played by the Buddhist monk and the other called a *nyishan* (a pair of drums) played by the *Harijans*, were played together, a quite unusual combination. Except for these differences—the gathering of the whole populace of *Lahoul*, the processions, the eating, drinking and merrymaking—were more or less the same.

Like the *Punya*, the *Runah* also was often performed when someone fell sick, and the lama or medium prescribed it. Strangely enough, this requirement came upon only the rich who could afford it and never to the poor. Perhaps for a poor man, his day-to-day activities were *Punya*. The *Runah* also ceased to be performed at about the same time as the *Punya*.

The Mulli

Mulli was a symbolic worship of the goddess *Hidimba*, performed in the village of *Jahlma*. In the legend *Hidimba* was the wife of *Bhim Sen*, the strongest of the *Pandva* brothers, where she is addressed as *Rakshasni*, or demon. It is believed that she was from the *Kullu* valley. This celebration of *Mulli* in *Lahoul* was started by *Raja Man Singh* of *Kullu*, who ruled from 1688 to 1719.

He had captured an area of Lahoul, later known as British Lahoul, leaving Chamba-Lahoul beyond Thiroth under the Raja of Chamba. It is quite evident from this that he must have established the temple of Hidimba at Jahlma and along with that started the tradition of this celebration.

This celebration is unlike any other form of worship practised in the valleys. The main event of the celebration is the sacrifice of a yak. The yak had to be purchased, and everyone in Lahoul had to contribute to the price. The yak would then be allowed to roam freely through the fields for a long time. A week before the sacrifice was to be made the yak had to be caught ceremonially. It used to be the duty of the villagers of Lote to perform the "Throwing of the Rope" to catch the yak. It may have been that the Ranas lived at one time in Lote, in the Pattan valley, and the Raja made it their responsibility to begin the ceremony. The Ranas may have lost their title later, but the responsibility of catching the yak remained theirs.

On a Saturday the yak would be caught and tied up. The villagers of Jobrang had the duty of collecting the donations for its purchase, known as sharshar. On the day of the celebration, one man from each household of Lote went to Jahlma, where they were treated as guests of the village, each taken to a different house for a feast. After the feast, the young men of Lote would take hold of the yak and lead it to a place called Devarkan, the place of the deity. All the other villagers would then join in to form a procession lead by a gura. No one else was supposed to touch the yak and it was a test of strength for the villagers of Lote to hold it. If they did lose hold of it, they were ridiculed and fined one lamb each. The yak was brought to a central place called the Sawa where it was turned over to the other villagers, ending the responsibilities of the people of Lote.

On one occasion at least, the yak proved almost too big and strong for its escort. Everyone was shouting that the Lopas (people of Lote) had lost control of the animal and it was escaping. Suddenly, after most of the villagers had been shaken off, one man of the Bhutungru family known as Grandpa Gara took the challenge seriously. Anchoring his legs against the wall of a house, he managed to hold the yak all by himself.

At the Sawa, the animal was taken down. A Chinal of Jahlma village would tear open the chest of the still living yak and remove its heart. The sacrifice was then considered complete. The Chinals would then butcher the yak for meat, each Rana and the Thakur receiving a specific part of the yak, which was turned over to their personal Chinals. Each of the fourteen kothis of Lahoul was also required to bring a lamb, all of which were then slaughtered to provide a feast. This celebration was also abandoned soon after the World War II, prior to which it had been celebrated every third year.

Mani Mahesh Kailash Darshan

Before proceeding to a description of the Mani Mahesh Kailash, I would like to make it clear that this description is not of the mountain generally known as Kailash, in Tibet, and of which there is a profound description in *Hermit in the Himalayas* by Dr. Paul Brunton. The story narrated here concerns a pilgrimage to a place called Mani Mahesh Kailash in Chamba.

The places are, however, not too far apart. Kailash in Tibet is situated at about 31° N latitude and 82.5° E longitude, while the local Kailash is at 32.23° N latitude and 76.40° E longitude. It's not inconceivable that the Kailash mentioned in this story may actually be the Tibetan mountain, since the darshan or pilgrimage described in the story is only upto the foot of a mountain, where there is a small lake or tarn at 13,000 feet, known as the tarn of Mani Mahesh. The peak, far above, remains shrouded in mist and fog most of the time, where no pilgrim reaches. It is a place of pilgrimage for people from all over India, most approaching the mountain from south on the Chamba side. Since Lahoul is further north of it, the people of Lahoul have to come from the opposite side crossing the mountain range to the south.

Mahesh is another name for Shiva. As such, the pilgrimage is for the *darshan* (glimpse) of Lord Shiva. It is believed that Shiva inhabits this peak, which is another reason for my conjecture that the peak mentioned may be the "real" Kailash in Tibet.

A visit to Mani Mahesh is called Darri Yatra in Lahoul. It is usually undertaken on the advice of a medium as a means of having

a desire fulfilled or to dispel problems, obstacles or sickness, and especially when the birth of a son is desired. But, for whatever reasons people go the Darri, most of them seem to feel spiritual vibrations or the presence of some power. It may be the effect of having total faith, but there are many examples of families who could not produce a son until they went to Darri.

Often, a group of people seeking various kinds of help would choose a suitable date, usually in July, and proceed to Darri or Mani Mahesh together. This is not a simple journey. They have to cross high mountains and passes in the midst of glaciers and crevasses, travelling through areas without even a trace of a footpath to guide them. It is believed that total dedication will protect the pilgrims and the journey is made quite comfortable. Doubts of the existence of this protective power, however, invites disaster in the form of rock slides, avalanches and loss of life.

One such incident occurred in 1976 when I was visiting Lahoul for the summer. A group of young men had formed to make this journey, each for his own reason. It is quite natural for such young people with a "modern" education to have doubts about the existence of occult powers, and perhaps some were only making the trip at the insistence of their families. After a few days' journey, they reached Kugti Pass, when suddenly they were engulfed in a heavy snowfall. Losing courage they turned back for home, abandoning the sheep they brought along to sacrifice at Darri. Yet another group of pilgrims who were following them only a day later made the crossing quite comfortably.

About two weeks later, one of the young men who came back had a tragic accident. His wife, mother, and aunt were making hay in a field crossed by electric lines, with a pole supporting the lines planted right in the middle. He had gone there just to see his family, but instead he picked up a sickle. When the women asked him what he was doing, he told them he was tired of the poor electrical service and was going to cut the transmission line. They thought he must be joking. He was a well-educated boy who should understand electricity, and so they returned to their work assuming he was going to help with the haymaking.

As if death were leading him by the hand, he began climbing the pole like a monkey. The women yelled and screamed for him to

come down, but he ignored them. The next moment he dropped straight to the ground, as if he'd been shot. The fall cost him his life, and his family, in shock and confusion at the horrible sight, ran towards the cliff to throw themselves into the river far below. Fortunately their neighbours caught them in time to prevent this. The young man had been the only son in that family, which made the shock much worse.

It is hard to say whether one should call this fate or *karma*, but, for those with complete faith in occult powers and the Mani Mahesh Yatra, all this was caused by the doubts he carried with him on the pilgrimage. Other members of the group who abandoned the trip halfway performed another mode of worshipping Shiva called Jagra for their own consolation and to avoid such retribution. Jagra is described elsewhere in this chapter.

A brief description of a visit to Mani Mahesh told by Uncle Sonam Ram follows.

“It was perhaps July of 1964 when we in a group of eighteen people started for Darri. Our first stop was in the village of Rapay, where we visited the village temple. There we met a local man named Paljor sitting and playing a chimta—a long strip of steel bent in a V shape—with one hand and a dholki—a drum similar to a mridangam—with the other. We asked him if we could come in. He greeted us warmly and told us that since we had come with good intentions and clear minds, we were welcome. We entered, lit the fire and adding some cedar firs to make a *dhooni* (incense smoke), began slogans ‘Kailash Pati ki jai . . .’ The whole valley resounded with the voices of the eighteen pilgrims chanting at the top of their lungs. Suddenly Paljor began trembling, signalling that the deity was entering into him. After a while another man from Bargul and a Chinal from Mooling started trembling too. Soon they began *grahni*, all three entranced and dancing around wildly, controlled by the presence of their respective deities. It seemed as if the temple would collapse. After a while, Paljor spoke. He told us that he (the god) was pleased with us and would take us into the palm of his hand on this sacred journey. This of course was true, and we reached

our destination very comfortably.

“The next day we passed through Jobrang Gahar and reached Khordeo Padhar (the plain of the god Khordeo) where we spent the night. There are two streams, which cross this plain and the path divides into routes for summer and winter travellers. By noon the next day we had reached Bhagvati Rang, the pass of the goddess Bhagvati and sacrificed one of the several goats and sheep we had brought for that purpose, as is customary. From there we descended into a valley treacherous with quicksand—one slip meant gone for good—then crossed a nallah by a very narrow bridge.

“Routinely, those who are not very good in walking stay at Lamba Jot while others continue on to the temple of Khordeo. Our group also went straight up to this temple that day. There is a gura at this temple who always calls strangers by name when he is in a trance, although he has no way of knowing who they are. He generally names those with whom the deity Khordeo is not happy, or for whom the god has a special message. On such occasions, the pilgrims try to be very humble and pray for the deity to cleanse them of evil shadows. Often the god tells them why he is unhappy with them. In some cases he is satisfied by this pilgrimage, and assures them everything will be alright from then on. In other cases he tells them to come again next year, or to perform some virtuous deed of charity.”

As the story was getting more interesting, uncle Sonam Ram paused to take a sip of tea and then continued.

“In our group he called Dola Ram Tozing by name, saying that he was suffering losses in all of his affairs. The gura did not call my name, but I myself went forward and made a *dhooni*. He asked me what I wanted. I told him that I wanted a grandson. That night I had a very strange dream. There were two hermits, one with a long white beard and the other with a long black beard. As they came together, the white bearded one threw ash on our youngest boy until

he was completely covered. I was petrified and suddenly awoke to lie sleepless the rest of the night. I was in a very sad mood as we proceeded on our way the next day, thinking of the dream and feeling that it might be a bad omen. After a few hours' walk, I could no longer resist seeking out Shiv Dyal, the lama of Bargul and the eldest member of our group, to tell him my dream. He exclaimed that this was a very good dream, that Shiva himself was the sadhu with the white beard and the black bearded one was Kaylinga, his minister. He suggested I also consult the gura at Nagyali temple, which we planned to reach that evening.

“At the temple, I again put cedar needles in the fire and tried to make the gura talk. Shiv Dyal served as my translator since the guras in this area were Gaddis (shepherds of Bharmour), and I didn't understand their dialect. While the gura confirmed only that this was a good dream without further interpretation, yet I was satisfied. He also advised me to take an *avshesh* (a piece of sacred cloth as a token gift of the deity) and ask the boy to wear it around his neck.”

The memory of the incident made his voice go deeper. Clearing his throat, he said,

“The next night's camp was made at the far end of a large open field called Duretu Ling. Alyas was the next stop, followed by a dangerous pass named Darri Rang. The pass was covered by a huge glacier studded with jutting ice formations. Truly ardent devotees walk this last leg of the journey to Mani Mahesh tarn barefooted. I also walked barefooted from Alyas to Darri. Ram Das Tholang once walked barefooted from Jobrang, while another time he made the entire round trip barefooted, for want of a son. After that ordeal he fathered four sons while in his forties and fifties.

“If the weather is clear, the peak of Kailash can be seen from Darri Rang. This vision of the peak is considered the *darshan* or glimpse of Lord Shiva himself. Rarely visible, Kailash is usually hidden by mist and fog. We were very lucky that the sky was absolutely clear. I was

told by others who had been there before that they had never seen it so clear. A glimpse of Shiva is supposedly the effect of the perfect faith and dedication of every member of the group.”

I interrupted and asked him to describe the temple. He said,

“There is no temple or shrine at the tarn of Mani Mahesh. A simple marble linga, carved with faces on all four sides, is placed on the bare ground. Two steel gurja (maces) and a bell flank the linga. The pilgrims leave offerings of money, or crowns made of gold or silver there, which sorely tests their faith.”

“Returning to Alyas, we experienced a scent of incense, some even heard chants. We thought another group must be approaching, but there was none. At Alyas we were greeted by a shepherd who gave us a warm welcome and invited us to spend the night with him.”

“We picked a different route for the return trip, via Mooling Gahar, which is shorter but very dangerous. This was perhaps a mistake. At one place the path through the glacier seemed so dangerous that some of us had very little hope of survival. After a long search we found our way down the cliff, but it was horrible. I had no hope of reaching the base alive with all the baggage on my back, so I just abandoned it. At the bottom, my partners asked me where my pack was. I explained that I could buy a hundred more packs like that, but I thought I’d never get down alive carrying it. One of the more agile members said he would have brought it down with his own if he had known I was in trouble. I kept telling him nothing was worth taking that risk again, but he climbed back up to fetch it. The next morning the others told three of us that our faces had been absolutely white the evening before. But all ended well and after two more days we reached home.”

Thus Shri Sonam Ram narrated this story with such a vivid memory as if it happened only yesterday.

While the trip to Mani Mahesh Kailash ends here, the ritual is not complete until a celebration called Darri Jatra is performed,

usually about two weeks later. A feast is held for the relatives, friends and the companions of the trip, but the important part of the programme begins after dinner. In the presence of four or five guras, the ritual of burning incense and cedar needles is repeated. As the smoke is brought before each gura, the chants of the deity of whom he is a devotee are raised as loudly as possible. Soon the gura goes into a trance and starts the *grahni*. Often he removes the clothes from the upper part of his body and beats himself with a bunch of iron chains. Some use a sword and hit themselves either on the back or the stomach. Some put fire in their mouths. It is thought that at this moment nothing can hurt them. The god, speaking through the medium, then gives his verdict on whether the pilgrimage was successful, whether the wish will be granted or the troubles will cease, or what further sacrifices are needed.

When each of the guras has gone through this ritual, the official part of the ceremony is over, but the party continues with drinking and dancing. This celebration is performed by each member of the pilgrimage group at his house in turn. All the members must attend each celebration.

Jagra

Jagra is a simpler mode of worshipping or appeasing Shiva, without having to go on a pilgrimage to Mani Mahesh. In the Pattan valley there is a small Shiva temple in the village of Mayling. Like most Shiva temples in that area, it consists of a small hut sheltering a Shiva Linga.¹ More lingas are placed outside the temple which are often covered with flowers, or have oil or butter poured over them as a form of worship.

As is usual when a family is in distress or suffers many losses,

¹ The *linga* or *lingam* in the Shiva temples is an cylindrical stone erected on a flat stone with a groove. Once when I was a small boy I wondered aloud to a friend if the linga represented the male and female organs since the word *linga* in Hindi or Sanskrit means gender or sex. He warned me not to mention this to anyone, else the worshippers of the linga would not spare me, because the worshipping of the sex organs would be looked down upon. But in the book *Kulu, the End of the Habitable World*, Penelope Chetwood gives the same interpretation. However, I think that the word *linga* came from the word *Linga-Sharira*, the subtle body. Perhaps instead of worshipping Shiva's physi-

a *gura* or *bhata* (another kind of medium) tells them that they need to appease Shiva by performing a Jagra. Like a drowning man catching at a straw, suffering people will accept anything that gives them hope. And so a date—usually in August—is set when the people of several surrounding villages meet at the temple where they must be generously fed by their hosts.

Four or five *guras* are also invited, often from the Pujari (priest) family of the same village who are in charge of the temple. The ritual burning of incense and cedar, along with chanting evokes the holy presence of the deity in the entranced medium. He then pronounces his verdict on the fate of the victim. A sheep is also sacrificed, the meat cooked and served to the villagers. This ceremony was discontinued for a time in the 1960s, but seems to have been revived recently on rare occasions.

Pori, The Fair at Triloknath

Every summer, since the temple at Triloknath was built, a fair has been celebrated there. A detailed description of the rituals and myths associated with this temple has been recounted in the Chapter on 'Temples and Monasteries'. Here we will explore the annual fair only.

In earlier times, this was the most prominent fair in Lahoul. People of all castes and creeds gathered there, not only from Lahoul, but from Kullu and Chamba as well. But since Independence, and the celebration of Independence Day on August 15, Pori has lost its pre-eminence because both holidays fall at about the same time. In earlier days when the villagers were reaping the barley crop and sowing buckwheat in the same fields, the short growing season made this a crucial period for the farmers, and they could not spare enough time away from their work to celebrate

cal body in the form of an image. his devotees began worshipping his subtle body in the form of a linga. In the *Shiva Purana* the significance of the linga is given as follows. Once there was a fierce fight between Vishnu and Brahma. The lesser gods were afraid that the whole universe might be destroyed, and appealed to Shiva to stop them. Shiva then appeared as an eternal pillar separating the two gods. Brahma and Vishnu stopped fighting, instead began searching for the ends of the pillar. one heading up towards heaven, the other downward to find its roots. This was the original Shiva Linga.

both. It is another case where orthodox belief has lost ground to new ideas and modern education. The villagers have lost interest and faith in making the pilgrimage to the fair, and while it is still celebrated, it has lost the glory it had when all of Lahoul attended.

The fair is a combination of pilgrimage and festival. Preparations are begun at least a week in advance, and most people leave home a day before the celebration, planning to camp out overnight in the fine summer weather. On the first morning they perform *darshan* at the temple of Triloknath, the Lord of Three Worlds, or Avalokiteshvara as it is regarded by Buddhists.

After paying homage inside, people next go to the *parikrama* gallery, between the inner and outermost walls of the temple. Buddhist prayer wheels are mounted all along the inner wall of this long corridor. Pilgrims generally complete three or seven clockwise circumambulations of the gallery, rotating the prayer wheels and murmuring *mantras* every morning and evening of their stay.

Ghee and mustard oil lamps burn continuously inside and out. People donate money and oil to maintain the lamps, one of which is large enough to accommodate a 15 kilogram tin of oil.

After the prayers and rituals, the festival begins. Temporary shops, stalls and hotels fill the fair grounds, as everyone is expected to buy souvenirs for relatives. At dusk, the fair-goers form a huge circle and the dancers known as *hesis* are called for. Often hundreds of dancers at a time perform throughout most of the night.

On the second morning a traditional procession is formed, headed by the Thakur of Triloknath riding a decorated horse. Their goal is the place where seven angels, the youngest of whom was Triloknath, appeared from seven springs. This is the most important ritual surrounding the fair. The procession then returns to the fair grounds for more festivities. Some people leave as soon as the procession disperses, while others stay until the third day when the fair is officially over.

The Festivals of Lights

A festival of lights known as Divali is celebrated all over India each October. A similar celebration which might be called a "Festival of Lights" is observed as Khogala in the Pattan valley, and Halda in Gahar and Gondhla, at the end of January or early

February. However, even the local celebrations do not fall on the same day.

The origins of the local celebrations are obscure. Once as a student I wrote an essay suggesting that Divali and Khogala were really the same, celebrating the return of Rama after his victory over Ravana, the king of Lanka. Because of the slowness of communication in those days, I theorized, it had taken a long time for the news to reach Lahoul. Otherwise, I could not think of any other reason why Khogala and Halda were observed. The headmaster took a dim view of my theories, crossing the whole section out of my notebook.

A Buddhist lama residing at the Guru Ghantal monastery, consults the lunar calendar, to fix the date of Khogala each year to coincide with the full moon, but the preparations begin much earlier. Cedar wood is split into fine strips about four feet long. The strips are then tied together into bundles to make a torch called halda. The torches are then piled up to form something like a tepee and decorated with flowers, like a Christmas tree. Incense and oil lamps are placed beneath this baraza along with a heap of sweet meats and fried bread, called marchu, all to worship the deity. The next morning, the whole village convenes and visits each house in turn, where they are invited to share a simple feast. That evening, the haldas at each house are lit and brought together at a central square. This is repeated four or five times, each in honour of a different deity. When the ceremony is over, the villagers return home to the most sumptuous dinner they can afford. The round of visits usually continues for two or three days.

Halda, celebrated in the Gahar valley, is somewhat similar. The date is set by a Buddhist lama, the halda are prepared and lit in the same manner and collected in one place. But there is a small difference. Along with honouring the deities, the people of Gahar valley yell curses at the Ranas. The people of Keylong curse the Ranas of both Kardang and Gushal, threatening to "bite their hearts". The people of Beeling scream at the Gushal Ranas only, in what appears to be a vestige of protests against some ancient tyrannies.

Fagli

Fagli, which is locally known as Koon, is one of the most

important festivals in the Pattan valley. It is celebrated on the new moon after Khogala (Jan-Feb). According to older traditions, this marked the beginning of the new year. In modern times, the Julian calendar is now generally used, and Fagli has lost its significance as New Year's Day, yet the celebration itself has retained its importance. Once a year at this time, people pay their respects to all the elders. The festival's importance for this area is similar to that of Christmas in the West.

Like Christmas eve, the night before the holiday is the most important part. The house is fully decorated, and lit with oil lamps everywhere. Like a Christmas tree, a baraza is set up. This time it consists of a bamboo stick, two to three feet tall, mounted on the floor. Around the stick a white shawl is draped in such a way as to suggest an angel dressed in white, sitting in the corner, ornamented with jewellery and flowers. A heap of sweet meats and other delicacies is placed before the baraza, along with burning incense. The baraza represents the angel Shikhara Apa, grandmother of the Peak, and her visit is thought to bring prosperity to the house.

On the evening before Koon, people avoid leaving the house after dark. It is believed that *yamdoots*—messengers of Yamraj, the Lord of Death—walk the night. Here is a story of one such encounter.

It is said that once the headman and lady of the Ruringba family came out on their roof to perform the Ringqualbi ritual before full dawn. They were barely halfway through the ritual when they heard a jingling sound, as if someone with bells and chains tied around his waist or ankles was walking towards them from the cremation ground. Quietly, the headman urged his lady to hurry inside. They had scarcely crossed the threshold when they encountered two giants just outside the door.

The couple were scared stiff, but since the apparitions were there, they had to be faced. Realizing that these giants were the messengers of Yamraj called *jamdwar*, the headman summoned up great courage to ask them why they had come. The *jamdwars* replied that they had come for Norzimba.

Norzimba was an old spinster living in a separate section of the same house. On hearing this, the headman became a little bolder and scoldingly asked them if they realized they were in the wrong

place. The jamdwars seemed abashed and replied, "Please pardon us, we really are in the wrong place." Then they vanished. Later that morning the couple found Norzimba dead in her room.

As far as the festival itself is concerned, the ritual demands that the head of the household and his lady get up very early in the morning. They prepare a mixture called totu, and kawari, a dough of roasted barley flour and butter milk. The totu is formed into cones and pyramids, and then taken up to the roof to be offered to the deities. The kawari is later thrown to the crows, who await it as if they had received an invitation. The totu is distributed among the family members as *prasad*.

The couple next go to pay their annual respects to their cows and sheep, to express their gratitude, and acknowledge their dependence on these animals. Meanwhile, the rest of the family get up and demonstrate their respect for the elders of the household by bowing to them and touching their feet. After breakfast they first visit their closest relatives within the village, then the whole village convenes to pay their respects at each house with food and merriment. It often takes three or four days to cover the whole village. The difference between this visit and the one at Khogala is that the villagers do not wait for an invitation to visit each house, but at Khogala an invitation is required.

Each day of the festival week has a special name and its own significance. One day is called Harpunah, and includes a symbolic representation of ploughing the fields. In this season the fields are snowcovered, and so symbolic ploughing is done on a large plate of soil. Two green willow sticks represent the bullocks and two more make the yoke and plough. By moving them through the soil on the plate, the "field" is "ploughed".

In the following weeks feasts and parties continue among friends and relatives, along with the exchange of flowers and other gifts. A special gift of marchu or fried dough cakes is sent to all the married daughters.

During the long cold winters when everything is covered under a white blanket of snow, and the villagers are confined indoors, cut off from the rest of the world, these celebrations serve to make village life quite lively.

13

Folklores, Songs and Dances

“Is it true that the songs of Lahoul are not in the Lahouli dialects? Why is this so?” These are questions that my father, Shri Som Dev, confronted quite often, posed by people outside of Lahoul. Perhaps the people of Lahoul never thought about it and never realized it. It was not easy to answer this question, without knowing the history behind it.

Songs and dances are basic expressions of the mind, through speech and body movements. From the very primitive to the most advanced, each society has its own songs and dances, although each one might differ from the others in many significant ways. Most songs and dances are an expression of pleasure and celebration, yet there are others that are used in rituals and express other states of mind.

As mentioned in the chapter on ‘Origins and Transmigration’ the people of Lahoul migrated from several different places at different times, all bringing different dialects of their own. Since human beings have to communicate with each other no matter what—they may even have to use a sign language at first. With the passage of time new dialects come into existence. This happens naturally, unless a written language already exists, with its own forms and literature, that people can learn, read and speak with others. While a new dialect may emerge for the sake of communication, as an admixture of several other dialects, people do not necessarily begin to compose songs and poems in that dialect immediately. Songs that originated in their ancestral homes, may be preserved and handed down generation after generation. This is perhaps the main reason that the songs of Lahoul are not in Lahouli. However,

later on perhaps people thought that songs were supposed to be in other language than their own, and thus even the new songs were composed in other language, mainly broken Hindustani. Also since humans can be slaves to habit, routine, or fashion, even when new songs were composed in Lahouli dialects, they sounded very odd and could not become popular.

After being confronted by the question about Lahouli songs several times, Som Dev decided to compose a few songs in the Pattani dialect. These songs were composed for a special occasion, a meeting of the Punjab Tribes Advisory Council, held at Jahlma in Lahoul valley in 1960. He was one of the members of this council, and the Chief Minister of Punjab was the chairman. The heads of various departments were supposed to attend this meeting. At that time the young men of the valley presented an entertainment programme with local songs and dances. One of the songs composed for that occasion begins:

Desho nojwan desh kanu shoode,
Desha keno yongring ibi tharoun sadhi e;
Tange dhaba bhate de-a desho shoode,
Joonshi ati saita dula roun sadi e;
Sarga kanu shoode dharti kanu shoode
Dola uidio gooring ibi tharon sadi e;
Go-la kanu shoode bendi kanu shoode
Dola uidio gooring ibi tharon sadi e;
Katu patu keno roothe amring chartu,
Dola yongring ibi tharon sadi e;

And so on. All of these songs were patriotic in nature. In this song, the young men of the country are reminded that this country is theirs and it is their responsibility to see that it does not decline or fall to ruin, and so forth. These few songs were carried on, and recently a few more have been composed by other people. But as I mentioned earlier, due to long-standing habit, the new songs in the local dialect could not become very popular.

Although it seemed as if that was the first time songs were composed in the Lahouli dialect, it turned out that this was not so. A song, in the Chamba-Lahoul dialect existed much earlier, though almost forgotten. Composed and sung by a lover to his beloved, it

begins:

Lover: Atchu giu mallah Sendwari jatrari yoshi-e,
Dabsha logsoshi-e, dabsha taksoshi-e.”

