

*The
Splendour
Of
Himalayan
Art
And
Culture*

Ashok Jerath

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Himalayan Art and Culture*

ASHOK JERATH



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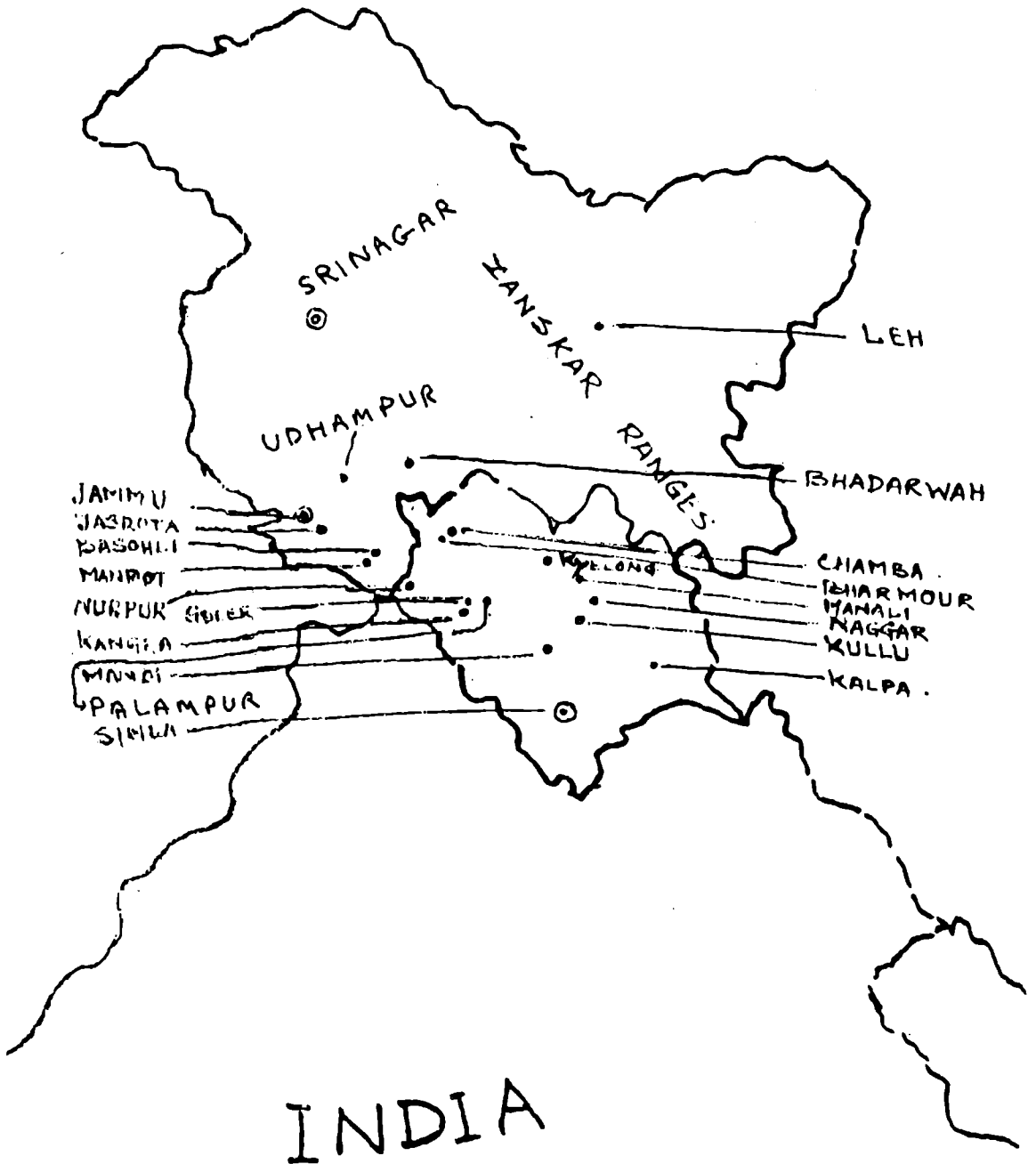
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*Dedicated to the great seers who passed
on the rich legacy of culture to our generation*

Important locales discussed in the book

Indicative map

Not to scale



Contents

<i>Preface</i>	9
1. The People and Tribes	13
1. Gaddis—the nomads	
2. Gujjars—the gypsies of the Himalayas	
3. Kinners—the highlanders	
4. Lahaulis	
5. Malana—the oldest parliament of the world	
2. Folk Culture	48
1. Chiselling the romance on sandstones	
2. Folk theatres of Himachal Pradesh	
• Karyala	
• Bhagtan	
• Banthara	
• Buddha, Harnatra, Jhanki and Bandha	
3. Pahari Rumaals and Ornamental Choulis	
3. Art and Architecture	66
1. Magnificent temples	
• Shikhra style of temples	
• Pagoda type of temples	
• Temples of hill style	
• Temples of pent roofs	
2. Buildings of hill style	
4. Miniature Paintings	82
1. Splendour of Pahari art	
2. Delicate touch of Kangra Kalam	
3. Miniature paintings of Guler school	
4. Miniature paintings of Kullu school	

8 *The Splendour of Himalayan Art & Culture*

5. Chamba school of miniature paintings
 6. Pahari miniature paintings: origin, development and execution
 7. Hands that created the beauty
 8. Master painters of miniature world
- 5. Wall Paintings** 120
1. Wall paintings of Arki
 2. Wall paintings of Sheesh Mahal
- 6. Famous Shrines** 126
1. Chamunda Devi, a reservoir of sculptures
 2. Baijnath, a marvel of architecture
 3. Hidimba Devi, a masterpiece of Pagoda style
 4. Bijali Mahadev
- 7. Centres of Culture and Learning** 134
1. Sardar Sobha Singh Art Gallery, Andretta
 2. Open Air Theatre of Norah Richards
 3. Himachal Lok Sanskriti Sansthan, Mandi
 4. Roerich Nicholas and Art Gallery, Naggar
 5. Enchanting castle of Naggar
 6. Mcleodganj, the mystic land
 7. Viceregal lodge, the centre for Advanced Studies, Shimla
 8. Tara Palace, a castle in the valley of Kangra
- 8. Legends of Art and Culture** 151
1. Gambari Devi, the legendary folklorist
 2. Shanti Bisht, a folk singer of repute
 3. Legends of Kangra painting
 4. Unsung heroes of folk ballads
- Bibliography* 162
- Index* 164

Preface

The Himalayas are a source of inspiration and challenge to the researchers, intellectuals and adventurers. The lofty mountains with snow-clad peaks and lush green forests fascinate one and all. They are honoured to be the abode of gods of Hindu pantheon. It was here the Vedic literature was created in its ravines, caves and highland settlements. In Vyas Gufa, situated at the Indo-Tibetan border area, was created the lofty epic of Mahabharata by the great seer Vyasa. According to the tradition, he dictated it to Lord Ganesha and the echoes of its hymns are still vibrating in the air. This has been confirmed by a researcher and a traveller of eminence. This also happens to be the land of the great races of the Panchjanya, who possessed great knowledge and wisdom. The Panchjanya included the Devas, Gandharvas, Nagas, Yakshas and Kinners. They were the races ruling the Heaven, the *swarga* with their super human powers and wisdom attained by them by their continuous research and meditation. The ranges right from Garhwal Himalayas to the Karakoram had early settlements of the Aryans, where the Aryan culture flourished and it is presumed that world's best literature was created in this region. The great seers and Rishis like Angira, Attri, Vashista, Kashyapa, Agastya, Pulastya, Asita, Vamdeva, Goutam, Prashar, Jamdagni, Manu, Parshuram, Shringa, Vyasa and a score of others meditated in the highlands of the Himalayas for the welfare of the mankind. The splendour of art and culture of this area lured intellectuals, the art connoisseurs and critics to study and work here to know the ultimate truth of the art in relation to human values. The myths and the mythology of this region were helpful in creating some magnificent works of the classical literature. Every cliff of the Himalayan ranges is dedicated to the gods and goddesses of the heathen followed by the Hindu pantheon. Its

forests and lush green valleys always dominated the plains as far as its rarefied free atmosphere is concerned.

The Himalayas, according to the experts in the field of geology, are recent in origin compared to some other mountainous ranges but the people of this region and their culture is as old as the civilisation of mankind. It is from this region that the civilised world emerged with its rich culture. The art and architecture of this region has fascinated the critics and art historians alike. The literature flourished here has inspired and influenced the thought of some of the great men of the nobility. Many early civilisations owe much to this land. It is from here that the men of great wisdom went to other lands of the globe to spread the message of goodness and nobility. The Himalayas are rich in natural resources. Perhaps these are the only ranges wherefrom the forms of different species of vegetation and animal life travelled to the whole globe. They are remarkably rich in minerals and precious stones for which the powerful kings fought fierce battles and the history of the Himalayas might need much to be researched. What we have learnt about the early settlers of this region is quite scant, but, nevertheless what we have inherited as legacy is superb in form and execution. It is doubtful, if it will at all be possible to explore the mysteries of the Himalayas despite the high technique of modern science. We are proud that we are the inventors of these great old civilisations.

The present work pertains to art, culture and architecture prevalent in the lower ranges of the Himalayas particularly around Dhauladhar ranges culminating at Zaskar ranges of Western Himalayas; thus right from the foothills of Shivaliks to Zaskar ranges myriad forms of culture are noticed. The prominent tribes of Himachal Pradesh—Kinners, Lahaulis, Gaddis, nomads and Gujjars have been discussed in detail in this book. Their life style, rituals, democratic set up and above all their manifestations in the field of art and architecture are the significant areas studied and discussed. Panchjanya as described in classical literature of heather, had their settlements in this region. Devas, Nagas, Gandharvas, Kinners and Yakshas were the most potential races inhabiting the region ranging from the Garhwal Himalayas to Zaskar ranges in the west. Out of these five races, Kinners of Kinnaur region of Himachal Pradesh have kept their inheritance intact. In addition to Kinners, the people

of Lahaul and Spiti, who owe their origin to Mongoloid races, possess unique customs and way of life. Gaddis, although, have their settlements in Chamba and Bharmour, yet most of them are nomads. In the same way Gujjars are generally nomads and they are always on the move along with their flocks of sheep and goats. They move to the higher ranges during summer months and to the lesser heights during the winter season in search of green pastures.

In addition to the cultural heritage of the people of these ranges, some buildings of importance having unique architecture like Vice-regal Lodge, Shimla, Tara Palace, Al-Hilal, and some rare temples like Baijnath, Chamunda Devi, Bijali Mahadev and Hidimba Devi temple of Manali are also discussed. Different forms of temples including Shikhra style, Pagoda type, Hill style and Pent roof type of temples are also studied with details.

Pahari art of miniature paintings has impressed the art historians and connoisseurs of art alike. This was the region where Pahari style of miniature paintings originated and flourished. Mankot, Basohli, Jammu, Kangra, Guler, Chamba, Nurpur, etc. were the erstwhile hill states wherefrom this style travelled to other Pahari regions in north India. Kangra Kalam, Basohli style of miniature and Jammu school of Pahari paintings marked their impression in the pages of art history. Manak and Nainsukh, the celebrated artists, belonging to the same family, were responsible for the origin of main Pahari styles of Jammu, Basohli and Kangra schools. They were real brothers and it was their progeny who originated other styles of miniature paintings of Nurpur, Chamba and Guler schools.

In this book, the splendour of art, architecture and culture of the people of Himachal Pradesh has been covered. However, references have also been made of Basohli, Jammu, Mankot, etc., as the Pahari art of miniature paintings had its own legacy in these erstwhile kingdoms.

ASHOK JERATH
ALL INDIA RADIO
DHARAMSHALA (H. P.)

1

The People and Tribes

The Himalayas, the pinnacles of human culture, legends and the abode of gods in Hindu culture, are the cradle of strange people popularly known as tribals. On the plateaus of these mountains several strange tribes still exist in their primitive forms. They have kept their culture alive despite several constraints. Rajis, the cave dwellers of Pithoragarh, Marchhas of Mana and Niti, the valleys situated at Indo-Tibetan border in Garhwal region, Jads of Gopeshwar and Chamoli, the nomads of Jammu, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh popularly known as Gaddis and Gujjars, Kinners of Kinnaur region of Himachal Pradesh, Lahoulis of Indo-Tibetan border areas of Himachal, the Dokpas, popularly known as the purest clan of Aryan origin and Changpas of Ladakh are but a few of the tribes whose sociological and anthropological studies are still to be explored in detail.

GADDIS—THE NOMADS

Gaddis are the nomads of the lower ranges of the Himalayas. Their mobile *Bashas* exist in Jammu and Himachal Pradesh especially on the plateau of the ranges situated on both sides of the river Ravi. They, in particular, inhabit in the upper ranges of Ladda, that is, Panchary, Sanga, Galiote and the slopes of Bani in Jammu region leading to the ranges of Zanskar in Ladakh region. In Himachal Pradesh at Chamba, Bharmour, Kullu and in a few places of Kangra we find the settlements of Gaddis though Bharmour is the main town around which many of these tribals have settled. In fact, this town is known as Gadheran— the region of Gaddis.

Bharmour is a beautiful spot accessible through metalled road from Chamba to Kharamukh. It is at a distance of 47 kms covered in two and a half hours. Then one has to cross the river and go on travelling on the other side of the Ravi. Earlier there was no bridge for vehicular traffic, as such the people had to travel on foot to reach the other side of the river where stood a bus to carry them to the town. Bharmour is situated at a distance of 18 kms from Kharamukh. It is a divine land of conifers, apples and pears inhabited by innocent and god-fearing people, Gaddis, the godly people.

Gaddis are Hindus and believe in Hindu gods and goddesses along with a number of tribal deities. They are so innocent and god-fearing people that for them every natural element is a symbol of some god. Most of the local gods worshipped by them have strange stories. People in Bhumag area worship three local gods, Sankri Devta, Sopore Devta and Sankhpal. All the three gods have their places of worship at the plateau or on the cliffs of mountains. During pooja, every year, people from all walks of life assemble in the courtyard of the shrine and the festival begins. Sankri Devta is a principal local god who is worshipped by all people of Bhumag region. Its temple is situated at the plateau of a hill having a height of almost 6500 feet surrounded by the conifers but the courtyard is wide enough to accommodate ten thousands of people. The temple of Devta is erected on a square platform which tapers up gradually at the apex designed in a simple Shikhra style with square sandstones. Placed nearby is a broken chariot with a single horse carved out of a monolithic rock, symbolic of the chariot of the god. The image of god is carried on a godly palanquin by the priests while the head priest follows the palanquin fanning the deity with a tuft of peacock feathers during festival days. The festival takes place in the month of *Sawan* when the people from far and wide assemble in the courtyard to witness Dev Jatr and to get their wishes fulfilled. Goats are sacrificed and their mutton is distributed as *prasad* among the devotees. They also offer chains popularly known as *sankles* of various strengths. Chains of steel, silver and, very rarely, of gold are offered at the time of festivals, especially when the wishes of the devotees are fulfilled.

The Gaddi people sing, drink and dance chanting the hymns of Sankri Devta. A particular dance, popularly known as *Kudd* is the

attraction of the occasion. Dancers dance in a circle, two steps forward and retreating a step at regular intervals. The dance catches speed with time and on the rhythms of drums, *kaihal* and other folk instruments. To wave off the chill of the night they burn logs of wood in centre around which dancers move. The dress of the people is simple. The males wear an apron-like long attire which goes down upto knees and a rope-like sash is bound at the waist, popularly known as *tigra*. They put on the turban of white or cream colour. They are fond of tight trousers. During winter *pattu* coats and baskets are used. The shoes are generally home-made with rough cloth but now-a-days they are using the leather shoes too. The men folk are fond of earrings of gold which are small in size covering only the earlobes. Women wear coloured attire like apron bound at the waist with several yards of woollen rope, the *tigra*. They are very fond of ornaments. Bead necklaces, earrings, noserings popularly known as *nath*, toerings, bangles of various strengths are but a few ornaments used by the ladies. The married ladies use *nath* as nosering and *koul*, a cone-shaped silver ornament, on their head. The ornaments are generally made of silver but sometimes gold is also used in rich families. The married women are fond of rich embroidered clothes of gay colours.

The Gaddis are in fact nomads who move along with their flock of sheep to higher pasturelands, though they have their permanent settlements at villages on the lower heights. They move to the higher ranges during summer months but in winters they get down to the lower heights. At the higher ranges they build up temporary dwellings as a shelter against rains and other natural calamities, but at lower ranges they have permanent settlements. However, they do not come down from the average height of 5000 feet. Their main vocation is to rear sheep and goats from which they get wool and milk. Wool is sold in the market. Sometimes the sheep and goat skins are also saved after getting the mutton of the animal and sold with all the enthusiasm. Ladies are expert in weaving the woollen clothes especially the sweaters, *pattu* and a number of other woollen garments. These woollen garments are dyed with homemade colours. Green colour is extracted from the bark of walnut trees, red from *katha* and yellow from flowers. These colours are treated chemically in such a way that they form permanent

colours. Coloured designs are given to the garments while weaving the coloured threads. Apart from weaving, the ladies help their menfolk in the cultivation. Maize, rice and a few legumes are grown in the terraced farms. In addition to the sheep and goat they also domesticate cattle like cows and buffaloes for milk. Among the fruits, apples, apricots, pears and nuts like walnut and almond are the favourites.

Matrimonial rituals are simple but magnificent. Mostly they are ceremonised collectively. The people from all the communities are invited to participate. They drink, dance and enjoy the whole night. The marriage is of several types. 'Dohri' is the marriage when the groom gets the bride who is the sister of his sister's husband so that two persons marry the sisters of each other. 'Dharme-Punye' is the marriage when the bride is offered to a man without any pre-condition. It is supposed to be most auspicious. In fact, the lads who do not possess any sister are married to the lonely girls of another family. The rituals are like those of the marriages performed in the Hindu families in the plains. The oath of husband and wife in true of their core is conducted while performing *Yagna*. Dowry system is prevalent but not on large scale.

Sometimes the men marry two girls one after another but it is very rare. The second one is not a real marriage. In fact, the married lady, if beautiful, is invited to come and live with and her husband is given the cost he had spent during his marriage, but this is possible only if the lady consents to live with another man than her real husband. Sometimes the financial conditions of the husband enforce him to leave his wife in lieu of some money and if he manages to get the money in due course of time he can pay back the amount and take back his wife even after several years' gap during which she might have given birth to children. The lady along with the kids is brought back home with all the fun and fare as if they have won some battle. Sometimes the ladies, not finding the atmosphere congenial, may leave their husbands and join with the families of the persons they have affinities with and remain with them throughout the life or till they feel satisfied with the situations.

Among the fairs and festivals almost all of them are related to the religious beliefs. Their gods travel during the festivals, the occasion is called *Jatr*. Several such *Jatrs* are in vogue when the

deity is carried in a palanquin followed by the *Chelas* or the followers who while in trance profess the future happenings. It is supposed to be a very important occasion for the commoners who gather in thousands to sort out their problems and ask the questions to these *Chelas* who sometimes give the exact answers. It is mysterious, but it does happen. For getting their wishes fulfilled they worship several local gods like Vasuki, Baba Bhairh, Surgal, Gugga, Tansu Nag, Boula Devta, Akkharh Devta, Kounsar Nag, Jalsar Nag and a number of goddesses like Jakhni Devi, Pingla, Mansa, etc. But above all, the god of gods is Mahadev or Shiva. They are the disciples of Lord Shiva.

GUJJARS—THE GYPSIES OF THE HIMALAYAS

It is really a feast for the eyes to see the flocks of cattle—sheep, goats, cows and buffaloes trotting by the roadside escorted by some ferocious dogs to the tune of the whistles of their masters. Masters are elegantly clad with beautifully embroidered garments. These are the gypsies of the Himalayas, popularly known as Gujjars, who are always on the move.

Several books on the cultural heritage of Gujjars have been published so far but their place of origin is not established yet. Most of the historians stress upon the fact that they came from the Middle Asia and reached India in search of green pastures and meadows. Some of the researchers believe them to be a section of the valiant clan of the Huns while others claim them to be true Aryans who established their colonies in the northern part of this country spreading upto the plains of Ganges. Gujjars have been mentioned in several epics and in a number of classical books with myriad noun forms—Gujjar, Gujar, Goojar, Goojjar, etc. In *Harsh-charita* by Bhan Bhat, there is a reference that during the reign of Prabhakar Vardhan there were some powerful domains of Gujjars. We find mention of these Gujjars in the diaries of foreign travellers that there were several powerful kings of Gujjars who used to assist the more powerful kingdoms and thus were the deciding factors in tilting the power from one kingdom to another. There are still some Gujjar settlements in several middle east countries which point to the fact that once they were settled there and established their kingdoms. Several such families are still there in the ravines and at the

base of Hindukush which speak Gojary language similar to that of the language spoken by the Gujjars of this part of the world. Gujjars reside in several cities and the localities of Attak, Peshawar, Jhelam, Rawal Pindi, Gujranwala, Sialokote, Lahore, etc. in Pakistan. They believe in Islam. Gujjars living in India are having secular outlook. Most of the clans of Gujjars living in U.P., Gujarat, M.P., Haryana, etc. are Hindus but those who go about the Himalayas along with their flocks are the believers of Islam. Most of their castes are the same as those of Rajputs—Chauhans, Khatana, Kasana, etc. Most of them have been converted long long ago. There are three distinct clans of Gujjars. Those who are permanent settlers in the rural or suburban area depend upon cultivation though a few of them are educated and are in service. Those who rear the cattles especially buffaloes and depend upon selling their milk are Dodis. They are the most handsome Gujjars, the representatives of the real Aryans. The third clan of the Gujjars is of nomadic nature. They are the Bakarwals who are always on the move. They rear sheep and goats the flocks of which move during the changing seasons along the roadsides and in the pastures and meadows. It is really a feast for eyes to see thousands of sheep and goats escorted by Gaddi dogs which hound the animal in their fold whenever there is a trespass. They are the guards of the flocks and understand the language of their masters. Bakarwals are always on the move. During summer months they move from the plains to the Himalayas especially to the valleys in Zanskar ranges where they get huge pastures stretched miles together. Gumery and Dras, the coldest parts of Ladakh are rich in greenery during acute summers. At the start of winter they start moving towards lesser heights and plains. Thus right from the base of the Shivaliks to the highland valleys of Ladakh is the domain of these nomads.

In addition to their flock of sheep and goats they carry with them ponies and horses on the backs of which household goods are kept. They include tents, utensils, clothes of daily use and other articles of use in the travel. In fact, all their assets are carried on the horsebacks. Wherever there is a place to spend night they settle down and form a *dera* with open tents to accommodate the family members. They may stay there for more than a day provided there is enough greenery for their flock.

Social Milieu

These nomads are hardworking people. The male members of the clan are tall having broad shoulders with cute cuts. They are having open milky visage, however, a few of them are dark in colour too. The elders are bearded. They wear long shirts and salwars of dark colours. Jackets of black or dark colour are always in use but *pattu* coat is in vogue during winter only. They use white turban in the style of Turks. Big leather shoes are in vogue which are nailed heavily at the soles. The females are thin and tall. Their attire is almost similar to that of their male counterparts. They are very fond of braiding their hair. Numerous small braids divergently appear from the upper part of the forehead and convergently slide down to a single braid of hair at the back. They usually wear a dark coloured cap on their head covering the turning point of the braids. They carry their younger kids on their back in cloth cradles fastened around their backs. Sometimes young lambs are also cradled. Newly born lambs are always carried on the backs to lure the sheep mothers. The free hands are always busy prompting the young lambs to move ahead and the 'mother sheep' to follow. Bakarwals are expert in whistling the tune which is understood by the sheep, goats and the dogs. They change the direction of their journey with the tune of the whistle of their masters. However, there are some naughty animals which do not pay heed to these whistles. These animals are controlled by the hounds. They are hounded back by the big canines. Of course the dogs are the most disciplined animals of the whole lot. Most of the work of these people is done by these dogs. During the night halt, the newly born lambs are set free so that their mothers take charge of them and suckle their young ones. Dogs are let free to guard the whole flock and they are always alert to push back any intruder whosoever it may be; even the beasts are torn apart if they happen to attack the herd.