Beloved: Sendwari jatrari yoshi-e, mochuri matage,
—repeat—

Lover: Tacha haposhi-e, gnacha ramoshi-e,
—repeat—

And so forth. Apparently the couple was very poor, but they wanted to go to a village fair at Sendwari. The lover says to his beloved, “Get up my darling, we shall go to Sendwari fair. We shall climb up the hill together hand-in-hand and we shall climb down together hand-in-hand.” At this she replies, “We shall go to Sendwari fair, but how? I do not even have a pair of shoes.” He then consoles her and says, “Do not worry, we shall borrow it, and later earn and repay it.” The woman mentions each thing she needs one by one, the trousers, a dress etc. Each time her lover gives the same reply, that they will borrow for them and later pay back the loan.

Thus this song existed long ago, but somehow it was forgotten. One reason may be that the tune and the rhythm of the song make it unusable for dancing. It is more like a dialogue. However, since then no one seems to have tried to compose songs in the Lahouli dialect as far as I can tell. I don't think any escaped my search.

Leaving aside these few songs in the Lahouli dialects, the other folklores and songs can be divided primarily into two groups. One of them is called the *ghure* and the other one is called the *pangwal geet*. Besides these two categories there is another called *sugili*, but it has almost vanished and is not known by many people of the present generation. A brief description of each follows.

Ghure

A *ghure* is essentially a folksong of the ballad type depicting either a historical or a mythological story. As a matter of fact the *ghures* have been very helpful in researching the history presented in the earlier chapters. Very rarely is a written document of the past maintained. If any account of the valley's history was kept, it was

in the form of these *ghures*. Among them are the accounts of the temple of Triloknath, the monastery of Guru Ghantal, the Ranas of Gushal, the sacrifice of Rupi Rani, and the Wazir of Chambak. On the mythological side there are *ghures* about Lord Shiva and Parvati, the *ghure* about the Sun, Moon and Rahu (the lunar node). Stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are also told in the *ghures*.

I shall only give a taste of them—the complete text for each song mentioned appears in Appendix A—but I feel that someone should collect and compile a whole volume of them, since they are vanishing very rapidly under the influence of modernization. Nevertheless I shall illustrate a couple of them in the following pages. Besides the ones presented in this chapter, the song of the sacrifice of Rupi Rani is presented in the section on the Ranas of Gushal, and the song of Wazirs of Chambak in the chapter on Ranas and Thakurs in the history section. The song of the temple of Triloknath is given in the chapter on ‘Temples and Monasteries’. The songs from the *Ramayana* and those of Lord Shiva are illustrated in the chapter on ‘Social Customs and Beliefs’.

All *ghures* are in the dialect of Kullu. Also most of them have a similar tune. Generally one group sings a line and the other group repeats the same line. Ordinarily they are sung while sitting, except for those used in the marriage processions, that are sung while walking. They are not used for ordinary dance music, but there was a special dance called Shaini, which accompanied them. This is described in the later section on dances.

One might be curious as to why *ghures* are in the Kullu dialect, particularly when they are not found in Kullu—indicating that they were not borrowed from Kullu, at least not in their present form. There are two reasons for this. First of all, as mentioned before, some people migrated from Kullu, particularly from Bara Bhangal, which at that time was part of Kullu’s territory. It is possible that these immigrants might have composed the *ghures*. Secondly, when Lahoul was under the Rajas of Kullu, the people of Lahoul and Kullu had the responsibility of guarding the Raja’s palace. Small groups of people took turns to perform this duty. During the cold winter nights they would build a fire and sit around it the whole night. It is said that most of the *ghures* were composed then. They

had nothing to do except sit by the fire, staying awake and alert. Instead of gossiping, they used to compose these songs and sing. Perhaps they even had to sing them to the Rajas, thus making it essential to compose them in the Kullu dialect.

A *ghure* describing a historical event involving a *gura* from Wari and the Ranas of Gushal begins:

Bola chanani na lagi o, rimiyan na jhimiyan,
 Suruga bharoru taray;
 Bola Ghooshe na lagi o, joguni re jaatray,
 Gure ri gaiye paikay;
 Bola aukhi na dhruye deeti, Birubala Rana,
 Choura ditura bolay . . .

Before dawn, while the sky is full of stars, two men come out of their homes. A fair of *Jogini* was going to be celebrated at Gushal, for which a *gura* (medium) was needed, and the two men were being sent to the village of Wari to ask Trashi-Parashi. Rana Birbal of Gushal is in trouble. He is asked to build a Choura, a platform in the village, to avoid the impending catastrophe and pacify the evil spirits. Trashi-Parashi, the medium, gives his verdict that although he loves his son Nandi, who is being asked to become the new *gura*, he should go to Gushal. Obviously it was not easy for Trashi-Parashi to part with his son. In the next stanza there is a description of the celebration. A symbol of the deity leads the procession, followed by Nandi. The celebration is successful and appeases the deity. People are asked to be happy. The young men are asked to dance happily and enjoy their lovely dress. The women of Gushal are asked to dance well, and the riches such as pearls and turquoise are on their way to them.

Evidently this song was composed when the Rana of Gushal had to build the village platform, to avert some kind of trouble. Thus a memorial of that event was retained in the form of a song.

There is also a *ghure* describing a mythological story, about the sun, moon, and the lunar node (Rahu) which begins:

Dharti mata e triye koori jami ji o,
 Jetha jetha kuriye namu naraina byahi ji o,
 Tethi kana kuriye panja pandupa byahi ji o,

Tethi kana kuriye lacha charune gaiye ji o,
 Raghu domey o chori kari naina ji o,
 Surja chandura e aire nu gaiye ji o . . .

Again the entire song appears in Appendix A. As mentioned before, mythological stories depict certain truths, but they are presented in parables or in symbolic language, and are often obscure and unintelligible to the ordinary person. For this reason they are often regarded as merely fictions or fantasies. As such I shall first present a literal translation and then a possible interpretation.

Mother Earth gave birth to three daughters. The eldest married lord Narayana. The middle daughter married the five Pandvas. The youngest had gone to graze the cattle, when she was kidnapped by Rahu, the lunar node or dragon's head. The sun and the moon had gone hunting. They killed a deer, brought it home, cooked and ate it. After eating they felt thirsty, so they went in search of water. At the lower spring the water was muddy so they went up to the upper spring where the water was clear. Here they saw a beautiful woman. They asked her who her mother and father were. The woman asked them why they wanted to cause trouble. It would create trouble for everybody. However, the sun and the moon insisted. She then told them that Mother Earth was her mother and Lord Vishnu was her father. Hearing this the sun and the moon looked at each other in surprise and asked her what she was doing in Rahu's house. At this she remarked that strange was their manner and strange was their thirst. The sun and the moon, however, asked again what she was doing there. At this she told them that she did housekeeping, crushed grains and cooked *Manda*. Hearing this Brother Moon tore open his body and hid her inside.

At first one might be tempted to dismiss the meaning of the song saying as simply orthodox beliefs and a misunderstanding of astrology and cosmology. However, I am not ready to discard it without giving it a deeper thought.

Astrologically, the sun represents pure consciousness and the moon represents reflected consciousness. It is possible that Mother Earth might be the representation of *Prakriti* (nature) and Lord Narayana the *Purusha* of the Sankhya system of Hindu philosophy. According to the Sankhya system, everything evolved from the union of *Prakriti* and *Purusha* which generally symbolize female

and male, respectively. If so, then the three daughters symbolize the three products of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*; *Buddhi*, *Ahankara* and *Manas*. However, in order to satisfy my interpretation, here the order must be changed to *Buddhi*, *Manas* and *Ahankara*. The eldest daughter being married to Lord Narayana indicates that *Buddhi* is the higher intellect and is a part of or complement to the pure consciousness. The five Pandvas then must represent the five senses. The *Manas* is always involved with the five senses. The youngest daughter would then be the ego or the lower part of *Ahankara* or the sense of "I-ness". Her being kidnapped by Rahu means that the ego is under the control of the lower nature or evil side of the human being. Rahu (and Ketu), the lunar nodes which are responsible for the solar and lunar eclipses, represent the lower nature of the human being, which always covers up the true being. The reason for calling the moon and the youngest daughter, brother and sister is that the reflected consciousness and the ego are ultimately both part of *Ahankara* itself. The moon's tearing his body open to hide his sister inside must mean that when a man is enlightened, although the ego vanishes, witness-self or *Ahankara* does not. Instead the ego is dissolved into the reflected consciousness itself.

Those who are familiar with the Sankhya system will find that this interpretation fits quite nicely. However, if the poet had something else in mind while writing this, it has eluded me.

Thus *ghures* are full of stories and information which must be preserved. The younger generation has been ignoring them. As a result many *ghures* have already been forgotten and lost.

The Pangwal Geet

The songs that accompany dance music fall into this category. Although the name *Pangwal geet* is not very common and most of the present generation may never have heard it, I am using this name because the older generation always referred to them this way. The language of these songs is mixed or raw Hindustani. The name *Pangwal geet* means 'the song of Pangwals', suggesting that the origin of these songs must be Pangi in Chamba district. Perhaps the earlier songs might have been in Pangi dialect, but the present ones are certainly not quite in that dialect. As mentioned, once

these songs were preserved in an outside dialect, people continued to compose new ones also in similar dialect, to the extent of their knowledge of dialect. Most of these songs have been composed in recent years, yet the composers kept on composing them in the broken Hindustani.

The theme of these songs is either a typical event or an activity, but rarely one with any historical significance. One of the most popular subjects is love affairs. There are some songs about good or the heroic deeds, but the majority are about bad deeds or immoral actions. Because pre-marital love affairs are not quite acceptable, any such incident quickly becomes a target for those who like to compose these songs. An example of such a song is the one about a young girl named Angmo, who had a love affair with someone while she was young and unmarried.

In recent years popular movie songs are also taking the place of locally composed ones. Also a few songs composed in local dialects are becoming popular.

Sugili

The *sugili* is a song composed mostly as an eulogy. It is sung at the time of the funeral, although there are no restrictions on singing it any time. At present *sugilis* are rarely heard; most of the modern generation may never have heard of them. Occasionally Harijan women used to sing these songs when someone quite popular and respected died. Often they were composed and sung right on the spot by simply substituting the names in an existing *sugili*.

Dances

The Popular Dance

This is a free-style dance. There are no rules, regulations or set steps to be followed. To some extent it is a slower version of a mixture of disco and rock-and-roll. Unlike Western dances, there are no pairs in this dance. Each dancer is by himself in the crowd. All a dancer does is to try to dance to the rhythm of the music using his own steps and movements. In earlier times this dance was generally performed to the song called *pangwal geet* as described above.

The music was provided by a *dholki*, a two-sided drum, sometimes accompanied by a flute. Sometimes the music alone was used without any singing. In that case the instruments would include a few flutes, *dholkis*, a pair of bronze plates or sometimes a pair of *nyishan* or *nagara* (a pair of drums beaten by sticks). There are several different *Ragas* for various occasions. They are: 'Byou Raga', specifically for weddings, 'Dari Raga', specifically for a celebration called *Darri Jatra*, performed to please Lord Shiva, and 'Gujung Raga', specifically for processions.

Recently a band similar to the school marching band—consisting of a set of drums, a few flutes, etc.—has become quite common. This type of band plays popular movie songs, often distorted and changed in their tunes to make them suitable for dance music.

This dance is usually performed by men only. Traditionally, dancing by women, particularly with men or in their presence, is considered to be beneath the dignity of respectable woman. However, lately it has been noticed that women also are taking part quite frequently, being taken as a part of modernization.

There are some professional musicians and dancers called *hessies*. They are a kind of nomad tribe whose livelihood consists of music and dancing at special occasions such as weddings. They also generally use the same steps and dancing procedures, however, sometimes they try to copy popular music, songs, and dances from the movies.

The Shaini

Shaini is a slow dance, with prescribed steps and rhythm, which everybody must follow. In this ancient dance, performed to a *ghure*, people form an open circle holding hands with the alternate person, linked in a kind of a circular chain. It looks like a square dance, but the steps are somewhere between a waltz and a fox-trot. They sway back and forth and side to side. Sometimes the hands are left free to clap with the rhythm. This was the only dance in which women also took part along with men. Often, only the older women would participate, the younger ones not daring to mix with men and dance.

This dance has become almost extinct today. The present generation has perhaps never tried it or even seen it done. Perhaps the older generation miss it.

14

Languages or Dialects

It might sound fantastic that in the tiny valley of Lahoul with a population of less than 20,000, six distinct dialects are spoken. These dialects have a direct bearing on the history or the origins of the people, as described previously. Harcourt named four dialects, namely, Boonan, Teenan, Manchat and Tibetan in his book *Kooloo Lahoul and Spiti*. I wonder where he picked up these names, as they are not commonly called so. As a matter of fact, if any of the present generation were asked about these languages, the answer would be a question in return asking what they are. However, it seems that all those who wrote about Lahoul subsequently simply copied these names. I will avoid these names and instead use the ones that at least a native speaker will recognize.

Manchat is a dialect spoken in the Pattan valley, that is, in the kothis of Gushal, Tandi, Warpa, Ranika, Jahlma and Jobrang. Therefore I shall call it the Pattani dialect. It is also spoken in Chamba Lahoul, although with a very heavy accent and many different words, but I do not think that it requires a separate name. *Boonan* is the dialect spoken in the Gahar valley, that is, in the kothis of Gumrang, Kardang, and Barbog, thus I will call it the Gahri dialect. *Teenan* is spoken in the Gondhla valley, in the kothis of Gondhla, part of Sisu, and in parts of Khoksar kothi. This one I will leave as is, since Teenan is the local name for Gondhla and every Lahouli knows this. The fourth dialect—what Harcourt called Tibetan—is spoken in the Tod valley, the Mayar valley in Chamba-Lahoul and also somewhat in parts of Khoksar. I will call it the Bodh dialect, as it is called so in Lahoul. Besides these four dialects, the Harijans or the Chinals have their own dialect. This one I shall call the Chinal

dialect. Finally lohars (blacksmiths) and sunars (goldsmiths) have their own dialect, which I shall call the Lohari dialect.

All six dialects are spoken languages only. None of them has a script of its own, and so do not enjoy the status of true languages. Besides these local dialects, most people know Hindi, the national language of India. This is the only language with which an outsider can communicate with the Lahoulis. All educated people and more than 60 percent of the uneducated understand and communicate in Hindi fairly well. Of course one can also find a good number of people who understand or speak English as well.

The six dialects mentioned above are totally different from one another. To illustrate the distinctions, let's take a couple of phrases and translate them into each of these dialects. For example, the phrase "come here" is translated as:

Pattani	der ata
Gahri	thyag rah
Teenan	ding antachi
Bodh	eru shog
Chinal	ithe ayi
Lohari	ithi ayi

The phrase, "go home" is translated as:

Pattani	chungri ila
Gahri	kyumang el
Teenan	chungkha ilti
Bodh	khangpa-la song
Chinal	ghare gachh
Lohari	ghaire gah

Thus one can see how much each dialect differs from the others. Very few people can understand or speak more than two of the dialects. Only a few rare individuals can speak or understand all six. The goldsmiths are often among these rare few, since they are few in number and have to deal with nearly everyone. The difference in the dialects and the problem of not understanding one another often keep the people of each area or race aloof from the rest, almost as if they were in different countries. The Pattani dialect is most often understood by the majority and therefore it is used as the means of communication when two people speaking different

dialects have to communicate with each other.

In the chapters recounting Lahoul's history, it was mentioned that some historians think that all or most of the hill people originated from Mundra-speaking tribes. However, I could not find a single word of the Mundra dialect in any of the dialects of Lahoul.

Quite often the counting system or the numerics can be found to be fairly similar among various languages or dialects. However, in this case even the numerals are quite different. The following table lists the numbers from one to ten in each of the six dialects to demonstrate this.

English	Pattani	Gabri	Teenan	Bodh	Chinal	Lohari
one	iti	tiki	iti	chig	ek	ek
two	juta	nyisking	niji	nyi	dui	dui
three	shumu	sumi	shumu	sum	tri	tri
four	pee	pee	pee	jih	chour	chor
five	gna	gnai	gna	gnah	panj	pan
six	trui	truee	trui	trug	chho	chha
seven	nyiji	niji	nyiji	dun	satt	satt
eight	ray	gyeyi	gyad	gyad	atha	ath
nine	koo	gui	koo	goo	nou	nou
ten	sa	chui	sa	chug	dash	dash

Pattani Dialect

A dialect can be one of the best sources of information regarding the origin of people. It can also give clues as to whether the people migrated from another settlement en masse or individually. It also helps to determine which of the groups of immigrants were dominant, or who were the first to migrate.

The dialect of the Pattan valley locally known as 'Changsapa Boli', which we are calling Pattani, cannot be traced to any particular language or dialect found outside Lahoul. It seems to be a mixture, and many influences can be readily seen. This gives a clue that the people of the Pattan valley did not migrate as a group. Furthermore, the influence of the changing rulers on the dialect is also noticeable.

The Pattani dialect is very well structured in syntax and grammar. Thus it is very easy to learn as compared to the other dialects.

For this reason, although it is only the dialect of the Pattan valley, it is understood by about 80 percent of the people of Lahoul. As such, outside Lahoul, it is known as the Lahouli dialect. The dialect of Chamba-Lahoul, although considered to be the Pattani dialect with a heavy accent, may very well be the base language which has since been overlaid by succeeding layers of outside influences. The difference between Pattani and the accent heard in Chamba-Lahoul may be much the same as the difference between British English and the English spoken in the Texas state of the United States of America.

The languages or dialects which have influenced or contributed to Pattani are the dialect of the Malana village in Kullu, the dialects of Busher and Tibetan. One can also find in Pattani a few words from the Balti dialect. Recently many words from Hindi, Urdu and even English have crept in. Although there are many Tibetan words in Pattani, yet I can safely say that the origin of this dialect is not Tibetan. The influence is of a more academic type since people studied Tibetan in earlier days. Most of the Tibetan words in Pattani are nouns. There is not a single sentence which is same in Tibetan. Linguists will perhaps agree with me that for any language to become a base or origin of another, or of a dialect, the sentence structure, its grammar and the verb declension should remain either same, or at least, be similar. This is not the case at all with Tibetan and the Pattani dialects. Nouns frequently creep into a language from other languages due to academic, religious and other influences.

In earlier times modern, Western-style, education was not prevalent in Lahoul, and people learned Tibetan in the monasteries. The reason for the extensive influence of Tibetan Buddhism and its literature was its availability in Lahoul, where other schools did not exist. Those who had learned Tibetan continued to use its words and introduced other Tibetan nuances while speaking their native dialects. Further, it can be noticed that most of the Tibetan words in any of the dialects of Lahoul are pronounced more as they are written than they are spoken in Tibet. The introduction of literary words into a dialect is a natural tendency. In the same context one can see a number of Hindi, Urdu, and English words commonly used these days. Since the influence of these languages is recent,

everyone knows that they are not original, yet they use them as if they can not complete a sentence without them. This happens with every language. For instance, since the British came to India, many Indian words like jungle, veranda, pucca, and so forth have entered English.

The influence of the Busheri dialect is not very great. Some words are common; and also there is some similarity in the sentence structure, its tone, and the flow. Thus one can conclude that either people migrated from Busher to Lahoul or vice-versa, or they had a common heritage.

The commonalty between the dialect of Malana, a single village in a remote valley in the Kullu district, and the dialects of the Pattan and the Gondhla valleys of Lahoul, is remarkable. This similarity has been explored in the history section in a chapter on 'Origins and Transmigration'. Some common or similar words are presented in Table 3.

It is interesting to note that the grammar of the Pattani dialect is very similar to that of the Sanskrit, while there are hardly any Sanskrit words in the dialect. Starting with the number—like the Sanskrit and unlike most other languages—the Pattani has singular (ek vachan), dual (dwi vachan), and plural (bahu vachan). For example, in English we say, "He goes" for one man and then "They go" for more than one. In Sanskrit, "Sah gachhati" is used for one person, "Tou gachhata" for two, and "Te gachhanti" for more than two. Similarly, in Pattani it becomes, "Du yuwa" for one, "Doku yuatoku" for two, and "Dore yuwatore" for more than two persons. This is where a common mistake is committed by outsiders while speaking in the Pattani dialect.

Again, like Sanskrit and unlike most other languages, pronouns have no gender in Pattani. For example, one should notice that in the example above, I used the word "man" in English, then the pronoun "he", while I used the word "person" in Sanskrit and Pattani for equivalent sentences. In this case, however, some other Indian languages—like Hindi—have the same syntax.

Also like Sanskrit and unlike many Indian languages, in Pattani verbs do not indicate gender, which is also the case in languages like English. For example we use the word 'goes' for both men and women. Sanskrit and Pattani are the same, while most Indian lan-

guages like Hindi have separate words. For example, “Jata hai” is used for a man and “Jati hai” is used for a woman. Finally Pattani is structured like Sanskrit, without compound verbs. For example, ge ildeg (I went), ge yuwatag (I am going), and ge yoga (I shall go). To indicate number of persons also, “nyeku yuwatoshi” (we two are going), and “nyere yuwatani” (we, more than two, are going).

Teenan Dialect

The dialect of the Teenan or Gondhla valley is fairly similar to that of the Pattan valley. Although many words are different, their phonetics and the sentence structure are similar. For that reason most people who speak this dialect also know Pattani fairly well, and use it to speak with people from other areas of Lahoul. Analyzing each word in a sentence, one will find each word significantly different in the two dialects. For example the phrase ‘come here’ in the Pattani is ‘der ata’, while in the Teenan it is ‘ding antachi’. The only commonality is the base of the verbs ‘ata’ and ‘anta’, meaning ‘come’. However, the syntax being fairly similar, they sound quite alike.

In an earlier section I stated that the base dialect for Pattani seems to be the dialect of Chamba-Lahoul, upon which words from many other dialects and languages are superimposed. However, in the case of the Teenan the base is certainly not the dialect of Chamba-Lahoul, instead it may be either the dialect of Malana or that of Busher. Influence of many other dialects—the Tibetan, Balti, Gahri, Pattani, Hindi and Urdu—is quite evident. Thus the Teenan dialect, like the Pattani, is a mixture of several dialects. Harcourt claims that the Teenan dialect is made up of Tibetan, Manchat, Boonan, a little Hindi and some Persian words.

In Table 1 some of the Tibetan words found in the Teenan and the Pattani dialects are listed. In Table 2 some of the Malana words common to both Teenan and Pattani are listed, and in Table 3 some of the Busheri words common to Pattani and Teenan are listed.

TABLE 1

Tibetan words in the Pattani, Teenan, Gahri and Bodh dialects

English	Tibetan (written)	Tibetan (spoken)	Lahouli (listed above)	Comments
Action	rthab	thab	thab	
Bag	phad	phe	phad	in Lahoul only for bag made of goat-wool
Belly	khog	khok	khog	
Box	sgam	gum	gum	
Bone	rus	rus	rus	or ruspa in Pattani
Butter	mar	mar	mar	purified butter only
Cave	phug	phuk	phug	
Devil	bdud	du	dud	
Dew	zil	si	zil	or zilfa
Describe	bshad	she	shad	or shadu in Pattani
Die	shi	shi	see	
Dichotomy	rnam-rthog	namthog	namthog	
Difference	khyad	khye	khyad	
Dog	khi	khi	khi	or khuee in Pattani
Drink	hthung	thung	thung	or tungu in Pattani
Eat	bzah	za	zah	or zou in Pattani
Empty	stong	tong	tongpa	or tongshi
Fee	yon	yon	yon	
Fold	ltab	tab	tab	or tabzu in Pattani
Fire	meh	meh	meh	
Guilty feeling	mnong	nong	nong	
Kindness	drin	trin	trin	
Knowledge	rigpa	rigpa	rigpa	generally for intelligence
Man	mi	mi	mi	
Meat	sha	sha	sha	
Memory	yid	yi	hid	
Mind	sems	sem	sem	
Misery	sdug-bsngal	dungal	dungal	
Nail	gzer	zer	zer	
Name	ming	ming	min	
Onion	?	chong	chong	
Pond	rdzing	zing	zing	
Pit	dong	dong	dong	
Prayer	phyag	phyag	phyag	for prostration

Precious				
stone	phra	phra	phra	
Repent	hgyod	gyo	gyod	or gyodpa
Reply	lan	lan	lan	
Spit	thu	thu	thu	
Steal	ku	ku	ku	or koozi in Pattani
Substitute	tshab	tsab	tsab	pronounced as chhab
Teachings	bshadpa	shadpa	shadpa	
Warmth	drod	tro	trod	
Word	tshig	tsig	tsig	pronounced as chhig

TABLE 2

Malana words common with Pattani and Teenan dialects

English	Malana	Pattani & Teenan	Comments
Black			
mustard	shayi	shayi	
Dog	koe	khuee	
Ear	raoo	rheta	
Fire	meeh	meh	
Father	ba	ba	
Hair	kra	kra	
I	goo	ge	in Lahoul gyu is for mine
Melted			
butter	mar	mar	
Mother	ya	ya	
Neck	muthu	muthu	
One	eed	iti	or idi in Chamba-Lahoul
Ox	rhad	-	in Lahoul rhad means cow
Strong	jorkar	jorkar	
Trousers	soothana	soothana	
Water	tee	tee	
Wool	cham	cham	

TABLE 3

Busheri words common with Pattani and Teenan

English	Busheri	Pattani & Teenan	Comments
Answer	lan	lan	
Air	lun	lun	
Cloth to cover head	khundu	ghundu	
Dog	kue	khuec	
Eye	mik	mig (or teera)	
Fire	meh	meh	
gold	zang	zang	
Goat	chigu	chigu (for small goat)	
He	do	du	
Horse	rhang	rhang	
Hundred	ra	rah	
Hand	gud	gud or gurb	
Mountainpass	rang	rang	
Meat	sha	sha	
Necklace	kanthi	kanthi	
Nose-pin	lounga	lounga	
Ornament put on the head	poshal	poshal	
Roasted barley flour	yud	yud	
Meal made of yud	doo	doo	
Shirt	kurti	kurti	
Sister	rhing	rhing	
Ten	sa	sa	
Wood	shing	sing	
Wool	cham	cham	
Woollen trouser	chamu suthana	chamu suthana	
You	ka	ka	

Gahri Dialect

The Gahri dialect—called Boonan by Harcourt and others—has phonetics very similar to those of the Tibetan dialects. However, there are very few words in common between the two. Perhaps not a single sentence in Gahri would match its Tibetan rendering totally. A partial knowledge of both Gahri and Tibetan is

so confusing that one can hardly speak either of them correctly without mixing the words. A mixed sentence on the other hand may not make any sense to those who know only one of them. From my own experience in childhood, I had picked up fairly fluent Tibetan or Ladakhi from the monks and nuns, who came for alms while visiting the temple of Triloknath. During my eighth grade in school, I was transferred to high school at Keylong in Gahar valley. There I picked up quite a bit of the Gahri. The more Gahri I picked up, the more I became confused with my Tibetan. That confusion still exists. While writing this chapter I could not decide for many words as to which dialect they belong.

The Gahri dialect is comparatively pure in itself. There is less influence of other languages and dialects on it, particularly compared to Pattani and Teenan. Harcourt writes that this dialect is half Tibetan as far as the words go and a separate language as far as the grammar is concerned. My opinion is on the contrary. While there are relatively few common words, the grammar has a fairly good similarity. For example both Gahri and Tibetan have only singular and plural cases—unlike Pattani and Sanskrit. Neither of them indicates gender in its verbs, unlike most Indian languages—nor gender in its pronouns, unlike English. In other words there are no equivalents for ‘he’ and ‘she’. In order to distinguish between a boy and a girl one would say that boy and that girl as ‘kho pucha’ and ‘kho pomo’ in Tibetan and ‘thae bucha’ and ‘thae cheme’ in Gahri.

Andrew Wilson, in his book *Abode of Snow* writes, “It is of interest to notice that there are remnants of what, for want of better phrase, may be called an aboriginal language. It is called Boonan and resembles the Tiberskad spoken at Sugnam in the upper Satluj valley. Herr Jacschke of Herrnhut described it to me as an aboriginal unwritten non-Aryan language and having grammar more perfect than the Tibetan—as for instance in distinguishing the different persons in the verb; but on this principle it must be more perfect than the language of Shakespeare and Milton.”

Wilson seems to be right. There are more words of the Gahri dialect in common with those of the Sugnam valley than with any other language or dialect. Some of these words are presented in Table 4.

In the history section in chapter on transmigration, I mentioned

TABLE 4

Words common between the Gahri and the Sugnam dialect

English	Gahri	Sugnam dialect
Come	ra	ra
Cat	pishi	pishi
Cow	balang	balang
Daughter	cheme	chemet
Grandmother	apa	apa
Grandfather	tete	tete
Horse	shang	shang
He goat	rabo	rabo
I	gi	gi
My	gye	gye
She goat	lama	lama

that the people of the Gahar valley seem to have migrated from Balti (Baltistan) when the Buddhists fled the Moslem invasion. The present Balti dialect has half Urdu, one fourth Tibetan and only about one fourth of the original Balti dialect. Discarding the Urdu and the Tibetan, if we compare the original Balti dialect with the Gahri, we shall find quite a few words common between them. Besides those in common with Pattani also which are listed in Table 5, there are many words exclusively common to Gahri and Balti. Some of these words are presented in Table 6.

TABLE 5

Words from Balti dialect in Pattani and Gahri dialects

English	Balti	Pattani & Gahri	Comments
Ball	polo	polo	
Cat	billa	bhilla	
Chickenpox	chimchim	chimchim	
Clay	kalag	kalag	
Dumb	handang	handang	mainly for stupid
Elder brother	kaka	kaka	
Elder sister	ache	ache	
Enimty	khon	khon	mainly revenge
Fodder	chhag	chhag	
Grand mother	api	apa	

Lake	chho	chho
Man	mi	mi
Meat	sha	sha
Melted butter	mar	mar
Nipple	chuchu	chuchu
Nun	chomo	chomo
Pride	phoso	phoso
Prostrate	phyag	phyag
Round	kirkir	kirkir
Shop	hati	hati
Silver	mul	mul
Spit	thu	thu
Throat	tutu	tatu
wood	sing	sing

TABLE 6

Words common between the Gahri and the Balti dialects exclusively

English	Gahri	Balti
Bride	bagmo	bagmo
Dear	chespa	chespa
Dog	khiuee	khee
Donkey	bombu	bombu
Eye	mik	mik
Flower	mentog	mendog
Gold	ser	ser
Grandmother	apa	api
Head	go	go
Kerosene	samar	samar
Matchstick	metruk	metrut
Mother	ama	ama
Pocket	chanda	chanda
Rain	chharpa	chharpa
Rotten	rulba	rulba
Shopkeeper	hatipa	hatipa
Son	pucha	bucha
Son-in-law	maqpa	maqpa
Soup	thukpa	thukpa
Thief	kunma	kunma
Under	yog	yog
Wool	bal	bal
Who	su	su

Bodh Dialect

The dialect of the Tod valley, which Harcourt and others called the Tibetan, is basically a dialect spoken in some parts of south-western Tibet. Tibet itself has many dialects, and since this is not the main, written language of Tibet, therefore we can not call it Tibetan. For that reason I am calling it the Bodh dialect, even though it indirectly means a dialect of Tibet, for Tibet is called Podh in Lahoul. I am not calling it the Todpa dialect because it is not exclusive to the Tod valley, instead it is spoken in the Mayar valley and also in parts of Khoksar.

This dialect is very similar to, or nearly the same as, those spoken in Spiti, Ladakh, Zanskar, some parts of Kinnaur, and even Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and so forth. In other words most of the Buddhist areas in the Himalayas use more or less the same or similar dialect. Yet I am sure there are enough differences, caused by other languages and dialects of the neighbouring areas. All of them have Tibetan as a basis, upon which the words of other dialects have been superimposed. Perhaps the grammar would be more or less the same.

The Bodh dialect of Lahoul seems fairly pure in itself. The other dialects of Lahoul seem to have had the least influence on it. Except for the Tibetan words found in other dialects, this dialect has no other words in common with them. It is comparatively easier to learn this dialect, especially compared with Gahri. Furthermore, if one can read or understand written Tibetan, one can converse in this dialect fairly well, even though many words are different.

Chinal Dialect

The Harijans of Lahoul, locally known as Chana or Chinal, have their own dialect, which I am going to call Chinal dialect. This dialect is quite similar to Hindi or Hindustani in its phonetics. They share many words in common, or words slightly deformed from Hindustani. While the words resemble those of Hindustani, its sentence structure is more like Sanskrit. For example the sentence, "Where are you going?" is translated as "kothe gachhtuse?", which in Sanskrit is "kutra gachhasi?" The Sanskrit word kutra becomes

kothe, while gachhasi is slightly deformed. At the same time there is a word kutre in this dialect also, which means 'what for' instead of 'where'. On the other hand the phrase "come here" is translated in this dialect as "ithe ayi", which seems closer to the Hindustani 'idhar aa'. In this particular case, however, Punjabi looks closer still with 'itthe aa'.

Grammatically, this dialect also does not have compound verbs, nor does it indicate gender with its verbs and pronouns, unlike Hindi and many other Indian languages. On the other hand, unlike Sanskrit, it does not have the case of two persons in its verbs. In fact, many words even do not distinguish between singular and plural.

Many words and phrases in this dialect resemble Kulluvi, Chambiali, Pangwali, Padri and Balesi. For example, a girl is called 'kui' in the Chinal dialect, the same is in Pangwali, Padri, Balesi, and Bhadarwahi. But the boy is called 'matha', which while not found in any of the above dialects, but is found in Mandiali. However, there may not be very many phrases which may be common to all these dialects. One reason for the commonalty among them may be that all are based on Hindustani. According to linguists, all of these dialects belong to the Indo-Aryan family.

Lohari Dialect

This dialect is spoken by the blacksmiths and goldsmiths of Lahoul. Generally it is very similar to the Chinal dialect, especially in its phonetics, yet quite a few words are different. For example, "Where are you going?" is translated in Lohari as "kosori gahno?", while in Chinal it is "kothe gachhtuse?" Many words appear in both dialects, but the major differences are in pronunciation. Words which when transliterated into English may start with 'j' or 'jh' in Chinal, but will start with 'z' or 'zh' in Lohari. For example 'clay' in Chinal is 'jan', while it is 'zan' in Lohari. A similar difference appears for the words written with 'ch' as in charm, or 'chh'. It was suspected that Lohari dialect might be similar to the ones spoken in the Pamir, Hindukush, or Chatral areas. However, I could not find any dialect of those areas similar to Lohari.



1. The mule-train on Rohtang pass.



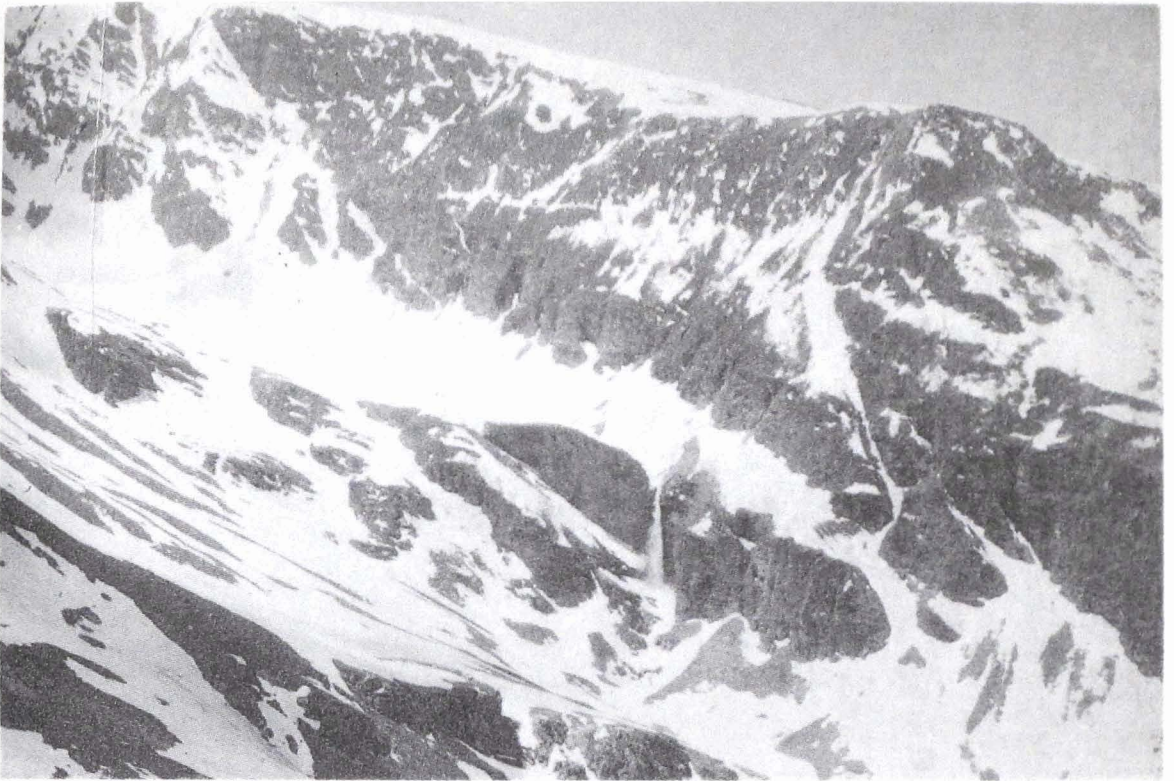
2. The snow-clad Rohtang pass during mid-summer.



3. The road is being cleared with the help of bulldozer.



4. Cutting the glacier on Rohtang to clear the road.



5. A view of Bhim fall from Rohtang pass.



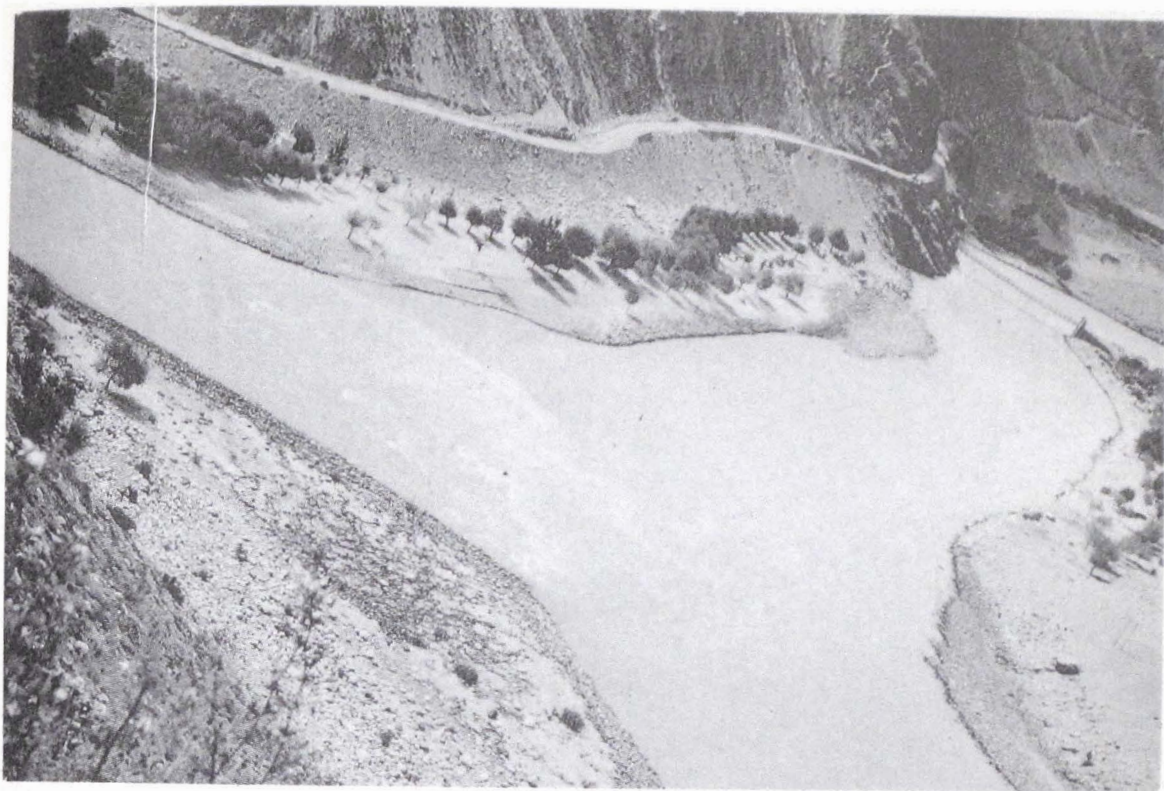
6. The naked mountain peaks across village Lote.



7. A view of Gushal glacier, with Kardang village on the foreground.



8. Visiting the source of river Byasa on Rohtang top.



9. Sangam, the confluence of rivers Chandra and Bhaga.



10. The river Chenab flows deep down through the gorge.



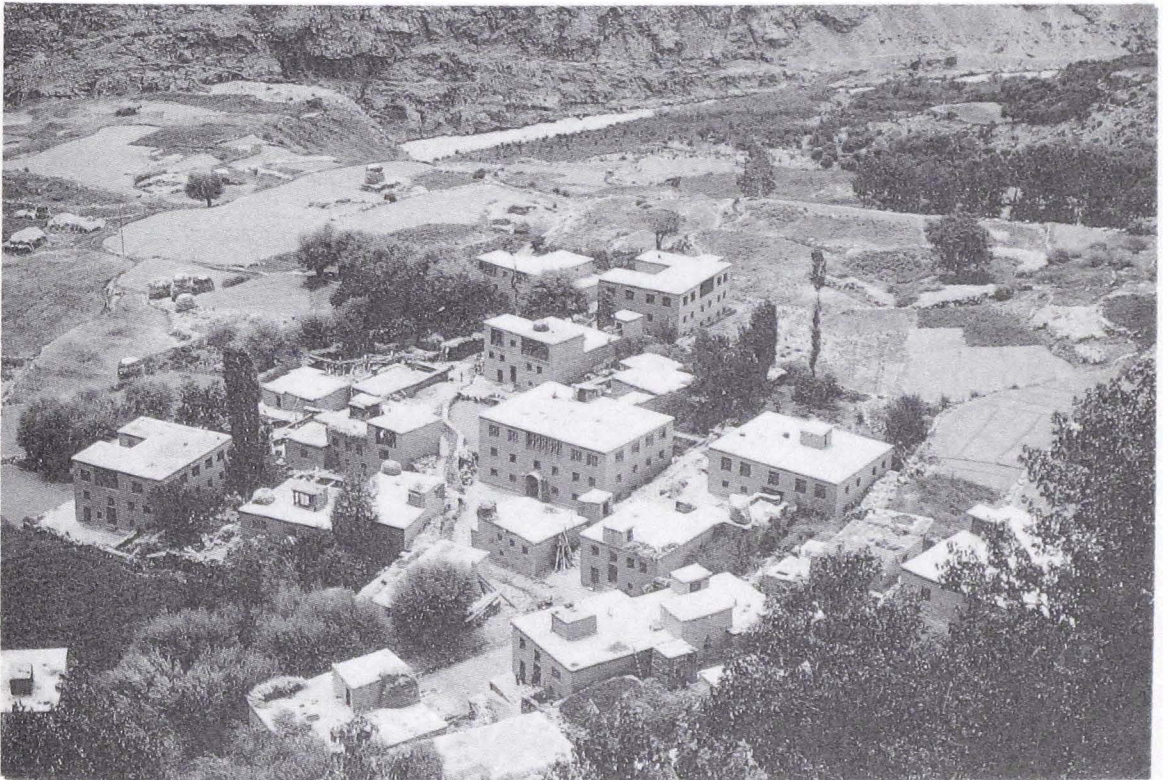
11. A view of a waterfall across Sisu.



12. The Fort of Gondhla.



13. A view of a part of Pattan valley towards east.



14. A close up view of a typical village of Lahoul (village Lote).



15. A view of Gushal village.



16. The arrival of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in Lahoul.



17. Thrashing of wheat with the help of bulls and chooris (the female yak).



18. The unthrashed wheat is being put into piles called Foocha, to save it from the rain.



19. A close up view of the dress of dancing girls.



20. The girls of Spiti present a dance during Independence day celebrations at Keylong.



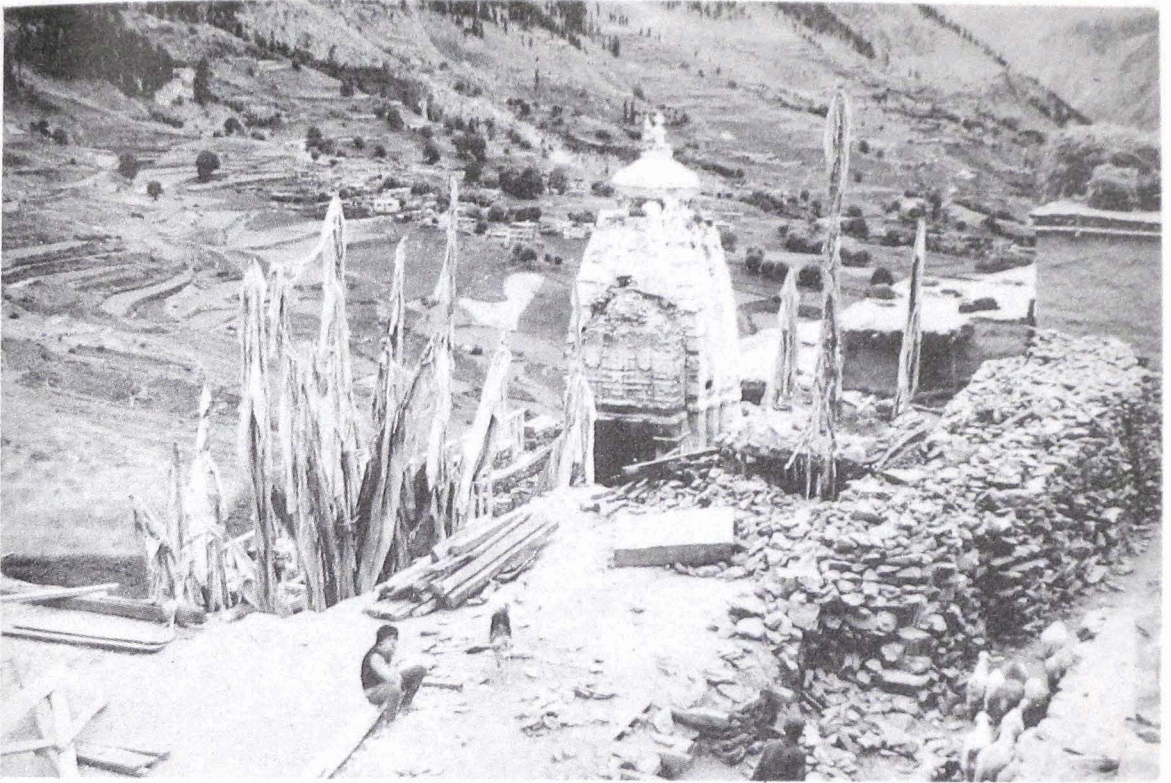
21. A free style dance at Keylong during Independence day celebrations.



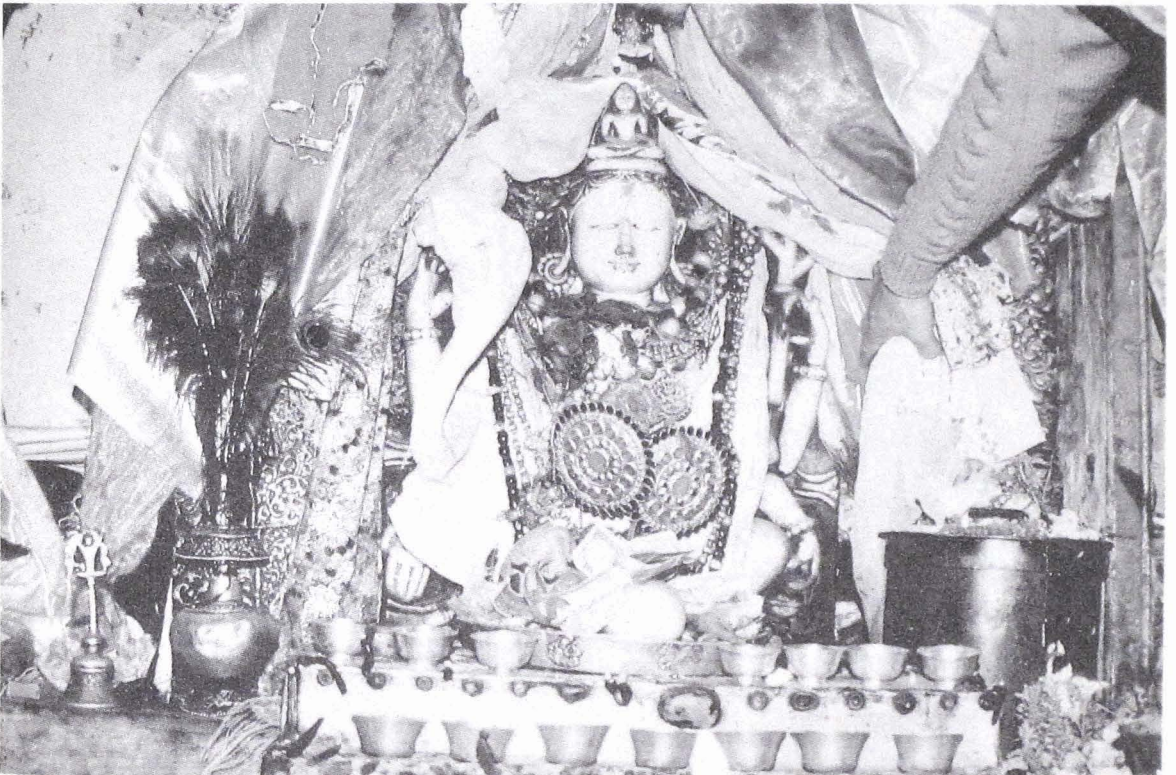
22. A marriage party stopped for a road-side reception called Karchhol, arranged by relatives.



23. The arrival of a marriage party.



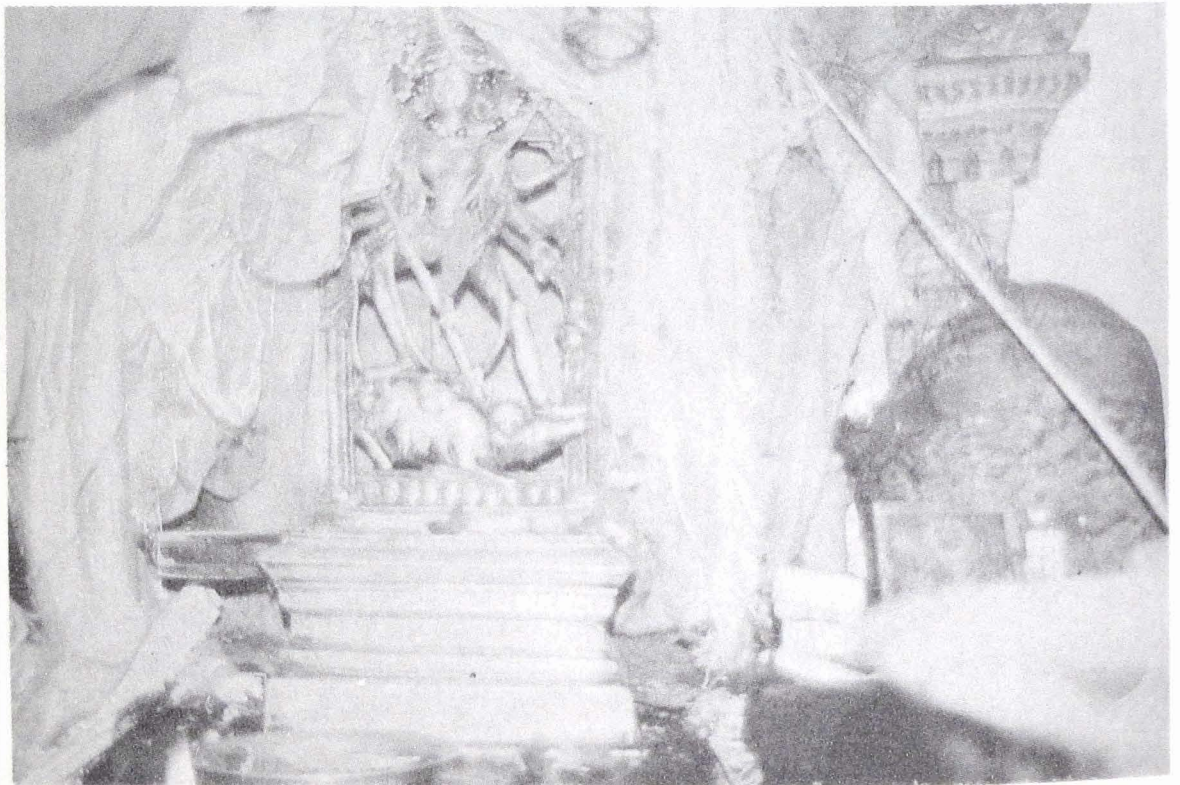
24. The temple of Triloknath, destroyed by the avalanche of 1979.