Women folk at once start making the *dera* look like a house. Kitchen is made in the open unless there is rain when they try to get the shelter under the protruding rock or in a natural cave they get on their way. The hearth for cooking the meals is always in open, arranged temporarily with stones; twigs of wood are used to lit fire. They are fond of maize bread which is prepared from the flour

made out of powdering the maize grains. Vegetables especially the green leaves of various herbs, potatoes and sometimes *dal* and curry are also used with a bit of chillies and raw onion. They are also fond of mutton. *Ghee* and *shakkar* are their best delicacies. While the ladies prepare the food, menfolk enjoy on *hukah* or gossip near the hearth to get the warmth during winter season. They lit torches during the night to shun away the wild animals. The next morning they pack their luggage on the backs of horses and ponies and start for the next halt. The process goes on until they reach the green pastures where they stay for pretty long time until they feel that their flock has taken enough.

The rituals and other celebrations are very simple. Almost every celebration starts with the distribution of *ghee* and *shakkar* among the poors and the kith and kins followed by the chanting of the folk songs. At the time of new births and also during marriage ceremonies hilarious folk songs are chanted. They are generally the love epics popularly known as *Masnavis*. Thus *Masnavis* like Saifal Malook, Heer Ranja, Laila Majnu, etc. are recited accompanied by folk music instruments like bag pipe, *algoja*, *mattian*, flute and drums.

Marriages are very simple. They are ceremonised without any vanity or show. Marriage procession comprises of horse riders. After the ceremony is over the bride is brought on the back of a horse. Marriage parties are received with *ghee* and *shakkar* distributed among all the persons accompanying the *barat*. They are given a feast of delicious food including sweets, rice with several types of curries, mutton and fruits. Generally the marriages are arranged by the family members but sometimes there may be mutually agreed marriages between the bride and the bridegroom. Occasionally, there may be a number of young lads opting for a most beautiful girl of the clan. When there is a competition, the cattles are offered in lieu to the parents of the girl. The bidder giving the highest bid wins the battle, of course the will of the girl is always sought by the mother of the girl confidentially. Once it so happened that a young Bakarwal gave away his whole herd of animals only to get the hand of a beautiful damsel. Other members of the community offered him some animals in gift and to some extent he was compensated. Marriages are conducted by the priests of the mosques generally in

Niquah style. Both the sides are asked about their consent followed by the recitation of *Ayats* from Quran Sharif.

The Bakarwals are the scholars of nature. They know the seasonal flowering, grasses and medicinal herbs of various kinds. They are the doctors of their herd and apply the medicinal herbs to the cattles whenever they are sick. Some of the Bakarwals collect medicinal herbs during their travels which are sold in the market at handsome price. Milk, curd, butter, ghee, etc are the ingredients sold by these nomads to make their both ends meet. They also sell raw wool which is cut once in a year in case of ordinary sheep but twice in case of Australian breed which they rear now. The cutting of wool generally takes place in the summer months. They are rich persons having thousands of animals in their herd. Now-a-days they have opened their accounts in the banks also and a few of the rich parties possess lockers too.

Since they are always on the move their children cannot study in traditional schools. Considering the fact J&K Govt. has introduced the process of mobile schools. Teachers especially Gujjars and Bakarwals are arranged to move along with the caravan of herds. They are the mobile schools. Teachers selected for these schools are the educated Gujjars and Bakarwals.

Democratic Set-up

Bakarwals always move in groups. A single *kabila* may consist of several families together. Each family used to have a head of the family and all of these heads combine together to elect their leader. Generally it is unanimously decided and the most active one or the most powerful and rich is elected to perform the duties of a leader. This headman of the herds is popularly known as Mukadam. These Mukadams were, once upon a time, the most powerful persons who used to decide the fates of the feudal lords. Even now they play an important role in deciding the trend in the general elections in the area. All the quarrels of the families are settled by these headmen of the clan. Even the major disputes between the clans are solved mutually among themselves. The deciding person used to be the Mukadam whose verdict is supposed to be final. Bakarwals seldom go to courts for getting justice. It is only when they are forced that

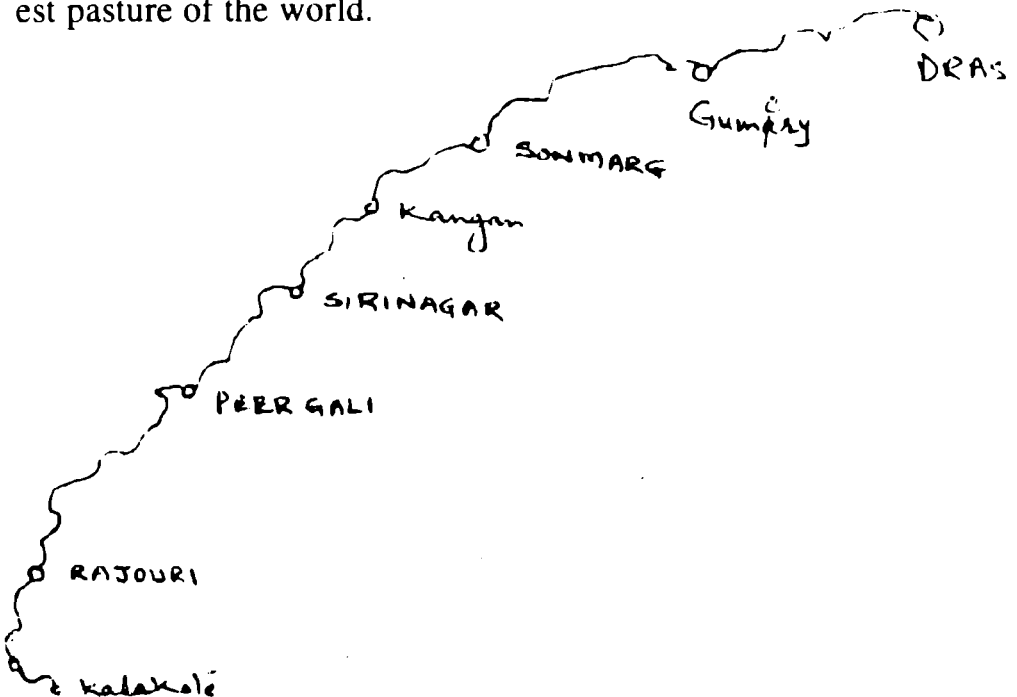
they knock the doors of the courts. Generally these disputes are extra-territorial, i.e. they do not concern with the clans only but the state is also involved. Then the Mukadams are helpless and they have no option but to go to courts for the cause of justice. Generally these cases are against the forest department and revenue department. Such disputes arise when they are not allowed to graze their cattles in a particular locality. These people are fed up with these legalities as they are so prolonged that it becomes rather impossible to have justice in a few sittings. So they try to avoid such proceedings.

Base Camps of Bakarwals/Gujjars

There are four major base camps of Bakarwals/Gujjars in Jammu province. They spend winter months in these camps and start for the higher ranges in the beginning of summer. The two important base camps are described below.

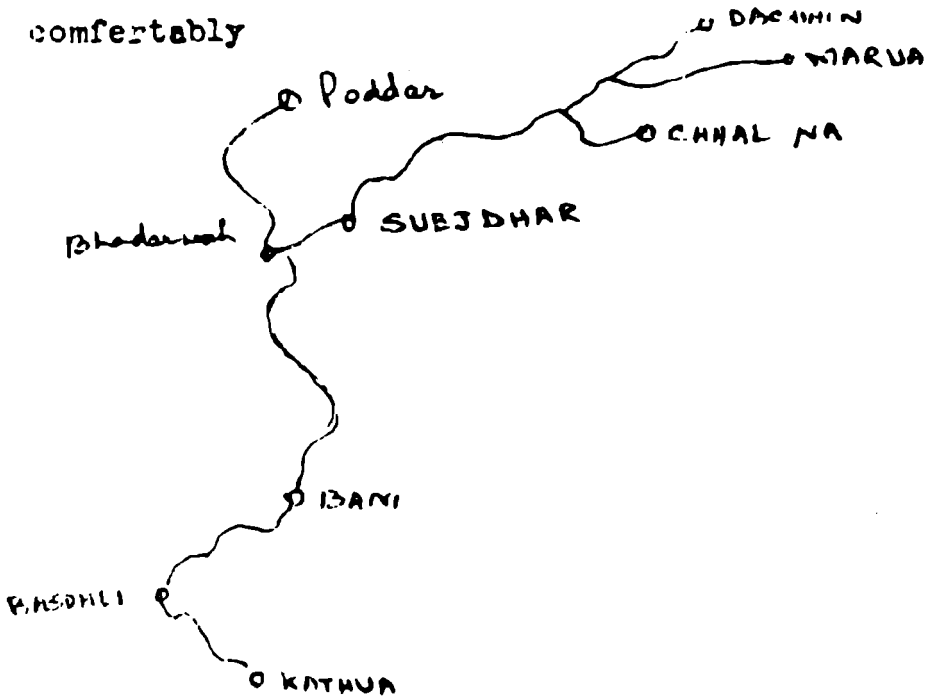
1. Kalakote

It is an important camp of nomads in Jammu province where thousands of these nomads depend upon the greenery during the cold months and start for higher ridges in summer via Peer Gali, Gurez, Kangan, Sonmarg, Gumery and finally reach Dras, the coldest pasture of the world.



2. Kathua

The nomads having camp at Kathua during winter months move to the higher ranges during summer via Bani to Bhadarwah, Poddar, Chhalna, Dachhin and Marua. It is a bit difficult tract yet the herd make it possible to make its way easily and comfortably.



KINNERS—THE HIGHLANDERS

The Himalayas have been the haven of our great thinkers and mystics. Vedic literature was written in the holy caves and ravines of the Himalayas. Its beautiful surroundings, cascading waters, snow-clad mountains were always the source of attraction for the mystics, scholars and the adventurers who ventured to know the mysteries of the highest ranges of the world and their people. Upper ranges of the Himalayas along with the ranges situated on the other side of borderline with Tibet were looked upon with reverence as heaven—the *Swarga*. The work done in this field through the researches of the holy scriptures, Vedic literature and Pauranic pantheon by the scholars have shown positive results confirming the

physiography of *swarga*. Nirukta (3-2-2) and Aetrey Brahman (3-37) narrate in a hymn—

पंचजन मम होत्रं जुषध्वम्

that five clans were the inhabitants of this land. They were named as *Panchjanya*. They included Devas, Nagas, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Kinners. In fact, this was the first phase of Aryan inlet. Devas, Nagas and Yakshas were famous for their knowledge, valour and rich cultural heritage. Their culture was propagated by the great seers popularly known as *Rishis* who were thinkers, original researchers and above all great experts in meditation. Devas were the masters of *Swarga*. They were wise, of a scientific temperament and brave people and above all they were known for their supernatural powers. They had invented *Amrit*, an ambrosia which made this clan immortal.

Parallel to Devas, were Nagas who were also powerful. They invented another preparation named *Sudha* to immortalise their clan and in this way, they were able to come in the line of Devas. Yakshas were famous for their knowledge and extra-terrestrial powers while as the Gandharvas and Kinners were famous for their beauty and artistic faculties. Devas, Yakshas and Gandharvas either disappeared in due course of time or mixed up with other clans but Nagas and Kinners kept their identity intact and established their regimes in the highlands of the Himalayas. Kinners are still having their region named Kinnaur, a district of Himachal Pradesh.

The plateau and the regions in which these clans lived have also been pointed out by the *Rishis* and the authors of the great epics and references of their inhabitation can be traced throughout the Hindu pantheon. In the post researches, the intellectuals and researchers have given their point of view about the places where these clans established their kingdoms. The Kingdom of Devas so called the *Swarga* was established on the higher ranges of the greater Himalayas. This region was rich in flora and fauna, cascading waters, medicinal plants and, above all, was a health resort. On this land the great seers, scientists and thinkers like Mrug, Angira, Atri, Vashista, Kashyapa, Agstya, Pulastya, Vamdeva, Asita, Gautama, and others worked for the benefit of humanity. This region was the central point of their studies.

There is a reference in Mahabharata of Pandavas' entrance to the *Swarga*:

ततस्ते नियतात्मान उदीचीं दिशमास्थिताः ।
ददृशुर्योगयुक्ताश्च हिमवन्तं महागिरिम् ॥

It refers that Devindera received Yudhishtira with his chariot after Yudhishtira crossed the Alaknanda and Saraswati rivers and approached the great glaciers of Alkapuri. This place must be near the Mana pass situated on the borderline of Indo-Tibetan border. From there only starts the region of Tibet.

स्वर्गं त्रिविष्टपं प्राप्य धर्मराजो युधिष्ठिरः ।

It means that the area nearby Tibet was of *Swarga*. Second among these five clans was the clan of Nagas. The Nagas were ruled by the great god Shiva and his disciples called Gana Nayakas. The central place of this kingdom was Kailasha and it was spread all over Kashmir, Sinkyang, Zanskar and the hilly region of Karakoram. There are many places ascribed to Nagas in Kashmir, viz. Verinag, Kukarnag, Anantnag, etc. and the old Kashmiri ladies wear a headgear having the shape of serpent which cascades down to their toes. There are several references of fight between Devas and Nagas to establish their superiority and the decisive battle was fought in the leadership of great god Shiva against Devas when Sati, the wife of Lord Shiva, on being insulted jumped into the *Havan Kunda*. Several stalwarts of Devas were killed in this historic war and with great difficulty Lord Shiva was consoled and thereafter for several centuries the regime of *Swarga* was ruled as per the directions of Lord Shiva.

The third great clan was of Yakshas. Their domain was around Alkapuri. Kuber was the ruler of this kingdom. Alkapuri was famous for its natural beauty and the materialistic richness. Alkapuri glacier feeds Alaknanda and other rivers. This kingdom was spread upto the ranges of Dhaulagiri. The kingdom had two valleys and from there only a path leads to Satopanth and Gaumukh. This was the famous Vishnuloka and there existed a famous shrine of Badrinath, which is still a pious place. Nearby the Mana village, the last Indian village on the borderline of Indo-Tibetan border, there

are a number of historical places like Vyas Gufa, where the great seer Vyasa created the great epic of Mahabharata. There is a spot where the Saraswati river appears and a rock bridge called Bhimpul was constructed by the mighty Bhimdev so that Droupadi could cross the river. It is said that when Droupadi, while going to *Swarga*, could not cross the river Saraswati, mighty Bhima joined the two banks of the river with a big rock, now called Bhimpul. With Kuber, a seer named Manibhadra, is also worshipped in this region by the tribals of the area. Perhaps the name of the Mana village is ascribed to the great seer Manibhadra.

Kinners were the masters of the present Kinnaur region of Himachal Pradesh and their kingdom was spread upto the river Ravi including Chamba and Kangra regions of Himachal Pradesh. Even some regions of Jammu on the other side of Ravi were included in this kingdom. The ruler of this kingdom was also Kuber.

In due course of time several national and international tribals, who were more powerful, in the time to come, overpowered these Panchjanyas. Among these clans Rakshas of south India were more powerful. They were the descendants of Pulastya who established a powerful kingdom in south India. They were so powerful at a time that they attacked the Amravati of Indira, the capital of the kingdom of Devas. Devas had to seek the assistance of the Suryavanshi kings of the Bharata. On the other side, Asuras of Asuria, may be the present Syria, attacked this land with all their might that Indira had to request the great scientist of Aryavarta to assist him to finish the most powerful Asuras—Rahu, Ketu and Bali. Pishachas were also powerful tribals, among them the Mangols were expert in warfare, who not only looted the region but in due course of time settled in this region of the Himalayas. They entered this region through several passes of the Himalayas. Some of them had to face the Nagas and Yakshas and most of them returned back but a few of the families settled on the highlands which were not easy to approach. Slowly and steadily these clans—Devas, Nagas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinners, Asuras, Rakshasas and Pishachas got mixed among themselves in such a way that they could not be segregated. That is why several tribals with Mangoloid appearance and touch of southern languages can be traced in the highlands of the Himalayas. But the Kinners have preserved their identity to some

extent though their area has been restricted to Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh only.

Kinners were the most beautiful people and a number of anecdotes can be traced from the holy scriptures; the most chivalrous race of Devas was lured by the damsels of this land. Kinners were the most wonderful singers, they, therefore, found their places at the Darbar of Lord Indira, the king of Devas. They were even sent on important assignments to lure the great seers so that they might not revolt against the regime of lord Indira as most of the seers, popularly known as *Rishis*, had superhuman powers attained by them through meditation and *sidhis*.

We find that the Kinners are the most handsome people among all the Himalayan races. They are expert in music and dance. Kinner dances are famous for their slow rhythmical steps and for their musical effects. No festival or ritual is complete with the performance of a dance. Dancers move to the rhythms of their musical instruments like drums, *nagaras*, *shehnai*, *bugjal*, flute, *ransingha*, *karnal*, etc. These musical instruments are played by a particular clan, popularly known as *Bajantry*. They are the best instrumentalists but are taken to be of lower status in society. Among all the dances of Kinnaur, Kyang is superb. It is performed in several ways. There are at least six forms of Kyang which are in vogue. Generally each dance starts with the hymns sung in praise of their gods followed by the musical flutter and the dancers led by the leader, known as Ghumeri, enter the arena. These dances cater to the time, seasons and rituals. Different dances are performed on different occasions. Of course, there are a few dances the performance of which can be enjoyed on all occasions and in all seasons.

The people are modest, unpretentious and decent as far as their dealing and behaviour is concerned. They are honest and industrious. Females are more attuned to the labour in the fields and cultivation while the males either assist them or go away in search of better jobs. They are open to the strangers and there is no *parda* system prevalent in the society. Their hospitality is exemplary. Often their openness and frankness is misunderstood by the strangers and a number of such references can be traced from the books written by the foreigners. In fact, they could not analyse their behaviour and social aspects with genuine efforts. Superficial studies

done in this field have damaged their assets to some extent.

Kinners, as other Aryans, were the worshippers of nature. The tradition of worshipping the natural objects like rivers, streams, falls, trees, mountains, etc. has come down to this day too. They worship several village gods and goddesses. Dabla Deo is worshipped in several villages of Kinnaur. Maheshra is the incarnation of Lord Shiva and several aspects of Shakti are also worshipped. Classical Hindu gods like Vishnu, in the aspect of Badrinath, Durga as Shakti and Shiva are but a few examples which are taken with reverence. Buddhism or more precisely Lamaism has made its way in the interiors of the Kalpa valley. In fact, the area near the border-line of Tibet has been influenced much by the preachings of Dalai Lama. However, both Hinduism and Lamaism go side by side. Lamas are invited to complete the rituals in some Hindu families too. Puh side of Kinnaur is having Lamaism in full swing. One more aspect baffles the sociologists that perhaps this is the only region where Brahmins are not found. All the rituals are either performed by the Lamas or by the commoners themselves. While performing marriages Pandits are not invited.

The people have several castes like Thakurs, who are supposed to be of higher status and most of them ruled the region with smaller principalities, Negis have the prominent role to play in the social and political life of this region. Since the region is far away from the main land of the Himachal Pradesh the means of transport are very scanty. Of late illiteracy is being overcome with the opening of schools even in the remote villages and the people are getting facilities to educate themselves. A few of them have migrated to plains to get better education and employment.

Kinners are cultivators at large. They rear the flocks of sheep and goats and a few live on pastoral life. Fruits like apricots, golden apple and several variety of wild fruits are being processed and exported out of the region. The land is rich in medicinal plants and a few of the families collect medicinal herbs and sell them in the market. The businessmen from the plains come there to collect the material to be sold in the markets of the plains. During the time prior to 1962 a number of Tibetan traders used to come there to do trading. Even the Kinners would transact with the Tibetans but it was very rare.

Matrimonial Relations

Polyandry was the custom of the pastime. A collective marriage of brothers of a family was ceremonised with a single girl irrespective of the age of the grooms. Generally the elder brother had the say in this type of marriage. A proposal of marriage was put up by the groom's family through a middleman of repute. If accepted by the parents of the bride the parents or the middleman would approach the family of the bride with a token of gift like an ornament, golden nosering or a necklace which would be accepted by the parents of the bride on her behalf. Generally a bottle of home-brewed liquor was also carried along with the message which was readily accepted and distributed among all the members present followed by the worship of the village gods and goddesses. A Lama was called who recited certain hymns to ward off the ill spirits. Even before the settlement of the marriage Lamas were consulted so as to get the prediction of good marriage. On a decided day the eldest brother along with a few kith and kins would leave for the bride's home. They were received by the family members of the bride and were given a feast. The whole night they used to sing and dance and next day the groom with the bride and bridal party would leave for their home where the whole party was received at the door by the elderly ladies, mother and other relatives of the bridegroom. The merry-making used to go on for three days when the people of the locality were invited over a feast. All the brothers who would be the husbands of the bride used to be decorated with bridal turbans connecting with a string to the attire of the bride and certain pledges were conducted in favour of the bride so that she would be recognised as the lady of the family. This traditional system of marriage had many positive points for example, the land in possession of the family always remained intact. There was never any problem of the distribution and division. The whole family worked as a unit and the lady at the helm of the affairs was never deserted. She had never to see the bad days of widowship as long as any one of the brothers was alive. Generally in such cases younger brother might leave the family to join the monasteries especially in Puh region. Then there used to be some queries about the emotional attachment of the lady with all her husbands. The author of these lines has confirmed from different authentic sources that there was

never a family feud on the basis of the emotional attachment of the lady with a particular husband. Generally in such cases the work was divided among the brothers. Some one looked after the household business, generally the elder one, and the others would go for cultivation and spend a pastoral life. Hence there used to be a single man at a time in the house to spend the night with the lady. However, when there were other brothers at home only a single would go in and enjoy cozy company of the lady who would shrewdly decide the turn. To indicate that some one was inside they would keep the footwears outside the door or hang a cap on the nail outside the door of the private room. Then there was the question of how the parentship of a baby was to be decided? When a baby was born generally the eldest groom was called as great father and the younger ones as smaller ones. Sometimes the eldest baby was named after the eldest husband and others according to their status.

Since there used to be a lot of difference of age between the lady and the youngest husband as such certain problems of adjustment cropped up and sometimes the younger brothers had left their families, either married other women or adopted Lamaism and went to monasteries to carry on the meditation. This type of traditional marriage was having a negative point also that most of the ladies who were not married, remained throughout their lives as spinster depending upon their brothers for their livelihood or went to monasteries as nuns. Slowly and steadily this custom has become obsolete.

Monogamy is the slogan of the day now. People are educating themselves and for them the polyandry has lost its charm now. Monogamy marriage is again arranged by the parents and the process is almost the same. There is another type of marriage in which the boy and the girl decide their fate and the would-be bride is carried away forcibly to the house of the bridegroom by the friends of the groom. The parents of the bridegroom afterwards send the proposal to the parents of the bride for the marriage. The parents of the bride ask the consent of the girl; if she is ready the marriage is performed. Occasionally, in such cases, the girl may not agree; then she returns to her parental house.

Polygamy was also one of the matrimonial customs among the Thakurs and the landlords to keep pace with the work of cultivation and household arrangements. Sometimes if the man did not get any

issue from his first wife he would go for a second marriage. In polygamy the elder wives were having upper hand in deciding the family matters. There is hardly any evidence of civil marriage in this region.