25. The image of Triloknath inside the temple.



26. Outside view of Durga temple, Udaipur.



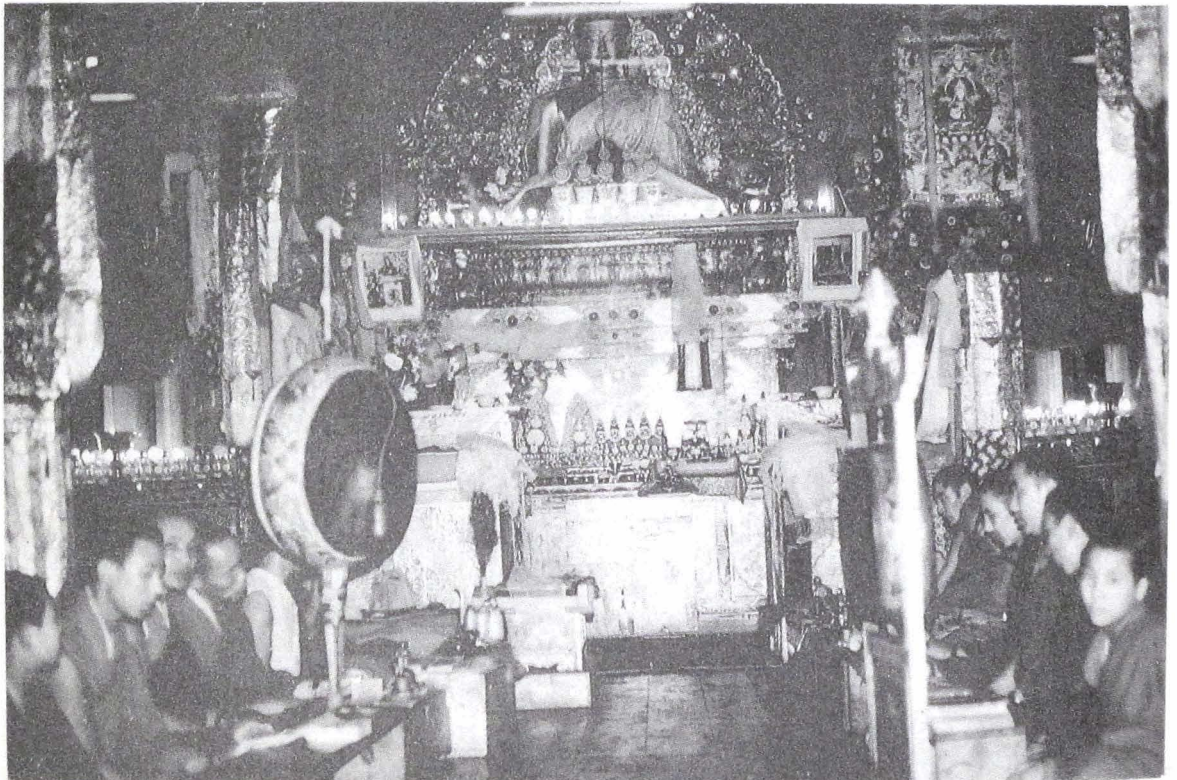
27. The image of Durga inside the Durga temple, Udaipur.



28. A sample of wood carving in Durga temple, Udaipur.



29. The busts of several Bodhisattvas inside a Buddhist monastery. Avlokiteshwara is in the foreground with white face.



30. The Buddhist monks engaged in prayer in Tibetan monastery, Manali.

Section IV

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, TEMPLES & MONASTERIES AND MYTHOLOGICAL STORIES

Chapter 15. Religious Beliefs

Chapter 16. Temples and Monasteries

Chapter 17. Mythological Stories of Lahoul

15

Religious Beliefs

Religion is a strange subject. The amount of good it does for a man or a society, versus the amount of contention it creates could be argued for aeons without reaching a conclusion. Religion is often said to be just a way of life. It portrays what you believe in and what you worship. Although apparently this seems to be a clear matter of choice of free will, yet how much mankind is boxed in is hard to imagine. We draw demarcations around us. Anybody outside that demarcation is different and often accused of being inferior. The funniest thing is that every religion does this at one time or other, if not at all times.

F. Grenard, in his book *Tibet the Country and Its Inhabitants* writes of the belief in soul and its transmigration or rebirth as a childish but popular opinion. Moorcroft and Trebeck comment in their book *Travels in Hindustan* about religion in Ladakh that the beliefs and practice were a strange mixture of metaphysics, mysticism, morality, fortune telling, juggling and idolatry. Cunningham commenting on a Buddhist prayer wheel being rotated by a continuous flow of water, writes, “. . . the device is so ingenious as to introduce the hope that it might be adopted in Roman Catholic countries where the time now spent telling beads and reciting Pater Nosters and Ave Marias would be more profitably employed in worldly matters, while the beads were told and the prayers were recited mechanically.” Harcourt writes of the Lungpe Chhos, “. . . a strange Lahouli demon worship with animal sacrifice conducted among the trees and rocks, without a formal place of worship.”

Once a lady asked me what religion I professed. When I told her I was a Hindu, she began to laugh hysterically. When she

finally gained control of herself I asked what she found so funny about it. She was frank enough to tell me that whenever her children acted up, she would yell at them "You monsters, you Hindus!" I'd never heard anybody calling members of other religious groups monsters before that. I knew that every religion considers itself superior to all others, but not in those terms. In India, many Hindus considered members of some other religions untouchables. Perhaps religious organizations have some reason for generating this type of attitude, or perhaps it is simply ignorance, xenophobia or a great blunder on the part of those teaching it. In the case of India, the Hindus were first conquered by the Moslems and later by the Christians, both proselytizing religions. Many were converted to the faiths of the new rulers, but the Brahmins devised an ingenious idea for stopping it. They denominated their religion as the supreme, relegating all others to the condition of untouchable. Converts to Islam or Christianity became untouchables. In this way they at least reduced this conversion, if they could not stop it altogether. As a result most of the country remained Hindu.

Thus we can see how biased a human being can be when it comes to religion. Yet at the same time, few people live without associating themselves in some way, with bonds no matter how tenuous, with some creed or belief, cult or worship.

Without considering each religion individually, I might say that every religion created this kind of intolerance at one time or another. I simply question why it must be so, why it continues when every religion offers something good to humanity, some inspiration and support. As far as teachings are concerned, every religion is right to a great extent.

All who have written about Lahoul mention three religions as extant in Lahoul—Buddhism, Hinduism and Lungpe Chhos. Although Christianity could not survive, it also played a part in Lahoul's history. An overview of each is presented in the following pages.

1. BUDDHISM

The roots of Buddhism in Indian Himalayas go as far back as the 2nd century B.C. It was during the reign of emperor Ashoka,

when all of India and more was under his dominion. Upon his conversion, the entire empire adopted Buddhism.

In earlier times, religious affiliations were more flexible. Religious or philosophical debates known as *shastrartha* (meaning of scriptures) based on the *Vedas* and other epics were held among scholars. If the scholars of one school of interpretation could prove that their understanding of the scriptures surpassed their opponents, the latter would become the disciples of the former. It is said that during the time of Ashoka, Buddhist scholars travelled to Tibet also, to preach the new doctrine. It is quite possible that the introduction of Buddhism to the Himalayan valleys dates from this period. During the 4th century, the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hian reported Buddhism in Ladakh.

Ahinsa parmo dharma, the Buddhist teaching of non-violence as the supreme virtue, became the primary doctrine in India. This encouraged India's neighbours to exploit the situation and successive waves of invaders poured into India. It is said that during the 7th century Turkish invaders even kidnapped seven hundred girls, including two princesses, along with their other loot. Khilji, Lodhi, Mogul attacks continued without significant resistance or retaliation.

Hinduism, as a religion, had also reached its nadir and badly needed reform. During the 9th century, Shankaracharya brought this needed reform to Hindu thought, defeating all Buddhist scholars in *shastrartha* (philosophical discourse) and converting them. The decline and eventual eclipse of Buddhism in India dates from this period, except for high ranges of the Himalayas.

As presented in the earlier chapters on history, the religious influences on Lahoul have often stemmed from political influences, that is, they reflected the religious persuasion of the current ruler. Since Lahoul has changed hands among the rulers of Kullu, Chamba, and Ladakh quite frequently, there has been a considerable mixing of religions and beliefs in Lahoul. This is evident from the variable Hindu or Buddhist names of Ranas and Thakurs in the same family at different times.

In India those Hindus, who do not like to confine the word Hindu to a narrow sectarian religion, consider Buddhism a part of greater Hindu society, portraying it as one of the many offshoots of

Hindu philosophy. Perhaps no where else this belief may be practically true as in Lahoul. Most people accept Hinduism and Buddhism equally in Lahoul. Many people may claim themselves to be on both sides at the same time and may not like to be dissociated from either one.

Buddhism has remained the prime religion of Ladakh during most of its known history. Buddhism in Lahoul has been mainly influenced by Ladakh, which in turn was influenced by Tibet. For that reason, a brief history of Buddhism in Tibet is required.

According to the history of Buddhism, numerous Buddhist missionaries were dispatched from India to the surrounding countries in the latter part of the 3rd century. According to available histories, however, the real foundation of Buddhism in Tibet was not laid until the 8th century. The credit for its success is given to one missionary known as Padma Sambhava, or Urgian Rimpoche, who is said to have preached Buddhism in Zahore (Mandi), Karsha (Lahoul), Kiache (Ladakh) and Pod (Tibet). Padma Sambhava, who was born in 747 A.D., is considered to be the reincarnation of Amitabh, the Buddha of boundless light. Although born in Udyana, India, his major work was accomplished in Tibet, where his image can be seen in many Buddhist monasteries. It is said that Guru Ghantal monastery in Lahoul was founded by him. Some local people believe that Padma Sambhava was born in Rawalsar in Mandi district.

Prior to Padma Sambhava, there were other scholars who trekked to Tibet from India. Pandit Shanta Rakshita from Yogacara Madhymika Swatantrika school of thought established the *Nying-ma* school of thought in Tibet. Vimal Mitra was another ex-patriate scholar who is accepted as the founder of some existing Buddhist philosophies in Tibet.

In the 11th century the Buddhist activities in Tibet became much more intense. During this time the *Ka-gyu* sect was established. Many lamas of this sect such as Tilopa, Niropa, Marpa, Milarapa and Ganpopa became famous. This influence spread in Ladakh and later to Lahoul as well. During this time Rinchen Zangpo of Guge built several temples or monasteries with the help of Kashmiri workmen all over Ladakh and Lahoul Spiti. Some

people think that the Gumrang and Sisu monasteries were built then.

In 1339 Gedun Truba established the *Ge-lug* sect. He was said to be the reincarnation of Padma Pani or Chakna Padma, the Lotus Bearer, of the five Dhyani Bodhisattvas. The Dalai Lama, also known as Gewa Rimpoche of Lhasa, and Tashi Lama or Panchan Rimpoche of Tashi Lhumpo belong to this very sect. The present Dalai Lama is considered to be the 14th in succession.

The Gelden, or seat of the Dalai Lama was established by Tsong Khapa in the middle of the 14th century. He was the first to be actually entitled as the Dalai Lama, although he was really the third in succession. The two earlier incarnations were also declared "Dalai Lamas" posthumously.

There is a slightly different version of the founding of the *Ge-lug* sect. In 1042 A.D., a scholar named Atisha came to Tibet from India. He founded the *Kadampa* sect. There is an opinion that this sect later became the *Ge-lug-pa*. In the middle of the 11th century another sect called the *Saskya-pa* was founded by Brogmi.

Thus various sects arose in Tibet at various times. Many of them continued to influence Ladakh, and in turn Lahoul. In 1420, the *Ge-lug-pa* sect was enthusiastically received by the king of Ladakh, Trak-Bumde. A number of monasteries were built throughout Ladakh and Lahoul. In spite of all these different sects of Tibet and their influence, the greatest influence on Buddhism in Ladakh, Lahoul and Spiti came from the Dharma Raja of Bhutan, the head of the *Drug-pa* sect. Many of the monasteries in Lahoul had been ruled by head lamas from Bhutan. It has been their responsibility to send a lama to stay in the Guru Ghantal monastery, serving the spiritual and ceremonial needs of the villagers of Lahoul, up to the present time.

Ritual Buddhism

In Lahoul, a mixture of mysticism and Tantra is practiced. Essentially, mysticism is an effort to obtain Buddhahood through meditation and yogic practices. Tantra also means individual spiritual growth. However, in everyday language, it is often misunderstood as merely ritualistic performances, practices and worship.

Yantra, meaning musical instruments, and *mantra*, meaning hymns, are used extensively in this practice. These instruments include a *gNah*, round double-sided drum; *bugjal* or cymbals, a pair of bronze plates with a large dome at the center; *gyadung*, a large brass trumpet, about six feet long, with low frequency bass; *gyaling*, a smaller brass trumpet somewhat like shehnai; *damar* or *damru*, a small drum carried in hand; *drillu*, the bell; and *kangdrum*, a trumpet made of thigh bone. *Dorjai*, the thunderbolt, always accompanies the *drillu*, but, does not produce any sound. Each instrument has its own time, place and purpose in its use. The melodious sound of *gyaling* and *gyadung* resounding in the early morning from the monasteries can put one in a meditative mood, if only one knows what is meant by meditation. Or it can wake one up from slumber with a melodious tune. Each *mantra* or sacred hymn has a very specific purpose and application.

In the sense of spiritual development, Tantra is divided into several different classes. They are Kriya Tantra, Caryya Tantra, Yoga Tantra and Anuttarayoga Tantra. In the ritualistic sense, Tantra, along with mantra, is used for faith healing or psychological treatment. Of course, there is a system of Buddhist medicine more or less parallel to the Ayurvedic system. The tantric method used as a substitute for modern allopathic medical treatment is highly resented by the latter's practitioners. They accuse the patient of going through all the ritualistic hoax until the disease gets beyond control, and only then going to the hospital. This accusation may be justified in some cases, but not all. So many troubles are mental or psychological, which no medicine can cure. Not knowing much about it, I prefer to take a neutral position. Psychological or not, faith healing or whatever, certainly these ancient traditions have some basis and a vast background. Misuse and misunderstanding is often the real problem. The relationship of mind and matter is much more complex than we understand. Mind control, hypnotism, power of suggestion are some proofs, or rather misuses of the power of mind over matter.

Personally I do not care, nor do I like to employ these ideas of faith healing, witchcraft or the driving out of demonic influences or exorcism. However, in the realm of psyche, anything is possible.

Thus these tantric rituals have been in use since time immemorial in every folk culture in some form.

Buddhism for Layman

In Lahoul about 90 percent of the Gahar and Tod valleys, about 20 percent of Gondhla and Ranglo valley, about 5 percent of Pattan valley and almost none of Chamba-Lahoul, except the Mayar valley, consider themselves to be Buddhists. In Mayar again, more than half of the population is Buddhist. These divisions are simply based upon the daily practices and acceptance of religious rituals.

In the Pattan valley, although most of the people consider themselves Hindus, yet the cremation ceremony of the Rajputs—that is, non-Brahmins and non-Harijans—is performed by a Buddhist lama in most cases. Also many households possess some ancient Buddhist scriptures as a part of their ancestral treasure. Since they cannot read this literature themselves, they hire Buddhist monks to go through them once a year or so. Other than this, the influence of Buddhism in the the Patten valley at present is negligible. However, it is quite evident that at one time or another in the past, the influence was there.

Perhaps it is true of every religion that its philosophy or profoundest teachings either do not make any sense to a layman or they are simply beyond his comprehension. He is concerned and contented with some simple routines, some day-to-day practices. Or he may even be contented by simply attaching himself to some religion without actually following any of its teachings. However, one thing is noticeable, the people of the Buddhist faith are very observant of its common practices and rituals. Consciously or unconsciously most of them repeat the most profound and sacred mantram 'Om Mani Padme Hum.' Several different translations exist, from the very simple to the quite elaborate. Some of the simple ones are "God is in the Heart. May that profound lotus grant us peace." or "Thou art like a pearl in a lotus." One of the elaborate ones is "I invoke the path of Truth and experience of universality, so that the jeweline luminosity of my immortal Mind be unfolded within the depth of Lotus center of awakened consciousness and I be wafted by the ecstasy of breaking through all bonds and horizons."

Since attaining *Nirvana*, or breaking the bonds and horizons of this mortal world is the primary objective of Buddha's teachings, this prayer holds nearly the highest place and greatest importance in Buddhism. One can find this prayer, along with some others, inscribed in the prayer wheels, called *Mani Chhokor* that are of various sizes. The small ones are carried in their hands by the elderly or monks, and are kept spinning any time their hands are free to do so. The bigger ones are erected in the monasteries. The visitors or the monks and nuns keep them spinning whenever possible. One revolution of it is considered equivalent to one repetition of the prayer. Of course, the prayer is supposed to be murmured along with the turning of the wheel.

There are other prayer wheels installed all around the gallery or the circumambulation passage that surrounds the main part of a monastery. Visitors or worshippers are supposed to rotate the wheels while they circumambulate the gallery. Besides the prayer wheel, the prayer can be found inscribed on the rocks or stones heaped in piles called *mani*, by the roadsides. The top layer of the pile contains either slates or well-rounded stones nicely inscribed with prayers. *Chhortens* and the prayer flags called *darchog* are other places where these prayers are found. *Chhorten*, also called *chaitya* in Sanskrit, is an offering receptacle built of stones in the shape of a pyramid and plastered with yellow clay or white lime. It has a four-sided base, and each side converging in steps to a point. Upon this point a piece of wood, typically carved first into a conical shape and then with various geometrical shapes is placed. These geometrical shapes generally consist of a square or a rectangle at the bottom, topped by a round or circular shape supporting a triangle, bearing a crescent crowned by a pear or spear-shaped pinnacle. In some cases the order of the geometrical shapes may vary. Also sometimes lotus petals are carved at the base of the pinnacle. These five shapes represent the five Mahabhutas: *Prithvi*, earth; *apa* or *jala*, water; *vayu*, air; *agni*, fire; and *akasha*, ether.

Chhortens are usually of eight regular conformations. It is said that when Lord Buddha died, eight kings shared the ashes of his cremation. Each built a *chhorten* and placed the ashes in it. The design of each differed slightly from the others. From that time on

there has been a custom of building the *chhortens* in honour of Sakya Thruva or Sange Konchog or some other Bodhisattva. They are also built to honour kings or celebrities, or in the memory of the members of rich families after their death. The Buddhists are very careful in going around or making a *parikrama* of these *manis* and *chhortens*. On journeys, when they encounter them along the road-sides, they make a point to pass them on the left, so that on return journey, they will have completed one *parikrama* in the proper direction, if they do not have time to perform the complete circle at one time.

Idol worship, prostration before an image or statue of the Buddha or a Bodhisattva is also a common practice observed by every Buddhist layman. The method of bowing or prostration is also typical. First both hands are folded while held above the head, then they are brought together over the heart, and finally the prostration is completed by lying flat on the ground with the hands folded together and the arms outstretched above the head in front of the idol. Among other methods of worship, lighting oil or butter lamps and incense while murmuring prayers, is quite common. One might call this a form of *Bhakti yoga*. These routines are not just for laymen, but are also emphasized in the initial stages of cloistered religious life. In earlier times, becoming a monk or nun was common, while other means of obtaining an education were not very popular. However, now that the so-called modern education has taken over the old customs and systems, religious vocations are more rare.

The lunar calendar is used for calculating feast days and other dates. In this calendar, calculation goes from new moon to full moon and back to new moon. Like the leap year in the solar calendar, the lunar calendar also contains extra days of compensation, every few months. In counting years to determine age, a twelve year calendar is used, each year associated with a specific animal. They are *Drug* (dragon); *Brul* (snake); *Ta* (horse); *Lug* (sheep); *Shai* (monkey); *Cha* (bird); *Khi* (dog); *Phag* (pig); *Piwa* (rat); *Lung* (bull); *Tag* (tiger); and *Yoi* (rabbit). Further each twelve-year period is attributed to a specific metal etc. such as iron dragon or iron bull and so forth. Thus by knowing the sign the number of years passed can be calculated very easily.

2. SHAIVISM Alias LUNGPE CHHOS

It may sound strange that so far, whoever has written anything about religion in Lahoul has cited 'Lungpe Chhos' as one of the religions of this valley. Yet among those who have not read any of these works, hardly anyone has heard this name. One might begin to wonder how this happened, and where this word came from. "Lungpe Chhos" was made famous by Dr. A.H. Francke of the Moravian mission in Lahoul, who was doing research in Tibetan archaeology. He put this word into writing and from him Harcourt took it and used it in his book, *Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*. From then on everybody else just carried it over without giving much thought to it. Francke translated this term as meaning "the religion of the valley". Evidently, if he did not coin this word himself, some Buddhist settlers must have used this word for the religion of those non-Buddhists already settled in the valley. Perhaps for a few generations they kept on using this word, which Francke heard and used in his books. Harcourt writes:

"In Lahoul the religion is essentially Buddhism, with an admixture of Hinduism, but the former has not always existed, for before it became the popular creed there was a species of belief that went under the title of Loong-Pai-Chhos (or the religion of the valley) which appears to have consisted mainly of bloody human sacrifices to evil spirits. . . . it is true that no human sacrifice at this time takes place, but goats and sheep are offered up before trees and when water courses are opened in the spring or in festival at the beginning of the harvest . . ."

He further adds that the Lungpe Chhos had no formal place of worship unless the trees and rocks held in reverence can be deemed to be such.

In reality this Lungpe Chhos was an admixture of a badly degenerated form of *Shiva-Shakti* doctrine along with other Tantric systems, such as worshipping of *Naga* (serpent god) and many other demi-gods and individual deities. The reason for being accused of not having any place of worship is that Lord Shiva is commonly envisioned as a hermit and a hermit is not supposed to

have any household or possessions. Also as mentioned in the *Shiv Purana* that Lord Shiva can be envisioned equally as formless and with form. In the formless mode he is worshipped in the form of a *linga*, a simple cylindrical stone erected over an oval-shaped bed of another stone. For these reasons one will not find large impressive temples to the name of Shiva in Lahoul, except for the temple of Triloknath, which has never been known exclusively as Shiva temple. A detailed description of this temple is given in a chapter on 'Temples and Monasteries'. In the chapter on 'Festivals and Celebrations', it is mentioned that most of the places for Shiva worship are either an open place with a Shiva Linga and a Trishul or trident—a three-pronged steel rod carried by hermits—or a very small temple called *dehra* where one Shiva Linga may be placed inside. One such *dehra* is in the village of Mayling in Pattan valley.

As far as Shakti is concerned, in her form known as Kali or Bhagvati, the situation is almost the same or even worse in some sense. Kali is believed to dwell on top of Rohtang pass, but there is not a trace of temple or anything called a place of worship except in name only. Quoting Sir John Woodroffe from his book *Garland of Letters*, "Kali is the deity in that aspect in which it withdraws all things, which it had created, into itself. Kali is so called because She devours Kala (Time) and then resumes Her own dark formlessness." Sometimes the place of worship is designated as a rock or a deodar or pencil-cedar tree. This might have been just to designate a place where people could leave their offerings. There used to be a pair of rocks so designated in the village of Lote also. However, under the name of Durga, there is a famous temple at Udaipur or Margul, which is also known as Mrikula Devi temple. A detailed description of this temple is given in the chapter on 'Temples and Monasteries'.

In the same manner there were many other temples (*dehras*) or places of worshipping other demi-gods and deities. A Hidimba temple to the name of demi-goddess Hidimba, existed in the village of Jahlma. One *dehra* to the name of Athara Naag (eighteen-serpent-god) existed in the village of Marbal. Another *dehra* to Kaylinga (the minister of Shiva) existed in the village of Lote. This was destroyed by mischievous boys during the 1950s. Many wood

carvings of this *dehra* were burnt as a part of campfire built by the children during the cold fall season. However, after the 1979 avalanche disaster, this *dehra* has been resurrected. Most of these *dehras* possessed a few S-shaped trumpets called *ranshingha*. Bunches of steel chains also are kept there which are used by the priests or *guras* to flog themselves to demonstrate the existence or the power of the god who descends into them on certain occasions. This is described in the chapter on 'Festivals and Celebrations'.

Another reason for calling Lungpe Chhos degenerated is that besides the condition of the temples and the places of worship, even its method of worship, its rituals, and the hymns or the *mantras* used were strange. *Gura* and *bhata* were two kinds of priests who performed rituals or acted as mediums. Like Tantrists, these people also had their own way of performing certain rituals to drive away evil spirits and the effects of witchcrafts. The *mantras* used were a degenerated form of Sanskrit and Hindi mixed with several local dialects. In some cases the *mantras* they recited relate mythological stories, such as:

Dhirikale surja chanduru paida keete,
Dhirikale nou nagini paida keete and so forth.

One may translate this as,

Dhirikale thou created the sun and the moon.
Dhirikale thou produced the nine serpents . . .

God only knows what they meant by Dhirikale. Perhaps Kale points towards Kali, the creator, as quoted earlier from *Garland of Letters*. Or it may be *Kala*, the time. In other cases the *mantras* did not make any sense at all.

Under ordinary situations perhaps, the people did not care much for these things, but as it is said that a drowning man will catch at a straw, so is the case here. When somebody fell sick and all the meagre treatments and ordinary medicines failed, perhaps they tried such treatments. Heaven only knows how many times it really worked. Animal sacrifice was a part of these rituals. However, some of the animal sacrifices may also have been simply a way to get meat for eating, since most of the people were non-vegetarians. This is evident as most of these sacrifices were made before start-

ing the major tasks in farming, such as harvesting, or making hay, quite laborious jobs. At the same time this might have been a way to prevent people's starting these chores individually, at any time. Even today importance is given to starting and finishing the major tasks by everyone at about the same time.

As time passed, people became more educated and aware of the outside world, these things began to lose ground. At present such rituals are rarely in practice. Nevertheless, from time to time different fads kept coming into picture. In the early 1950s, a man named Ram Dass Koupa emerged and became famous for his feats. He was supposed to be able to recite a few *mantras* and make a brass pot called *lota*, run. Of course somebody had to hold it down to the ground while the *lota* was supposed to pull that man along with it. This was, again, used to take advantage of the innocents. The pot could, supposedly, find the source of evil, which often turned out to be a rock buried in the basement of the house or the courtyard—never any person.

Those who did not believe in such practices, or magic, accused him of fraud, but in a free country nothing could be done, since it is not a crime. Their argument was that if there was any truth to it, the pot should either move by itself or else anyone should be able to hold it, while Mr. Koupa had a few selected men who could hold it. His argument was that only certain types of people can be used for any feat, just as not everyone can be hypnotised. One of the criteria used was that the person holding the pot should have a first name starting with 'S'. Those who believed in it and saw it, presented the counter argument that no man on his own could move so quickly, especially up and down the staircase. The pot would simply drag the man down the stairs. It looked almost like falling head first. In any event the fad did not last even a decade and died a natural death.

In the early '60s another fad started. This was the springing up of new *guras* or the mediums of Lord Shiva. They became the foretellers of miseries or mishaps, and the seers of their causes. Those who believed in them presented the argument that most of these new *guras* were very humble, honest and truthful people who would never cheat. Three of them became quite popular, one from the village of Gushal, another one from the village of Tandi and the

third one from the village of Wari. Each became renown as the *gura* of such-and-such village, rather than by his own name. This fad also more or less died very soon, although they still exist and are consulted here and there.

In Gondhla valley almost every village has its own deity. Unlike those of the Pattan valley they did not get thrown out or stashed away, even after the modern education or the reforms brought in by the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma. Chief among these deities is called the Raja Ghepan who is accepted throughout Lahoul and even in Malana village of Kullu valley. There is a custom by which this deity is taken out for a tour of most of the Lahoul valley every third year. This tour also includes the Malana village where his brother Zamlu is supposed to reside.

The physical shape of Ghepan is very unusual. A pencil cedar pole about twenty feet long—almost the whole tree—is selected. The process of selecting this pole is also quite strange. It is said that a number of similar poles of almost equal length and size are placed on a plateau way up on the mountain beyond the reach of a passer-by or those less apt in mountain climbing. The night before the selection, Ghepan is worshipped and all these poles are placed parallel to each other, with the heads in a straight line. The next morning the villagers check them and find one of them sticking its head out beyond the rest. That is the lucky pole that becomes Ghepan.

At the thicker end of the pole, the head is built up by wrapping lengths of multi-coloured silk and fine cotton clothes around it until its diameter is about two and a half feet. A silver and some times even gold crown is placed on the top. The rest of the body is also wrapped by similar pieces of cloth, but in a single layer. Each piece is left to drape down two to three feet. At the tail end a 'T' shaped bar is placed as a handle for lifting.

One man carries the head, while a couple of people support the tail so that it does not drag on the ground. It is believed that the person who carries it is completely under the control of the deity and is steered in the direction the deity wants to go. They also say that while moving in the right direction it becomes very light, while when moving in the wrong direction or halting it becomes very heavy and simply pulls back. This sensation is probably accurate as

one can give a scientific explanation for it. I do not mean to offend or to shatter the faith of those who believe in it, yet I would like to give a short explanation of this phenomenon from the basic principles of physics, which would also show that the people were not lying when they said they experienced such forces. A long pole can always be used as a lever. By making one end very heavy, it becomes an even better lever. Thus it is not the person carrying the head who does the steering, but rather the people lifting the tail become the pilots. A slight twist at the tailend could steer the head in any direction with such a force that the person carrying the head will simply be helpless, and will be carried along against his own force. In the same manner a simple push or pull from the tail will have a similar effect of pushing the man in front forward or dragging him back. Thus whether the people at the tail realize it or not or whether they do it consciously or unconsciously, the person carrying the head is at their mercy.

It seems that this deity Ghepan is still well accepted and its tours still continue in spite of a few slack years during the 1950s. Ghepan also has a company in these tours, a companion called Boti. The shape of Boti is the same as that of Ghepan. The only distinction being that it is a little smaller. This Boti is supposed to be a female deity and belongs to a neighbouring village of Rop-sang. The rest of the deities from this area are confined to their own villages only. However, when Ghepan goes out on a tour, all the other deities of this valley also are brought out, and they are not disassembled and put indoors until Ghepan returns home.

Thus Lungpe Chhos had its own existence—though it is only a deformed Hinduism—and it still exists to some extent, but among the young people with modern education it may be considered almost non-existent. Also the arrival of Rishi Brahma Prakash changed the situation completely in some areas. More about this sage is given in this chapter later.

Witchcraft

No educated person likes to believe in witchcraft, at least not until one has been affected by it, yet it seems that it has been in practice all over the world at one time or another. It is interesting to

look at the encyclopedia of witchcraft, which shows how widespread this practice or belief was. There are several books written on this subject.

In the United States also, once I was driving somewhere when I heard something about witches on the radio. Startled, I listened more carefully. It was an interview with a witch in Boston. Another time a few years later, a local newspaper published an article, again an interview with a witch. In Lahoul also there is a belief in witchcraft. This belief may be considered a part of Lungpe Chhos, and as such it is included in this chapter. Of course no one in Lahoul will admit that she, or he is a witch—unlike the ones in the United States of America. In daily chores when something, a little unusual, happens people think that perhaps some witch had her spells on it. When the fresh milk goes sour, or the cow does not let the milkmaid come close for milking, people go and consult a *gura*.

There are many unbelievable stories about the witches in Lahoul. In one story it is said that once the wife of a Thakur was sick. When all the medical treatments available there failed, the Thakur consulted a *gura*. He told him that a witch had her spells on his wife. The *gura* asked the Thakur if he would like to know who the witch was. When the Thakur gave his nod, the *gura* began to cut the hair of the patient. Thakur was furious at this horrible act of the *gura*. The *gura*, in an effort to console the Thakur, told him that if there be a single strand of hair lost from the patient's head, after he dispels the witch's influence, the *gura* should be hanged. After the exorcism, to the dismay of Thakur, the patient's hair was exactly as it was before. Then the *gura* asked the Thakur to invite all the people making an excuse of a celebration, until he sees the witch who should have no hair on her head. On the invitation of the Thakur people poured in from all directions, but no witch. The *gura* insisted that some people were still left out and asked the Thakur's men to go and make sure everyone from the neighbouring villages have attended the feast. At last Thakur saw an old women with her head fully covered under a scarf. The *gura* went and pulled her scarf. The woman had no hair on her head.

3. HINDUISM AND SANATAN DHARMA

Hinduism is one of the most ancient religions in the world whose founding is not attributed to any particular individual as such. Because of its long history, it has gone through many reforms, rejuvenations and re-orientations at different stages. The result is many different subjects or beliefs or modes of worship. Religion can be simply a way of life, a way of worship, and a way of performing certain rituals and customs, or perhaps simply the culture of a particular society. As such one can not help associating oneself with some religion or the other.

The Hindu religion is like an ocean which absorbs everything, yet it remains as it is. If one goes into very minute details, Hinduism's innumerable different forms can seem completely confusing and cause one to conclude that there is nothing concrete within Hinduism. Yet the string that holds these innumerable beads to form the necklace called Hinduism can be found in its ancient philosophy, the scriptures—the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagwat Geeta*, *Puranas* and so forth—its myths, legends, and epics—*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. No matter what part of the country or the world one may come from, no matter what language one speaks, when one calls oneself a Hindu, one holds these as common ground with the rest. The same story of Lord Rama or Lord Krishna is found in every language of India. The vastness of this religion extends to the point that while one may not know anything about Hinduism, nor worship any god or deity, and yet believes and claims oneself to be a Hindu, one is very well accepted as a Hindu. On the other hand a hundred different people may worship a hundred different gods and yet all of them may claim themselves to be Hindus, that will also be perfectly acceptable to them all.

Thus in Lahoul also approximately 90 percent of the Pattan valley, almost 100 percent of Chamba-Lahoul (except Mayar valley), about 70 percent of the Gondhla valley, about 5 percent of the Gahar valley, and perhaps half a percent of the Tod valley consider themselves Hindus. It is hard to draw a line between what one may call Hinduism and what has been called the Lungpe Chhos in the previous section, since all those involved with Lungpe Chhos are also Hindus and as such they are included here as Hindus in these

estimates. These figures exclude Buddhist, only for the sake of distinguishing the Buddhists from the rest. Otherwise in the global definition of a Hindu, an Indian Buddhist is as much a Hindu as a Shaivite, or a Vaishnav, or a Hare Krishna follower, or a Kabir Panthi, and so on. Perhaps nowhere in the world one may find this belief of Buddhism as another one of the reformations on the greater Hindu religion, held practically true as in Lahoul. Most people accept both religions equally. It is only a matter of trend and persuasion, as it was in the olden days when whoever was defeated in intellectual intercourse and philosophical debate would convert and become the follower of the winner.

Their ordinary customs of daily life, their understanding of death and rebirth, *Karma* and its results, the importance of *Dharma* or virtue, and good deeds and devotional practices or *Bhakti*—all these are their common grounds. Almost everyone believes in them whether one is a Buddhist, a Hindu of any school of thought, Lungpe Chhos or Shiva-Shakti follower. However, unlike Buddhists, Hindus do not adhere to their religion or its rituals and activities very strictly.

Nevertheless they have retained a version of the caste system that is basically divided into three groups, rather than four as described in Manu's system. They are Brahmins, locally called Swangla; Rajputs, who are locally known as Bodh; and Harijans. Brahmins are mostly limited to Chamba Lahoul and Pattan valley only. In Chamba Lahoul the majority of the people are Brahmins, while in the Pattan valley they are in minority. Between the Brahmins and the Rajputs there is another sub-caste known as Garu. A Garu is a mixture of Brahmin and a Rajput. Among the Brahmins, Garus and the Rajputs the distinction simply exists as a family origin and has nothing to do with the profession, since by profession most of them are farmers. However, among the Harijans there are further subdivisions based upon their profession. There is a class called Chinal or Chana, who are mainly farmers. The other classes are the blacksmiths, goldsmiths and silversmiths.

In the earlier days most of the non-Buddhists were under the influence of 'Lungpe Chhos', whether they really believed in it or not. Other than Lungpe Chhos they had nothing to claim as Hindus, until 1930s and 40s. During these years, modern education gained

popularity, and along with it an influence of Arya Samaj crept in. Prayer meetings, *Bhajans* and *Kirtans* were held in many villages. This, however, did not have a widespread and continuing influence, since there was no one highly learned to preach or teach anything, other than a hand full of local educated young men. Because the Arya Samaj did not believe in idol worship, the result of its influence was in discarding many rituals of the so-called Lungpe Chhos. Many idols and images were destroyed or thrown away.

The major reformation on the Hindu religion, however, began when a sage named Rishi Brahm Prakash came to this valley during the 1940s. He came to the village of Gushal, a village which was perhaps under the worst influence of strange beliefs and customs prior to that. For example there was a custom that every girl, born in this village and married outside the village, had to donate a lamb to this village on a certain day every year. All the lambs were collected and slaughtered on that particular day as a sacrifice to the village deity or the demon. It was believed that any girl who did not comply with this custom would suffer badly in the form of her own sickness or death or sickness of someone in her family. Besides this, there were many other undesirable customs and rituals.

It was into these circumstances that this great soul came, and turned the customs and systems of this village upside down. He is said to have come from a place called Khanna in Punjab, but hardly anyone in Lahoul knew why and where he came from and why he chose this particular village. I would call it God's will answering to excessive sin. He preached the Sanatan Hindu Dharma, the message of the *Geeta*, *Vedas*, and *Upanishads*. Most of the people of this village and many other neighbouring villages became his followers or the followers of the *Vedanta* philosophy. Every one of his followers became vegetarian. Thus not only the custom of sacrifice was over, but also the killing of animals for the sake of meat in general was abolished. A small temple was established in Gushal. *Bhajans* and *Kirtans* (prayer songs) took the place of hue and cry and whistles of the sacrificial processions. *Yagya* and *Havan*—the sacred fire of oblation—replaced the old rituals. Apparently prosperity came to the village instead of miseries as they had believed earlier would result from not complying with the old customs. From

this time onwards the people had something to claim themselves to be Hindus. Almost everyone, who became the follower of this Rishi observed some routines of prayer and meditation. Hymns like *Gaytri-mantra* was on their lips at free times. The fear of ghosts and demons vanished from their minds. Most teachings of the *Bhagwat Geeta* was a part of their common knowledge. The funeral rites also were changed to Hindu custom of reciting *mantras* from *Rigved* and other scriptures.

The influence of *Vedanta* or Sanatan Dharma also remained more or less confined to the Pattan valley, typically around the village of Gushal. The rest of the areas, though influenced by the modern education, yet not by Hindu philosophy. Nevertheless, the old customs of Lungpe Chhos were thrown out of many villages, especially in the Pattan valley for many years. This influence has been negligible in the Gondhla and the Ranglo valleys, even though most of the people claim themselves to be Hindus. It had no influence among the Buddhists at all. As the time passed, again for lack of learned teacher, the influence of Sanatan Hindu Dharma also continued to diminish, and the old Lungpe Chhos began to raise its head. Some of the old celebrations and worships were revived in many villages.

Recently an influence of Radha Soami sect has been spreading rapidly. This sect seems to attract women more than the men. Several groups have their prayer and discussion meetings. They have built a *satsang bhavan* (meeting hall) in Tholang village. Every Sunday they have a get together there. The origin of the Radha Soami sect was in Dyalbagh in Agra, founded in the 1920s by a man who was addressed as Sahabji Maharaj. After the death of the original founder, its followers divided themselves into two groups with two separate leaders. One group continued at Dyalbagh, while the other group has its headquarter at Byas in Punjab. The followers of each recognise only their respective heads as their *guru*. In Lahoul the followers of Byas are in majority. They visit that place every year and spend a few days in performing some manual labour, what they call *sewa*, during a celebration known as *Bhandara*.

Thus in Lahoul one may find expressions of the Hindu religion from a very primitive and orthodox beliefs to a well advanced

philosophical understanding and approach. With the passage of time the orthodox beliefs and customs are rapidly vanishing. Unfortunately, real philosophic understanding is not advancing or replacing blind faith. Instead the people are becoming more agnostic. True understanding and its importance need to be revived.

4. CHRISTIANITY

Christianity, though it barely exists in Lahoul at present, certainly deserves a mention here. The source of Christian teachings in Lahoul was the Moravian mission at Keylong. This mission was started when two men, Rev. Heyde and Rachler were sent to Mongolia from Herrnhut in Germany in 1853. On their way to Mongolia, they had to pass through Lahoul and Tibet. However, they were stopped by the Chinese at the border and could not reach Mongolia. So they were ordered to settle down wherever they best could. They chose Keylong in Lahoul and established their mission there. From 1853 to about 1940 this mission was represented in turn by Rev. Heyde, Rachler, Jaeschke, Redslob, Francke, Hettasch and Peter, along with their wives in most cases. From 1904 to 1909 there was one lady named Miss Duncan, studying Tibetan archaeology living there. Dr. Francke also was with the Tibetan archaeology and he travelled far and wide in this area and collected and compiled the chronicles of most of the rulers or Thakurs and Ranas of Ladakh, Lahoul, and Zanskar etc.

Harcourt visited Lahoul in the late 1860s. He writes in his book *Kooloo, Lahul and Spiti*, “. . . These missionaries built a mansion quite in German style. A large lower apartment was reserved for chapel and here every Sunday services were held, the one in the morning in Tibetan for the benefit of such Lahoulis and Ladakhis who may care to attend . . .” He also added, “. . . as far as the success of the mission in this remote part of the world has not been pronounced, but the influence of these good men is working much to the advantage of the people around, who although may not embrace the new creed.”

Rev. and Mrs. Heyde are credited with having started the first primary school of the so-called modern education in the late 1850s. In 1861, the missionaries started another primary school at

Tholang. Within a few years they expanded to seven branch schools where the lamas were engaged as teachers. All these schools had to be closed later for lack of response from the local public. Also it is said that the missionaries felt the lamas were unreliable. It is obvious that as missionaries their main goal was to convert the people to Christianity, which was accepted neither by the public nor by the lamas who were used as teachers. I may add here that prior to the schools started by the Moravians, education used to be a function of the monasteries. Harcourt wrote that when he visited Lahoul there were at least 71 nuns who could read and write and one of them could calculate for solar and lunar eclipses.

Andrew Wilson visited Lahoul in 1873. He wrote in his book, *Abode of Snow*, “. . . the staff consisted of brothers Heyde and Redslob with their wives and nearly 20 baptised converts including the children of native Christians. They have translated almost the whole *New Testament* and have scattered Christian publications over all the Tibetan speaking countries as well as conducted extensive educational operations.” He also mentioned that when the Moravians purchased some land at Keylong a few years earlier, they could only obtain it on the condition being formally inserted in the title deed that it should revert to the original owners whenever the British rule came to an end in Lahoul. What a confidence and far sightedness!

Much credit is due to these missionaries for their sacrifices in coming to such a remote corner of the world and working there for the uplift of the people. It is said that it was they who brought potatoes and other vegetables like cabbage to this land. They taught the women how to make the famous socks of Lahoul, although most of the western authors complained that the people were so lazy that they did not even want to copy them and were totally unresponsive to the suggestion. However, the truth of the matter was that people suspected that the real motive behind all their good works was to convert them to Christianity. That is what the people resented and not the progressive ideas and helping hands. In order to protect their religion, people did not want to accept any favours from the missionaries. When the British government was forcing people to send their children to the schools run by the missionaries, some rich people paid poor children to go to school as substitutes

for their own children in order to save them from being influenced and converted. They preferred to keep them at home and illiterate, rather than have them converted to some other religion.

These missionaries tried to translate the Bible into the local dialect of Teenan. They tried their best to preach the Bible and make converts, but to no avail. In a period of a little less than a century they could really convert only one man named Pal Trashhi, who lived in Sarjing, an area bought by the mission. They tried to bring a few converts from Ladakh and made them settle in Lahoul. One among them was their famous Munshi (reader) and translator, Zodpa. The other one was Jamba Phuntchog. Rev. Peter made him settle in Tholang. Jamba Phuntchog had 23 children. One by one they all left Tholang and sold the land to its original owners.

The Moravian mission was closed in the early 1940s. The reason may have been two-fold. First of all the mission had completely failed in Lahoul. Secondly, during World War II, Britain being against Germany, perhaps the German mission could not stay in the British India. After they had gone, the few converts could not maintain themselves without a teacher or services. Thus practically speaking, Christianity came to a virtual end in Lahoul.

16

Temples and Monasteries

Every religion or faith has its place of worship. It may be called a church, a temple, a monastery, a mosque or anything else. Although I may say, "Oh Lord! For your worship you have made the most beautiful temple called mind," yet I see that it is not very easy or even possible for many people to visualize that temple of mind and perform worship. Most people need a physical entity, a visual image of some god or higher power which they can see, sit in front of, and worship. Accordingly, there are several temples and monasteries based on various religions and faiths and ethics of daily life maintained by the people of the Lahoul valley.

A brief discussion of some of the important temples and monasteries in Lahoul is presented in the following pages. Many small ones are omitted for their significance does not extend beyond the small community around them. As mentioned in the section on religion, the places of worship in what was called Lungpe Chhos are very insignificant. A majority of them have just a small hut with a *lingam* inside, and so they are not included in this chapter.

Temple of Triloknath

This is one of the very rare places in the world which is worshipped equally by two different religions. The temple of Triloknath, one of the holiest places in India, attracts flocks of *sadhus* (Hindu hermits) who come to visit this place every year from all over India. At the same time a large number of Buddhist pilgrims from Ladakh, Zanskar and other parts of India also visit Triloknath every year.

Unlike most Buddhist monasteries and some Hindu temples, this place has only one idol inside the main part of the temple. This statue is made of white marble, and is seated in the lotus position. It has six arms, two of which are resting on the knees in the *mudra* of meditation. One hand holds a lotus, another is in the gift bestowing *mudra*, while the other two are clasped over the heart in praying position. Another small statue is incorporated into the head of the main figure.

Triloknath means the lord of three worlds. Most Hindus consider it a deity in its own right, while those who try to go a little deeper into its meaning consider it a manifestation of Shiva. One may reach this conclusion from the design of the image. According to the myth, Shiva holds Mother Ganges over his head, in the matted locks of his hair. The Buddhists consider it to be Avalokiteshvara, Charangik in Tibetan. Charangik means transcending awareness. As one of the Bodhisattvas he represents the principle of intellection, and is a symbol of Buddha's compassion. He is emanation of Amitabh, Buddha of boundless light.

The main part of the temple is made of solid stones arranged in a conical shape of the *Shikhara* type, like most Hindu temples found all over India. Inside is so small that, along with all the decorative and religious items, there is barely enough room for two people to stand before the image. There is a belief that when people go to see this idol, it shows a dark gloomy face to those with whom the lord is unhappy while it shows a bright white face to those with whom the lord is happy.

Outside the main temple there are two beautifully carved stone pillars on each side of the door. There is a very narrow gap between the walls and these pillars. These pillars are known as the pillars of *dharma* and *paap*, virtue and sin. The gaps between the pillars and the wall test a person's virtuousness. It is believed that sinners get stuck when they try to pass through the narrow gap, while the virtuous pass through easily. There is a *Parikrama* gallery, a circumambulation passage surrounding the main temple, between it and the outer walls with Buddhist prayer wheels mounted in the walls throughout the gallery. Pilgrims would go around the temple in the gallery, rotating each of the wheels in turn. This and all the outer structures were demolished by the avalanche of 1979

while the main part of the temple survived miraculously. It has been reconstructed, perhaps with a similar structure as before.

There is a folk song about the founding of this temple that narrates a mythological story. Myths representing seven angels or seven sisters are fairly common in Indian scriptures. The complete song which appears in Appendix A, begins:

Toonderi Rana o gwaru powala rakhi ji o,
Gwaru powala menungeri dhara ji o

The Rana of Tundeh had a cowherd who used to graze the Rana's cows on the hill of Mainung. There he found seven springs. One day he noticed that seven angels came out of the seven springs. As they played there, the cowherd watched them from a hiding place and thought he should tell the Rana about it when he got home in the evening. Somehow when he got home he forgot about it. Days went by. He watched them every day but unfortunately forgot about it every evening. One day he tied a stone to the horns of the Rana's *choori* (a yak breed cow) to remind himself of the day's incident. Unfortunately he forgot even this reminder. In the evening, the Rana's wife went to milk the cows. The striped *choori* kicked and the stone fell into the milking pot, breaking the marble pot to pieces. The Rani was very upset and complained to the Rana about the cowherd's foolish act. The Rana was also upset and summoned the boy. When he appeared, the Rana furiously asked him why he had done such a foolish thing. Humbly, the cowherd asked the Rana to listen to his story. When the Rana had calmed down, the cowherd told him everything. Still the Rana did not quite believe him, and so he ordered him to catch hold of the youngest angel and fetch her to him.

The next day, when the angels again appeared from the springs, the cowherd jumped from his hiding place, and grabbing hold of the youngest angel, ran towards the village. The other angels gave chase, begging him to look back just once. But the angel he was kidnapping warned him not to look back, or else he would freeze into a statue of stone. The cowherd obeyed the angel, until he reached the village, but then he looked back and they both were turned to stone.

The Rana and Rani came to see it. They were astonished to see

this beautiful angel, and asked where the statue of Krishna had come from. Both paid homage to the statue, performing a hundred prostrations and a hundred *parikrama* around it. The Rana established a temple there and arranged a celebration, the fair of Tundeh Pori. People came on pilgrimage and to attend the fair from far and wide. They lit butter lamps and performed hundreds of prostrations and *parikrama*. Music was played at the Bhayari ground.

A description of this fair, celebrated every year, is given in the chapter on festivals. A statue, known as cowherd, used to be there in the *parikrama* gallery. The Rana or the Thakur of Triloknath, a strict Hindu, acts as the manager of this temple, while a Buddhist monk attends to its daily activities and the needs of pilgrims.

Durga Temple of Margul (Udaipur)

A few miles west of Triloknath there is a village on the right bank of the Chenab river, near its junction with Mayar Nallah. Margul is the local name for the village. It is also called Udaipur after Udai Singh, who was the Raja of Chamba in the 17th century when he annexed this area to Chamba.

Until a few years ago this was a small village with few inhabitants. It was known only for its temple, frequented by pilgrims and visitors. Recently this place has started growing very rapidly. Several government offices, including the offices of the Sub-divisional Magistrate, Executive Engineer of Public Works Department, a government rest house for visitors, a police station, a hospital and a veterinary hospital and a school have been established there. New businesses, primarily small shops and tea stalls, have also sprung up. A division of GREF (General Reserve Engineering Force of the army) has also been stationed here mainly for the construction of roads in this area.

On a hill top at the northwestern end of the village lies an ancient temple of Durga, or Kali. From the outside, this is an old, shaggy-looking structure with a gabled roof of wooden shingles ranged around a *shikhara* type peak. The walls are built of alternate layers of stones and logs, plastered with mud. Inside, however, is a monument, an artistic treasure.

The main sanctuary is a typical Hindu temple of the *shikhara*

type (pyramid-shaped peak) about six feet square inside, with walls about two feet thick. Inside is an image of Durga with eight hands, standing over a slain buffalo demon. It is made of *ashtadhatu*, an alloy of eight metals. The metal neither rusts nor tarnishes, nor shows any effect of aging or weathering. This beautiful statue has been placed on a rectangular pedestal with several steps and an inscription which appears to be in four different languages, which is indecipherable to an ordinary man. They are not in any of the fourteen languages current in India, nor in any of the well-known modern languages of other countries.

T.S. Negi has written in the *District Gazetteer of Chamba* that this inscription is in late *Sharada* characters. The inscription states that this image was cast by Panjamaneka Jinaka of Bhadarwah in the Shastra year 4645 (1569-70 A.D.). In my calculations, the Shastra year 4645 corresponds to 1543 A.D. There are divergent opinions on the exact date of the founding of the temple. In 1972 I happened to meet Mr. Roerich and Mrs. Devika Rani Roerich at the Dhungri temple, Manali. During our discussion I mentioned that I understood the carvings in the Dhungri temple were done by the same man who worked on the Udaipur temple. They told me that it was only some outer work that had been done by this man in the 16th century, and that the original temple at Udaipur had been established in the 12th century. Although they did not give their sources for this information, they were firm and confident about it. If they are correct, then the idol at Udaipur must be older than 4645 Shastra year, since the idol probably pre-dates the temple built to house it. Therefore I cannot say whether the inscriptions were translated correctly.

During the 1960s and '70s many precious images and artifacts were stolen from several temples in India. This image also was stolen from the Udaipur temple in 1972. A few months prior to the theft I had a chance to see the temple for the first time. I warned the pujari in charge of the temple to be wary of the gangs of thieves, who were vandalizing the temples. But there is a belief in Lahoul that this image could not be lifted off its pedestal unless a particular *mantra* was recited, a *mantra* believed to be known to only one man.

About six months later the idol suddenly showed up in Manali,

under a rock near the bank of the Byasa river. Since the statue was left in plain sight, there was some doubt whether it was the real statue, or a fake planted to satisfy the people and police, and to make smuggling of the real statue easier. The eventual consensus was that it was the real item. The police station was swamped with pilgrims and curiosity-seekers when the statue was brought in.

The inner sanctuary of the temple is surrounded by a *parikrama* gallery. The three sides of it are narrow passages, barely four feet wide, while the eastern side has a bigger *mandap*, or sitting room with a large balconied window facing south. Beautiful wood carvings depicting ancient legends and myths cover the facade of the sanctum, the four pillars in the *mandap*, the ceiling, the architraves and the side panels of the window. Each section depicts different stories from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and several *puranas*. Those who are familiar with these stories can easily recognize each event.

Two of the architraves present the story of the *Mahabharata*. The first shows Draupadi's *swayambar* (marriage) to Arjuna. To win Draupadi in marriage Arjuna had to shoot an arrow through a fish's eye revolving on a wheel while looking at its reflection in a pot of boiling oil underneath. The architrave depicts Arjuna bending the bow, shooting the arrow, Arjuna holding Draupadi's arm, the five Pandvas standing beside King Drupad, the father of Draupadi. Krishna's presence and the indication of his being an incarnation of Vishnu is also depicted there. On the other architrave, the battle of the *Mahabharata* is presented, including several scenes of the battle between the Kauravas and the Pandvas.

On the third architrave, the story of the *Ramayana* unfolds. Scenes present the gathering of *Vanar Sena* (an army of apes) by Rama, Hanuman arriving in Lanka and addressing Sita, Hanuman's encounter with King Ravana of Lanka, Hanuman setting fire to Lanka, the awakening of Kumbhakarana and so forth.

The ceiling is in four sections and presents some myths from the *Shiva Purana*. Shiva is shown in various forms, surrounded by scenes of the music and dancing of the *apsaras* (angels). These scenes perhaps represent the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, for that is how their marriage is described in the *Shiva Purana*.