Now people are adopting the ways of single families thus monogamy is popular among the persons of new generation. Those living in the remote areas have still kept up their traditional values but on the whole the areas located nearby the main roads are turning their garb speedily.

Kyang—The Fascinating Dance

Kinners were famous for their musical renderings and dances. The dainty damsels of this region fascinated gods, the Devas, so that a number of *Apsaras* who displayed their talents before the gods were used in several intrigues to degrade the high souls reaching to the level of perfection by dint of their meditation. The tradition of music and dance has been an asset of the people and till today the rituals, religious festivals and social assemblies are not complete without music and dance.

Situated at the borderline of Indo-Tibet region, Kinnaur is rich in its scenic beauty and lush green forests. Apple orchards spreading miles together are the feast for the eyes of the visitors. The succulent fruit of yellow colour has a special flavour and is in much demand in the plains. The people are well-built and handsome as far as their physical structure is concerned. They are fond of lavish food and drinks. The drinks are prepared from apple and almost every second family brews the liquor which is the main drink used during rituals and festivals. Social gatherings start with a glass of this drink followed by music and dance. The Kinner ladies are fond of ornamental dresses studded with precious stones and richly embroidered. They are also fond of ornaments of silver which adorn their handsome features.

Dancers dance to the tune of musical instruments played upon by particular instrumentalists belonging to a particular clan of the society called *Bajantry*. They are supposed to be of low status in the social circles. Drums, *nagara*, *shehnai*, *bugjal*, flute, *ransingha*, *karnal*, etc are the local musical instruments used in the dances.

Among all the dances of Kinnaur, Kyang is the most popular dance. It is conducted in more than six forms. The change in form is indicated with the help of rhythms on the drum and gestures of the dancers. The main form of Kyang is called Dabar Kyang. In this dance the dancers dance in a circle led by the male members followed by the females. The leader is known as Ghumeri. He leads the dancers with a tuft in his hand swaying on lateral sides. This tuft is known as Chamvar of the god. In fact, the dance starts with the worship of the god through this Chamvar and when the leader approaches the venue of the dance the flutes and drums come to life instantaneously. First of all, hymns of gods are sung during the time the leader goes on swaying the Chamvar. The leader with his left hand picked up by the right hand of the third person in the row is the only dancer having right hand free holding the Chamvar. While in the sequence, every dancer is bound by the hands of alternate dancers till the circle is complete. As far as the movement of the feet is concerned they sway from left to right and from right to left in slow motion of rising waves. Alternately they move in slow rhythms in the centre also giving the idea of low tide ebbing downwards. Sometimes the dance performance continues till late night. Drift in sequence of the dance is always there on the instance of the leader. At the juncture of the new rhythm there is an utterance of words—‘Shabashe, Shabashe’.

There is another form of Kyang popularly known as Pulasho. It is in vogue in the valley of Nesang. It is staged without any song and only the rhythm of the drums help the dancers to act, gradually heightening the pace till it stops suddenly. Somahelang is another form. In fact, it is a song of flowers blooming during spring season in the valley of Shyalkhar. The dancers dance in a circle with very slow movement. In the form of Bang Parishming Kyang the dancers sing the popular song of Rop Thulpa, a romantic song, with fine footwork which is the essence of this dance form. Dhungru which is also called Vakyang is another form with a line of two dancers on each side facing each other give their performance. Generally, gents and ladies stand in a queue alternate to one another. They pick up hands of alternate dancers. In the performance a line sways forward while the other one retreats with the same swaying motion. Then the second line moves forward with the same gait while the

first one retreats and the process goes on. This form of Kyang is conducted without any instrument. The dancers dance on the rhythm of the songs which are either attributed to the gods and godly images or to the great men of the society especially belonging to the royal families. It is very popular form of Kyang and is performed in Dhungal Bheesh festival of Kamru fort situated in the valley of Sangla.

In addition to these forms, Kyang is also performed by two dancers while the singers and the instrumentalists display their talent in the background.

The traditional dresses of the dancers are richly decorated and embroidered. The ladies and gents both wear round caps with twigs of flowers tugged in front of them. The married ladies wear the head ornaments the network of which extends to their forehead. Woollen attires of *pattu* are in vogue. They tie woollen ropes at their waist. These dances are performed generally during festivals which are celebrated in the summer months as most of Kinnaur region is covered with a layer of snow during winter and early spring.

LAHAULIS

The people who inhabit the higher mountains of the Himachal Pradesh covering the altitude of at least 10,000 feet above the sea level and occupy the land of Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh are Lahaulis. Lahaul and Spiti is the largest district of Himachal Pradesh as far as its area is concerned. It touches the border of Jammu and Kashmir to its north and of Tibet to its east. It lines with Chamba, Kangra and Kullu districts to its south-west and west. Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh lies to its south-east. Due to its height and extreme climatic conditions most of its land is inhospitable and rugged and forms a sheath of cold desert like that of Ladakh. It comprises of three main valleys—Chandra, Bhaga and Chandrabhaga valleys. Chandra valley is rough enough for the inhabitation with great mountainous region; its plateau are fed by the glaciers causing vegetation at intervals overcast by meadows and pastures which form the grazing centres for the herds of the nomads during acute summer months. Chandra river flows through

its ravines naming it as Chandra valley. Local people name it Rangoli. The Bhaga valley is comparatively fertile one and suitable for cultivation. Potatoes and beans are the main crops of the land. Bhaga river feeds the valley. It is popularly known as Gara. The land that stretches from Darcha upto Tandi is richly populated and cultivated by the people. The third valley popularly known as Pattan starts from the village of Tandi where the two rivers, Chandra and Bhaga meet forming a common river Chandrabhaga popularly known as Chenab in the plains. This valley is stretched upto the boundary line with Chamba and is the most fertile land of the region. Most of the villages of the region find their settlements in this valley only.

Historically and culturally this region of Himachal Pradesh had very close association with Ladakh and Tibet, hence both Tibet and Ladakh influenced the social milieu and the culture of the people. Even the languages spoken in this region are either Tibetan or influenced by Tibetan language. People are Mongoloid in appearance with flat facial bones, small noses and narrow foreheads. They are of medium height ranging from five feet to five and a half feet. Occasionally, we find tall persons having six feet or so in height. Hinduism and Buddhism are the two main beliefs prevalent among the commoners. The aweness of the grandeur of the nature has caught the fancy of the people to such an extent that mountains, their peaks, trees and big boulders have become the godly elements for them. They worship these natural objects with all their reverence. Gyephant of Lahaul and Jamlu of Spiti are the common example. They erect poles clad with perchants in the centre of the heaps of stones and pebbles representing the great god Shiva. The scenes of this type of worship can be witnessed at the higher ridges of Lahaul and Spiti. They believe in spirits and to make them happy they sacrifice sheep and goats. Even yaks were sacrificed before the advent of Buddhism. Buddhism adopted many practices of Hinduism so that both Hindus and Bodhs worship the common gods and goddesses. Several religious places are examples of this harmonious development. Guru Ghantal monastery situated at the confluence of Chandra and Bhaga rivers and Triloknath shrine are the examples of this common cultural heritage. Even after the advent of Buddhism the commoners' fear of goblins and spirits made

them to worship the spirits. Tantric Lamaism associated itself with such beliefs—"There are many benevolent spirits and malevolent demons who are supposed to dwell in trees, rocks and hill-tops, and before whom the Spiti Buddhists sacrifice sheep and goats. They believe greatly in witches, sorcerers and the evil eye. This form of Tantric Lamaism keeps its hold on the people by an association of dread and fear of spirits dead or inanimate. . . . There is a taboo even on the planting of trees or opening of new sources of irrigation." (M.D. Mangain, *Lahul & Spiti*, p. 53)

A.F.P. Harcourt in his book, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul and Spiti* published in 1972, also states the same fact: "It is true that no human sacrifices at this time take place, but goats are offered before trees when water courses are opened in the spring, or in festivals at the beginning of harvest." (p. 65)

Buddhism is the chief religion revered by the Spitians as well as by the Lahaulis. Like Ladakhis they chant the popular hymn 'Om Mane Padme Hum'. These hymns are scribbled and placed in prayer wheels which they rotate while chanting them. They believe that in this way the hymn is multiplied by the number of rotations of the wheel and they get the credit of all. The hymn is carved on the metallic sheets and stones which are kept in the religious shrines and sacred chambers. Mane walls are erected in Ladakh just in the outskirts of the settlements. These Mane walls are having a layer of Mane stones placed on the surface. These Mane walls are believed to prevent the ill souls to enter the villages. Even the small perchants fluttering in the air fastened with strings to the vertical poles carry the writings of this hymn. Even some high ridges are regarded sacred which are worshipped with aweness. Gyephang La is one of those revered mountainous ridges. A deity with the same name, Gyephang is believed to dwell on the apex of the ridge. It is a belief that this deity protects the people from natural calamities and bad spirits.

There are a number of monasteries scattered throughout the valleys of Lahaul and Spiti. Guru Ghantal is the oldest of all the monasteries which contains a number of wooden idols. It is situated at the confluence of Chandra and Bhaga rivers. This monastery is revered as the religious shrine both by the Hindus and the Buddhists alike. An image of Mahakali of black stone finds its place in

the monastery along with three statues of Buddha—Nawang, Namgial and Padmasambhava. It is said that this monastery was handed over to Lama Namgial by Rana Triloknath, a Hindu disciple of Namgial. Earlier a portion of the revenue from Lahaul was offered to the shrine. At present the monastery is in possession of a piece of land the production of which is being used for the lamas serving the monastery.

Shashur monastery is another important religious shrine situated near the village of Keylong. It is famous for a festival held in June every year wherein a play is enacted by the lamas. It starts with a procession of the priests of the monastery led by the chief lama. The main attraction of the play is a clown conducting acrobatics. He amuses the audience with his jests and grimaces.

Kardhang monastery was an old monastery which was renovated later in early 20th century by a great seer, a lama of miraculous powers. He was popularly known as Lama Norbu who with his efforts initiated a number of Lahauli families to Buddhism. The monastery is situated in the village of the same name, Kardhang.

Kye monastery is another famous religious shrine of Buddhists. The monastery is a storehouse of traditional musical instruments used in festivals and during performances of a religious nature. The monastery is popular for its mask dance which is witnessed by the locals and outsiders every year.

These monasteries are looked after by the head lama, known as Khanpo who is assisted by a number of other lamas in the administration and ritual ceremonies of the shrines. These head lamas are elected in rotation in certain monasteries whereas in some others the tenure of headship is left on the will of the head lama who generally retires after a service of five to ten years. However, he goes on performing his duties of a religious teacher and assists the newly elected head lama whenever his services are required.

The society of Lahaulis comprises many communities, viz. Thakurs, Bodhs, Shipis, Lohars, Hesis, Balras, etc. Thakurs were the ruling class in erstwhile state of Lahaul. They were respected by the commoners and the people of lower strata of the society used to serve the Thakurs. Bodhs believe in Buddhism. They predominate the Chandra and Bhaga valleys. They were shown as Kanets in the records but they came from the Mongoloid race. Their

features, viz. narrow forehead, developed cheekbones and small eyes speak of the fact. They are mostly cultivators but now-a-days they have resorted to business also and have proved to be shrewd businessmen. Swanglas are the cultivators in general and possess land. They have come from the Aryan lot. Both Bodhs and Swanglas are the scheduled tribes. Shipis and other lower castes serve Bodhs and Swanglas in cultivation and thus depend upon them for their livelihood. The Garas are the artisans and they are also called Lohars and work as smiths. They mould the iron and other metals to make the household equipments. A few of them are expert in making jewellery. Garas assist the Bodhs and even Swanglas in several rituals. They play an important role in the rituals of death customs of Bodh community. In the same way Bhats and Shipis play almost the same role in case of Swangla community. Garas are musicians and play musical instruments. The councshell carriers and drum beaters, during the procession of the dead, are generally the Garas.

Generally the marriages take place within the community itself. Swanglas once looked down upon Bodhs but that rigid class system is not prevailing now-a-days. Both the communities eat, drink and dance collectively during the fairs and festivals. However, they do not give their daughters to Shipis in marriage. In the same way the lower communities too marry their wards within their communities only. However, some exceptions are always there. There is a community doing the ministerial job for the society. They are known as Hesis. There is another community expert in straw work. They weave baskets and other articles of daily use and are known as Balras. They occupy some land also to cultivate for their families. The food and other products of daily use in kitchen are produced in these fields.

In Spiti there is no rigid class distinction as such. The people who ruled the land were respected with a title of Nono and their females as Zho Zho. There were a few families living in the villages—Kyuling, Mane, Gue, Gooling and Geumal. The artisans included carpenters, smiths and beta, the musicians. There was, once, a servant class living on the labour and serving the higher classes of the society especially the landlords. They were known as Yogpas.

A number of festivals and general assemblies are organised in

different seasons of the year. In addition to the religious ceremonies, there are a number of social functions and festivities connected with the land and its production. People plough their fields on some auspicious days fixed by the lamas. After the seeds are sown a procession of the land-owners led by the lamas goes round the fields chanting the hymns followed by a collective feast and a round of home-brewed Chhang. After the germination of seeds another round of get-together is organised. Sometimes a sheep is sacrificed in the name of Lha, the protector of the land, so that he may help the seedlings to grow healthy. At the time of harvest another ceremony is held similar to the first one. The people are not allowed to cut the crop till the harvest is declared. They do not use iron sickles before harvest. However, if they need the grass leaves or a bit of raw corn they pluck it or use the sickles made of horns or wood. After the harvest, a gala ceremony is organised with collective feast and several rounds of drink and dance activities.

Birth customs are observed in different manner in different valleys. Gotsi is the main custom in Chandra and Bhaga valleys when on the birth of the first child a feast is arranged for the people of the locality. The villagers go to the house of the host and shower their blessings. Sometimes they bring with them flowers and locally brewed Chhang. After a week of the birth of the child, lamas are invited for *Shudhikaran*, that is, the purification ritual when they recite the hymns from the holy books and bless the child. *Mundan* ceremony takes place when the child is one year old. In this ceremony the maternal uncle is the initiator. The ceremony is celebrated with the worship of the gods by lighting the lamps followed by other rituals.

Marriage

Generally joint family system was the call of the past days when polyandrous marriages were the need of the time. Elder brother was married with a bride and the younger brothers were supposed to be the grooms of the bride automatically. When the match was decided, the elder brother would go to the bride's house alongwith a few persons and after a stay for a night they perform various rituals and would bring the bride alongwith him. Sometimes due to certain reasons, a younger brother might go to bring the bride. The

bride was received by the elderly ladies at groom's residence and then after the formal reception with the chanting of the traditional songs the common bride was linked with the grooms with the help of a thread fastened to their turbans at one end and to the little finger of the bride on other, thus symbolically binding them together for the whole life. The common bride was given the assets or at least a document was prepared to this effect. Ladies in polyandry enjoyed much privileges. It was the lady who decided all the social matters; even the matrimonial ceremonies were decided as per the directions of the lady. She had to decide the turns shrewdly to bed with and it was she who decided the paternity of the child. Sometimes these children were named after their paternal ranks. For instance the elder child was named after the elder groom of the lady whereas the second one was named after the second groom and so on, irrespective of their original paternity. Generally one of her husbands used to be at home while others went alongwith the herds or to the fields for cultivation. However, when there were more than one husbands at home, the lady, very cleverly, decided the turns. To indicate that some one was with the lady, in privacy, one had to keep his shoes outside the chamber or his umbrella or cap hanging on the wall outside the private chamber. This type of marriage prevented the distribution of land. It was a joint property of the family. Lady was the symbol of integrity of the family. But there were several hindrances in such social bindings. There used to be large gap of age factor between the lady and the youngest husband who might look for another source for his biological needs. Sometimes the younger husband might opt for another bride but then he was debarred from the ownership of the land. However, in such marriage the lady never saw the miserable days of widowship. On the death of a husband there was another one to look after her. It was the elder brother who was taken as the incharge of the household matters but after his death the responsibility fell on the second one and so on. However, polyandry is not practised now-a-days.

The second type of the marriage was polygamy when a male would marry more than one lady. In such marriages the elder bride always wielded more powers and had right over the important decisions of the family. These marriages were prevalent among the

landlords when more hands were required to look after the assets especially the herds, cultivation and other household activities. Sometimes these marriages were performed only to get an issue if the first bride could not give birth to a male child. Generally second or the third marriages were performed with the consent of the first bride. However, there were certain exceptions.

Monogamy is the need of the modern times. The new generation is opting for single families independent of any binding. Monogamy in Lahaul region is performed with the consent and advice of Jhoya, the astrologer. The parents of the groom consult them for suitability of the girl in their mind. Once decided the elderly persons visit the house of the bride and offer Chhang and Khatak to the family. Then the marriage is settled. On the decided day, a few of the respected people of the village, Jhoya and a few friends of the groom visit the family of the bride and offer Khatak, Chhang and an arrow to the bride's family. The whole night there is merry making session when a feast of Chhang and eatables is given. They sing and dance the whole night and the next day return with the bride. Curious enough that neither the groom nor his father visit the family of the bride in the marriage procession. The bride is received by the elder ladies of the family of the groom. Again there is a merry-making session over Chhang, singing and dancing. This type of marriage, when all the formalities are performed, is named as big marriage popularly known as Ta-bhagston whereas there is another type of marriage which is called the marriage by theft. In such cases generally there is an understanding between the bride and the groom. The boy offers some money and other gifts to the girl and if accepted it is taken as consent of the lady and the marriage is performed in a simple ceremony avoiding any ritual. The parents do not generally interfere in such relations. However, their role begins after the consent of the girl is taken. This type of marriage is popularly known as Kunmai-bhagston.

In Spiti region, the marriages take place amongst the same clans but they should not belong to the same *Gotra*. During marriages a number of rituals are performed, for instance when the marriage party reaches the bride's house a number of boulders are erected. Their number cater to the number of members of the marriage procession. Generally there are 101 or 51 or 9 or the minimum

three big stones which are to be removed by the marriage party before the members are allowed to enter the house. Sometimes trees are planted before the entrance of the house. These are to be removed over the chanting of the traditional songs. The girl is concealed by her friends and only after getting money from the treasurer accompanying the procession they are allowed to see her. Even the entrance to the house is not allowed without getting money. The girl is brought with a *khatak*, a white scarf, bound around her neck. There is another ritual performed to keep peace in the family. A stone is erected before the entrance of the house of groom at which an earthen pot is broken and the lama recites some hymns from the holy book. The lama is gifted with *khatak*, some money and other articles before he departs. The bride is taken into the family fold and then starts the bridal game when in a wide open utensil powdered corn is kept and a lady conceals a coin in the powder which both the bride and the groom have to locate single-handedly. The process is repeated a number of times and the winner is applauded merrily. However, if the bride wins, the friends of the groom jeer at him followed by a collective feast.

Extramarital relations before and after the marriage are not taken morally bad but there must be the consent of the two. Sexual relations with younger brother of the husband are common and the husband does not mind provided he must not be ignored when required. It is a free society with very little inhibitions. Foreigners are not allowed to exploit this situation. However, of late Lahaulis and Spitians have become sensitive to this type of relations too. Monogamy has acquired many habits of the plains too. Dowry system, which was very rare in the past, has now found its grip in this society also. Widow marriage was common but now the youngsters opt for the new bride. However, it is still regarded as the part of social bindings. In the same way the divorces are common. When both members agree to divorce they fasten a thread joining the two through their little fingers and pull apart to break it symbolising that a thread of relations binding the two is broken and they are separated and free now. Sometimes the woman is to be provided with financial security if the man wants to get rid of her. Some amount is decided by the elders of the society. Generally divorces take place due to misunderstandings as well as due to ill-

deeds of any one of the two. The lady may get fed up with the gambling and drinking habits of the man and the man may accuse the lady with infidelity. The decisions are taken by the elders of the society or by mutual understanding. Neither the civil marriages are in vogue nor the people go to courts for getting the verdict of divorce.

MALANA—THE OLDEST PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD

Malana is a small village of about 500 families situated on a plateau of Chandrakhani mountain at a height of about 12000 ft. It is surrounded by the lush-green forests, rugged mountainous ranges and difficult tract not easy to climb. That is why the outsiders could not influence the traditions of this village for thousands of years. This village can be approached through three difficult routes, the less difficult among all is the route of Jari. Jari is a small village which can be approached by mini bus or taxi. While proceeding to Manikaran one can drop at Jari. From Jari the mountainous path leads to the village of Malana. Malana is about nine kms from Jari, and with a little effort, normally a visitor reaches Malana from Jari in five of six hours.

The main occupation of the villagers is cultivation but the produce is not enough to suffice the needs of the inhabitants, thus cattle rearing and collection of medicinal herbs are the other sources of livelihood. The people with their herds climb down to the areas of Mandi and Suket during winter. The main food crops include wheat, millet and maize. The whole land is in the name of the god of the village known as Jamlu Devta. The villagers work in the fields and are known as *Majaras* of the god. After harvest, a fraction of the produce is always offered to the god which is stored in the holy store of the temple. This stored crop is used in various religious festivals and rituals. Even an outsider is served with the food taken from the store of the god.

Jamlu Devta is the rustic form of the great saint Rishi Jamdagni. As the legend prevails Jamdagni was searching for a most conducive place for meditation. He was carrying eighteen images of the gods in a basket, symbolic of all the gods of the world, the wild wind scattered these images throughout the Beas valley. Wherever

these images fell they became the gods of the locality. Jamdagni Rishi came to Malana and found the locality quite suitable for his meditation. So he stayed there for a while before proceeding further. Slowly and gradually the people from far and wide especially from the high ranges of the Himalayas came there to settle. Since the saint was the most revered his verdict in disputes and deciding matters was always final. This tradition still exists among the masses. Strange enough, throughout the valley of Beas, the images of local gods were established but in this village there is no image of Jamlu Devta, instead Khanda of Jamlu Devta is taken as a symbol of the god. Jamlu Devta is named as the chief deity of Kullu valley and whenever there is a convocation of the gods of the valley the final verdict of Jamlu Devta is taken as the supreme one. Jamlu Devta communicates with the masses with the help of its *Gur*, the principal disciple.

The most astonishing fact of the village is its democratic setup. Malana society elects the members to administer the locality in peace. There are two houses of the elected members, the lower and the upper house. The lower house is named as Kanishthang while the upper one is Jeyshtang. Jeyshtang has eleven members out of which three are permanent members and eight are temporary ones. These eight members are elected out of four wards called Chug. Each Chug is again divided into two parts, each part is called Chhuddi. The four wards are—Thamyani, Nagvani, Palchani and Durani. So two elders are elected from each ward, i.e. one from each Chhuddi of every ward. These elders are known as Jathera. Three permanent members include Karmishth, i.e. the chief of the village and the main administrator. In fact, he is the chief executor of the will of the god. He is generally elected from Thamyani ward. Second is the priest known as Pujari of the Jamlu Devta. He is elected from Nagvani ward and the main function of the pujari is to perform the rituals and religious ceremonies, and to worship the god as well as to attend the religious ceremonies performed in the locality. The third permanent member is Gur. Gur is always elected by the Devta himself. It used to happen at some special occasions of religious convention when the soul of Devta entered the body of any person of the locality. He will shiver and profess the prophecy beyond human existence and powers. He will be elected as the Gur.

Gur is the communicator of god's will. They are the three permanent members of the upper house and serve the Devta and the upper house throughout their life. The eight temporary members may be elected. When there is death of a member or any one of them resigns, they all have to quit the house and the elections are declared in which the members of the two houses participate. Only the mature persons of the referred Chugs participate in the election.

The lower house is known as the Core. One mature member of each family is taken as member in this house. Generally the chief of the family is taken as the member. If there is no mature male in the family then the mature lady of the house is taken as the member. The consent of the lower house is obligatory in every decision. Though the matter is resolved in the name of the upper house yet until or unless the lower house gives its consent the matter lingers on. As such, sometimes the elders have difficult time to make the members of the lower house understand the gravity of the situation. Generally the consent of the lower house is always there. However, when there is no proper understanding between the two houses the matter is brought before the Devta in the temple where the Devta gives its final verdict through its Gur. It is binding on each and every person of the society of Malana. All the administration of the village is conducted with the help of the Jeysthang, the upper house. It includes the progress of the village, the business and any matter of importance. To help and assist the Jeysthang there are four officers called Fougaldars. These Fougaldars are again elected from the four wards. To execute the decisions of the upper house is the main responsibility of these Fougaldars. They are also responsible for the security of the inhabitants. Each one of the Fougaldars gets Rupee one yearly from the deposits of the Devta. Generally there is no problem for these officers as the decisions are unanimous and abiding. Every villager is having great regard for these officers who work in the name of Jamlu Devta. There is a legend that the Devta always looks after them but never leaves a sinner or a culprit unpunished. This fear and regard makes everyone disciplined. There is no reaction against any decision taken by either of the house or the Supreme body, the Jamlu Devta himself. That is why no example exists in the records of civil courts of Kullu district that any one of the residents of Malana village has ever approached the court

for any judgement.

Apart from the lower house represented by the adult members of each family there used to be an assembly of the villagers before the godly place where each and every member of the village irrespective of age and sex participates and is free to ask the Gur about the problems faced by them. These problems are generally of personal nature. This assembly is known as 'Ra Deo'.

The village of Malana comprise of two distinct parts. They are apart from each other at a distance of about a hundred metres and in-between these two parts lies the worship place, i.e. the temple of Jamlu Devta. They are known as Soura Berh and Dhara Berh. The place of the god is called Harcha. In this comparatively plain place, is erected the stage having length of about 15 feet and breadth of about 12 feet with a height of about two and a half feet. It is the meeting place of the two houses. Whenever there is need, one of the members of a house calls three times from this stage with the utterances of the words 'Doye Gatake' so that whosoever listens to the voice leaves behind the work and assembles there so that immediately the members join to start the proceedings. Sometimes they are postponed for better times or in the absence of any one of the three permanent members. But if one feels more urgency he would come and sit nearby the stage and burn the twigs of wood so that when its smoke is seen by the members they are collected and the proceedings take place immediately, taking account of the urgency of the matter. If the decision taken by the elders as well as the members of the lower house is not agreed upon by the complainant he may appeal in the Darbar of the god. The process is called 'Chhabe Pona'. Before going to the temple the permission is obligatory from the upper house first. Both sides of the quarrelling parties have to bring one goat each of the same size. They are bound on the two sides of the stage and the men belonging to them sit on their knees bending their face by the side of their goat. Both are covered with a cloth of piece. Gur, the communicator of the god recites the godly hymns and puts the grains of rice in the ears of the goats, whosoever shirks its body first to shun away the rice grains is supposed to be looser and the other side wins. The looser goat is cut into pieces and thrown into the stream while the other one is cut and distributed among the audience attending the ceremony. Thus

the final decision is over which is not only binding but also obligatory. Earlier, according to a foreign traveller, . . . These two goats were given the poisonous needles and during the ritual whosoever died first was supposed to be looser. Hence that goat was thrown into the river. The looser side has to be fined. After the process is over both the sides compromise and ill-will prevailing among them is waved off with the help of a collective feast in which a few of the elders join; thus the atmosphere remains congenial.

People of Malana are simple and to some extent are beautiful in their looks. They possess the normal height and mixed features of Aryans, open forehead, round head, a bit long visage and shining face with the glow of crimson colour. They wear long *Jamas* of wool and cover their head with round cap. The women are beautiful and braid their hair in different platelets bound together at the rear. They are very active and participate in almost all the rituals of the village. The marriages take place in the village only. Generally the spouses are selected from different parts of the village. The bride may be from Dhara Berh and groom from Soura Berh or otherwise. A few of the marriages have also taken place in the nearby villages like Rashmale, etc. But it is very rare.

The language spoken in Malana is typical one. It is more or less understood by a few villagers belonging to nearby localities only. For a foreigner, it is very difficult to understand it. It is called Kanashi language. The utterances the Gur rendered during trance are called 'Kanash Dana' which means the utterances of the god, hence the name of the language is Kanashi. It includes a few words of Kulluvi, Sirmouri and Sanskrit. It is strange that despite several claims that work has been done in this field not a single linguist has tried to explore the possibility of its analysis. Some of the historians think that earlier it was the settlement of Khasas and due to the difficult terrain the locality was isolated from the so-called civilised world and they had kept the traditions and language alive and unadulterated. Their traditions, fairs and festivals are intact. Twice a year the symbols of Jamlu Devta and other gods of the temple are taken out of the chambers to have Darshana and the people participate with all their vitality. *Falgun* and *Sawan* are the two months auspicious for this ritual. During Falgun month the golden image of Akbar is also brought out of the chambers of the temple. There is a

legend that a Sadhu was travelling with two gold coins of Malana village when he was caught by the Mughal soldiers. He was imprisoned and the gold coins were deposited in the treasury of Akbar the great. The same night the king had a dream in which he saw Jamlu Devta directing him to release the Sadhu and deposit the gold coins in the treasury of Malana temple. Akbar himself supervised the operation and found the coins joined together. He was so overwhelmed that he sent his golden image symbolic of his person along with the gold coins to the treasury of Jamlu Devta. The golden image of Akbar is still there in the treasury of the god.

Once a year the disciples of the Jamlu Devta go out in the valley of Kullu to collect material for the depository of the god. They feel that each one living in the valley of Kullu is the disciple of Jamlu Devta and owes to the god a bit of his or her earnings. The collected material is deposited in the store and the money saved in the treasury for the hard days to come.

The people of Malana think themselves superior to all the communities settled in the valley of the gods, i.e. Kullu. Whenever a foreigner visits the village he is looked down upon by the inhabitants and they utter the words like 'Shoon, Shoon'. It is only when the outsiders wash themselves that they are accepted and received with food, etc.

2

Folk Culture

CHISELLING THE ROMANCE ON SANDSTONES

It is really a feast for the eyes to find the wonderful, artistically cut sandstones decorating the reservoirs of water, the natural springs in the hills; particularly, hill regions of Jammu, Udhampur and Chamba abound in such stones. Ordinary stones are chiselled into life-like sculptures. Icons with popular images, floral designs, mythological anecdotes and the hill culture at large are the various aspects of life carved with such dexterity by the artisans that they greatly enhance the living artistic values of the contemporary aesthetics.

To trace back the history and the origin of this art, one has to penetrate into the psychology of Pahari/Dogra feudal lords and the courtiers. They were famous for their chivalry while fighting in the battlefields. They were tough and hard but very soft at their heart and instinctively art-lovers. This trait of feudal lords is imbibed by their courtiers and even the commoners.

One can easily find the treasure of these chiselled half-reliefs under the canopy of eucalyptus and pine trees, on the Chaupals of the villages and on the panels of springs. These half-reliefs include the characters of the folk designs used while decorating the huts and floors of the houses.

The subjects of these carvings range from the mythological figures like the gods and goddesses mentioned in Indian classics, images of local deities, animal motifs, floral designs and the geometrical figures to the local aspects of the vicinity which influence the folk most.

Two types of sandstones were used in these carvings. Black stones were the product of the local sandy rocks whereas the grey stones were imported from other parts of the country. The rough sandstones were chiselled into required measurements of slabs which afterwards were cut according to the requirement. They were carried to a particular place where the masons and sculptors finished them to fine forms of the statues and half-reliefs as suggested by the feudal lords and the rich people who were there to erect them as memorial stones. Generally the black stones were used to carve the local deities while the grey stones were used to carve the images of greater gods and goddesses. The size varied from 6" × 3" to 2' × 3'. Some rare half-reliefs are found to have the size of 5' × 3' measurement.

The grey sandstones were used for the square images of different nature. 1' × 9" sized stones with 4" to 6" thickness were chiselled for these images. Sometimes, even the cubes were used for three-dimensional images in the form of statues. Such huge carved slabs can be seen at Mantalai in the vicinity of Sudh Mahadev in the district of Udhampur. This area is rich enough with these sandstone images. Bari Ban at Chinaini, Paap Nashi of Sudh Mahadev and a scores of unnamed springs carry these half-reliefs. Panchary, Meer, Gota, Sanga and Galiote are the other places in district Udhampur which are rich enough in these carvings. In fact, the hilly tract ranging from Tikri, a spot at 50th kilometre on the national highway, to the upper ranges of the Shivaliks we find thousands of water springs decorated with these half-reliefs and images of different local and classical gods in addition to other folk subjects carved on these sandstones. Generally these square slabs contain one-sided carvings. But a few of them are carved immensely on both sides. These full reliefs are loosely kept on the panels of the springs whereas the stones carrying the half-reliefs are cemented on the panels of the springs. The second type is of memorial stones erected to commemorate the early deaths of the kith and kins.

The process of chiselling followed three steps, firstly the rocks were cut into slabs. It was the job of the masons and the stone-cutters. They were the paid workers. These slabs were carried to the required places where the sculptors chiselled them into required shapes. These artists were respected by the rich and the poor alike.

They were generally amateur artists but in due course of time their progeny adopted the job as their profession. These artists were handsomely rewarded after the completion of their work. The images of gods and goddesses carved were subject to final finishing after being examined by the person who employed them for the job. Sometimes the Pandits and the scholars were called to examine these images especially of classical gods so that they would match with the description given in the scriptures. However, the images depicting the local culture, customs, etc. were the creations of the imagination of the artisans. There were two definite clans working in this field. *Salaras* worked on the sand slabs while as *Batairas* worked on the solid stones. A few of these families are still engaged in chiselling the stones and rocks in the area of Kangra in Himachal Pradesh. But most of them have adapted other jobs due to lack of enthusiasm in this field.

The third phase was to instal these images on the panels. The people of the locality celebrated the festive occasion with all their gusto. Brahmins were given feast followed by a community lunch. The images were given bath under the showering of flower petals and the Vedic hymns were recited by the Pandits. Holy waters of Ganges, Surya Putri, Tawi, Chandrabhaga and that of the springs of Kashmir were used for the purification of the godly images. Landlords clad in white Dhotis assisted by Pandits and Brahmins performed Yagna finally placing the icons on the panels, thus completing the *sthapna*. It was the process to awaken the stone images into life. The persons responsible for the show were honoured with materials and money. The celebration would sometimes run for three days together and completed only after the installation of the images on their panels. This uncelebrated art has been travelling down unknowingly from the time no one knows. However, it flourished in the reign of Dogra kings. Several of the water springs in the hills were decorated and constructed by the members of royal families; they bear their names on some stones. Queens of the lords, especially, were fond of constructing these springs and decorating them with the chiselled images of their family gods and goddesses. Some of the springs carry the dates of construction also but they are generally newly constructed. The old springs do not carry any sort of these dates and there is no source left to ascertain

their dates. The old men of the locality narrate several stories. The myths carried on for centuries together. The only source is a crude figure of Yakshini carved out of black sandstone placed on the upper panel of the spring nearby the popular temple of Sudh Mahadev in Udhampur district. This image is supposed to be chiselled when the other images of the temple came into existence but since it was the image of Yakshini it was kept outside the temple at the entrance. The old men of the vicinity match its time with the broken trident of the temple. Its iron core carry the inscription which has been deciphered. This script was in vogue in 12th century A.D. indicating that the trident of Lord Shiva was at least 800 years old. If it is the fact then the image itself is having the same age. Some more springs near the bank of stream Devika in Udhampur carry stones on which tentative dates of their construction are given. A spring by the roadside at Phalata in Udhampur district carry the stone with the date and the person responsible for its construction. We can thus presume that the art started long back but it flourished during the preceding two centuries. Moreover, from the style of sculpture also one can infer the probable dates of the construction of the springs and the chiselling of the images erected on their panels.

The style of these stones is different in different localities. For instance, in the interiors of Panchary Niabat of Chinaini in the district of Udhampur, more finely chiselled stones are available. The more interior springs contain three-tiered stones of flat slabs having meticulously carved half-reliefs. They are conical in shape and almost three feet in length and two and a half feet in breadth at the base. They taper up gradually to a pointed apex. These conical slabs are carved in three panels. The upper panel contains the carvings of nymphs with the wings showering water and the second one contains the carvings of a palanquin carried by the carriers on the logs of wood followed by a horse rider. There is a damsel sitting inside the palanquin peeping through the curtains. The third panel contains the carvings of birds like parrots, etc. The springs nearby the main roads are simple and have square stones of 1' × 9" size. Most of these stones carry the images of serpent god Nag Devta. Some of them are carved with rustic touch while the others are beautifully chiselled with acumenship of an artist. There is a stone

image of beautifully carved serpent god decorated with scales in the vicinity of Panchary. It is popularly called Akhada Devta. Other motifs carved on these sandstones are the mermaids, fishes, dragons, horses and elephants in addition to several plants, like pine, mango, and banana tree and trailers, twinnings, flowery creepers and shrubs of various kinds. Among the godly images, Lord Rama, Vishnu, and other gods of eminence in addition to local gods and family godlings are carved on these stones. Along almost the entire Pahari belt ranging from Peer Panjal to the lower Shivaliks we find such springs. In Chamba and Almora also some of these stones can be seen richly carved with the images. At Almora these springs are covered with roofs the ceilings of which are carved profusely with intricate designs. It was the common heritage prevailing throughout the hills.

FOLK THEATRES OF HIMACHAL

Folk drama and theatre is very popular among the common people of Himachal Pradesh. Almost every festival and fair in the region carries the touch of these folk performances. The people from far and near come to enjoy these performances throughout the night. Apart from the popular folk theatre like Raas Leela and Ram Leela, there are a number of folk plays staged in different regions of Himachal Pradesh which are unique in their form and execution. These folk plays are based on folk tales, ballads and local anecdotes. A few of them have trickled down from the legendary episodes and the popular epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Karyala

Karyala is the most popular folk theatre among the people of Shimla, Solan and Sirmour areas of Himachal Pradesh. During early winter season especially around Deepawali, folk parties popularly known as Natak Mandalis approach the villages where they give their performance. Generally these parties are invited by the villagers as a community or individuals whose wishes are fulfilled by the grace of gods. Earlier, it was a normal phenomenon that during Deepawali festival the Natak Mandalis used to give their performance almost in every village of the area mentioned above.

No stage is required for Karyala performance. A place is selected in an open area and poles of wood are erected on its sides, which are fastened with the help of cords. Thus the stage is ready. It is popularly known as 'Akhada'. Akhada is a place where the wrestling takes place. Perhaps, that is why, such stage is called Akhada as much of the fun and fare takes place in this arena. On one side of this temporarily arranged stage a cell is created for the performers. It may be an already constructed room or a tent. It serves as green room for the artists. These are the meagre requirements. Sometimes they do not need all this paraphernalia but perform the drama just like 'Nukkad Natak'. Since it starts at night, deodar and pine splinters are lighted around the temporary stage which give light as well as warmth during the cold night. Several 'Alaos' are created that a scene of a campfire fascinates the viewers. It also helps the audience to warm their bodies.

It is a dialogue performance intermittantly woven with music and dance. There is no serialised plot of the drama. In fact, it is total sum of mimicry and imitations. A farce of the real life is created with gestures, dialogues and actions. The performers are professional artists who create humour with their gestures and dialogues. They are so trained in their art that they spontaneously pick up the thread of the dialogues. The comments of the audience are satirised in such a way that a flutter of laughter is created instantaneously. There is no director as such, nor any author of the play but a leader of the party is there to give the guidelines. However, individual artists are free to concoct their dialogues according to the situation. Sometimes, comments from the audience make the way to enhance dialogue between the two artists enacting on the stage. In this way, the audience is also involved in the performance.

Karyala starts with rituals when the musical instruments like *ransingha*, drum, *nagara*, *karnal* invite the audience from far and wide followed by a dance performance of Chandrawali. Chandrawali is the incarnation of Shakti. A male artist in the garb of goddess enters the arena with burning incense in his hand. He steps on the tune of the rhythm played on different musical instruments. He moves around the audience, touches the various instruments and disappears from the stage. Everything stops after his exist and there is a lull before storm. Everyone waits for the next performance and

then suddenly a storm is created by artists in the garb of Sadhus who may approach the stage from any corner or even from the audience side. There is no particular direction mentioned for them. They utter the renderings like 'Ho, Ho'. A lively atmosphere is created and the audience is ready to listen the dialogues among them. Generally two of them converse with each other so that there may not be any confusion. These are the dialogues which create laughter. Several characters of the society are made the centre of their ridicule. Mimicry of the politicians and other farce characters of the society is conducted with such an acumen that there is a peel of laughter everywhere but they go on performing without having any note of that. However, they sometimes astonish, frown, fret and snub them with such a gesture that it adds more humour. Generally the language of conversation is Pahari but to add humour they use Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and sometimes slang English too. Generally language is twisted and concocted to create humour. Dialogues are always rendered in verse. To fill in the gap between the dialogues and imitation, folk songs and folk dances are performed. During conversation, if a character is not able to answer a question, he makes the gestures in such a ludicrous way that it adds humorous glow to the situation.

Karyala is performed only by the male characters. No female character takes part in the performance, may be due to the vulgarity which may creep up in the dialogues and thus there is always a risk of creating an awkward situation. There is another theory behind it that the emotional gestures which can be enacted by the males are not possible by the females but this is not true as far as the female faculties are concerned.

The soul of the Karyala is the humour created through the dialogues. Music and dance entertain the audience during the gaps. We can say that they are the fillers in between.

In addition to the dialogues between Sadhus, mimicry of Churanwala, Mem Sahib, Thulana, etc. are also created. Sometimes contemporary problems are also taken in which the whimsical characters are ridiculed through these mimicries.

Bhagtan

Bhagat or Bhagtan is a folk theatre conducted on both sides of the river Ravi. We may say that this type of folk drama is popular among the Dogra folk at large. Kangra, Chamba and Jammu are the main centres where these folk dramas are staged. It is said that it has its origin in Ras Leela of Mathura from where it travelled to other parts of the country especially Rajasthan and Pahari kingdoms of Kangra and Jammu. As a matter of fact, court jesters used to entertain the courtiers and feudal lords but for the common people Bhagtias provided the entertainment. They belonged to lower strata of the society and moved from one village to another conveying message of social importance and at the same time they provided light entertainment in order to beguile their day's hard labour. That was the reason why they performed the dramas in evening hours, nevertheless, occasionally on the invitation of landlords or rich farmers performance was conducted during the day time also, especially during rituals like marriages, etc. There was no binding of the time.

Like other folk theatres, the characters of this performance also dressed in ludicrous attire so as to create a lively atmosphere among the audience. Long apron type shredded gowns, ludicrous headgears and unmatching Pyjamas were the dresses used. Even, sometimes, jute hair were used instead of headgears.

At present, though the number of the performers is miserably reduced but here and there, from time to time, we may witness this lively performance. No stage is required to enact Bhagtan. Any Chaugan or a platform may be taken as the arena for the performance. No green room is required as they don't require any make-up, only the ludicrous ready attire is there to perform in the way they like. The play starts with the drumming of the percussion instruments and the pleasant sound of the flute indicating that the play is going to commence and the people from far and wide gather at the venue to witness the Bhagtan. The characters one by one enter the arena and a lively atmosphere is created. There are the dialogues which form the sequence and the drama goes on. The whimsical characters of the society are ridiculed and several anecdotes are enacted to give way to the real aspects of life.

There are several anecdotes narrated by Sansar Chand Prabhakar in Somasi edition of October 1980 that Baba Maya Ram was the disciple of Lord Krishna and was a great artiste of this theatre. He belonged to Katnour village of Kangra district which is now submerged in the water of Pong dam. Once he arranged the folk theatre of Bhagat but due to some unavoidable circumstances the characters who had to play the part of Gopis could not come and he had to take the help of his own daughters who acted as Gopis. The daughters of Baba Maya Ram sang the separation songs in such a melodious voice that Lord Krishna himself participated in the dance that could only be witnessed by Babu Maya Ram so that this anecdote became the mouthpiece of the village. In the same way he narrates the mystic anecdote of Baba Ranjhu of village Haar Chakkian. Like Baba Maya Ram, Baba Ranjhu was also a great disciple of Lord Krishna. He dedicated his whole life for this theatre. Once it so happened that his party was invited to perform Bhagat in a village but while cutting a short distance they passed through a forest and lost the track. They were tired of the long journey and after a bit of rest they started to perform the folk drama. As according to the myth, when the lamp for the Aarti was lighted to start the Ganesh Pooja followed by movement of the Pooja Thali with the burning lamp, a gold biscuit and small Damru of Lord Shiva appeared from nowhere. Every one was astonished to see the two divine articles. Such was the faith of the folks in Bhagat folk drama. In this folk drama, in addition to the dialogue technique, dances in the style of Ras Leela enhance the beauty of the theatre along with the musical renderings. The main character in Krishan Leela episode is that of Mansukh. It is said that Mansukh is the synonym of Udhav the mythological character of Sukh Sagar and Shrimadbhagvat, who was the friend of Lord Krishna. The folk drama starts with the dialogues between two *gopies*, again enacted by the male characters. Though the characters are legendary yet the dialogues between them are generally topical catering to the needs of present day life. This is followed by the dialogues between Lord Krishna and Mansukh. Lord Krishna asks his friend, should he send a motor car but instead Mansukh pretends to listen a bottle of liquor and replies in negative with a peel of laughter from the audience. Again he is asked if Mansukh likes a lorry but instead Mansukh

takes it a Larhi, i.e. the bride, again the reply is in negative that he is not in a situation to accept a bride. Again there is an offer of a horse from Lord Krishna to Mansukh, i.e. would he accept '*Ghorha*' (a horse), he readily accepts the offer and replies that he likes '*Pakora*' (snacks) but it should not be less than a quarter of a kilo. Again there is a laughter from the audience. In this manner the ludicrous dialogues go on, making the atmosphere lively. Mansukh is the main character of the play and is well versed in his role. In fact, he is the soul of this folk theatre. Generally the whimsical characters of the society are ridiculed with mimicry and satirising their way of life. Now-a-days the centre of their ridicule are the political leaders who are having two ways of life especially those hypocrites who harm the social values and damage the norms of the society through their selfish motives. Bhagtias also play the farce of Gaddi, Gaddan, Bhol, Roulu, Ranga, etc. in which the sarcastic language is used to interpolate the spurious insertions here and there to create laughter after laughter.

Banthara

Banthara folk theatre is popular among the people of Mandi region of Himachal Pradesh. In fact, it is synonym of Bhand, i.e. jester. The characters enacting Banthara are known as Banth. In earlier times, the feudal lords of erstwhile kingdoms used to enjoy the company of jesters who could easily release the tension of lords caused due to the political situations, through their gestures and ludicrous dialogues. With the fall of the feudalism these people, who were really artists, came out to exhibit their talents before the common people. Thus a folk theatre emerged with several artists working in groups popularly known as Mandalis. Banths belonging to different Mandalis, sometimes, compete with each other in prompt reply of the questions put up to them. During feudal regime different parties were invited to compete and the winners were rewarded handsomely.

No stage is required for the performance of Banthara. The artists in the garb of different characters would appear before the audience at a fixed place popularly called Akhada. Banthara is a blend of three arts—music, dance and gestures. Gestures combined

Banthara is a part of the rituals ceremonised in Mandi region of Himachal Pradesh. Majhwarh, Malwana, Karsoda, etc. villages of Mandi are still performing Banthara after the religious ceremony at the Mansa Devi temple of Bangran, where people of the surrounding villages assemble in a get-together, popularly known as *Jagrata*, which runs for the whole night. Here, a disciple of the goddess, Gur, serves as the oracle of the goddess and the questions of the audience are answered by the Gur. After the ceremony is over the people assemble at a decided place to witness and enjoy the Banthara.