The side panels of the window also present some stories

narrated in the *Shiva Purana* and *Vishnu Purana*. One of the stories that can be clearly noticed is that of *Samudra Manthan*, the gods and demons churning the ocean, each side grasping one end of the rope. By churning the ocean, a pot of elixir (*amrita*) and a pot of poison were formed. The physician god, Dhanvantri, kept the pot of elixir, but where to put the poison became a problem. Wherever they threw it, it would cause destruction. Finally the gods appeased Shiva, who drank it, but held it in his throat, not allowing it to go into his stomach. The scene shown, however, is only that of churning.

The other panel presents the story of Vishnu's reincarnation as Vaman, the dwarf. Bali performed a *yagya* to usurp Indra's throne. Indra was frightened and prayed to Vishnu to save him. Vishnu appeared as a dwarf Brahmin and went to Bali. He asked Bali for three steps of land in charity to the Brahmin. When Bali accepted the request, the Brahmin appeared as a giant and put one step on the earth, another step in heaven near Brahma and the third step in *patal*, the nether region. Thus he left Bali with nothing and saved Indra.

The facade of the shrine seems to present themes, or mythological stories from the *Rig Veda*, particularly from the section called Thousand Syllabled Speech. This section is about the creation or evolution of the Universe, but given in the form of riddles or parables which are difficult to understand and therefore give rise to much misunderstanding.

At the entrance of the *mandap* there are two huge, but crudely carved statues over six feet tall, standing as gatekeepers. They face the facade of the shrine. A few years ago while doing some repair work in the *mandap*, people found two other smaller statues underneath the feet of these large ones. They were previously buried under the dirt and gravel of the floor.

There is a superstition that if one says "Let's go" while leaving the temple, these two gatekeepers also come along. That is why people just signal each other with their eyes or hands and walk backwards until they are out of the door. There is another belief that these two guards, *birs*, ride the river and go to see their counterparts in the Guru Ghantal monastery on the night of Fagli festival.

Outside this door is another small room, sometimes used by

hermits to spend the night. There are steep steps outside the main door leading up to the *chabootra*, or courtyard. There is a stone in the courtyard, which must weigh several hundred kilograms. There is a belief that twelve people can lift this stone using one finger each, while chanting "Hail to the mother Bhagvati." Without this chant, or with any other number of people, the stone cannot be lifted. For whatever reason, it did work when we tried. First we tried with ten or eleven people, without the chant. Then we used twelve people, still without the chant, but without success. Finally we tried with the chant. This time we raised it waist high and held it there for a fairly long time. However, we did not try with more people. And I do not think there was room to squeeze in any more people.

Guru Ghantal Monastery

Far above the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers, there is a monastery known as Guru Ghantal on a hill that rises between the two rivers. This is one of the ancient monasteries of Lahoul and it is the only monastery for most of the Pattan valley that performs the death or funeral ceremonies. One *lama*, who resides in this monastery, is responsible for performing these rituals for the major part of the Pattan valley.

Guru Ghantal was established in the 8th century by Padma Sambhava, locally known as Urgian Rimpoche, who was responsible for spreading Buddhism in most of these areas. The original or main idol in this monastery is a head only, made of marble, perhaps by the same artist who made the image of Triloknath. In a mythological story about this image, a head began to appear or grow out of the sandy river bank at the confluence. Someone who saw this miracle, chopped the head off with his sword before the whole body could appear. Later a monastery was built and this head was placed in that monastery as the principal deity. Many other images were added in this monastery later. These images or idols were made out of clay as found in most of the Buddhist monasteries. They were introduced by *lama* Latsam Rinchen Zangpo.

When this part of Lahoul was under Chamba, the Rana of

Triloknath was the *kardar* (manager) of this monastery. Later he handed the monastery over to Guru Nawang Namgyal of Bhutan under the condition that a *lama* would be deputed to the monastery for every three-year period. The Bhutan monastery then handed it over to Tagna monastery in Ladakh, which at that time was also affiliated to Bhutan. The abbot of Guru Ghantal monastery sent an yearly tribute of thirty rupees to the abbot of Tagna monastery. Half of this tribute was in cash and the other half in goods. The abbot of Tagna monastery is supposed to have forwarded this tribute to the Kangri Doujan monastery near Lake Mansarovar in Tibet, from where it was forwarded to the head monastery of Pangtang Dechiling in Bhutan. The routine of sending a *lama* to the Guru Ghantal monastery still continues.

Trashi Tambell was one of the well-known *lamas* who was at one time sent to Guru Ghantal. After his death, in his next incarnation he was again sent to Guru Ghantal. It is said that he recognized Rubu Powal, who used to graze sheep there and Hagu carpenter, who was involved in construction work at the monastery when Trashi Tambell was in charge of the monastery in his previous life. This réincarnated *lama* lives in the Tagna monastery in Ladakh at present, but visits Guru Ghantal occasionally even now.

It is said that there is an image of a demon known as Tsedak in Guru Ghantal monastery. It is believed that when this demon was angry, it caused damage to the area, such as diseases or crop failures. Finally a powerful *lama* came, performed certain rituals to pacify the demon, and tamed it. Then he took the image and locked it in a dark basement room. He advised people never to open the door and never to show the image daylight again. At that time this Lama, perhaps Trashi Tambell, moved all the other idols to another monastery known as Toopchiling. This monastery is almost at the bottom of the hill, close to the main road and easily accessible to visitors. Currently a road for vehicles has been constructed up to this part of the monastery. A few years ago, while constructing a new building for the monastery at this place, people found a number of wooden statues under the earth and gravel of the old building. They look several hundred years old.

There is a folk song in Lahoul about the Guru Ghantal monastery and the arrival of Lama Trashi Tambell in Lahoul. It begins:

Tandi Ghushe ri sala na gwayi ji o
Upuru Ghantaleri dosha na bhooyi o,

See Appendix A for complete song.

The literal translation of this song is as follows:

Once the *kothis* (counties) of Tandi and Gushal suffered a crop failure. They believed that it was due to the ill effects of Guru Ghantal. So the three *lambardars* (headmen) got together and went to Negi Hari Chand, the ruler of the valley. When Hari Chand asked what brought the three headmen to him, they lodged their complaint with him. Negi Hari Chand then wrote a letter addressed to Trashi Tambell, and sent two men to his home in Ladakh with it. The great lama came from Ladakh to Kolong. The Thakur of Kolong, Hari Chand, and his queen came to see the guru. They paid homage to him. The great guru then went over the mountain, on to Gondhla. The Thakur of Gondhla and his queen came to pay their respects to this great lama. After that the guru then went to Guru Ghantal monastery. Two men were sent to Gushal and Mooling to call the carpenter and mason, Raghu and Sugura, who built a new building for the monastery. The crops of Tandi and Gushal improved after that.

The idol of Guru Ghantal was stolen in the 1960s from this monastery. The head was brought back later, however, without the thief's being caught. It was suspected that the image brought back may not have been the original one. Once I had a chance to talk to Lama Domba and asked about this rumor. He told me that the then Deputy Commissioner of Lahoul was the one who had brought the image back and had asked the lamas if the image was the real one. He added that out of the fear of the Deputy Commissioner all the lamas said that it was the original one, but in fact most of them felt that it was not. There is no way it can be confirmed now, unless an archaeologist could determine the age of the idol.

Kardang Monastery

Kardang monastery is one of the most famous centers of Tibetan Buddhism today. Dozens of monks and nuns, residing in the monastery, have devoted their entire lives to meditation and

study of Buddhist scriptures in pursuit of Nirvana. For the last ten or twelve years, three nuns from the West have also been studying Buddhist philosophy in this monastery. The sect of Buddhism that this monastery is affiliated with is called the Drugpa sect. The origin of the Drugpa sect is considered to be Bhutan, from which it spread to Tibet, Ladakh, Lahoul etc. However, there are some people who think that its origin was Tibet. Being affiliated with the Drugpa sect does not mean that study is limited to one particular branch or line of thought. Instead, the studies are very broad. Besides studying various schools that originated in Tibet, they generally study most of Mahayana and Hinayana tenet system as well.

This monastery was established some time in the 11th or 12th century. However, it is said that it was in fairly bad shape until 1912, when Lama Norbu from the neighbouring village of Gwazang re-established it. Norbu travelled extensively in Tibet and Bhutan, studying under famous scholars of Buddhism like Thogdan Rimpoche, until he reached a stage when he himself could be called a *Rimpoche* (exalted one). He then came back to Kardang and revitalized the Kardang monastery. New structures were raised and extensive study and teaching of the scriptures was initiated. Lama Norbu is credited with having acquired the power of freeing his soul at will. It is difficult to say whether he or anyone else could acquire the power to change the time of death at will. However, it is said that the lamas in this monastery have definitely mastered the technique of freeing their souls at the time of death, sitting in meditation with full control over mind and body; rather than being at the mercy of nature on their deathbeds losing their senses until the body is declared dead. There have been many examples of exhibiting such control. In 1979, the Vaidya of Sumnam village, who was associated with this monastery, though he did not live there, exhibited such a phenomenon when he died. Declaring his death, he sat down in meditation. However, in his case he did not die on that day, while a colleague of his, from this monastery (perhaps Lama Paljor of Gwazang village, though I could not confirm it) was there to see him. He told the family members that there were some obstructions, and as such the next day when he could release his soul would be the 13th day from the previously declared date. This came true.

Lama Norbu died as the head of Kardang monastery. His ashes after cremation were kept in a *Chhorten* (a pyramid type structure, also called Chaitya in Sanskrit) in this monastery. After Lama Norbu, Lama Kunga became the head. Kunga was born in Tibet, but was supposed to be the reincarnation of a previous abbot of Kardang, as such he was brought to this monastery to assume his previous position.

The process of finding a reincarnation is quite elaborate. First, a hint is given by the child himself, when he or she talks about his previous life, before he comes to know much about the present life. In some cases, before dying, the person leaves a clue to the approximate vicinity where he will be born again. In such cases, people keep a watchful eye on every child born in that area. Once it is suspected that a child is a reincarnation of someone, a group of examiners go there and put the child to the test. One of the tests used is to put some personal items such as books, rosaries, bowls that belonged to the person, mixed with similar articles of others. The child is asked to choose the items that belonged to him. If the child passes all the tests, he is declared the reincarnation.* The parents relinquish the child, allowing him to resume his previous life's position. Such children are known as Gyachhul. After selection they go through a rigorous training under the most capable teachers until they attain their majority.

Two children have been found in Lahoul in recent years, who are supposed to be reincarnations of famous Lamas. One of them is Prabhat, considered to be the reincarnation of the head lama of Rizong monastery in Ladakh. The other one is Ajay, who is considered the reincarnation of one of the teachers of the present Dalai Lama. Both of them were taken away from their parents to let them re-assume their respective positions. Prabhat, however, does not live in the monastery any more, and leads a common householder's life.

Lama Kunga was a very learned man and was very well respected within the valley. He also possessed much spiritual power. He died in 1965. His ashes are also kept in a *chhorten* in the

*A description of such tests given to the present Dalai Lama can be found in his book *My Land My People*, (New York: Potala Corp., 1977).

monastery. After Kunga, Hishe Rangdol became the head lama of Kardang. Hishe also was born in Tibet, and was the head of Kifug monastery in Tibet. When China attacked Tibet, he escaped to India. Hishe's grandfather, who also lived in Kifug, was the Guru of Kunga. Hishe Rangdol, though highly learned, does not seem to possess the same dynamism and charisma as Kunga.

Kardang monastery has many achievements to its credit in the field of Buddhist philosophy and spirituality. A few years ago three monks named Nawang, Angrup and Paljor sat down for a marathon meditation of three years, four months and eight days, a record in Lahoul, if not in India or the world. They went into seclusion for meditation on October 13, 1973, and came out on February 21, 1977. During this period they did not see anyone's face except for an occasional visit from the Buddhist doctor just to check their well being. If they needed anything, they left a note outside the door. When the people brought the required item, they left it outside the door, tapping on the door lightly to let them know they'd been there. During this time only one unfortunate incident happened; the father of Nawang died before they completed their meditation.

According to Tibetan Buddhism, this type of meditation is supposed to last three years, three months and three days. However, in this case when they completed this period, some other lamas went in. Together they spent another month and five days in meditation. These three monks were then entitled to be called *gaylong* (lifelong celibates) and are considered to be among the highest ranked ones in the Lahoul valley. On the 21st of February they came out of seclusion and met with other lamas only. The next day they met their parents. On the 26th, they gave a *darshan* to the general public. The scene was described as very touching. Tears of happiness rolled down the faces of the visitors, while the monks stood there with smiles on their bright, lustrous, serene faces. During their retreat their hair and beards had grown long. Their ages at the completion of their meditation were 27, 31 and 29 respectively. Since then several other monks have completed this three year three month and three day meditation.

Thus the monastery has maintained a high standards and traditions of Buddhism, far from being an object of derision for any sensible person.

Shashur and other Monasteries

In the midst of a cedar forest, there is a monastery known as Shashur Gompa, on the Bhaga river's right bank. Shashur means red cedar. The monastery is situated a few miles up a hill above Keylong, the district headquarters of Lahoul.

As already mentioned, the sect of Buddhism followed in most of these monasteries in Lahoul is Drugpa. However, that does not mean that the lamas here disregard other sects; on the contrary, they study the theories and practices of most of the other sects of Tibetan Buddhism, in particular the Ge-lug and Nyng-ma. So far as the practice of Buddhism, its philosophy and rituals are concerned, one may not notice differences between one monastery and another. The differences will be apparent to those who go into the more subtle points of the rituals and practices. One apparent distinction, however, is that in some of these monasteries there are group studies and meditation. While in others it is mainly an individual effort, although even in those monasteries there may be certain rituals that are performed in a group. The lamas belonging to different sects generally do not hold any sectarian differences against each other; instead they respect their superiors or more learned ones irrespective of the school they belong to. For example Lama Paljor of Gwazang is one of the highly learned men who primarily follows the Nyng-ma school and belongs to Gwazang monastery, yet he is equally respected in Kardang monastery which primarily follows the Drug and Ge-lug schools. Lama Paljor frequently visited the Kardang monastery, which is only half a mile away from Gwazang monastery, before his death in 1992.

One unique activity in the Shashur monastery is its annual festival called *Shashur Tsheshu*. Every year around the month of June, a day is chosen, according to the Buddhist astrological calendar, for this celebration. The main programme in the celebration is what is wrongly termed as "devil dance". This dance or rather dance-drama is performed by several monks wearing the masks of various deities and devils, including clowns in their own style.

So far as the structure of the monastery is concerned, it is similar to most other Buddhist monasteries. The outer structure, particularly the entrance, is typical of Tibetan monasteries, with a

large door and pillars and architraves of carved wood full of paintings. Inside there are a few rooms full of busts and images of Buddha, Bodhisattvas and famous lamas. There are also a few shelves of books, musical instruments, and walls covered with *thankas*.

The other monasteries in this area are the Tayul Gompa, Lapchang Gompa, and Piyukar Gompa. These monasteries are comparatively smaller and have fewer monks and nuns. Dr. H.V. Guenther, chairman of the Department of Far Eastern Studies at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada, spent several years in these monasteries, studying and practising Buddhist philosophy. He is still remembered by the people. Professor Guenther has written nearly a dozen books on various subjects of Tibetan Buddhism. When I met him, he told me that he really missed the place and called it his home.

Neel-Kantha

Although there is no temple at present in a place called Neel-Kantha, yet it seems that there will be one very soon. There is a lake in the precincts of Naingahar near Chokhang village in the Pattan valley, which has recently become prominent as a holy place.

It is believed that Lord Shiva meditated at this place. The word Neel-Kantha essentially means the blue throat. In a mythological story it is said that when the gods and demons churned the ocean, they came up with a pot of elixir and a pot of poison. They did not know what to do with the poison. Finally, Lord Shiva drank it, but held it in his throat without letting it go to his stomach. The poison burnt his throat, which then became blue, and in order to cool it he took a snake and wrapped it around his throat and neck since the body of snake remains cold all the times.

Until very recently this place did not have much significance. People used to claim to have seen a headless buffalo in this lake. This, however, had no significance as far as the holiness of a place is concerned other than just a mystery. A few years ago when someone went to *Darri yatra*, a *gura* asked him why he had to come all the way to Mani Mahesh Kailash when he could have worshipped Lord Shiva at Neel-Kantha. Perhaps this was the origin

of this place's gaining popularity. Since then it has been considered one of the holy places in the valley. Many people started visiting the place hoping to get their desires fulfilled. Some seem to have had strange experiences, while others may not have felt anything special.

Some of the experiences that people relate are quite fascinating. It is said that people had visions of buildings and trees and so forth inside the lake. A *Gaddi Gura* (shepherd medium) is said to reside there, who asks people to sit near the lake in meditation and concentrate while staring at the lake. After some time huge buildings and trees appear deep down at the bottom of the lake. Those who do not believe in such miracles argue that the lake is surrounded by high mountain peaks and trees and jungle at the lower ranges. What people see is the reflection of the mountains and trees in the water and the waves and ripples in the water make the mountains look like buildings with windows. One person who had an experience is a young man who recently got his master's degree from Jawahar Lal Nehru University in New Delhi. Being a young man with modern education, I would expect him to be the least orthodox, much less superstitious. When I presented him with the non-believers arguments, he said, "Sure you can see the reflections of the mountains and trees there all the times, but can't you distinguish between the two. A reflection is always upside down. Granted that it will be difficult to make distinction in case of buildings whether they are upside down or not, but how can you mistake an upside down tree, when you see the top pointing down and trunk up close very clearly in the case of reflection? What I saw was a road or path leading towards a building. On both sides of the road there were trees with roots down towards the bottom of the lake and the branches and leaves up. The details of the building were not very clear, yet you could see the doors and windows." He further said, "The trouble with most people is that they can not concentrate at all, while it requires a deep concentration before you can have any vision."

In another story I was told by a doctor friend that their chief medical officer visited that place. This medical officer had a daughter for whom he had been trying to arrange a marriage for the last ten years or so. He was looking for some highly placed officer as

his son-in-law, and his first preference was a pilot. Soon after this visit his daughter married a pilot. Since then the doctor became an ardent believer.

Hearing such stories, curiosity is aroused in the minds of many people and so a group of trekkers decided to see this place. When they left the nearest village, only a few miles away, they were warned not to take any meat or eggs with them, but they did not pay any heed. This group got lost and could not find the lake and returned to the village late at night. Next day they took a guide with them, but again they took eggs with them. With the help of the guide they, of course, found the place, but when they sat down to eat their lunch, to their surprise, out of forty eggs they found only two worth eating. All others were rotten and they could not eat them. Thus through occurrences such as these, this place has been gaining popularity very fast. It is rumoured that some people are planning to erect a temple at this lake.

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Mythological Stories of Lahoul

There are several mythological stories connected with the area of Lahoul in general, the rivers Chandra and Bhaga, or the Himalaya and its ranges in and around Lahoul. In other chapters I have stated that the mythological stories depict certain truths, but in parables or allegorical form. These symbolic languages are not simple to decode, as Dr. Evans Wentz pointed out in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* that the guardians of philosophy—whether East or West—used symbolic language to which only they knew the key. In some chapters I have made an attempt to decode some of the myths in order to explain certain facts. In this chapter, however, I shall simply present the stories as they are and shall leave it up to the reader to interpret them.

Stories of Shiva and Parvati

Shiv Puran, one of the ancient scriptures of the Hindus, the foundation of the Shiva-Shakti doctrine, contains the mythological stories related to Lord Shiva. His wife Parvati is mentioned to have meditated on Drilbu, a mountain between the rivers Chandra and Bhaga. In the *Shiv Puran* she first appears as Sandhya, and then as Arundhati. Later she appears as Uma or Sati and finally as Parvati. As Uma or Sati and as Parvati she marries Shiva in two different life-times. These stories are narrated in the following pages. The stories also contain the Hindu trinity—Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva as Rudra, the Destroyer. This trinity can also be interpreted as birth, life and death, the three aspects which every being experiences. In the *Shiv Puran*, Shiva or Shankar is

also presented as triune or the unity of the three. Parvati is presented as Shakti (energy) or as Durga, the mother of the universe.

There is a sedimentary strata of red and brown lines throughout the southern range of the Himalaya passing through Lahoul. According to the local myth, this is the path of the marriage procession of Lord Shiva and Parvati. As mentioned before, the belief is that Parvati lived and meditated on Drilbu, in the eastern end of Lahoul. Drilbu is considered to be one of the holy places in Lahoul. Every year a number of people take a *Parikrama* or circumambulation of it—a form of worship. The junction point of the rivers Chandra and Bhaga called Sangam—between the villages of Tandi and Gushal—is also considered to be one of the most sacred places. Shiva, also known as Shankar or Rudra, is supposed to dwell at Mani Mahesh Kailash in the western end. I am not quite sure whether from this point, Mani Mahesh, one can see the peak of the real Kailash, which is in Tibet or this is some other peak, which people have accepted as the Kailash mentioned in the scriptures. Drilbu being on the eastern end and Mani Mahesh on the western end, the marriage procession passed through the southern range connecting these two mountains.

Story of Sandhya and Arundhati

Brahma, the creator of the universe, narrates this story to Narad, the immortal omnipresent Muni. From Brahma's eyebrows a beautiful girl was produced whose name was Sandhya (twilight). She was so beautiful that on seeing her, Brahma's own desires were aroused. Shiva came to know of it and he was furious. He scolded Brahma and said, "No one should ever have lustful thoughts on seeing his mother or daughter or sister or his brother's wife, while for you Brahma, the creator of the universe, the knower of everything, it is a shame." Humiliated, Brahma started perspiring and a few drops of his sweat fell on the earth, from which the living beings were produced.

Sandhya came to know of this. Feeling she would be the biggest sinner if the desires of her father or brothers were aroused simply by looking at her, she decided to burn herself alive in a remorse. She also thought of leaving a curse that no one should

have sexual desires immediately after birth. With this in mind she went to the bank of the river Chandra-Bhaga to perform *tapasya* (penance). Brahma came to know of this and felt sorry for himself as well as her. He asked Rishi Vashisht to go and see Sandhya and give her initiation and guidance since she was quite ignorant about meditation and penance. Sandhya was sitting near the red lake on the mountain near the Chandra river. Addressing her, the gorgeous one, Vashisht asked her who she was and what she was doing there. Sandhya looked at this bright-faced Rishi and said, "Venerable Sage, I came here on this barren mountain for penance. If you consider me worthy of being your pupil, then guide me as to what I should do." Since Vashisht already knew everything, instead of asking her many questions, he proceeded to give her instructions. He told her to meditate upon Shankar and use "Aum Namō Shankaraya" as her prayer. He added that Shankar would fulfill all her wishes. She was also told that she should not eat anything and should survive only on water. After giving her all these instructions, Vashisht left her there to let her start her penance.

Sandhya sat there and meditated for four ages. At the end of the fourth age, Shankar appeared to her in the sky. Being pleasantly surprised and perplexed, Sandhya closed her eyes. She praised Shankar and prayed silently. Shankar entered her heart and enlightened her. He said, "Oh greatest of the devotees! I am pleased with your devotion, now you can ask me for anything you desire." Sandhya said, "Oh lord of the lords! If you think that I have been purified from my sins and if you consider me worthy enough, then ordain that no human should have sexual desire right from birth. Furthermore, if you consider me pious, then let there be no one more pious than me. Lastly, if I am born again, then the man I marry should not consider me as a sex object, but instead he should be like a good friend. Also any man who will look at me with desire should become impotent." "So be it," said Shankar, "from now on human life will be divided into four stages—infancy, childhood, youth and old age. It will only be at the third stage that they will be potent. Your other wishes also will be fulfilled. Your husband will be a very fortunate one, and will live for seven *kalpas* (7000 ages). I have blessed you with everything you asked for. Now let me tell you about your future. You are destined to be

burned alive. Look down there at the base of this mountain. There is a hermitage of sages at the junction of the rivers Chandra and Bhaga. There Medhatithi has been performing oblation for the last twelve years. If you go there and jump into that sacrificial fire, you will become his daughter. While jumping into the fire, think of someone whom you wish to marry. Also, after four *yugas* (ages), at the end of the Sat Yuga, you will once again meditate on this mountain. Then in the beginning of the Traita Yuga, you will become the daughter of Daksha and will marry the one you desire." After telling her all this, Shankar disappeared.

Sandhya accordingly went down to where the sages were performing *yagya* and quietly jumped into the sacrificial fire. While jumping into the fire she could not think of anyone to marry except the celibate sage Vashisht, her instructor. Due to the blessings of Shankar, no one saw her jump into the flames that consumed her in no time. The sun took her body and divided it into two parts. The upper part became the dawn, placed between night and morning, and the lower part became dusk, placed between evening and night.

When the *yagya* was over, the Rishis found a newborn, golden baby in the ashes. Medhatithi took her in his lap and gave her the name Arundhati. One day when Arundhati was five, Vishnu and Shiva came and married her to Vashisht.

Story of Uma or Sati

When Shiva scolded Brahma for looking at his own daughter with lust, Brahma was humiliated. He wanted to take revenge by getting Shiva himself involved with a woman. Shiva or Shankar had taken birth as Rudra. Brahma sent Kamdev (Eros) along with his wife Rati (goddess of love) and Vasant (Spring) to arouse the desire and lust of Rudra, but all in vain. Seeing his failure, Brahma went to consult Vishnu. Vishnu asked what had brought the creator of universe up to him. Brahma said, "In the beginning of creation several sons, Dharma (duty or virtue), Kama (desire), and Daksha (intelligence) were born out of my body. Then a beautiful girl Sandhya was born out of my eyebrows. Seeing her beauty, my own desires were aroused for which Shankar scolded me so much that I am still burning in the fire of disgrace and shame. This fire will go

out only when Shankar himself gets involved with women.”

Hearing these words from Brahma, Vishnu said, “You, the creator of the universe, the knower of everything, how could you think of such a thing for Shankar? It is not worthy of you to be jealous of him. However, if you insist, then I shall ask you to meditate upon Durga (Shakti) and appease her. If you can please her then she will take birth as a girl and marry Shankar. Ask Prajapati Daksha to do penance in order to receive Durga as his daughter. You know Shakti, the mother of the universe, in her various forms as Sarsvati the wife of Brahma, Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu and Uma, the wife of Shankar. Therefore, go and meditate and pray to her to manifest as Uma.

Upon his prayer and penance, Durga with four arms, riding a tiger, appeared to Brahma. She asked him what had made him remember her, and what she could do for him. Brahma was pleased and said, “Oh Mother of the Universe! I want you to attract Shiva with your *maya* (illusion). Daksha is meditating at the northern shore of Kshir ocean to receive you. I request that you be born as his daughter and marry Shankar.”

Durga looked a little worried and said, “Oh Brahma! Why do you speak like an ignorant? How can you think of attracting Shankar to illusion? He is flawless. He is the master of illusion, and I am always at his service. How can I bring him under my control, when I am myself only an illusion?” However, she thought that if she could not fulfill the wishes of Brahma, then the whole tradition of penance would be ruined. Therefore she said, “Oh Brahma! There is no one who can attract Shankar, but I promise you that I will do my best. I shall incarnate as Sati and worship Shankar to please him.” After giving her promise, she disappeared.