The performance of the Banthara is enjoyed nearby Deepawali festival when the folk instrumentalists and the folk singers are invited to perform the folk theatre. The main characters of the folk drama are known as Swangis, i.e. those who imitate. These imitations are generally humourous in nature, however, sometimes serious topics and subjects are also taken to educate the masses. During the period of feudalism some definite parties were recognised by the regime and they were invited to give their performance and sometimes two parties were invited to compete with each other in the performance and the victors were rewarded by the feudal lords. Generally, false characters and hypocrites were ridiculed through gestures and dialogues. To create humour light dresses and masks made of card board, wood and cloth pieces are used. Jute is used to make long hair popularly known as Jata. These hair, artificially created, are coloured according to the need and the situations. Sometimes nests of the birds are also used as headgears to create laughter and mimicry of Sadhus.

Every character is expert in singing and dancing. Dance and music are the important aspects of the folk theatre. In fact, each scene is preceded by music. Each scene carries a definite lyric on the rythms of music and dancing steps. In addition to other musical instruments, Shehnai and Nagara play very important role in the whole performance.

Dialogues are the essence of this folk theatre. These dialogues are not predecided, however, a scheme is planned and according to that plan the dialogues are concocted. These characters are so expert in cooking the dialogues instantaneously that it seems that they have mugged them up. Sometimes odd situations may arise when,

while conversing with each other, the characters may not be able to answer a query. Then they sort out the problem by simple gestures, again creating a peel of laughter. Even the audience, sometimes, is involved when the characters pointing towards some persons ridicule them or satirise them with simple gestures. Sometimes a person from the audience may ask a question which is taken positively and answered with the same gesture. Several farces are conducted in this folk theatre. They include the imitation of Sadhu, mimicry of Sahib and Mem, dialogues of Chela and Cheli, imitation of Dau, etc. In fact, Banthara is very close to Karyala. If we shift the scenes and rename them and the title of the theatre is changed, both the theatres become almost the same. Yes, there is a difference of the language and some cult of the soil is there. For instance, in case of Dau, a Gaddi village Tantrik is ridiculed who lures away a Gaddi whose Gaddan is suffering from severe stomach ache. With his Tantrik power Dau makes the Gaddi blind and lures away his Gaddan but finally the matter is solved with a little give and take process when Dau is favoured with a lamb. As far as Sadhu's imitation is concerned it is almost the same in both the folk theatres and so is the case with the Chela Cheli dialogues.

Due to lack of favour and encouragement, these folk theatres are now dwindling. The electronic media has also played a vital role in making these folk theatres unpopular. The Art, Culture and Languages Academy of the state and other cultural institutions can help in the survival of the folk theatres.

Buddha, Harnatra, Jhanki and Bandha

In addition to the most popular folk theatres of Karyala, Banthara and Bhagat several other folk dramas are staged in different parts of Himachal Pradesh.

Buddha is the folk drama enacted at Mandi along with Banthara. Some folklorists think that it is the part of Banthara but generally it is played separately in its distinctive performance. It is said that Banthara was enacted by the people of upper caste only. The folk artists of lower strata of the society were not allowed to participate in that folk form so they invented their own style and form thus

Buddha came into existence. This folk theatre is performed in the areas of Mandi, Sundernagar, Karsog, etc. Almost all the characters belong to lower caste of the society as such it was not possible to satirise the deeds of the upper caste people directly. Hence direct rendering of the dialogues is avoided, instead the lyrical renderings play the role of direct conversation. The attire of the characters is made of straws of wheat and jute which covers the whole body of the character. The headgears are the big caps having three horns protruding at the apex. Even the hands are covered with a sheath of straws and three artificial grass fingers appear at the juncture.

The play starts with the rendering of *Bhagti Geet*, i.e. devotional songs followed by the farces of Buddha, Chandrouli, Maskhara, Jogi, Pahari, etc. Buddha enters the arena with musical renderings, followed by Chandrouli. The lyrics of Chandrouli have the fragrance of the soil and the daily routine of the farmers. When Jogi enters the arena the lyric is changed followed by Maskhara, who is supposed to be the paramour of Chandrouli. It is this character which creates a lively atmosphere with his renderings. The whole Mandi gets enough from the villagers to distribute among its characters the corn, eatables and money. Sometimes they enjoy the collective feast for the whole week after the performance is over.

Hiran or *Harnatra* is the folk drama enacted by Gaddis in the Gadderan areas of Bharmour, Chhatrari, Bassu and Saho. It is performed during spring season. In fact, the nightmare of the winter is always a suffering situation and during spring Gaddis come out of their hibernation to celebrate and welcome the summer which is always a pleasant season for them. The main characters of this folk drama are Khappar, Chandrouli, Gaddi, Gaddan, Sadhu, Sahib and Hiran. Khappar wears a long woollen apron which is generally shredded. A woollen rope is bound on it. Trousers of uneven size and a cap or turban on the head is the attire of this character. They also cover their face with masks popularly known as Mohra. Khappar possesses a club in his hand which he sways in the air while dancing, rendering irrelevant words. In fact, the role that is enacted by Sadhus in Karyala is performed by Khappar in Harnatra. There may be more than three in a single performance like those of Sadhus in Karyala. Chandrouli is another character of the folk theatre. Male characters enacting the role of Chandrouli wear the female

dresses. Their number is the same as that of Khappar. Chandrouli is supposed to be the paramour of Khappar as such they dance in the company of Khappars. Other characters like Gaddi, Gaddan, Sadhu, Sahib, etc. wear the dresses according to their role and they cater to the situation of the play. Hiran is a peculiar character clad with the shredded clothes covered by the woollen ropes throughout the body. It wears two horns on his head. Generally the make-up is done in a temple from where the procession starts towards the streets and houses. The procession is led by the musical instrumentalists followed by the farce characters and other people. Drum, shehnai and ransingha are the main musical instruments used in this performance. The people or the host favour them with corn, fruits and money which is distributed among the characters.

Jhanki is another form of Harnatra when for days together Harnatra is played almost in the same area. The characters and their performance are almost the same.

Bandha is another form of Hiran or Harnatra but it is enacted during night hours when the splinters of pine are burnt to light the arena. It is played with almost same number of characters. Dialogue is the main aspect along with farcical gestures of the characters. A competition is held and a number of parties take part in that competition. The winners are applauded whereas the losers are jeered at followed by the performance which may go on for the whole night.

In addition to the above folk dramas, a number of folk plays are staged in different forms but in limited localities. *Voura* among them is peculiar to all these. It is in fact a Tantric dance enacted by only a group of people belonging to a particular locality of Una district. *Horingfo* of Kinnaur is also a peculiar performance. It is a slow dance with a number of characters.

PAHARI RUMAALS AND ORNAMENTAL CHOULIS

Embroidery and Phulkari work of Shivaliks is world-famous. Women folk are devoted to this art weaving the colours of emotions and designs. Girls by instinct imitate their elder counterparts in knitting, needle work and ornamentation of cloth pieces. Interweaving the threads of different sorts with small needles into mul-

tiple designs in the natural training they get from the very childhood from their sisters, mothers and other elderly ladies. They are virtually trained, in their teenage, to make the ornamental garments for their dowry. They knit the woollen clothes like sweaters of intricate designs, embroider the saris with gold and silk threads of different colours into several beautiful designs of border lining as well as floral and figurative structure. They interlace the coloured beads, twist the threads into various patterns so as to use their braided and plaited forms into multiple designs.

Kashmiri needle work, Dogri embroidery and Punjabi knitting are perhaps the superb art of women. Chamba, Basohli and Jammu Rumaals, embroidered Choulis and bedsheets are still in vogue among the masses. Embroidery of Chamba is enchanting and captivating. The embroidered Rumaals with figurative structure overwhelm the viewers.

Chamba Rumaals, especially, are superb in this art of embroidery. They are world famous for their fine needle work. The Rumaals are used as headgears by the ladies of the hills of Chamba, Basohli, Jammu and Kangra. Rumaals in shining colours can be seen plated or fastened around the neck or the head. These Rumaals are simple having very light or no needle work done on them. In due course of time these Rumaals were used as gifts. Such Rumaals were richly decorated with gold and silver threads. Sometimes to create variety of designs, silk and cotton threads of various colours were also used. The tradition of embroidering the square cloth pieces of light colours was not limited to Chamba Rumaals only but, like Pahari paintings, it became the cult of the hilly folk, thus it was in vogue in the areas of Basohli, Bilaspur, Jammu, Kullu, Kangra, Mandi and Mankot. Surely Chamba is not the originator of these Rumaals. Like Pahari Kalam (school), the Basohli Rumaals are the oldest. However, the tradition of gifting away the Rumaals is not in vogue now. I think this tradition has crossed the river Ravi and flourished in the region of Chamba after the fall of Basohli state. A Rumaal of Chamba origin is lying in the south Kasington museum. It is believed that the Rumaal belonged to Basohli which was taken to Chamba alongwith the looted material by Raja Raj Singh of Chamba in 1782 A.D. Another Rumaal is lying in the museum of Baroda which is superb in artistic designing in embroidery.

Some Pahari Rumaals are embroidered over square pieces of light coloured cloth of different measurements. Sometimes other forms of Rumaals were also used. This art can be traced to the origin of wall paintings and miniatures. The domain of this art, however, remained in the vicinity of the ladies only. The subject of embroidery however, was Phulkari, i.e. to embroider the flowers, twinnings with alternate leaves and flowers. Some beautiful Rumaals contained more beautiful and popular subjects like Raas Leela, Krishan Leela, etc.

The Rumaals meant for gifts were prepared out of light silk or superior cotton cloth pieces. A few of the Rumaals lavishly decorated were made out of the rough cotton pieces also. They were common among the masses. Generally double stitching was done so as to finish the Rumaals on both sides. The figures embroidered were lined by the golden threads while the body of these figures were needled with other colours. The threads available were generally of white colours. They were given other shades at home. The primary colours were prepared from organic matter like yellow from the acacia flowers, black from lamp soot, saffron from saffron flowers, red from *Hurmachi* and sometimes from *Basooti*—an insect of red colour. The sheath of the raw walnuts was also used in giving the colour to the white threads. The technique is still prevalent in the hills to colour the woollen carpets, etc. The secondary colours were prepared from the primary colours by mixing them in proper ratio. Saffron colour was also prepared by mixing the primary colours in adequate proportion.

These Rumaals are still in use in certain areas of Himachal. During ceremony, before the commencement of the marriage, gifts like fruits, sweets, etc placed in the baskets were covered with the designed Rumaals. They were also given as token of gift in dowry, this tradition is still prevalent.

Two specimens of such designed Rumaals are displayed on the panels of Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu. First Rumaal is of red silken cloth piece of 9" × 9" measurement. The whole Rumaal is divided into four squares by thread work. Each square is again divided into four thus total number of the squares become sixteen. Each square contains a beautiful geometrically designed flower needled with the thread of golden blue and green colours with multilateral designs of

the border lining. There is another Rumaal made out of light yellow coloured silken cloth having the measurement of 3' × 3'. The Rumaal is beautifully embroidered by squarely bordering runners and twinnings having green leaves alternately braided intermittently with red petaloid flowers having four petals each. Second border is of yellow colour in linear form. Third border is again in the form of a line in purple colour. At the corners, flowers with a single petal are embroidered with rich and variegated colours. Each corner is decorated with a pair of parrots sitting on a branch opposing each other. Parrots are having green body and red beaks and wings. In the centre a big flower is needed having eight petals of red colour and purple shade. Every petal is intercepted by green sepal. There are four sapphire coloured flowers stitched one in each direction. Centre of the flower is having green and red circles. The central flower has been enclosed in the double lined border of yellow silken thread with twinnings running circularly having alternate green leaves and purple flowers.

Ornamental Choulis

Like Pahari Rumaals, ornamental Choulis were very popular among the folk. Richly decorated blouses were the features of inherited art of making bodice. Often, these Choulis were backless and had half sleeves. Wide open necks embroidered richly on the borders with shining colours, these garments had intensely braided cups to be fitted on the breasts decorated with fine needle work. Sometimes these blouses were ornamented with pendants of cut glass stitched to give the lustre to the blouse. The blouses were also ornamented with the beads of different colours, gold thread, pieces of mica and mirror. Heavily braided and ornamental Choulis are still preserved in several museums of the country.

These blouses were backless. The bodice part of the ornamental garments was fastened at the backs with the help of small strings. Though backless, these blouses would cover the body in front upto the waist of the ladies using them. It is a matter of discussion that whether the modest ladies would wear these backless Choulis. Though sex was never taboo in the hills yet the exhibition of body was never encouraged. It may be possible that these ornamented Choulis were only used by the ladies of the royal families, that too

on certain occasions. They were also given in gifts with a limited use to satisfy one's hunger for artistic wearing in isolation or in the company of some one from whom they wanted appreciation of their beauty.

The stitching of these garments was a bit complicated process as compared to the ornamental Rumaals. Rumaals could be prepared from any piece of cloth but for Choulis special cloth pieces were needed. Generally silk cloth pieces were used to prepare the Choulis. These cloth pieces were cut to give a definite shape to form the blouse followed by rich embroidery with myriad designing.

A number of such Choulis are under display in Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu. Three of which are beautifully decorated. The first one is a finely decorated backless half sleeved Chouli cut out of fine superior silken cloth piece. There are two big flowers emboidered in golden thread. Each flower is having fifteen petals. These flowers cover the breast cups. Inside these flowers small flowers are embroidered with eight petals in each. The interiors of the big flowers are braided with green and red coloured threads while the inner flowers are bordered with red inner lines and the green pith occupies the high place of the breasts. Towards the waist side, a single flower with sixteen petals has been embroidered. This single flower is bordered by green, red and blue border lines decorating its interior. Again there is a small flower inside these border lines of different colours. From this flower emerge four budding flowers on four directions with a small twig with each flower. There are two spindles embroidered on left and right side of the flower. The spindle on the right side is stitched with red coloured thread while the spindle on the left side is needled with golden thread.

The second blouse is again backless having red coloured sleeves of silken cloth embroidered with six border lines plaited in wavy structures of different colours. The cups of this blouse are conical in structure and divided into three quadrangular cells having blue base. Each cup is embroidered with designed flowers.

The third blouse is again backless blouse having decoration like the first one. Sleeves are plain while cups are embroidered with the same style. Back is covered with red thread from neckside and yellow thick cotton thread bordering the cups from waist side.

3

Art and Architecture

MAGNIFICENT TEMPLES

Ancient temples which exist since ages are simple buildings erected to house the images of gods and goddesses. Earlier there were caves carved out of solid rocks which were used as places of worship. Several Budh Viharas and Jain temples are witness to this style. Slowly and steadily the earlier settlers used wood and stones to erect large rooms for worship. They were very simple cells with wide place to sit in and the images were placed in the centre. Early Aryans were the worshippers of the elements of nature. Anything which could not be conquered was considered as god and they started worshipping them. High ranges of the Himalayas, sun, moon, wild winds, big trees and a number of other elements of nature became the objects of their worship. Thus temples of fire as Agni Devta, Varuna, serpents as Nag Devta came into existence. In the beginning these deities were kept on a pedastal in the open or under a tree by the side of springs or rivers and streams especially at their confluence followed by the construction of their chambers in simple forms. With the development of civilisation and enlightened thoughts more complicated rituals and religious ceremonies came into existence and with these ritual technicalities of construction of holy chambers found their way and became prominent. Several books were written and a separate Shastra of this type of construction was developed. The people became more particular about the place, location, side, design and the material to be used in these constructions and several hypotheses were set-forth in these writings. Thus more complicated and designed temples were constructed the finale

of which we can see in Nagar style of temple architecture. Temples erected in this style can be seen throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Shikhra Style of Temples

Erected on the cliffs, crests and the upper ridges of the mountainous regions are the massive structures built out of big sandstones placed one on another without having any mortar used. For thousands of years these chambers of the images of the gods have withstood the onslaught of rain, sun, snow, chilly winds, foggy atmosphere and not the least the polluted environment of the centuries. Generally these temples are cone-shaped erected on a rectangular basement with a single cellar in which the image is placed. They possess no Mandpas and ante-rooms. They are entered through a decorated porch supported by two pillars. The cone which starts from the rectangular basement gradually tapers upto apex where it finishes to form a spire with a multiple cut stone placed on the top. This stone is called Amalaka. Some temples are covered with kiosk, an umbrella-shaped structure made up of slanting slates or wooden plates, to protect the Shikhra of the temples from natural calamities. These are the peculiar forms of Shikhra style. Strange enough, the style has not originated in the hilly area, on the contrary the design is borrowed from the plains. Perhaps the architects and the masons were invited from the plains to erect these temples.

The earliest possible specimen of the Shikhra style temple exists in Kashmir on the ridge of the famous Shankaracharaya hill overlooking the magnificent Dal lake. It is popularly known as Shankaracharaya temple. The main building of the temple is about 30 feet in height erected on the octagonal platform. The interior of the temple is 14 feet in diameter. Ceiling is flat and the roof is supported by four octagonal limestone pillars. The Lingam finds its place in the centre of the chamber. According to the Kashmir historian, Bamzai, the temple shows early Kashmir style in experimental stage, "it tries to introduce the early Shikhra style and has still one storeyed gable pediment which is evident even now despite the later construction." The later developments show the highly skilled architectural style with the fine touch of the intricate mosaic

designing on the outer circumference of the temple. The exact style can be traced from the Lingraj temple of Bhubaneshwar in Orissa. The beautifully and artistically carved images on the outer walls of the temple in multiple panels and a number of finely carved and chiselled deities resting on the pedestals of the niches speak the beauty of its architecture. There stand a number of loving couples with different gestures of wooing, embracing and kissing each other. The spire of the temple consists of conspicuous sunstone. In the same way, Sidheshwar temple of Bhubaneshwar is a true specimen of this style. The style is captured in the construction of most of the hill temples. The temples of Chamba, Bharmour, Bajoura, Babor, Krimachi, etc in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu, the temples of Jageshwar, Baijnath, Gurjar temple, Dwarhat, Chitai, Almora in Kumaon and several temples in hilly regions owe their designing to this style.

Out of the cluster of six temples of Chamba, the Laxmi Narayan temple was erected by Sahil Varman, the founder of the town. Other temples in the town were constructed afterwards by a number of feudal lords. Latest is the temple of Radha Krishna erected by the prince of Raja Jit Singh in 1825 A.D. Three of these temples belong to Lord Shiva and its cult and the other three to the Vaishnav cult. All these temples are constructed in the same style. The spires of these temples are covered with kiosk of the slanting slates fixed on the wooden planks arranged convergently towards the apex forming a cone on the top and gradually scatter divergently in ecropetal order forming an umbrella. Their walls are decorated with chiselled cut stones forming a number of intricate designs. The Gavakshas, i.e. niches contain the chiselled deities enclosed in the small archs supported by two chiselled pillars placed on the basement of the protruding platforms.

Two more Shikhra temples are the attraction of the town of Chamba. They are the temples of Hari Rai and Bansi Gopal. Hari Rai temple is profusely decorated with the carvings of deities and the mosaic view of intricate designing. It was constructed in 11th century. The temple of Bansi Gopal is of later period. Two more temples of the same style are situated on the outskirts of the town. Vajreshwari of Bhagwati temple is remarkable for its beauty and grandeur, for its decoration and superb structure while Champawati

temple situated on the north side of the Chougan houses a stone image of Durga slaying the buffalo demon. It is in a dilapidated condition. There is a shrine by the side of the temple which shelters the images of Vasuki Nag and its Vazir.

At Bharmour, the ancient capital of Chamba, there are two main temples built in this style. Larger one is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is popularly known as Mani Mahesh. It is ascribed to Meru Verman who reigned in about 700 A.D. but it is doubtful that the present building goes back to so remote a time. The evidence to this context is an inscription on the brass bull which stands in front of the temple. The other Shikhra temple of Bharmour, smaller in size and plainer in appearance, contains a brass image of Narsingh, the lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Its construction by Tribhuvan Rekha, the queen, is mentioned in a copper plate inscription of Yogakara, the son of Sahil Verman and is supposed to be of 10th century A.D.

A stone temple of peculiar style is that of Chandershikha, the moon crowned Shiva at Saho near Chamba. It is mounted by sloping slate roof evidently of modern date. The two remarkable figures, however on both sides of the entrance bear out that the body of the building is ancient. An early Sharda inscription, discovered in the adjoining village Sahran, presumably records the foundation of the temple. The small Shikhra temple at Udaipur, three miles from Chamba, is a specimen of a very late period. It was erected after the death of Raja Udai Singh in 1720 A.D. It contains three small-sized images of white marble. The central one is that of Narayan and the other two of the Raja and his brother Lakshman Singh, who were murdered on the spot where the temple stands. Besides there is a slab with the name of the Raja and his four Ranis and eighteen maid servants who performed the ritual of Sati after the death of the Raja. The slab corresponds with the Sati pillars of Kullu and Manali.

In Chandrabhaga valley there is a temple devoted to Trilok Nath, the lord of the world, another name of Avalokiteshwar, the popular Bodhisattva. This is constructed in Shikhra style. It is built of stone and the spire is constructed with the help of burnt bricks. The porch, supported by two graceful pillars with fluted shafts is profusely decorated with carvings. It contains a shed-like external

structure which forms the ante-room in front and at the same time provides a procession path around the temple. There are two small Shikhra temples on the outer side of the main temple in which several wooden images and other structures are placed. It is said that these structures are erected whenever there is any death in the family of Rana. These objects of memoir are not removed with the exception of the objects used during Char or spring festival. They represent man, woman and a demon popularly known as Gani, Mezmi and Kalinza in local dialect. Kalinza is chased by villagers and takes off the mask and joins the dance afterwards with the persons masked as Gani and Mezmi. It is symbolic of chasing the chilly winter and forcing it to leave the village and to welcome the spring.

There is another temple built in the style of Shikhra architecture known as Lakhdatta situated in Nurpur. It stands by the side of Chougan bazar the link road. It is a small plain temple with peculiar covered spire.

In the vicinity of Jammu we find a number of ancient temples built in Shikhra style. Almost sixty kilometres from Jammu, on the north-west ranges of Ladha there is a village named Krimachi. Now merely a hamlet of a few huts, Krimachi was once the capital of the most powerful kings of Bhumag. On the upper ridges of the village are erected a number of temples by the side of a stream. Five of these temples are still intact. They are almost having same style and origin as that of Mani-Mahesh of Bharmour. Mani Mahesh temple is remarkably preserved but these temples have suffered much at the hands of alternate heating and cooling process. Moreover, the apex of these temples are not covered resulting in much damage. Two of these temples are in dilapidated condition whereas other three have somehow escaped the onslaught of the natural calamities. The main temple is about 35 feet in height having an open courtyard which is called Mandap. It can be reached by a flight of several steps. The entrance is 3½ feet wide and more than 7 feet in height. The porch is supported by two magnificently carved pillars on the dots of which rests the designed round arch constructed out of large sandstones perfectly cut in size. Each side of the temple is having three niches, the central one of each side is more prominent and is built in the style of Mani Mahesh temple.

The side niches are in rudiments. These are popularly known as Gwakshas. They might have contained deities but are empty now. Each corner is minutely cut and designed so as to rest on the curvatures. There are three equal panels beautifully designed and finished into a sunstone Amalka so that there are six small Amalkas on each side and finally each panel tapers up to the apex under the main Amalka. The main Amalka is broken. The central images of the temples are missing, however, a bust of Lord Shiva, an image of Varah Avtara carrying globe on his shoulder and crushing a demon and a few more images are kept in the chambers of Archaeological Deptt. at Krimachi which have not been identified yet.

There is a famous temple of Shiva situated at Billawar, at about a hundred kilometres south-east of Jammu. It is also built in the same style but a bit plain. The Amalka from the apex is missing but from the space left at the top one can easily guess that once there must have been an Amalka stone.

A number of such temples are scattered around the vicinity of Jammu. The riddle of their age and origin is not yet solved. A number of these temples are supposed to be at least ten centuries old and are attributed to Pandavas. A temple situated at about ten kilometres from Jammu, at Katal Batal by the side of river Tawi, is very simple in structure and speaks of its early age. This temple is the simplest form of this style with rectangular base which makes a cone at the top with a very small Amalka in rudiment at the apex. The entrance is about 5 feet in height and 3 feet in width. The real image is missing, instead an image of monkey god Hanuman has been replaced. Some broken images are scattered around the temple.

At about ninety kilometres north-west from Jammu there is a temple of Sankri Devta again built in the same style. The Amalka of the temple has been broken by the wild winds and is kept by the side of the temple.

In Kumaon region of Uttar Pradesh, there are a number of temples erected in the Shikhra style. The most famous are the Jageshwar temple complex and Baijnath complex of temples at Garud. Jageshwar complex of the temples is situated at about thirty kilometres from the main city Almora. It is a cluster of several temples built in the same style with the exception of three small temples built in the style of Chaitya of south India. The main temple

housing the Lingam is centrally placed and is peculiar in form and style of Shikhra architecture. Baijnath temple complex at Garud is again attributed to Lord Shiva. It is a cluster of several temples symmetrically arranged by the side of a stream. These temples are again constructed in the style of Shikhra architecture.

Gurjar temple at Dwarhat, almost a hundred kilometres from Almora, is famous for its elegantly carved images and mosaic view of its outer walls. The temple has been erected on a huge platform constructed with the help of large sandstones and slabs. These slabs having measurement of 2.5' × 1.5' to 5' × 2' are joined together end to end without any mortar being used. The general measurement of platform is about 50' × 50'. One has to reach the platform by the flight of seven steps constructed in north-west direction. Each step is 6" in height. In the south-east direction of the platform there is another platform which can be approached through six steps of 9" height each. It is a small platform having measurement 12' × 12'. It is 4.5' high from the base of the main platform. On the side of this platform is erected the main building of the temple. The more detailed and superb forms of the images speak of the acumen of the artists. Shikhra style of this temple is having five aspects. On each aspect, the carvings in the form of half-relief as well in three dimensions, have been chiselled out of very ordinary sandstones arranged in five panels. Each panel tells the immortal story of the sculpture. Though the parabola of time has damaged the form and the structure of the images yet the existent reliefs are feast for the eyes of the visitors. The display of the detailed account of the balanced structures of the images, the dancing damsels, sitting royal figures, gods, muscular elephants and above all the busy couples enjoying the best of their physical moments is superb having no parallel especially in this region.

Strangely enough these holy chambers possess images of Lord Shiva, Lingam or incarnation of Vishnu but no Shakti image finds its place in these temples. Since most of these temples were erected around 9th century and afterwards, Shaivism prevailed the region in those days. Shakti Puja was prevalent before the period is a fact. However, some complexes of these temples do contain the worship places of Shakti along with Shiva cult. Ahata Chaurasi of Bharmour is the peculiar example where we find a temple of Lakshana Devi

along with the temple of Mani Mahesh. This temple might have been built at least a century earlier, that is why it is a typical hill style architecture with a conspicuous pyramidal structure whereas other temples in the vicinity are erected in Shikhra style.

Pagoda Type of Temples

Pagoda type of architecture, strange enough, finds its place in the regions of the Himalayan zones which are close to the border-line with Tibet, Nepal and Ladakh. They are the pyramidal structures with succession of convex roofs placed one on another so that they look like a meticulously designed structures from a distance. Most of the art historians think them to be of Chinese origin but according to Percy Brown this type of stylised architecture travelled from India to Nepal, China, Tibet and Japan. Others think that it has travelled to India via Nepal.

Pagoda type of temples are much in vogue in the regions of Kullu, Mandi, Shimla hills and in parts of Kinnaur. Among the best specimens of this architecture are the temples of Hidimba at Manali, Tripur Sundari at Naggar, Prashar temple at Mandi and Adi Brahma temple at Khokan in Kullu.

Temple of Hidimba at Manali can be taken as an example of this style. This temple is raised on a solid rock. The basement of the temple is rectangular in structure made up of heavy sandstones on which the superstructure is erected. There are four roofs placed one on each tapering up to the apex so that the lower part of these roofs is broader while the upper part becomes narrower. These roofs are made out of the planks of wood covered by the galvanized sheets which protect these roofs from heat and cold. The upper most roof has been covered with a cone tapering at the apex to a point.

The facade of the building is richly decorated with the carvings of the figurative structures and floral designs. The cedar wood is used for the purpose. The carvings are done in different panels. The image of the deity is in a form of stone. In fact, a pair of feet are worshipped which are supposed to be the impression of the feet of Hidimba, the legendary goddess, the wife of Bhima, the great Pandava and the mother of legendary character Gatotkachh of Mahabharata. These feet are kept under the protruding rock shelter

under the roof of the temple. In fact, a big rock piece shelters the souvenir of the legendary character, Hidimba. There is only a single chamber which serves the purpose of the Mandap and the cells. The facade of the temple is carved with several godly and other images of animation in three panels of the wooden frame. The entrance to the temple is decorated with the busts of stags on two sides of the door. It is an old temple but the dates exactly are not known yet. There is another temple, popularly known as the temple of Tripur Sundari constructed in the same style. It is situated in a village of Naggar. It is a three-roofed structure erected on the same pattern as that of Hidimba temple. The lower two roofs are supported by four pillars each, through which one can relish the broad view of the valley. The upper most roof is cone shaped and completes the construction in the style.

Another temple built in this style is that of the temple of Prashar Muni in district Mandi. It is a well maintained temple with beautiful carvings and framework done in several panels. The roofs constructed one upon another are covered with slanting slates to prevent them from the wrath of sun and rain. The attraction of the temple is an image of Shakti riding on the back of Makra. It is a four-armed deity with Kumbh in one of her hands the other one is armed with armoury while the other two hands are busy in frolics.

There are other temples built in this style of architecture. They include temple of Manu at Sainj valley which is having a six-tiered roof and Adi Brahma temple at Khokan which are worth mention, Adi Brahma temple is a four-tiered roof temple and is still intact.

Generally these temples were built in or around 16th century but a few of them are said to be old while a very few are very modern in origin.

Temples of Hill Style

Hill style of temple architecture seems to be older than the Shikhra style. Early settlers were Shakti worshippers hence chambers to house the image of Shakti were constructed. These were the simple cells comprising of the main room for the devotees and a cella for the image to house in. Since this region of the Himalayan ranges was rich in coniferous forests, cedar wood was used in

plenty along with the chiselled sandstones. The image used to be carved out of the blend of hard wood of various types or moulded after the smouldering of various metals. Generally a mould of eight metals was prepared popularly known as *Ashtdhatu*. Several such images are still intact in various parts of this region of the Himalayas.

The building of these temples was erected with the help of thick logs of wood which run the whole length of the walls horizontally and vertically. Cedar or pine beams of full length were used. This type of wood could face the onslaught of natural calamities as well the attack of white ants. Moreover, it could bound the stones together for ages together. The space inbetween these beams was filled up with cut stones symmetrically chiselled to adjust in. This alternate masonry work of wood and stones made the walls solid enough to face the parabola of time. The basement of these buildings was constructed with solid sandstones. It used to be in rectangular in structure. From the basement the vertical beams were so adjusted that the walls slowly and gradually taper up to form a pyramidal structure. Sometimes the roof was constructed with slopes on one side only to form the pent houses. Generally the base in rectangular was raised on four sides so as to meet a point at the apex to form a cone-shaped structure. The slopes of the walls varied from temple to temple. The ceiling of these temples were chiselled fantastically to form various designs on the sandslabs. They included big flowers and various forms of vegetation, runners, twinnings and flowery trailers in addition to various forms of animations and geometrical designs. These carvings are really a feast for the eyes. The main chamber or the Mandap was erected with the help of four vertical supports linked with horizontal beams so as to form a railing for the varandah. The cella housing the deity inside formed the inner chamber.

Lakshana Devi temple of Bharmour is the conspicuous example of this type of temple architecture. Situated in Ahata Chaurasi of Bharmour this temple was erected in the groove of deodar trees. Its facade is lavishly decorated with carved images on the three-panelled frame which forms a gable at the apex. The carvings, though, to some extent have been damaged due to alternate heating and cooling process yet their lining and remarkable cute figures speak of the acumen of the artisans. A number of dancing

figures are carved along with instrumentalists working on the rhythm of the dancing steps. Corners are decorated either with the floral structures or with the beautiful damsels in different postures. Some carvings of animals were also there but not so prominent. The Mandap of the temple is wide enough to accommodate the devotees in hundreds. The ceiling of the temple is fantastically carved with big floral and geometrical designs. It is so beautifully carved that the visitors are fascinated. It is remarkably preserved as it was, may be due to the roof over it which prevented the rain and the sun to come in. However, the whole atmosphere is smoky. The deity i.e. Lakshana Devi occupies the central place of the cella. The pillars making the facade of quadratic cella are again beautifully carved with various figurative structures. The image of the deity, as according to the priest is made with the blend of eight metals popularly known as *Ashtdhatu*. It is a beautiful image carved with due acumen of the artisan and is supposed to be of 7th century.

There is another temple of Shakti situated at the village of Chhatrari in Chamba district. This temple is also built in the hill style of architecture. It is supposed to be built in early 9th century. The image however came into existence in 680 A.D. according to the inscription on the image. According to Mian Goverdhan Singh "the temple was the last work of Gugga, the master artisan of Meruvarman" (*Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*). That means the temple was originally erected by Meruvarman, the founder of Bharmour, in 8th century but it might have been renovated in early 9th century. The temple resembles with the Lakshana Devi temple but it is having a single cell meant for Mandap as well as the cella for the deity but afterwards a separate cella was made to house the deity. The main chamber is surrounded by an open gallery supported by wooden columns. The entrance to the inner chamber is framed with profusely decorated facades having remarkable designs and carvings of various deities and godly images.

There is another temple of Kali popularly known as Mirkula situated in the village of the same name which is supposed to be of later period than both of the temples mentioned above. Image of the deity is again metallic and an inscription is there describing it of 14th century. Though this temple is also decorated but not at par with that of the temples of Lakshana Devi and Chhatrari temples of

Bharmour. Other temples of this style include the temple of Ambika in Nirmand, in addition to the cluster of temples scattered in the region. Oldest is the temple of Ambika attributed to the goddess of Kali, built in the same style of hill architecture with sloping roof and alternate wooden and stony structures.

Elsewhere in the hills of Jammu and around, there are a number of temples built in the same hill style and form. About sixty kilometres from Jammu near Reasi town there is an old temple of Chariana Devta supposed to be built in 8th century. It can be approached through a flight of hundreds of steps which climb up to a hamlet surrounded by a grove of trees under which stands the old structure of a small temple. It is erected on a quadratic base constructed with solid stones from where the walls taper up to a point at the apex. The outer walls are covered with sheets of tin. There is only a single chamber formed in the style. In the centre of the chamber which serves as Mandap a five feet image carved out of wood is placed. It is the image of Chariana Devta. Chariana Devta is supposed to be a heavenly body who cures all the ailments especially physical. The devotees who are blessed with their wishes, adore the Chariana Devta with their images cut out of wood or sandstones. Thus we find hundreds of such idols placed in a circle around the temple in open courtyard. A few of these images are in couples. Some of them are finely chiselled while the others are rustic in touch. The male figures are cut with masculinity, moustache and beards, wearing turbans and flanked with armoury like bows and arrows while the female images are carved with Ghagra and Chouli as their attire and noserings and bangles decorate their bodies. Six human size images are also kept inside the temple which are carved out of solid wood. However these images are damaged due to the moisture in the temple. Outside an amphitheatre is designed to accommodate the devotees as well as the visitors visiting the temple during festival days. Once in a year a festival is organised, wherein the people from far and wide reach there to pay their homage to the god.

In Bhadarwah town of Jammu province there are a number of such temples erected in the pyramidal style. The most famous and the ancient of all these temples is Gatha temple situated in the village of the same name. It is the temple of Vasuki Nag wherein

two images are centrally placed. They are of Vasuki Nag with human personification crowned with serpent hoods and the second one is of his savior Jimut Vahan. The temple is a typical pyramidal structure convergently tapering at the top to form a conical structure. The outer walls of the temple are covered with sheets perhaps to save it from the sun and rains. There is only a single room serving the purpose of both Mandap and the cella. The images are made out of black wood and according to an inscription on them they are almost ten centuries old. From the courtyard of this very temple the Kaplash Yatra starts. Before the start of the Yatra, Chela, the chief disciple of the deity Vasuki Nag, wears a garland of bells and dances at the rhythm of drums, *ransingha* and other folk musical instruments. He gets into a trance and the public in attendance ask him about their personal problems. To some he answers and others are led astray. After the ritual the Chhari Mubarak moves ahead led by the Chela followed by the instrumentalists and other fellow beings. Thus, the Yatra starts for a shrine by the side of icy lake which shimmers during summer season only and is situated at the height of 16,000 feet above the sea level. It is about twenty kilometres travel from Bhadarwah town.

There is another temple of Vasuki Nag recently built but in the same style of a pyramid wherein the black stone images of Vasuki Nag and Jimut Vahan are placed exactly in the centre. It is of modern origin as such there is no carving or decoration like that of the Gatha temple which is richly decorated, especially its facade is remarkably designed with figurative carvings.

There are several such old temples constructed in the style of hill architecture scattered in the vicinity of Udhampur and nearby villages. They are simple temples with a main chamber which serves the purpose of both Mandap as well as the cella. Generally the deities are placed in the centre of these chambers and their slopy walls on one side and straight walls on the other side, take them into the fold of same style of architecture. These temples are attributed to goddesses of various incarnations of Shakti.

Temples of Pent Roofs

These temples are said to be older than that of Pagoda style of architecture. These temples have been built with a rectangular base

constructed with the help of alternate stones and beams of wood so that they form the solid basement on which a verticle pillar of the size of the base is erected which might go higher than 30 feet. At this longitude, a big chamber is created to house the deity. Generally a hut is constructed on the apex of the pillar so that from the distance it appears as if houses are erected at height to escape from the wild life. Such temples can be seen in Shimla hills and in the region of interior Kullu. The best example of this architecture is the temple of Yogni with a rectangular pillar erected scores of feet in height. Half of the pillar is solidly built which forms the base of the upper half portion, through which the main chamber of the temple constructed at the top can be approached with the help of stairs which make a flight from the ground level to the first half of the pillar. The steps of the stair are without any support of the railing. They close at a balcony from where these steps are internally constructed in the other half of the pillar and they lead to the main chamber of the deity. The main chamber is again constructed at the top of the pillar. It is a hut-shaped structure with pent roofs sliding on both the lateral sides. The whole work is a masonry craft of wood work with several niches opening outside in the gallery. These niches are supported by verticle columns and horizontal beams linked with dots forming the curvatures. In the Shimla hills, we find several temples of this style. At Sarahan village, there is a temple erected in the same style with twin towers linked together with a framed entrance at the base. The hut-like chambers with pent roofs are meticulously carved with a mosaic view of designed structure. The facade of the temple is remarkably chiselled.

BUILDINGS OF HILL STYLE

Away from the hustle of the towns, quite isolated but full of vitality and gleam in nature are the striking two-storeyed buildings scattered in the lush green plateau of the mountains overlooking the snowclad cliffs. They seem to be the castles erected in the medieval times, superb in form and stylised to facilitate the folk to escape the chilly winds during acute winters.

These buildings are erected with the help of the chiselled sandstones and logs of wood intermittently woven to form a structure traditionally in vogue for centuries together. These exquisite struc-

tures are self-sufficient to accommodate the joint families and the cattle during odd hours of chilly winds and scorching sun. Generally these buildings are erected on square ground with the foundation of several feet, dug with shovels. These foundations are filled with solid stones with a little of mortar and on these foundations chiselled square or rhomboid stones are symmetrically arranged with a little mortar followed by a line of thick logs of wood. This alternate arrangement of the chiselled sandstones and logs of wood make the walls more strong to face the calamities of nature. Generally the first floor is low roofed and is meant for storage and serves as the chamber for the cattles. They have the store houses wherein the fuel is stored for the hard times to come. The ground floor, sometimes, possesses several chambers to accommodate a herd of cattles. The roof is made out of logs of wood systematically arranged after chiselling them so that not even an inch of the space is left in between them. The upper storey is constructed in the same pattern on the walls of the first floor. Generally the upper storey is having good height on the walls of which logs of wood are arranged in the form of triangles so that a dome-shaped structure is formed to accommodate the slippers meticulously arranged. It is on these slippers, the pieces of the slates, generally square in form are arranged in such technique that not a bit of space is left in between the two. They are either mortared or fixed with the help of wires or nails so that during wild winds they may not be swayed away. In between the two storeys, each such building contains Varandahs to walk over as well as to sit on to bask in the sun. The doors to these chambers are very simple, cut out of logs of wood, sometimes even big sleepers are used to form their frames. Doors are made in sliding technique which can be opened in one side only. There are no proper stairs to reach up to the second storey. Only logs of wood are chiselled in such a way that a number of steps are created whereby only a person expert in climbing such steps can use these rustic stairs. Such stairs are there to prevent any beast to climb to the second storey. As the local people believe that during the night beasts, especially wild bear, comes out of its hideout in search of food and may climb up to create nuisance. According to them, sometimes these bears are so wild that they may even break away the thick wooden doors with their thrust.

Internally these huts are plastered with the plaster of mud and cow dung mixed with hay. Thus any pore left during the construction is plugged with the help of mud plaster. This mud plaster assists the people in getting the cozy atmosphere during acute winter. The sliding slates give way to the snow deposited on the roofs to slide down.

Exterior and the interior walls of these huts are richly decorated with wooden carvings in the case of the rich and big landlords; thus one can easily distinguish the status of the family after having a look on these buildings. The buildings of the rich are more elaborate and lavish in structure and more profusely decorated.

4

Miniature Paintings

SPLENDOUR OF PAHARI ART

When one looks at a Pahari Painting, the magic of romance spellbounds the onlooker. The fascinating fresh colours appeal to the eye and the heart. The beauty created by the painted showers, cascading waters, twittering birds, gardens and above all the vitality of the romantic appeal in the eyes of lovers captivates the onlooker. It is this characteristic which fascinates the art critics and the connoisseurs of art.

Pahari painting art took birth in the closed domains of transparent movement around 16th century but it established its superiority in the reign of popular king of Basohli, Raja Kirpal Pal in 17th century. From then on it established its tributaries in Kangra, Guler, Nurpur, Chamba, Mandi, Kullu and Jammu. Most of the art critics believe that Pahari paintings have their roots in the Mughal art. Thus M.S. Randhawa speaks, "The Mughal style with its gentle curbs and flowing line ultimately achieved fulfilment in the charming landscape of Kangra valley." But Dr. Coomaraswami in 1912 commented upon the discussion that the Rajput style is quite different from Mughal style. In Rajput style he clearly indicated two different schools, Rajasthani and pahari. It was his volume, *Rajput Painting* in 1916 that attracted the world. It contained the cultural heritage of this art. The theme of these paintings, as Coomaraswami depicts, was a unique atmosphere woven by love.

"What Chinese art achieved for landscape is here accomplished for love. Here it never and nowhere else in the world, the Western gates are, opened wide. The arms of lovers are about each other's

necks, eye meets eye, whispering of Sakhis is nothing else but Krishna's courtship, the very minds are a spellbound by the sound of Krishna's flute and the elements standstill to hear the Ragas and Raginis".

Modern artist Belgian Paul clearly indicates in his work Rene Gaffe, Pual Delvaux (Brussels, 1945) that the subject of the Kangra paintings is romantic situation. "The lovely passionate women longing for a lover. There are no direct allusions to her agony but its constant underlying presence is revealed by means of sexual symbols. The lover is represented by a sculptured rider rearing in the moonlight, a candle flickering into darkness. A pillar rising to the sky while the women's passionate requirements are expressed through imaginary of trees, flowers, mirrors and the frank depiction of her nude magnificent charms".

It is not the superficial touch of colours and designs but a well thought movement of symbolic painting which, no doubt, opens the horizons for debate on its emergence from the traditional folk paintings with the expression of various symbols.

The paintings, may be in deteriorated form, on the walls of various temples and *samadhis*, owe much to the basic themes of the romance depicted in the miniatures. Various symbols woven in these paintings, to some extent, cater to the needs of the religious beliefs yet the images taken from *Bhagwat Purana* of the love frolics of Lord Krishna with Gopis speak of the basic aspect of romance lying in the background of this art.

Various hill states started their workshops for the creation of these miniatures. Thus there was a great competition among them to invite the best of the artists to their states. Among all the schools Basohli school was more flourishing and it lasted for long. From here the artists spread to Himachal and Jammu regions. The treatment of the subject of love is symbolised with prominent religious symbols like Radha Krishna, a pair of birds, cloudy atmosphere and trees of banana, mango and kachnar in addition to other symbols in the form of creepers, trailers, twinnings, lotus and animals like snakes, elephants, stags, and others are frequently used.

Even the basic colours, red, blue and yellow have symbolically been used.

Colours used according to E.B. Havell were raw siana, burnt

siana, raw umber, naples blue, yellow, venetian, red, green, oxide of chromium and cobalt blue. Generally miniature paintings were more popular among the royal families and courtiers, but, the wall paintings were encouraged by the feudal lords. Temples, *samadhis* and the palaces of Dogra feudal lords are still resplendent with these paintings. To level and make the frescoes more shining the canvas were smoothened with organic matter like yellow of eggs, starch of cooked rice, organic gum, molasses and the essence of animal bones.

Only a few of the artists have outlived the passage of time who too are feeling themselves out of tune due to the dwindling of the artistic taste. No longer are there the noble patrons of art to come to the help of the artists facing disappointment and neglect.

DELICATE TOUCH OF KANGRA KALAM

Kangra was one of the most cultivated Pahari states rich in fruits and vegetables. Its mountain-side gradually ascends from the base of the Shivaliks to the height of 13000 feet. It is fed by the tributaries of Beas and Ban Ganga. Chamba, Mandi and Guler states of erstwhile kingdoms surround it from three sides. Its lush green plateaus, wide pastures stretching for miles together and the health resorts are so captivating that thousands of tourists from the country and foreign lands visit Kangra every year.

The history of the state is as old as the hills and goes back to Mahabharata era. It was ruled by Raja Bidi Chand during the reign of great Mughal king, Akbar. It was in the time of Jai Chand that conflict with Mughal empire erupted. Jai Chand sent his son, Trilok Chand, as hostage to Mughal Darbar. Jahangir killed Trilok Chand later on as he refused to part away with his beautiful bird which greatly fascinated Jahangir. After this incident there was a regular war between the Mughals and the feudal lords of Kangra. However, Kangra lords adopted the strategy of gorilla war as they could not face the huge army of Mughals. This conflict went on till the post-Aurangzeb period.