Daksha, on the other hand, had been doing penance for 3000 years. At the end of that period, Durga appeared to him and asked what he wanted from her. Daksha said, “I am only doing this penance for Brahma’s sake. I pray thee to be born as my daughter and then marry Shankar.” Durga promised to fulfill his desire and soon a daughter was born to Daksha’s wife. They called her Uma. She grew by leaps and bounds and while her parents began to worry about arranging her marriage, Uma had begun to meditate and worship Shankar. Her mother provided a place at home for her

meditation. Knowing this, Brahma, Vishnu and others visited her, and were amazed by the profundity of her devotion. Then they went to Mount Kailash and prayed to Shiva. Shiva asked the reason for their visit. Brahma and Vishnu said in one voice, “Both of us are married and we think that now you also should get married. You had promised that on appearing as Rudra, you would take care of this world. So we request you to fulfill your promise.” They also told him about Uma’s devotion towards him. At this Shiva replied, “I shall comply with your request, but on one condition. The woman should act and behave according to my will. She should fully trust me. If at any time she loses her faith in me, I will give her up.”

Shiva then appeared to Uma. Seeing her devotion, he was very pleased and they fell in love with each other. Uma asked him to marry her in the presence of her father. Giving her his promise, Shiva came back to Mount Kailash and thought of Brahma. Brahma appeared there at once. Shiva told him to go and ask Daksha to arrange the marriage; so Brahma became the go-between taking messages from one side to the other. Finally everything was settled and the marriage took place on the last Sunday of Chaitra (March-April) when the moon was rising and the sun was in the sign Falguni. After the wedding Shiva and Uma returned to Kailash. They lived there for twenty-five years. Then, one day Uma expressed a desire to go and live somewhere else. She was tired of the rains in the rainy season at Kailash. Shankar said, “Dear, wherever I go with you, the clouds will follow us. So it does not matter where we live. However, I think the Himalaya is the best place to live. It is peaceful and only the lovers of peace live here. It is the home of the yogis and sages.” Uma accepted the proposal and they lived in the Himalaya for ten thousand years.

One day all the Rishis and Munis were performing *yagya*. All the gods were present there. Shankar and Uma also were there to attend the *yagya*. After some time Daksha arrived. All the Rishis and gods paid respect to Daksha, but Shankar did not. Daksha was furious saying that Shiva, his own son-in-law, did not care for him. He cursed Shiva and began to hate him.

Sometime later Daksha performed a *yagya* at his place. He invited everybody except Shiva. When Uma saw all the gods were going somewhere, she asked her husband where they were going.

Shankar told her about Daksha's *yagya*. Uma then asked him why they were not going. Shiva told her about Daksha's hatred towards him. Uma pleaded that they should go, but Shankar refused. Then Uma said, "A daughter does not need an invitation to go to her father's home. So I will go." Shiva tried to stop her, but she insisted and left. Unfortunately Daksha made it difficult for her by insulting and calling Shiva names. Uma could not tolerate these insults to her husband. She decided to burn herself rather than listen to her father's meanness. She sat down facing north and produced a fire out of herself, which consumed her immediately.

When Shankar came to know of this he was furious. Pulling a hair from his head and threw it on a rock and produced a giant named Vir Bhadra who put himself at Shiva's service. Shiva told him of Daksha and ordered him to destroy the *yagya*. Vir Bhadra went there and polluted the sacred fire. He killed several Rishis and finally chopped off the head of Daksha. Thus Shankar's anger was pacified and he went on to do penance.

Parvati's Tapasya and Marriage

There was a demon named Tarkasur. He pleased Brahma with his rigorous penance and meditation. Brahma granted him his wishes. Tarkasur demanded that he should be so strong that no one could kill him except the son of Shiva, if there be one. After having that wish granted, Tarkasur began making troubles for all of the gods, but no one could do anything to him. The gods knew the kind of blessing Tarkasur had received from Brahma. As such, they went to Brahma and requested him to undo his blessing. The gods told him that Tarkasur even dethroned Indra, the king of the gods. Brahma told them that once a blessing is given, it cannot be revoked. He did, however, promise to ask Tarkasur not to exploit the blessing. Brahma also advised the gods to go and pray to Shankar to marry. Only a son born out of his energy could destroy Tarkasur.

The gods prayed to Jagdamba or Shakti—who had incarnated as Uma in a past life to marry Shankar—to return as Himachal's daughter and marry Shiva again. At the same time, Himachal's wife Maina also had been praying to Shakti to be born to her as her daughter. Shakti, or Jagdamba, the mother of the universe, was

pleased with these prayers and meditation and promised that she would fulfill their wish. After some time, Maina gave birth to a beautiful daughter and named her Parvati.

One day Shankar came to Himachal and told him that he would like to meditate near the source of the Ganges in the Himalayas. He asked Himachal to keep everyone away as he did not want to be disturbed. Himachal arranged everything to his full satisfaction. One day Himachal took some fruit and flowers and went to see Shankar with his daughter Parvati. He introduced Parvati to Shankar, asking him for permission to allow Parvati to serve him. Shankar refused, saying that beautiful women cause disturbance in the minds of meditators. He did not want to have women around. At this Parvati replied, “Oh *Antaryami* (the knower of mind), you have dedicated yourself to a great penance. Tell me isn’t that penance full of Shakti (energy)? This Shakti itself is the *prakriti* (nature) of all *karma* (actions). From this Shakti only all creation has evolved. If there were no nature how then could there be name and form?”

To this Shankar replied, “Parvati, I have destroyed nature through my penance. Now I am in my absolute form.” Parvati laughed and said, “Oh king of the yogis, what are you saying? The universe itself is grounded in Prakriti. How can anything exist without Prakriti? Everything is due to Prakriti and Purusha, and I am that Prakriti and you are that Purusha. All your attributes are due to me only.”

Thus presenting the arguments of the Sankhya Shastra, Parvati convinced Shankar. He gave her permission to come and serve him. However, Shankar thought that Parvati’s ego was inflated and made up his mind that he would crush her ego. She would have to meditate and do penance, only then would he marry her.

On the other side, the gods were getting anxious. They sent Kamdev (Eros) along with his wife Rati to arouse the desires of Shiva so that he would marry Parvati. Kamdev threw his soft arrows of sensuality at Shiva. In the meantime, Parvati also had come there adorned and looking extremely beautiful, as if she was there just to help Kamdev. Shankar’s desires arose. He felt pleasure looking at Parvati. He thought that if just looking at her gave him so much pleasure, what would happen if he embraced her? Suddenly he realized that he was flawless, formless and attributeless.

How could such desires come up in him? Looking around, he noticed Kamdev sitting in a tree shooting arrows of desire at him. Enraged Shankar's third eye opened and a flame shot forth and roasted Kamdev then and there.

Rati felt miserable and thought that the gods did an injustice to her by sending Kamdev for such an impossible task. At this all the gods got together and went to Shankar. They told him about Tarkasur and explained that Kamdev was simply trying to help the gods. On the other side Narad, the omnipresent Muni, came to Parvati and told her that she would not have Shankar until and unless she meditated and prayed herself. He also added that by simply doing his service, Shankar was not going to be pleased. Taking Narad's advice, Parvati asked her parents for permission to leave home in order to do a rigorous penance. Her mother tried to stop her. She told Parvati that she could pray and meditate at home. She was just a young princess and it would be too harsh for her to go out and away from home and live like a hermit. Parvati insisted, until Maina agreed to let her go. Parvati went near the source of the Ganges, where Shankar used to meditate. She started her *tapasya* there. In the heat of summer she built a fire around her and meditated in the midst of it. During the cold winters she meditated in cold water. She meditated like this for three thousand years. The whole universe was heated by her *tapa*. All the gods were surprised when they saw it. No one had ever done that before. They went to Brahma and Vishnu and requested that they plead with Shankar. They went and told Shankar the trouble Tarkasur was giving to all the gods and requested that he marry Parvati. Shankar replied that if he married then all the Rishis and Munis would do the same, which would ruin the tradition. However Brahma, Vishnu, and the other gods did not give up, instead they sat down there for prayer and meditation. When Shiva asked they reiterated their request. Shiva then said, "Although I consider marriage to be a jail, yet I am always under the control of my devotees. I cannot disappoint my devotees and as such I will have to consider your request." Shiva then sent the Sapt Rishis (the Seven Sages represented by the Big Dipper) to test Parvati.

The Seven Sages went in the disguise of Brahmins. They tried to convince Parvati to give up her penance and forget about Shiva.

They told her that Shankar was just a naked hermit who did not possess anything. They also expressed surprise that she trusted that cunning Narad, the liar. Parvati warned them not to say a word against Shankar. She did not give up her vow. The Seven Rishis then returned to Shankar.

Hearing their report, Shankar was pleased. Then he went himself in the disguise of a Brahmin. He said to Parvati, "Girl, who are you and why are you doing this *tapasya*?" Parvati said, "In my previous life I had burnt myself in the fire and this time also I was just going to do the same, but I stopped for a while when I saw you." After saying that, she actually jumped into the fire, but the flames became cold and could not burn her. The Brahmin said to her, "Now that even the fire could not burn you, tell me what you want?" Parvati then told him that she wanted to marry Shiva. The Brahmin then started talking against Shiva. He uttered whatever bad things he could think of against Shiva. Parvati got upset and asked her maid Vijya to throw the Brahmin out. She said that it was a sin even to hear bad things against Shankar, not to mention of saying or wishing something bad. She then herself prepared to leave that place. Seeing her leave Shankar appeared in his true form. He told her that he was simply testing her sincerity, otherwise she belonged to him life after life and then asked her to marry him. Parvati asked him to go to her father Himachal and beg her from him. She also added that in the meantime she would return home and tell her parents about it.

Shiva then came back to Mount Kailash. After some time he went to Himachal's house in the guise of a hermit and started dancing and playing the *damru*. Maina did not recognize him, but was pleased to see him dance. She gave him alms, but Shiva refused to take them and instead told her that if she was really happy with the dance, she should give her daughter to him. Maina was very much annoyed at his demand. In the meantime Himachal also returned from the Ganges after taking a bath. Maina told him of the hermit's rudeness. Himachal became very angry and threw the hermit out. Shiva then went back. After he left, Himachal realized that the hermit was none other than Shankar himself. Then they repented of their folly, but it was too late. Shankar had already disappeared.

Strangely enough the junior gods had by now forgotten about Tarkasur, and instead had become jealous of Himachal. They thought that if Shankar married Parvati, then Himachal would become too proud of himself for being the father-in-law of Shankar, the Supreme. So they decided to stop the marriage. They returned to Shankar and requested him not to marry Parvati. Shankar is also called Bhole Nath, which means the innocent master. Throughout the story he keeps repeating that he is under the control of his devotees, and that anyone who prays to him sincerely, would not be disappointed. Accordingly on the request of the gods, he went to Himachal in the disguise of a gentle Brahmin. He said to Himachal, "You are the king of all the mountains. Parvati is a princess, who has everything in abundance at her wish. On the other hand Shiva has nothing at all. His only possession is the bull he rides. Ghosts and demons are his worshippers and admirers. How can a princess like Parvati survive with somebody like Shankar?" He convinced both Himachal and Maina, and then returned. Maina warned Himachal that if he gave Parvati to Shankar, she would throw their daughter in the ocean and would herself commit suicide. However, Parvati was not going to give up. Nothing could dissuade her.

After going back to Kailash, Shankar recalled the Sapta Rishis. The Seven Sages appeared at once. This time Arundhati, the wife of Vashisht also came along with the Seven Sages. Shankar ordered them to go and appease Himachal and Maina for the marriage of their daughter to him. He said, "Tarkasur is creating too much trouble and must be destroyed. Moreover, Parvati also deserves to have her wish fulfilled."

The Seven Sages immediately went to Himachal. Arundhati tried to convince Maina, while the sages tried to convince Himachal. Arundhati argued with Maina that since Shankar is the creator of everything, and everything is due to him, then how foolish it would be to think of what he possesses and what he does not. He who has control over everything does not need to possess anything. They also threatened Himachal and Maina that if they did not give Parvati to Shankar willingly then he might come and take her by force. They reminded Himachal that earlier Himachal had gotten his wings cut off by Indra, this time he could get his peaks chopped off and his future generations would be destroyed. They also told

them the story of Aranya Raj, who saved his future generations by giving his daughter Padma to Pippilad Rishi in marriage under similar circumstances. Thus after long arguments, the Sapta Rishis succeeded. Himachal and Maina began preparations for the marriage. The Rishis returned to Kailash and told Shiva that everything was settled and the marriage procession would soon begin.

Himachal prepared a *mandap* (pavilion) one thousand yojna long (approximately 8000 miles) spread into forty thousand kos. Vishwakarma sculptured the images of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra and all the other famous gods, in that pavilion. His skill was so great that the images looked as if the real deities were sitting there. Himachal invited all the mountains—Mudrachal, Astachal, Udyachal, Malyachal, Giriraj, Dadur, Vishad, Gandhamadan, Karvir, Mahendra, Priyaj, Kronch, Purshotam, Neel, Sneel, Chitrakoot, Venkat, Sirigiri, Gokamukhi, Vindhyachal, Kalinger, Bahub Kailash and all. He also invited all the rivers—Son Bhadra, Narmada, Godavari, Yamuna, Brahma-putra, Sindhu, Satadru, Vipasa, Chandra Bhaga, and Bhagirathi Ganga.

On the other side, Shankar invited all the gods along with their entourages. Each brought several million followers, thus in all there were several billion who attended the wedding. Vishnu told Shankar that the marriage ceremony should be performed with proper rituals. Thus at Shankar's request, several famous Rishis like Kashyap, Atri, Garg, Shilad and Pipillad started the ritual with readings from the *Rigveda*, *Samveda* and *Yajurveda*. Following the rituals the party proceeded to Himachal's place. Shankar sent Narad ahead of the party to check the arrangements and to inform Himachal of the party's arrival. When Narad reached Himachal's pavilion, he was taken aback by the images of all the gods. He thought that the party had already arrived before him. After checking everything Narad returned along with Himachal's sons to receive the party. Shankar asked Narad if everything was alright and if Himachal was still ready to give his daughter. Narad told of the pavilion and described the illusion that the images created. The gods were frightened, but Shankar consoled them saying that there was nothing to fear, and so they proceeded.

Parvati's mother Maina was anxious to see Shankar. Shankar came to know of Maina's egotism. He asked Brahma, Vishnu and

the other gods to lead the party with their respective retinues. He himself along with his entourage remained at the rear of the procession. Maina's joy knew no bounds when she saw the gods in full regalia, shining bright like suns and moons. She would point to the leader of each group and ask if that was Shankar. Narad would introduce her to whomever she pointed to. Maina wondered how impressive Shankar must be when all the other gods who were under him were so majestic. She thought how lucky she was to have such a son-in-law. She praised the fortune of Parvati.

But to bruise Maina's pride, Shankar came at the end of the party looking ugly, with his naked body covered in ashes, and riding on an old bull. Among those who were with him, some had one eye missing, some had one leg missing, while others were just plain ugly. Pointing his finger, Narad introduced Shankar to Maina. Maina fainted and fell on the ground when she saw him. After a long struggle she regained consciousness. She cursed everyone, particularly the Seven Sages and Arundhati, for convincing her about this marriage. She scolded her daughter for choosing ugly old Shankar, when Brahma, Vishnu, the Sun, the Moon and all the other gods looked so majestic. Everyone, including Brahma and Vishnu tried to convince her of her error, explaining that their very existence depended on Shankar only. Himachal also tried to comfort her, insisting it was not the proper time to carry on like that, but Maina was not ready to listen to anybody. She threatened to kill both Parvati and herself rather than allow the marriage to take place. Finally, all prayed to Shankar to show his true form to Maina. She then beheld Shankar glittering like a thousand suns. Vishnu was serving him while the Sun held a parasol over him and the Moon decorated his body with jewels. Ganga and Yamuna fanned him. Angels danced around him. Seeing all that Maina's joy knew no bounds. She looked at her daughter and told her how lucky she was. She then apologized to Shankar for insulting him.

Thus the marriage ceremony was performed with full decorum. After the marriage Himachal requested that the party stay there for a few days more. The party accepted his invitation, and he kept them there a long time, each time extending his invitation for a few days more. Rati prayed to Shankar, saying everyone was happy except for her, since her husband Kamdev was burnt by Shankar's

rath. Shankar then returned Kamdev to life. After spending a long time in the Himalaya, one day Shankar decided that they must leave, and so they returned to Kailash.

Purport: In all these stories one might wonder why one Shiva marries Parvati several times in different life times, while Shiva never dies. The reason for that is that Shankar represents the eternal Godhead, while Parvati represents Nature. Nature changes, one cosmos dies and another is born, yet the supreme Godhead is eternal.

Myths of the River Chandra-Bhaga

According to this story, Chandra was the daughter of the Moon, although "Chandra" itself means moon, and Bhaga was the son of the Sun god. They were in love and wanted to be united in celestial marriage. With this intention they went to the top of Bara Lacha pass. As a lover's hide-and-seek game they decided to run from this pass in opposite directions and, encircling the vast tract of the Himalaya, meet again in Tandi for their eternal union. With this promise and hope they set off running, Chandra heading south, Bhaga north. Chandra was smart and swift, and even though she had a greater distance to cover, she reached Tandi before Bhaga. Not finding her lover there, she became anxious and worried, and headed toward the Bhaga valley in search of her lover. She saw Bhaga finally, coming slowly, struggling and tumbling through the rocks, and with a sigh of relief returned to the place appointed for their meeting. When Bhaga reached there, they performed their celestial marriage, each being lost in the other at the point called Sangam, which means union.

As a matter of fact, at the junction of the two rivers, one can actually see that Chandra, the right branch curls up towards the left that is Bhaga, before they meet.

In another version of the story it is said that their names instead of being Chandra and Bhaga, were Chandra Bhaga and Surya Bhaga, literally "Moon ran" and "Sun ran" indicating their dash from Bara Lacha pass.

It is said that once, long ago, Lahoul used to be the abode of the Rishis. They came in large numbers to this holy spot for meditation, and had hermitages built along the rivers Chandra and Bhaga

in which flowed milk instead of water. Nor did the rivers tumble through narrow gorges, but ran smoothly through grassy green plateaus. Sitting in meditation every morning, the sages would drink a cup of milk from the river before even opening their eyes.

Demons came to know of this wonderful land and the sages living here, and became jealous. To spoil the *samadhi* of the sages, the demons killed a number of animals and threw them in at the source of the rivers. As usual, the sages ended their meditation with a drink of milk from the river without looking at it. That day it tasted different. They opened their eyes and found the river running with blood instead of milk. The Rishis were upset by having their lifelong effort in meditation spoiled by the sin of drinking blood and left the valley. Out of anger, they also left a curse that the rivers from then on would run in deep gorges, and that no one would drink their water or use it for any other purpose.

In actuality, the rivers do run in deep gorges, making it impossible to use them for irrigation or any other purpose without considerable effort, and also the water remains muddy most of the time and is not suitable for drinking.

Stories About the Pandavas

Looking at the mythological and historical stories, it may seem a little strange at first that there is not a single story connected with Lord Krishna or Lord Rama, except for one folk song about the *Ramayana*, which is narrated earlier. At the same time there are several stories about Lord Shiva and the Pandavas in Lahoul. A careful study reveals that the local myths and stories are not totally baseless nor blindly fabricated by the local people, instead there are specific scriptural backgrounds to most of the stories. For example, the *Shiv Puran* is full of stories of Shiva's being in that area. Similarly in the *Mahabharata*, it is stated that the Pandavas went to the Himalaya on their last journey. At the same time there is not a single instance in which Lord Krishna or Lord Rama happened to be in that area in any of the scriptures. Therefore not having any local myths about them is quite understandable.

In the epic *Mahabharata*, it is mentioned that after their victory over the Kauravas and regaining their throne, the Pandavas did not

find solace or happiness and peace of mind. They blamed themselves for the destruction of the country, and the death of many people, including many of their own kin. So they handed over the throne to their grandson Parikshit and left on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas. This was their last journey; they died one by one on their way to the Himalayas, until only Yudhishtira, the eldest brother, was left alive. Then the chariot of Indra appeared, which took him straight to heaven. It is also believed that Droupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, died in Lahoul at Tandi on their way.

The myth of the formation of Rohtang pass by a kick from Bhimsen, the second of the Pandava brothers, was narrated in an earlier chapter entitled 'Rohtang Pass—The Gateway to Lahoul'.

Many strange objects, incidents, and occurrences are attributed to the Pandavas. For example there is huge pile of reddish-brown oblong boulders of smooth, hard granite at a place called Doran in the village of Lote. This pile of boulders is called Doran Gagar. Each of these boulders must weigh between three to ten tons. As such, there is no way that anybody could collect them there and no reason why anyone would want to. At the same time it is not a place where they could have been piled up by a flood or volcanic activity, at least not in the past couple of thousand years. The river flows nearby in the gorge at least a thousand feet below. The local myth is that one night the Pandavas were trying to make gold. They had not completed the process, when a jackal cried, "It's morning!" Suddenly all their work became a pile of stones and the Pandavas quit working and left the place.

There is a song also—though almost forgotten now—which describes the time of the Pandavas reign, the first few lines of which are:

Jab thi-e Panduru re raj,
 Tab thi-e nou gaja mahnu,
 Jab thi-e Panduru re raj,
 Tab thi-e hathire ghora,

The meaning of the song is that during the reign of the Pandavas, man stood nine yards tall. Also the horses were as large as elephants, lice were as lizards, and a single grain of wheat weighed one seer (over two pounds). I wonder if this indicates the dinosaur

age rather than Pandavas, or is just a symbolic representation of the Pandavas' greatness.

Gyab Kayser

Among the Buddhists there is a story of a great king named Gyab Kayser, that in some ways parallels the *Ramayana* of the Hindus. Just as the *Ramayana* is believed, by a majority of Indians, to be a record of historical event rather than being merely a mythological story, in the same way, the story of Gyab Kayser is considered factual, not mythological. There are, however, some mythological stories linked with Gyab Kayser. One of the myths is the formation of Rohtang pass, narrated earlier, others are mentioned in the section on 'Trade with Tibet'. Like the *Ramayana*, the story of Gyab Kayser varies in length from a simple short story to a several volume epic in the Tibetan books.

The story, in a nutshell, describes the deeds of Gyab Kayser, a famous king in the part of Tibet called Horr. He had a beautiful wife named Chocho Drugu. An angel named Ane Gurman always remained with him, though invisible to everyone else. He had a horse named Kyang Norbu, like Pegasus of the Greeks, and a bird named Thung-Thung, who was his messenger. Ane Gurman, Kyang Norbu and Thung-Thung were his greatest helpers, more so than any human, throughout his life. He had left Tibet in order to conquer the nearby countries. Perhaps Lahoul was one of them. During that time the king of China came and kidnapped his wife Chocho Drugu and plundered his kingdom. When Gyab Kayser did not return for a long time, the people of his country sent Thung-Thung looking for him to give him the message. Thung-Thung came and sat on the left shoulder of Gyab Kayser, indicating bad news. Gyab Kayser then returned to his kingdom immediately. When he found what had happened in his absence, he again raised an army and attacked China. He defeated the Chinese king and reached the palace where Chocho Drugu was held. However, it had been a long time since Chocho Drugu had been kidnapped, and she had accepted her kidnapper as her husband, by whom she had a son. When Gyab Kayser found her, she told him that he was too late.

The similarity between this story and the *Ramayana* is that

Gyab Kayser and Rama were both kings far away from their homes and kingdoms, during which time their wives were kidnapped by “demon” kings from nearby kingdoms. Both of them attacked and defeated their rivals. The dissimilarity is that in the *Ramayana*, both Rama and Sita were in exile when she was kidnapped, while Gyab Kayser had travelled alone. Chocho accepted her abductor as her husband and began a family with him, while Sita never accepted Ravana. Last but not the least, Rama is considered to be a reincarnation of a god (Vishnu), while Gyab Kayser, like Odysseus, was not divine but always had the goddess protecting and guiding him at every step.

Story of the Devil Lhebe

Lhebe was a devil who lived on a hill across the river Chandra in the Gondhla valley. He created havoc for the people living nearby. They were afraid of Lhebe even during the day while walking alone in that area. One day a powerful Buddhist lama was passing through, riding a horse. Lhebe came, climbed up on the back of his horse and tagged along behind the lama. The lama removed his zangoi—a cloth used by the lamas to wrap around like shawl—tied the devil with it, along with himself, and drove the horse as fast as he could. With his spiritual powers, the lama made Lhebe totally helpless before him. He then took the devil to his house. There he removed Lhebe’s godiri, his outer jacket, buried it under the fireplace, reciting some *mantras* which prevented Lhebe from removing it. The godiri bound Lhebe to the lama’s house. He could not leave it behind, nor could he remove it from beneath the fireplace because of the powerful *mantras* protecting it. The lama then used Lhebe as a slave, to do all types of hard labour. When sent to the forest to collect firewood, Lhebe returned with whole trees, piling them up in front of the house.

One day the lama went to a fair in a nearby village. Lhebe saw his chance to run away, but not without his godiri. He enticed the lama’s old mother to place her hand on the fireplace. The *mantra* could not affect Lhebe while her hand touched the fireplace, and so he was able to lift the stones and remove his godiri. Next he removed the old woman’s heart and set off for the fair. When the

lama saw the heart in Lhebe's hand and also noticed that he had his godiri on, he immediately knew what must have happened. He quickly ran home to find his mother dead, and chased Lhebe, but could not catch him again. From that day on, Lhebe never dared come around and bother people. He left for good and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Epilogue

Life is for living, no matter how and where. Mankind today is both hungry and haunted. Hungry for power, wealth, a better life and a good time; haunted because of its grim and bleak future. This is true everywhere in the world and especially true in India. Forgetting his real self, man is chasing his shadow and in that pursuit kills somebody here and hurts someone there, yet he never gets anywhere.

Over-population has been blamed as the cause of every misery everywhere. One forgets that it is the quality of the people that makes or mars a country rather than the quantity. There is nothing to be called a progress in a land where there are no people. The real reason for progress or backwardness or suffering is how a man behaves, lives, acts, and thinks. The very source of misery is the man himself just as the very cause of progress is the man himself. In reality over-population is not the sole cause of India's suffering, instead it is the mismanagement of her people, corruption, selfishness, and the bureaucracy which has become the real stumbling block in the way of progress, making everything a hurdle race.

I am very much in favour of controlling the population growth. But what I am opposed to is the effort of ignoring and covering up the real cause of suffering and lack of progress, and throwing all the blame on over-population. People forget that every individual's dishonesty and lethargy adds up to the retarding force. I don't have to give big illustrations to prove my point, instead one can just look at the living example of Japan. Japan is a small country, hardly as big as one state of India or that of the United States of America. It has the highest population density in the world. It is the first, and so far the only victim of a nuclear weapon and was almost ruined in the Second World War. Yet today Japan is one of the most advanced countries in the world. There is scarcely a country in the

world where one cannot find something that was not made in Japan. It has shaken the very roots of industrial giants like the United States of America, and has become a model for every country in the world. The very reason for this progress is individual honesty, hard work, sincerity and their national character. On the other hand there is Mexico, situated just next door to the most advanced and the richest country in the world, yet its people are poor, illiterate, and fully underdeveloped. The main cause of this is the widespread corruption.