The artists from Mughal courts migrated to Kangra like other groups of the artists who had spread in other Pahari states of Jammu, Basohli, Mankot etc. It was Sansar Chand, who became king in

1775, who welcomed the artists with open arms for he was an enthusiastic patron of art and culture. Slowly and steadily Sansar Chand gained the favour of his courtiers and general masses. He was a generous king listening to the problems of the masses with sympathy and tried his best to make the state happy and prosperous. Above all, he was fond of paintings to the extent that several artists from different parts of north India came there to work under the patronage of Raja Sansar Chand. As according to Moorcraft, "Sansar Chand has a taste for the arts which would have been magnificent, had he possessed the means, and is more generous than suits his finances. Although his liberality is occasionally shaded by efforts of parsimony . . . he is fond of drawings, keeps several artists who execute the minute parts with great fidelity but are almost wholly ignorant of perspective. His collection of drawings is very large."

It was in the beginning of 19th century when Gurkhas dominated the state of Kangra and usurped much of its territory. Despite the hardships and intrigues, Raja Sansar Chand continued his efforts in encouraging the artists. The Kangra style of painting became so captivating, and thereby popular, that it was adopted by the artists of other states.

Kangra paintings are unique in style and treatment. Among all the Pahari schools Kangra painting developed into such a style of excellence that it reached the apex of the genre of art. The beauty and characteristics of Kangra paintings are well expressed by Coomaraswami, "Sensitive, reticent and tender, it perfectly reflects the self control and sweet serenity of Indian life, and definitely theocratic and aristocratic organisation of Indian society."

The beautiful cascading colours with all the vitality and assonance, sentimental appeal having compelling and abounding animated love themes, transparent body curvatures and the charm of the slender figures are but a few features of Kangra miniatures. It is but the beauty of poetry in colours.

Basohli school, flourishing on the right bank of river Ravi lended its aura to Kangra being in its vicinity on the other side of the river. With very simple and popular episodes and with limited technique of blending colours and with all the vitality of their emotional touch the artists built their castles of myriad images, created with the

background of medieval Bhakti movement symbolising the relation between body and soul. The subject of these paintings ranges from the Vaishnav cult to the classical epics.

Theme of Paintings

It was Ramanujacharya who propagated the Vaishnav cult. According to the cult, Lord Vishanu is one of great trinity and Lord Krishna is his incarnation. Love of Lord Krishna for Gopis is but relation between soul and body. Jayadeva, a famous poet of Birbhum, West Bengal, created an immortal love poem. It was named *Geet Govind* which describes the love of Radhika and Gopis for Krishna. Jayadeva was offered a beautiful girl named Padmavati as his wife, earlier she was being offered for service at Lord Jagannath's temple but in a dream Lord Jagannath appeared to the father of the girl and asked him to offer her in marriage to Jayadeva which he did with profound respect. Jayadeva, a gifted poet, was overwhelmed with the beauty of the girl and created the magnificent love epic *Geet Govind* in which he personifies his love for Padmavati as love of Lord Krishna for Radha, the beloved of the Lord. Milkmaids, who tempt Lord Krishna, symbolise the five senses of smell, touch, sight, taste and hearing. The love episodes narrated in this book have been personified by the artists of miniature paintings.

Ramayana recreated by saint poet Tulsi Das is another subject woven in these paintings. They include Ram Darbar, Rama-Ravna battle and of course the episodes related to the exile of Lord Rama.

Sat Sai created by romantic poet of medieval India, Behari was also popular among these artists especially the couplets highlighting the physical charms of Nayikas and their sensual gestures. Other Hindi poets especially those who created love lyrics with all the romantic touch, were the inspiration to these artists. Thus paintings depicting forms of Nayikas and personifying the twelve months of the year were created with acumen and cute touch. In these paintings of *Baramasa* the natural elements have emerged with all their vitality and force. While painting each month, its characteristics and change in climate and season was considered with due observation and as per the description given in these love lyrics.

Even emotional renderings and sensual expressions were duly painted with details provided in these scriptures. Other themes include the love episodes of the plains—Heer Ranja, Mirza Sahiba, Sohni Mahiwal, etc. Thus on one side it was the mundane sensuous love of Nayikas longing for their lovers and on the other side they symbolise the love for higher self, the spiritual love.

Clothing and Attire

Kangra is very close to plains hence the characters of its paintings used Punjabi attire like shirt, popularly known as Kameez and Dupatta to cover the bust. While as Suthan, a form of Pahari trouser like breeches were in vogue to cover the hind limbs of the body by the female characters painted in these paintings. They were usually red or black in colour. They are also painted with Lehengas and Choulis. These Choulis are bound at the back with two strings. The back is open. Male characters are painted with turban decorated by a plume or a feather at the forehead, and Jama on their upper body, which cascades down till their knees, over the trousers. They are shown with a cloth of piece on their shoulder, popularly known as *Pataka* and a piece of cloth or a woollen rope fastened at their waist like those of the Mughal courtiers. Feudal lords and other courtiers are painted in Mughal attires. Lord Krishna is, however, painted in yellow Dhoti and peacock plumed crown on his head. The commoners, cowboys and the villagers have been painted with Langoti or Jangia to cover their lower parts of the body and simple cap on their head. The curvatures of these clothes are so cute that they look like live characters. The Dupattas or Odnis are decorated with silver lining at the borders.

Ornaments and Jewellery

Ladies are shown with richly decorated ornaments like earrings, nose rings, Karan phool, Kundal, Besari, necklaces and richly adorned bangles of yellow metal. Rings on their fingers and toes, Tika on forehead and Kara or Bajubandh on the arms are the other ornaments shown in these paintings. Male characters, especially the members of royal families and courtiers are shown decorating themselves with necklaces and rings.

Foliage and Other Elements of Nature

Almost all the corymb plants are shown in these paintings. Mango, banana, banyan, pipal, jamal, kachnar, etc. are the main trees painted in these paintings. Runners, twinnings, trailers and tendrils with alternate leaves and flowers are frequently designed. Flowery herbs and shrubs with streaks of white flowers cascading downwards are painted as a style which is the unique feature of these paintings. Lush green plains are also drawn with beautiful landscapes of Beas valley. Water tanks and lakelets are painted with lotus and nimphea. Green, yellow and light blue colours are used to paint the foliage. W.G. Archer has analysed symbols in these paintings. The tendrils and twinnings entwining the trees like banana and mango is symbolic of physical love between the Nayaks and Nayikas. Other sexual symbols include the serpent as the personification of phallus, banana tree symbolises male power and body while the tendrils and twinnings as the female energy.

Style and Technique

The Kangra school of miniature paintings flourished at three places—Nurpur, Tira Sujanpur and Guler. Nurpur, being very close to Punjab, imbibed Punjabi culture and many paintings of this school give the impression of Punjabi dresses and locale. But Guler school was superb with unique features of its own. In addition to the Vaishnav cult, as mentioned above, the artists painted the persons of the feudal lords and courtiers in their routine life. Portraits of Roop Chand, Man Singh, Vikram Singh, etc. are important examples. Raja Goverdhan Chand (1744-1773) was a great patron of art and culture. All the facilities were provided to the artists during his reign. They were honoured for their magnificent creations, thus in a way he encouraged the artists to give life to new ideas in colour. It is in his period that maximum paintings were painted but the style came to a climax during the reign of Parkash Chand. Tira Sujanpur was the other state where multi myriad images were created. This was the style taken from Kangra paintings.

The Kangra school is specifically mentioned for its locale and its relation with the soil. The style has a unique sense of freedom and is closely connected with its surroundings. There is no self-

consciousness, no studied emotions, no attitudes. It is free from exaggerated personality and deliberate individualism. Painting is nothing but music in colour. M.S. Randhawa thus opined: "The main features of Kangra paintings are the fine and delicated curvatures highlighting the body lines. Brilliant colours used spellbound the onlookers, minute details in colours and lines are the other features of these paintings. As Coomaraswami speaks, "vigorous archaic cut is the bases of its language."

While drawing the paintings in this style three steps were considered most important—master painters to draw the sketches with fine brushes on light colours followed by whitening and smoothening the surface of the paper so that the brown surface of the paper was completely changed with only a bit of impressions of sketch lines remaining as the guidelines for the artists who afterwards drew the caricatures and coloured them accordingly. Generally the colours were applied by the assistants. Mostly pure colours were used to maintain the brilliance which is still glowing even after the expiry of two hundred years. Red, yellow and blue primary colours were used to cater the brilliance of these paintings. Occasionally other colours were also used which were prepared after blending the primary colours and required tinge was made available to the artists.

These artists were having no set principles. Most of the paintings were done merely through their inspiration out of their imagination, that is why the features of characters drawn are remarkably different from those of the characters drawn in other Pahari schools. As according to M.S. Randhawa, "The human figures, particularly of woman, were mostly drawn from memory and this explains the similarity of faces with gazella-like eyes, straight noses and rounded chins. Each artist evolved his own formula for the portrayal of faces, and though the Kangra art is anonymous, it is possible to identify the work of individual artist. Almost all the faces are drawn in profile. Perhaps it was easier to do so but it may be that the beautiful chiselled features of Kangra women are effectively portrayed in this manner." Though it is almost impossible to portray same type of faces if the artist has to draw from his memory but perhaps, M.S. Randhawa meant to say that they were having same type of faces in their mind while portraying these characters.

Artist and Creators of Kangra Style of Paintings

No art historian or critic is sure about the artists who were behind the canvas of this school of paintings. We get a very few pieces of this art on which the names of the artists are scribbled. Signed paintings of two artists namely Fattu and Kushala are available in museums and in some personal collections also. Some other artists mentioned by the art historians are Vasia and Purkhu, Padnu and Doukhu who were working in the reign of Raja Sansar Chand. The most celebrated artists of this style of Pahari miniatures were two real brothers Manak and Nainsukh, the sons of Pandit Seu. Manak was responsible for the evolution of Basohli school of miniature paintings but after the death of his patron, Raja Amrit Pal of Basohli, Manak along with his brother Nainsukh and his sons and nephews shifted to Kangra wherefrom these artists went to different Pahari states of Chamba, Nurpur, Guler, etc. Most of them settled near Kangra where in Rait village Chandu Lal Raina, the descendant of this family of great artists, was working till an year before his death as an artist and was approved as master painter by Himachal Academy of Art.

MINIATURE PAINTINGS OF GULER SCHOOL

Guler was a small hill state encircled by the famous hill states of Kangra and Nurpur. An anecdote was in vogue that a shepherd, (*Gwala*), had seen a goat and a lion drinking water together that was why the feudal lord of the region named it as Guler to commemorate the memory of the *Gwala* but unfortunately the *Gwala* was killed by the lord so as not to disclose the story. The same legend is prevalent in Jammu also that Raja Jambulochan had seen a goat and lion drinking water together in the vicinity of Purani Mandi resulting into the origin of Jammu city.

It was Raja Hari Chand (1612-1627) who constructed a fort on the place and named it after him as Haripur. The fort is in ruins now-a-days but history still exists. It was in the reign of Raja Goverdhan Chand that the school of miniature paintings flourished there. Goverdhan Chand (1744-73) was a great lover of the miniature paintings. He encouraged the artists to settle in Haripur and exploit their talent. He married a Basohli princess and in return

gave away his own sister to his brother-in-law so that the integrity of this legacy could be maintained. He patronised a number of artists. Among the lot were the members of famous family of Pandit Seu especially his younger son Nainsukh, an ardent artist of no parallel, who was earlier working in Jammu Darbar under the regime of Raja Balwant Dev, sought his place in the domain of Raja Goverdhan Chand. Goverdhan Chand's son Parkash Chand (1773-90) was also very fond of miniature paintings. Like the feudal lord of Saruinsar Raja Balwant Dev, Parkash Chand was very fond of being portrayed in person so that he could be remembered in the days to come through these paintings. He also made these artists to paint his courtiers and even his private life. Like that of Raja Balwant Dev, he would call his artists to his *Harem* and ask them to portray his daily affairs. Even he made them to portray his creditors. His son Bhup Singh who become the king of Guler in 1790 did not like the extravaganza of his father with the result most of the artists retired and went to seek other patronage which they found in the person of the feudal lord of Kangra. In fact, it was the Guler Kalam which played the decisive role in making Kangra Kalam famous in the world of miniature paintings, thus W.G. Archer had to say, "The state of Guler played a decisive part in the development of Pahari paintings in 18th century. Not only did it develop the greatest art of delicacy and charm, but the final version of the Guler style was taken to Kangra in about 1780, thus becoming the Kangra style itself". As such it is not easy to differentiate the Guler Kalam from that of the Kangra Kalam. Like that of Jammu school the specific features of the ruler became the main factor of these paintings, Parkash Chand's personality was the central figure which was prominent in those paintings. So states Jamila Brij Bhushan in her book, *The World of Indian Miniatures* "As in Kishan Garh so in Guler the special features of the ruler became distinguishing mark of the painting of the area. Parkash Chand's slightly tilted chin became a hallmark of Guler paintings. Guler turban is a piece of cloth tied over a helmet, whose tip shows through, Jamas are long and the sashes thick, being either plain or striped but not really ornamented.

These artists painted a number of love themes also especially Krishan Leela, anecdotes from *Bhagwat Purana* and the emotional

paintings of *Geet Govind*. Dr. S.S. Charak in his book *History and Culture of Dogras* which is compiled on the basis of the manuscripts by A.H. Bingley and W.B. Cunningham and revised by A.B. Longden states, "These artists painted series on the *Bhagwat Purana*, the *Geet Govind*, Keshav Das's *Baramasa* and *Nayika Nayak Virah*, Bihari's *Sat Sai* and the *Raagmaalas*. In addition they did fine portraits of their patrons. The *Ramayana* theme became particularly popular with the artists and patrons in the Jammu hills where the life career of Rama, Sita and Hanuman have been done in large number of miniatures collected in the Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu. The seige of Lanka and Rama's battle with Ravana were popular themes with Pahari painters. This classic seems to have provided a rich subject for painting and murals. A number of *Ramayana* paintings, some 84 in number, are preserved in the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba representing various styles of the Dogra hill schools.

Andrew Topsfield of Victoria & Albert Museum also acknowledges the work of Guler court in his book *Indian Court Paintings*. He states, "A religious subject in the early Guler style combines the new technical refinement with a devotional feeling taking the form of tender domestic observation. Shiva is shown sewing a garment, while Parvati strings human heads for his necklace. Their sons, the many headed Kartikeya and the elephant headed Ganesh who plays with Shiva's cobra, sit beside them, and their respective vehicles the bull, lion, peacock and rat, wait in attendance. Versions of graceful Guler idioms were developed in several courts, such as Garhwal to the south east". He further states, "As earlier periods of Indian paintings, the luxuriant burgeoning of nature serves to enhance and express the emotions of the human figures. Krishna is, as usual, shown as an elegant, princely figure, perhaps akin to the young Sansar Chand. As at Guler, scenes of Zanana life were also charmingly rendered with increasingly curvilinear rhythms, as in scene of ladies throwing powder and squirting water at the spring festival of Holi".

The main features of Guler school include the prominent faces of the characters with thick eyebrows. The nose is occupying the major portion of the face. Big deep eyes fascinate the onlookers. The background of the greenery and the rich plantation are parallel to that of the Kangra school. Plants like banana trees, trees having

broader leaves and a few of the flowery plants in the background make the drop scene. Red crimson, sky and the blue colours are used in abundance. Animals like cows, snakes and calves are painted at large alongwith some other animals. Birds like peacocks with their feather erected while in the mood of dancing, swans and other birds are painted in abundance. These paintings, are generally without the border lines. However, a few of them possess dark colour borders. Most of the paintings have light shaded canvas on which the main work is done but a few of them are also painted on the cream coloured canvas. Of course they don't possess the charm of romanticism for which the Kangra paintings are famous for.

MINIATURE PAINTINGS OF KULLU SCHOOL

Kullu hill state was famous for its artistic expression. Folk paintings on birch bark were in vogue for centuries together. Though, nothing is available now as evidence but the history and the folk traditions speak the truth as this was a style of folk paintings. The schools of miniature paintings of Kullu can be ascertained through the folk touch in the existing miniatures. It was in the middle of the 18th century that this school came into existence. Raja Pritam Singh, the then feudal lord of Kullu, was a great lover of art and literature. It was due to his efforts that a workshop for the artists and painters of miniature paintings was established.

Kullu is again a beautiful town with sloppy and terraced fields which bewitch the visitors and trekkers alike. One can have splendid view of the Himalayas from its cliffs. To become a creative artist in such a beautiful surroundings is but a natural process. But as according to the art critics and the learned viewers these paintings are an example of blending of two techniques, i.e. the rustic background and classical touch. In other words, we can say that Kulla school of miniature paintings lack the acumen, shrewdness and penetration of the artists. They are more like folk paintings rather than having fine touch in them. Straight emotionless faces, flat and flabby bodies, especially the females, are devoid of any feminine looks. They are shown having manly structures. The contours of breasts are absent, however, they are shown with two circles on both sides of the chest. Either the artists were not in the

know of this effeminate aspect of their characters or they were too shy to portray this part of the body which seems ridiculous. Open big eyes, flat faces and long hair which cascade down from the shoulders are the main features of these paintings. Ladies are shown with armed blouses which almost cover the waist reaching the upper part of the Ghagra of many folds. Generally they are shown in Saris. Different ornaments like earrings, noserings and tikka on their forehead are the main attractions of the yellow metal they decorate with. Bangles in the wrists and toe rings are the other ornaments drawn in these paintings. Nayikas are shown with half covered heads and almost exposed bosom.

Male characters are shown with cap or turban of Mughal style in addition to the Mughal royal attires. They tie a cloth piece on their waist. To decorate the dresses, red colour is used more frequently. Yellow, pink and light pink colours are also used here and there. The male characters can be differentiated from one another by dint of their dresses they put on. Their social status can easily be analysed through these dresses. The poor, especially the cow-boys, are shown with turbans on their head but their upper body is painted without any cloth piece. On the other hand, the royal people are shown with another type of turban, well decorated and stylised. They wear long aprony-type of attires with trousers.

The conspicuous character of these paintings is the prominence of the world of plants and foliage. These paintings are decorated with flowery plants in the background of white or light green or cream coloured canvas. They are having the impression of Basohli paintings, i.e. like those of the trimmed plants shown in the style of the miniature of Basohli school. The trees include the banana, conifers, weeping willows and pines. Most of the paintings are shown with the pine trees in background with a pair of birds, generally parrots, sitting on them. These plants are painted in dark green, yellow and red colours. Flowers are generally painted in red. Among the birds peacock, parrot, kingfisher and king swans are frequently drawn. Among the cattles cows, calves are prominent. Other animals include deer, rabbit, snakes, etc. The bodies of these animals are not balanced one. Though the hind part of the body is more finely and minutely drawn with due observation but the upper part is shabbily drawn. The necks of these animals are flabby and thick

in comparison to their body, but the birds are comparatively painted with artistic touch. Sometimes the peacocks sitting on the trees are more prominently shown than the trees on the branches of which they are sitting.

These paintings are bordered with dark red or chocolate colours having dark linings in the internal frames. The human characters are not at all balanced. The throat, i.e. the inner neck portions are shown with swellings like those of the goiter patients. May be to show the disease but definitely all were not the patients. Perhaps they could not handle this part with minute observation and fine portraiture.

CHAMBA SCHOOL OF MINIATURE PAINTINGS

When the styles of various schools were established, particularly at Basohli, Jammu, Kangra and Guler, other Pahari states were trying hard to create their own ingenious style of painting. There was a competition among these Pahari states regarding this art. The feudal lords of these states started workshops to train the budding artists of their own. In this way the hill states of Bandralta, Reasi, Chamba, Kullu, Mandi, Bilaspur, PUNCHH, etc. tried their best to create new styles but with a few exceptions they remained on folk-art level.

Chamba is famous for its natural beauty, dwelt in a valley on the bank of river Ravi and shadowed by the Himalayan ranges. It was popularly known as Champavati. Bharmour was the capital of this hill state. It is situated about 61 kms. from Chamba. Sahil Varman the feudal lord of this state (970 A.D.) was a religious-minded man who created this state and gave it the name after her beloved daughter, Champavati. In the beginning of 18th century the lords of this state invited artists from other Pahari states of Nurpur, Kangra, etc. where this style had already marked its core. Some of them came to Chamba and settled there. That is why miniature painting of this school owe much to this style. Later on, in the beginning of 20th century, Raja Bhuri Singh, the great lover of miniature paintings, collected a number of such paintings and started a museum in the form of an art gallery, which afterwards, was converted into a full-fledged museum. It has now been declared as

the state property. Bhuri Singh museum is situated at the bank of a river by the side of Chougan of Chamba. It is enclosed in a spectacular building, spacious enough to accommodate the articles of art and craft of this region in addition to the miniature paintings of different schools. A number of Chamba paintings have also been displayed with other artefacts. They include the spring stones and articles meant for decoration. A number of carved wooden images and statues of gods and goddesses have also been displayed. Generally the paintings displayed carry the impression of Kangra school but a few of them do carry the touch of the locale of Chamba.

The style of Chamba paintings can be ascertained by keenly observing the faces of the female characters painted in these paintings, otherwise the surroundings and the atmosphere woven are very much attuned to the style of Kangra paintings.