The key to progress is a combination of honesty, sincerity, hard work, faith, confidence, and proper utilization of intelligence and manpower. If these ingredients are put together anywhere towards any kind of goal, there is nothing that can keep a nation or an individual from succeeding.

I have reached the conclusion that there is nothing that can uplift a country as a whole in an instant, like lifting a structure with a hoist. Nor there is any magic potion to do so. Instead it will have to be built brick by brick and stone by stone from every corner under a well structured plan. Each corner will have to be built by the people themselves who live in that corner, rather than waiting for someone to come and build it for them.

Lahoul has a great potential for building itself and becoming a model. It has most of the ingredients mentioned earlier while remaining fairly untouched by corruption and undermining forces. As I have mentioned in earlier chapters, the people of Lahoul can match the people of Japan in hard work, sincerity and intelligence. The women deserve special credit in that respect. However, many evils of modern times—corruption, lethargy and bureaucracy—are creeping in very fast under the name of modernization and in the garb of false progress. This is where the role of young educated people comes in. They must recognize these evils. They must be able to distinguish good from bad. The educated people must wake up, recognize the opportunity, and come forward to build the structure of progress in their own corner. I shall be there to do my part. Even this remote inaccessible corner of the earth can be built into a heavenly place only if its residents sincerely wish to do so, or else we shall be chasing our own shadow in search of peace and progress.

APPENDIX A

Folksongs of Lahoul

SONG ABOUT RAMAYANA

Rama o Lachhumana duye sonduru bhai	— repeat —
Rama o Lachhumana baruye mangai	— do —
Seeta o Rani baruye mangai	— do —
Triji barushe byahe bati ani	— do —
Naga loka gaiye nou nagini lagay, Surga lika gaiye Surja Chandura logay:	
Adamma puri behra banaye	— repeat —
Adamma puri nou lakha baage	— do —
Rama o Seeta pasa khelande	— do —
Rameri pasa sumulla baithi, Seete-ri pasa kumulla baithi;	
Teere nu baate seete-ri nazure	— repeat —
Sona singa harani nou lakha baage	— do —
Oomulla booti soomulla keeti, Soomulla booti oomulla keeti;	
Peto peto Rama taindune pasa	— repeat —
Rama o beera bana sumoori	— do —
Agai agai douri sona singa harani, Tetha peechhe douri Rama o Bira;	
Adu na baate sochunde laagi	— repeat —
Adu na baate phiri kari ayi	— do —
Doodhe-ri katoru baati charai	— do —
Doodhe-ri katoru rakuta bhari, Tanbhayo Lachhumana Rame-ri-païke:	
Gheewe sanjoti baati charai	— repeat —
Gheewe sanjoti ishunde lagi, Tan bhayo Lachhumana Rame-Ri païke:	
Peepule-ri patura aadi charai	— repeat —
Peepule-ri patura shookunde lagi,	

Tan bhayo Lachhumana Rame-ri paike . . .
so on and so forth.

SONG OF SHIVA AND PARVATI
(A.ghure on mythological story)

Manyi jamela poota je, babu jamela dheewa je;
Manyi jamela poota je, badhayi lagi je;
Badhayi lagi e, nawana rakhi je;
Babu e jamela dheewa je, badhayi lagi je;
Badhayi lagi e, nawana rakhi e,
Ishura beera e Gourani baru mangai je;
Aitware barey o Gourani baru mangi je;
Somare barey o byah othu keeti je;
Ishura beera Gaurani saithe byahi je;
Ishura Gauri e Rani jhagura keeti je;
Gouri na Rani e pyouke nu douri je;
Chandura mukha heri re Gouri,
Drui Raja Ram-eri bole je;
Gouri na Rani e rushi pyouke nu douri je;
Adhuna manju bate Jambu mata meri je;
Jaambu na mata e poochhune lagi je;
Gouri na Rani e kiji kame douri je;
Gouri na Rani Ishura saite jhagura keeti;
Gouri re pyouke o anukara geyi je;
Asanti aye teehara nukuru grasa keeye deunle.

SONG OF THE RANAS OF GUSHAL AND A GURA FROM WARI
(Ghure describing historical event)

Bola chanani na lagi o, rimiyan na jhimiyan,
Suruga bharoru taray;
Bola Ghoshe na lagi o, joguni re jaatray,
Gure ri gaiye paikay;
Bola aukhi na dhruye deeti, Birubala Rana,
Choura ditiru bolay;
Bola jori na manu, Wari jogu bhejay,
Trashi Parashi re poochhay;
Bola Trashi Parashi bola bolanday,
Nandi puturu meray pyaray;
Bola ageya chalunday, dhargeya nishani,
Peechhe chalande Nandi;

Bola pawa khelande Rokuru na Deburu,
 Dera khelande Nandi;
 Bola bhali kari nacha o Ghusheri gabhuru,
 Patuka pyari teri doulay;
 Bola bhali kari nacha o Ghusheri gharani,
 Moonga moti ghare ayey;
 Bola bhali kari nacha o Ghusheri ani,
 Ena-ni munari teri vatay.

SONG OF RUPI RANI
 (A ghure describing historical event)

Oorana shooki moorana shooki pani nahi teepu je.
 Ghunsheri panugana shookara geye je,
 Udho Mama Teetu Maita manasuba keeti je,
 Chambe ayi Udetu roura Rane-ri prouri khari je,
 Rane-ri prouri khari je pothi patiri heri je,
 Patiri andura je kali kuti bata je.
 Udho Mama Teetu Maita manasuba keeti je,
 Kali kuti bata deunle, dwara koonu pahre la,
 Patiri andura je kali bhiliri bata je,
 Udho Mama Teetu Maita manasuba keeti je,
 Kali bhiliri bata deunle chuli koonu pahre la;
 Patiri andura je Ghunguru Teeka bata je,
 Udho Mama Teetu Maita manasuba keeti je,
 Ghunguru Teeka bata deunle rasi koonu sahme la;
 Patiri andura je Ghoonguru Deyi bata je,
 Udho Mama Teetu Maita manasuba keeti je,
 Ghoonguru Deyi bata deunle Chamba kunu byahe la;
 Patiri andura je Rupri Rani bata je,
 Udho Mama Teetu Maita manasuba keeti je,
 Hori dabo pyouke Ghusharu choochu matu dabe la,
 Ghunguru Teeka ayela choochu to peeye la,
 Hori dabo pyouke Ghusharu teera matu dabe la,
 Ghoonguru Deyi ayela doomadu herey la.

SONG ABOUT SUN, MOON AND RAHU (LUNAR NODE)
 (A Ghure describing a mythological story)

Dharti mata e triye koori jami ji o,
 Jetha jetha kuriye namu naraina byahi ji o,

— Repeat —

Tethi kana kuriye panja pandupa byahi ji o,
 Tethi kana kuriye lacha charune gaiye ji o,
 Raghu domey o chori kari naina ji o,
 Surja chandura e aire nu gaiye ji o,
 Aire nu gaiye o mirga su mari ji o,
 Mirga mari e chuli chouka deeti ji o,
 Chuli chouka deeti o rasoni swari ji o,
 Rasoni swari e rasoni khayi ji o,
 Rasoni khayi o trishuna lagi ji o,
 Surja chandura e pani topunde gaiye ji o,
 Bune prehnare o khadura pani ji o,
 Upuru prehnare o neembula pani ji o,
 Eura prehnare o eka istiri aasay ji o,
 Surja Chandura e poochhune lagi ji o,
 Bolo isutiri kunu teri mata ji o,
 Bolo isutiri kunu tere pita ji o,
 Bate-ri mahnu e kya e projana lagi ji o,
 Bate-ri mahnu e bate jogu ghate ji o,
 Surja Chandura e ghiri phiri pochhunde ji o,
 Kunu tere mata e. kunu tere pita ji o,
 Dharti mata e maindune mata ji o,
 Vishnu bharrari maindune pita ji o,
 Surja chandura e muhe muh hairi ji o,
 Raghu re ghare o kya e kama kare la ji o,
 Nawe teri lachhuna e nawe teri trishuna ji o,
 Surja chandura e poochhune lagi ji o,
 Raghu re ghare of kya e kama kare la ji o,
 Shiburata kooti e manda pakayi ji o,
 Chandura bhai e apuni bouri cheeri ji o,
 Bouri cheeri o bhenni chhupayi ji o.

SONG ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRILOKNATH TEMPLE
 (A ghure on historical event)

Toonderi Rana o gwaru powala rakhi ji o,
 Gwaru powala menugeri dhara ji o,
 Lacha chari menugeri dhara ji o,
 Menugeri dhare o nyiji muruti asay ji o,
 Nyiji muruti o sata muruta niguti ji o,
 Gwalu powala e ghare jogu heri ji o,
 Roje roje o Menungeri dhare ji o,
 Roje roje yada bisoori ji o,
 Churure seenge o pathura bahnai ji o.

Bouti seibi o churu duhne geyi ji o,
 Shari churi o latana mari ji o,
 Shankheri dooguru e pathura lagi ji o,
 Bouti seibini gali mowali deeti ji o,
 Toonderi Rana e shadi kari ani ji o,
 Bolo powala e kya e kama keeti ji o,
 Jiya mere saiba e meri arja suno ji o,
 Menugeri dhare o nyiji muruti asay ji o,
 Nyiji muruti o sata muruta niguti ji o,
 Sata muruta khela khelande ji o,
 Toonderi Rana e hukuma deeti ji o,
 Gachho powala e pithi chaki ani ji o,
 Kano muruta e pithi chaki ani ji o,
 Powala putura e mainugeri dhara ji o,
 Kana muruta e pithi chaki ayi ji o,
 Toonderi Rana e jalakoonde aye ji o,
 Shawe koro e shawe dandwata kiti ji o,
 Prabhu Krishuna e kune muluke aye ji o,
 Bouti seibini jalakoonde ayi ji o,
 Shawe koro e shawe dandwata kiti ji o,
 Toonderi Rana e vihara basayi ji o,
 Toonderi Rana e Toondeh Pori chhari ji o,
 Lok o duniya e Toondeh Pori heri ji o,
 Loko duniya e ghiwe sanjoti bati ji o,
 Shawe koro e shawe dandawata kiti ji o,
 Prabhu Krishuna e kouna muluke aye ji o,
 Bayari padhura e dhumuku chherayi ji o.

SONG ABOUT GURU GHANTAL MONASTERY
 (A ghure on a historical event)

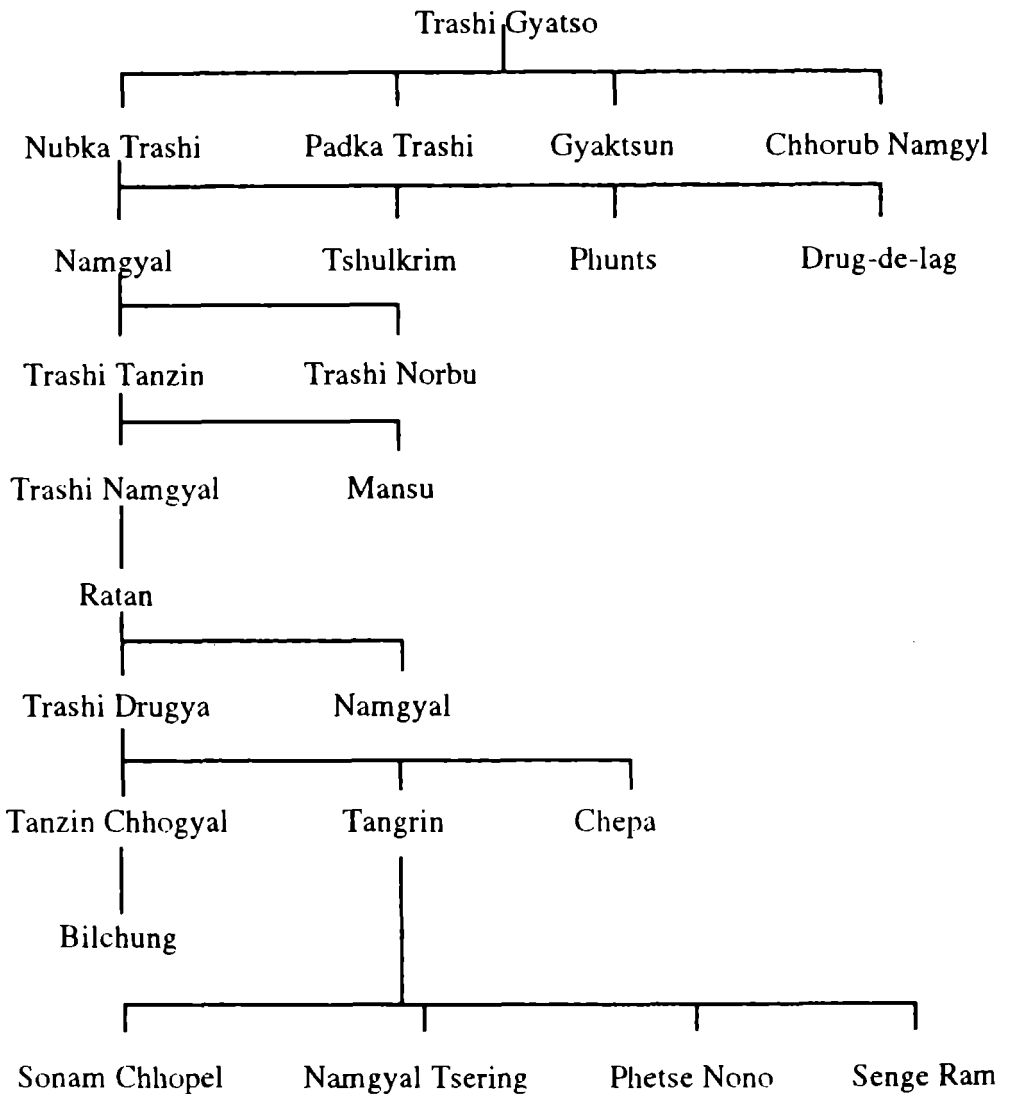
Tandhi Ghusheri sala na gwayi o,
 Upuru Ghantaleri dosha na bhooyi o,
 Triji lambura e dhoona chhoona kiti o,
 Negi Hri Chanda poochhune lagi o,
 Triji lambura e kiji kame aye o.
 Sonu lambura e jawaba diti o,
 Raghu lambura e jawaba diti o,
 Khoku lambura e jawaba diti o,
 Tandhi Ghusheri sala na gwayi o,
 Upuru Ghantale ri dosha na bhooyi o,
 Negi Hari Chanda kalaboota likhi o,
 Ayo kalaboota Tambell-eri utari o,
 Jori manu e Ladakheri bheji o,

Jori manu e Ladakha pouchi o,
Jori manu e Tambell-eri ghare o.
Badi guru e Kolonga pouchi o,
Kolongereri Thakura jalakoonde aye o.
Chocho saibini jalakoonde ayi o.
Lok o duniya e jalakoonde ayi o.
Badi guru e ranguteri phere o.
Badi guru e Gundhuleri kothi o,
Gudhuleri Thakura e jalakoonde aye o.
Chocho saibini jalakoonde ayi o.
Gundhuleri Thakura e badi adura rakhi o.
Badi guru e upuru Ghantala geyi o.
Jori manu e Ghushe jogu bheji o,
Trakhuna Raghu shadi kari ani o,
Trakhuna Suguru shadi kari ani o.
Upuru Ghantala nawe lagi bani o.
Upuru Ghantala banguleri nwhare o.
Tandi Ghuseri salana pheri o.

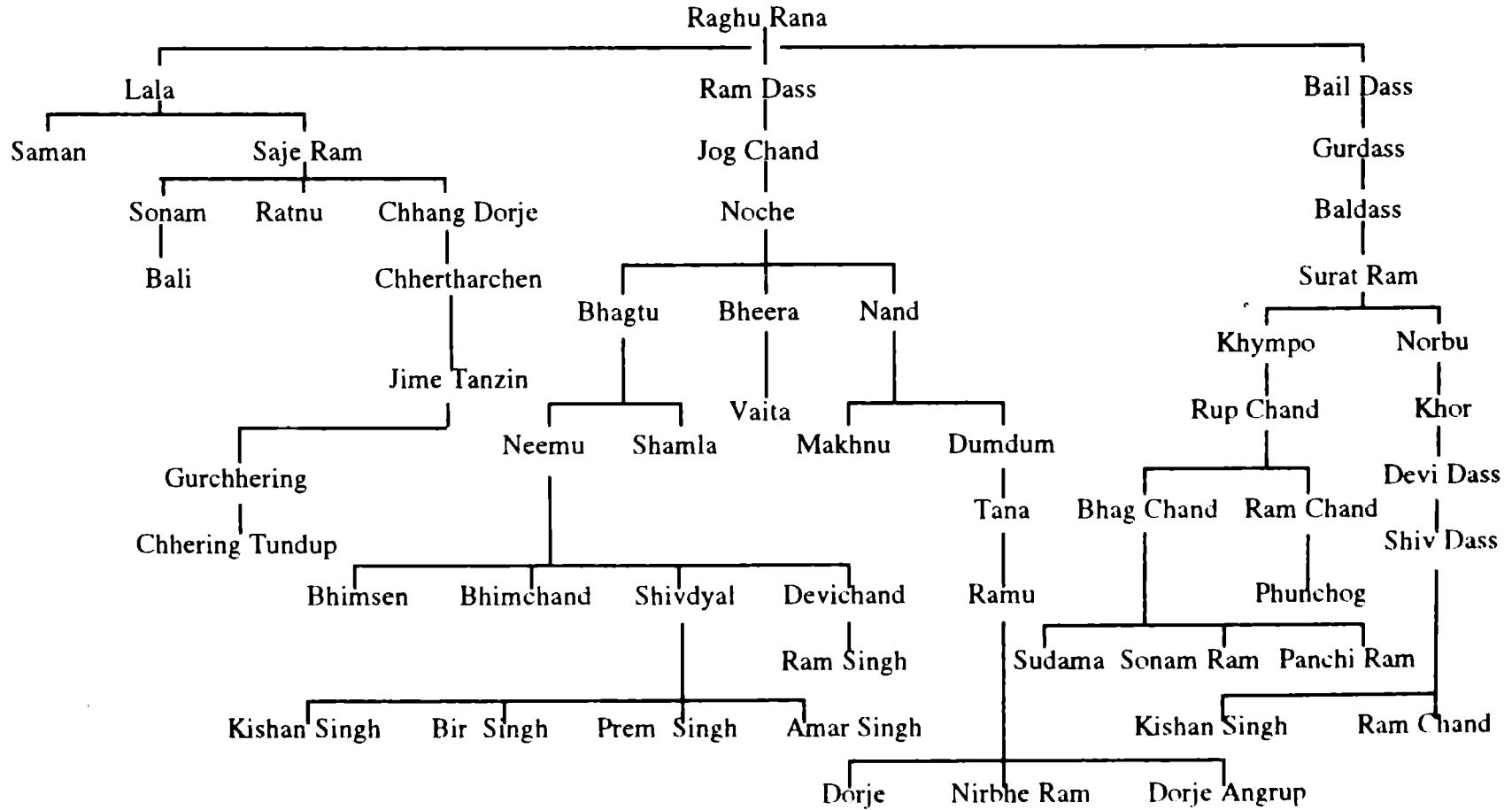
APPENDIX B

Family Trees of Ranas and Thakurs

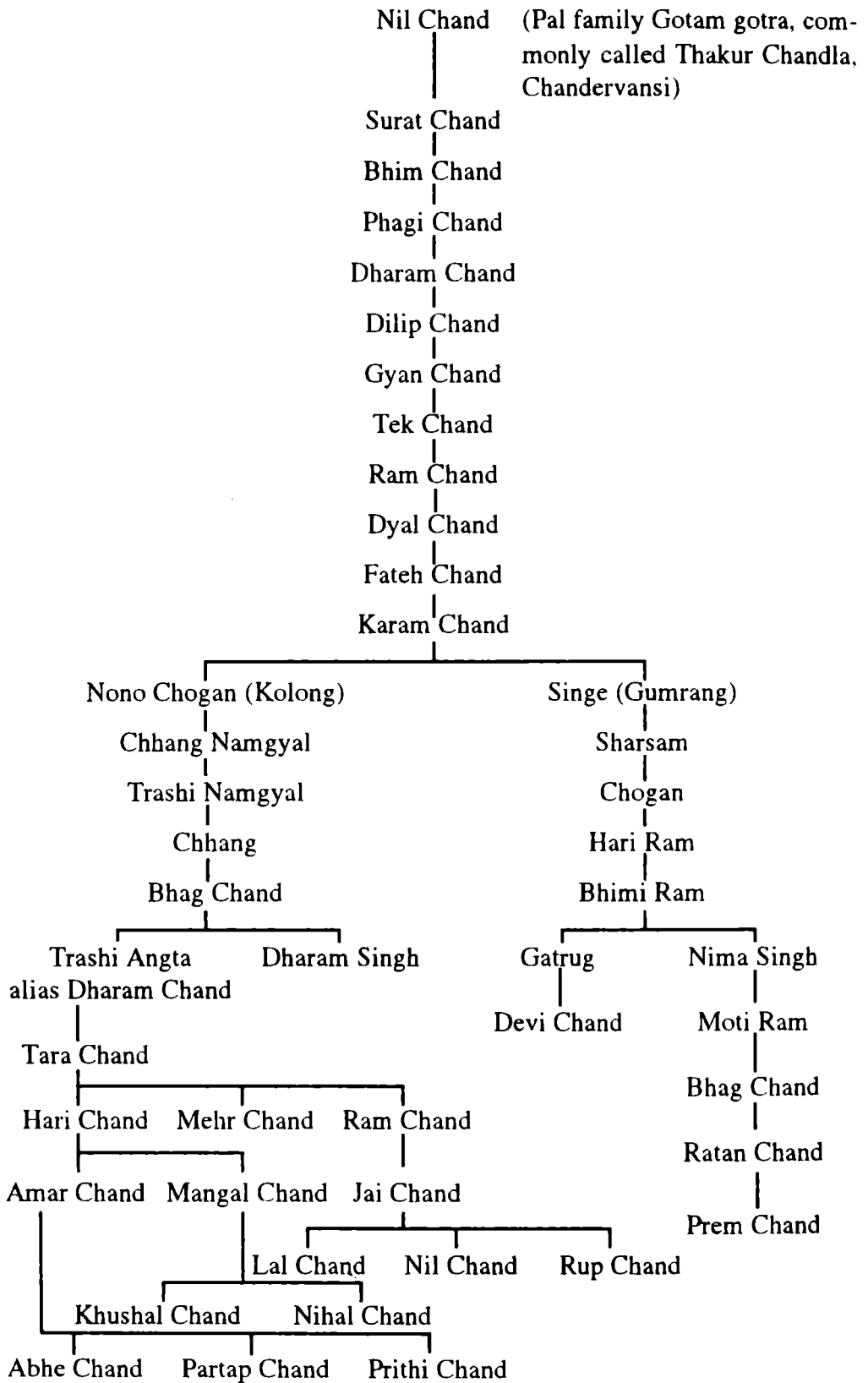
1. FAMILY TREE OF BARBOG THAKURS



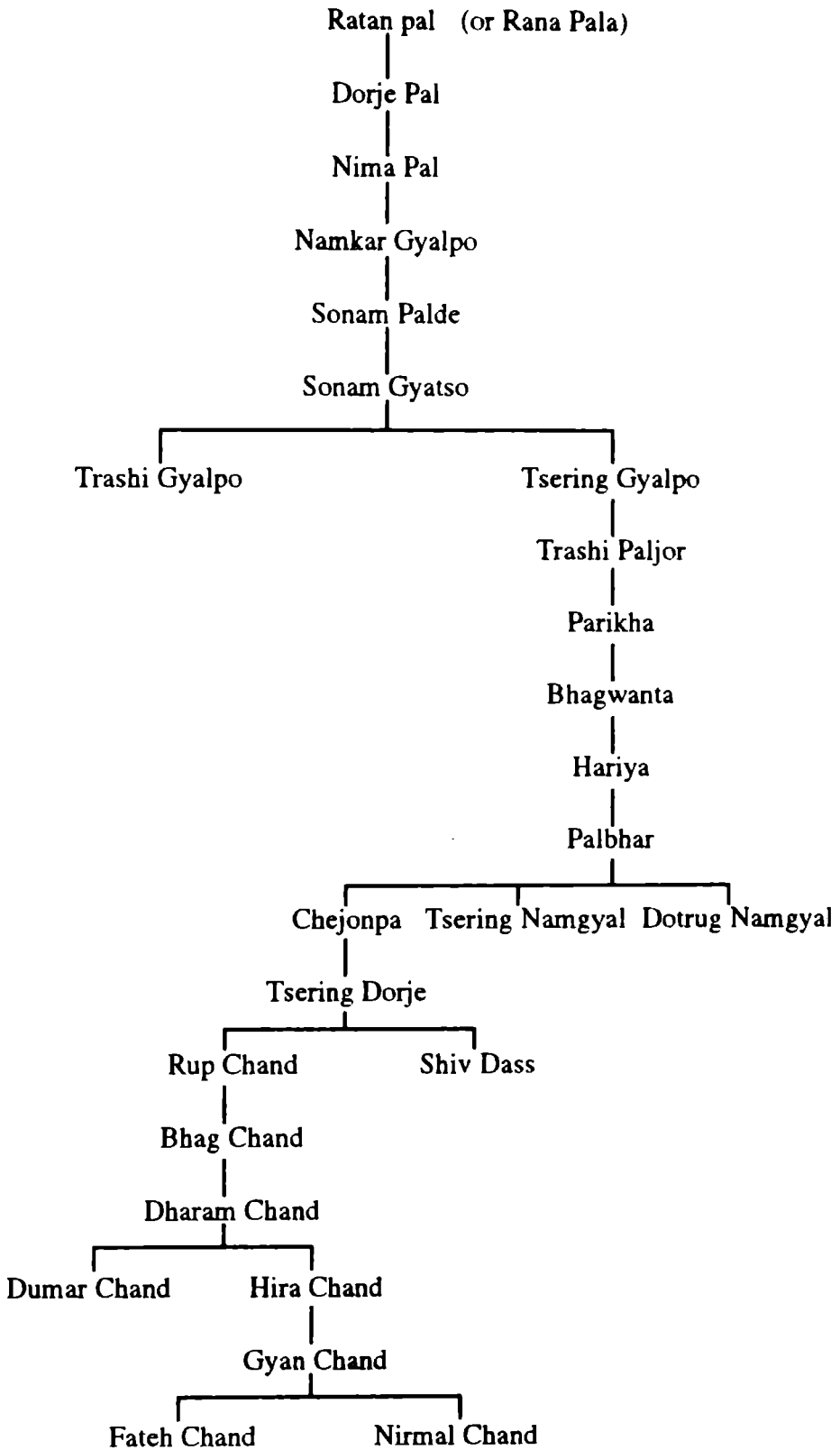
2. FAMILY TREE OF RANAS OF GUSHAL



3. FAMILY TREE OF KOLONG AND GUMRANG THAKURS



4. FAMILY TREE OF GONDHLA THAKURS



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