Swollen lips with pressed visage, deeply carved eyebrows, big nose and broad forehead dominate the whole face are the main features of these paintings. The neck is too small and fluffy in comparison to the whole body. In fact, these paintings are more close to the folk paintings. Minute details and the beauty which charm the viewers in the miniature paintings of Kangra and Guler are absent in the paintings of Chamba. It might be the transitory phase when the folk artists were trying to portray the fine portraits. There are a few pieces which can be placed at par with the paintings of Kangra, Guler and Basohli schools. There is a painting of Radha Krishna flanked by a maid with a tuft of peacock feathers with which she is airing the couple. Another lady with a Ghagara through which a tight trouser is peeping out has been shown offering flowers in a saucer to the couple. Two instrumentalist ladies are playing on Sitar and Dholak. Radha Krishna are sitting on a wooden seat supported by a cushion. The floor is carpeted with a beautifully embroidered carpet having red coloured flowers woven with due acumen. In the background is a structure of a building with protruding parapets and painted roof with flowery twinners culminating into three exit chimnies. The space is beautifully distributed that the greenery makes the scene pleasant enough created by the fangs of trees painted intermittantly with the flowered branches which run out of stem. The flowers are white in colour arranged in racemose style. One thing peculiar enough of this painting is that



1. Deity of Jamlu Devta at Manikaran



2. Spring stones with carvings of deities



3. A Gaddi bride



4. A Gaddi lady with a Rumaal bound on her head



5. A character of Spiti folk theatre (by Himachal Academy)



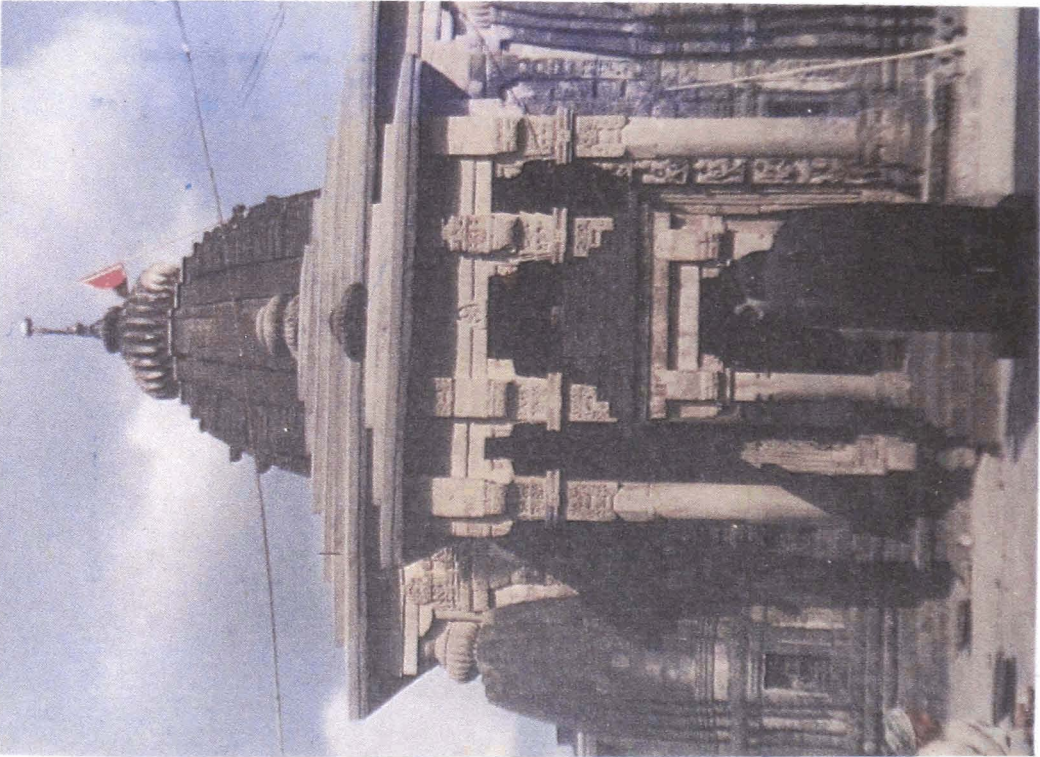
6. A Spiti damsel (by Himachal Academy)



11. Diwaankhana,
Arki Palace, Arki



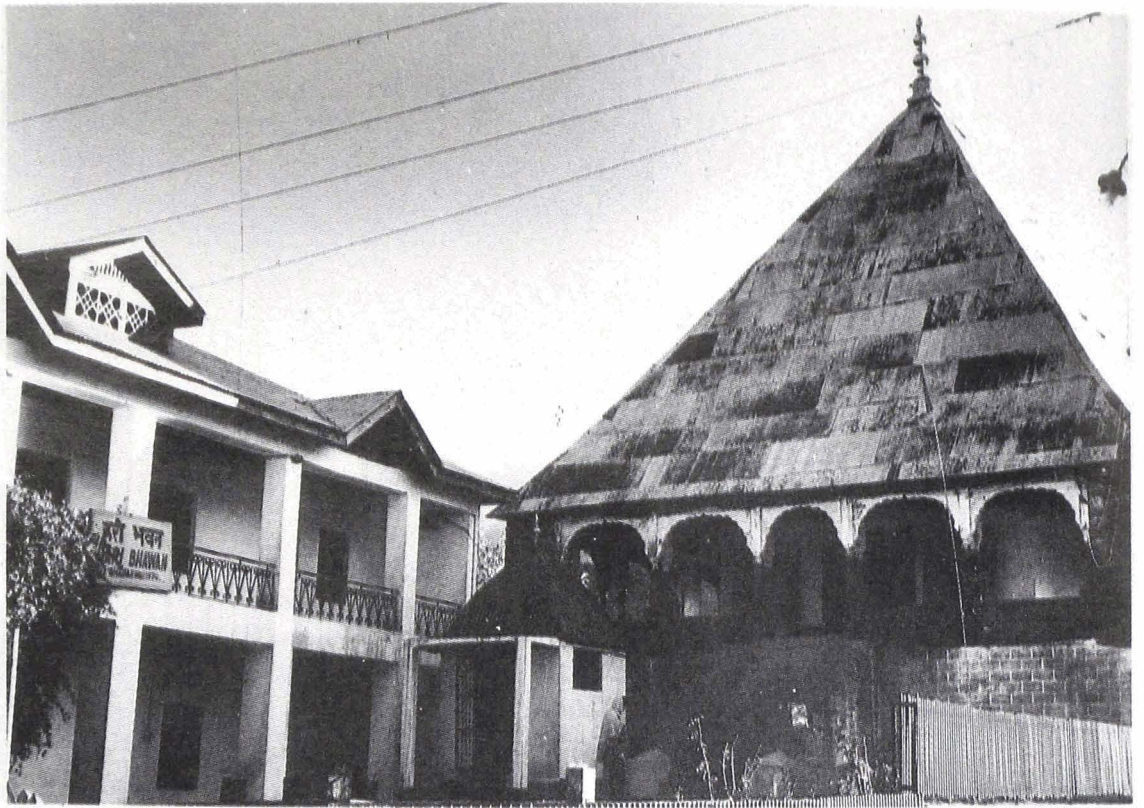
12. A statue of Gaddi at
Chamunda Devi temple,
Kangra



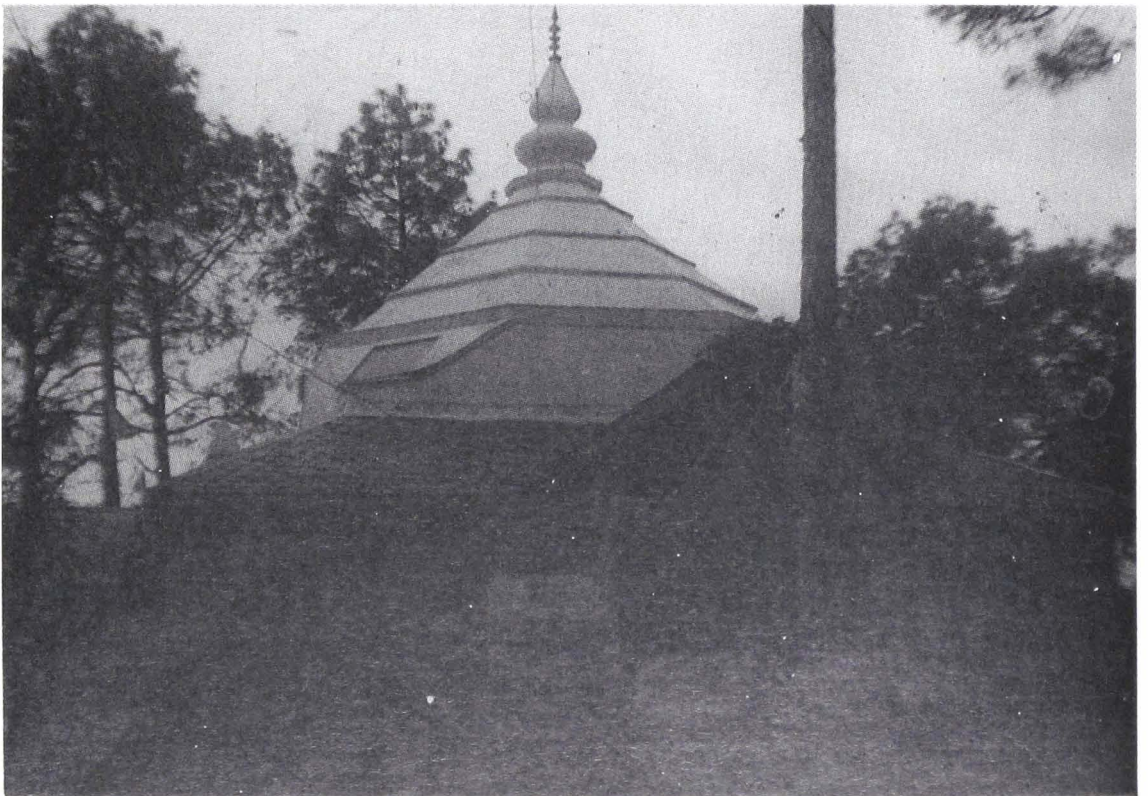
13. Baijnath temple, Baijnath



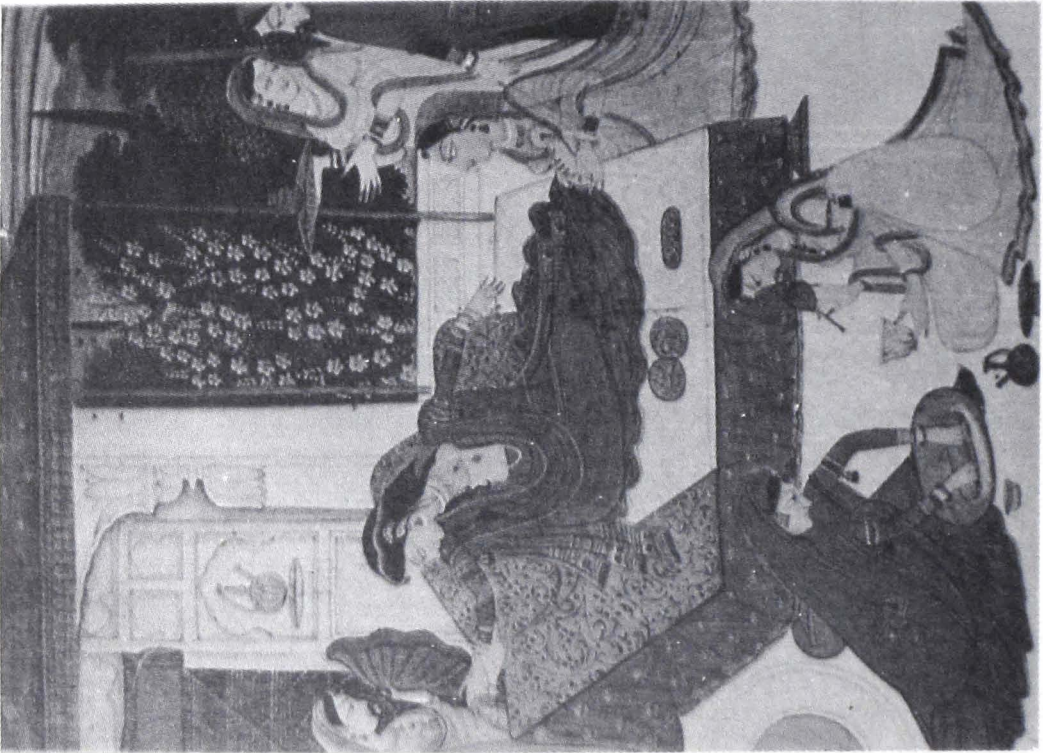
14. Sobha Singh Art Gallery
(author with daughter and grandson of Sardar Sobha Singh)



15. Hill style temple, Vesuki Nag (Deptt. of Information, J & K)



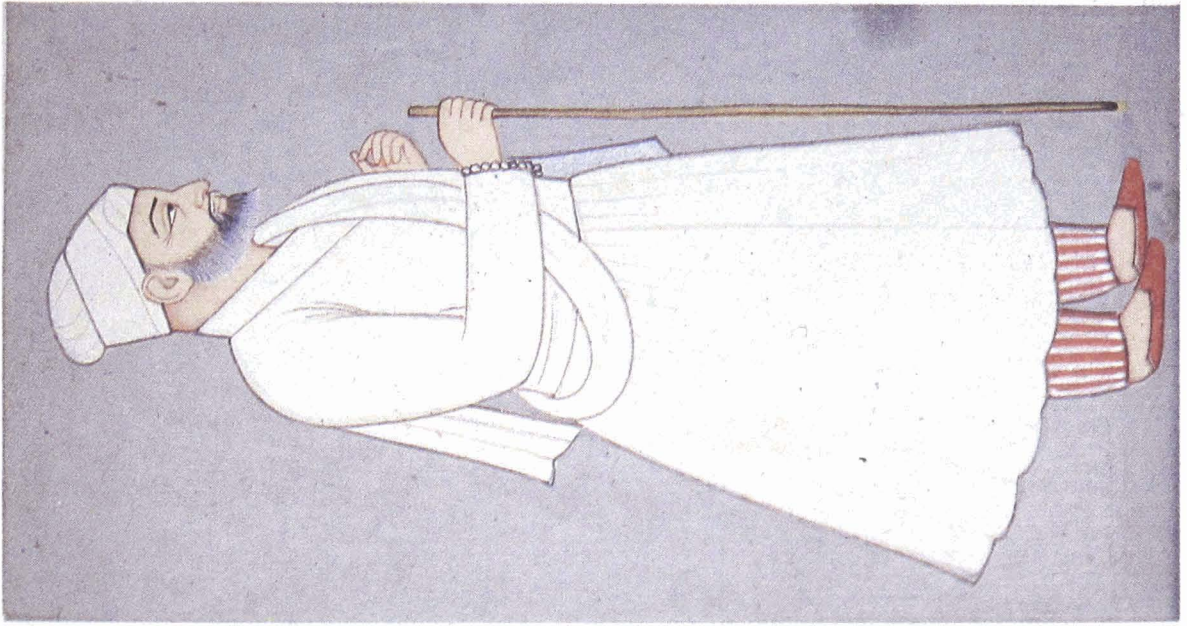
16. Parsuram temple, Renuka



17. Kangra style painting



18. Guler style painting



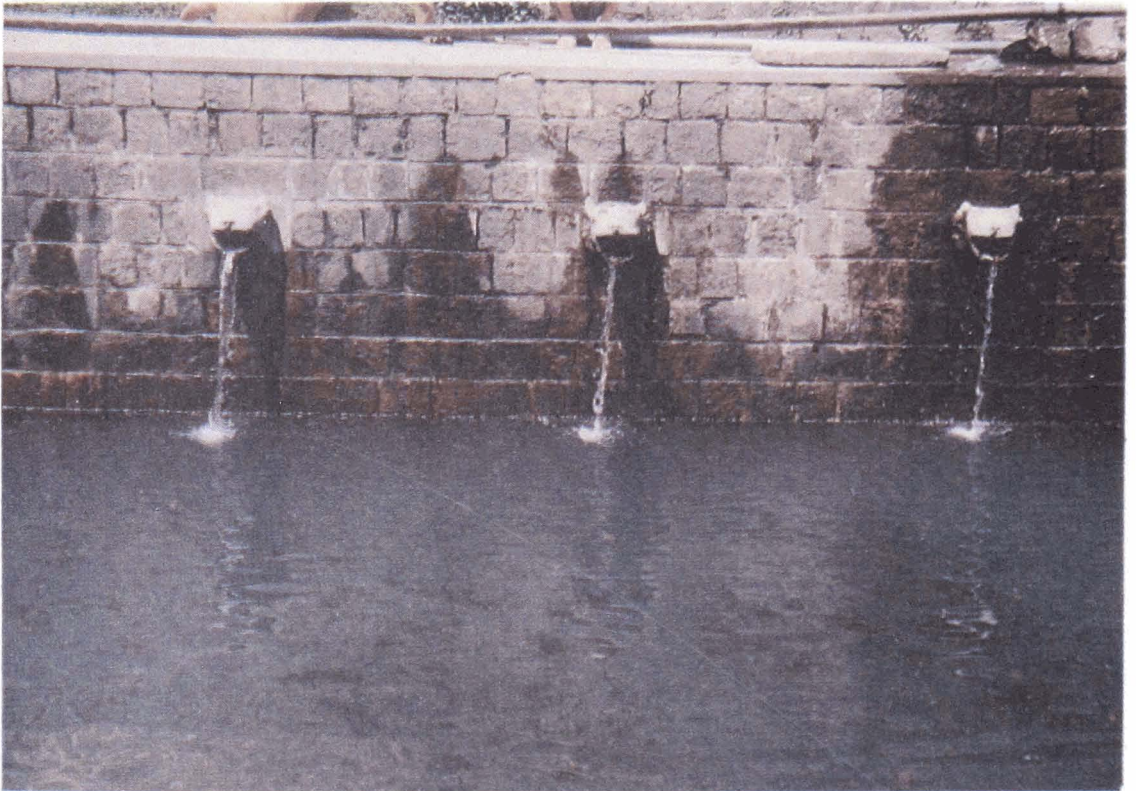
19. Manak, the master painter by Om Sujanpuri



20. Viharni by Om Sujanpuri



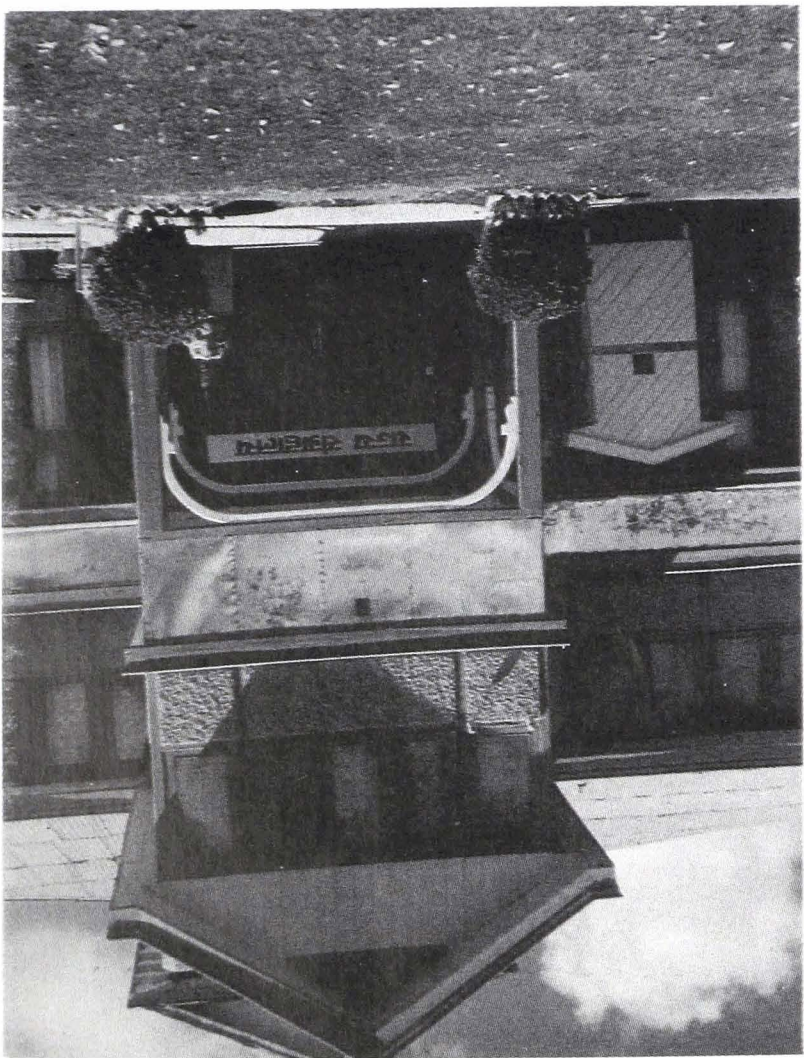
21. Hill style building, Manali



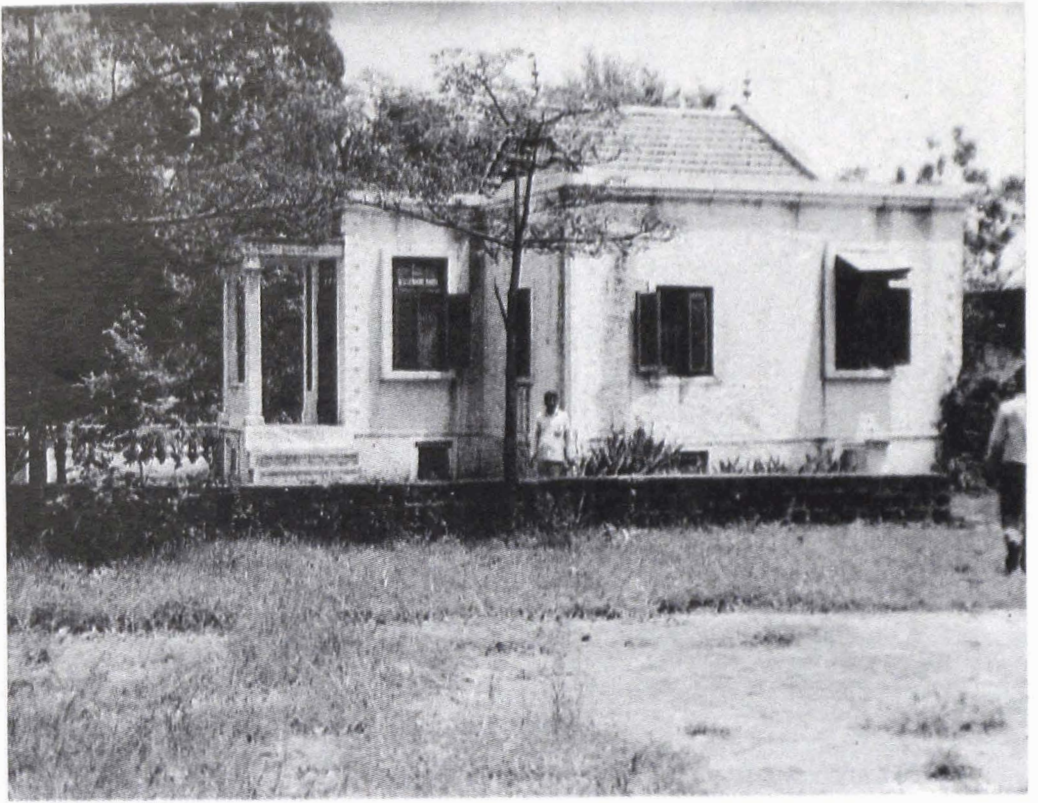
22. A spring in Mcleodganj, Dharamshala



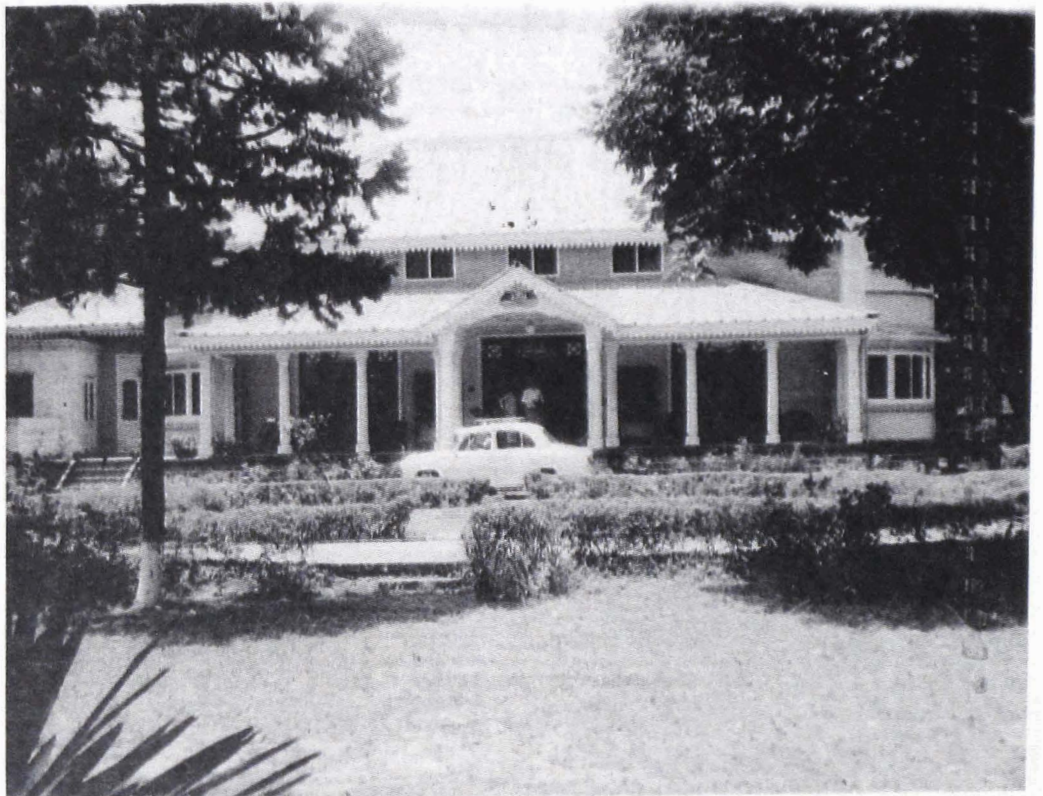
23. Director, Himachal Lok Sanskriti Sansthan, Mandi



24. State museum, Shimla



25. Glass house, Al-Hilal, Palampur



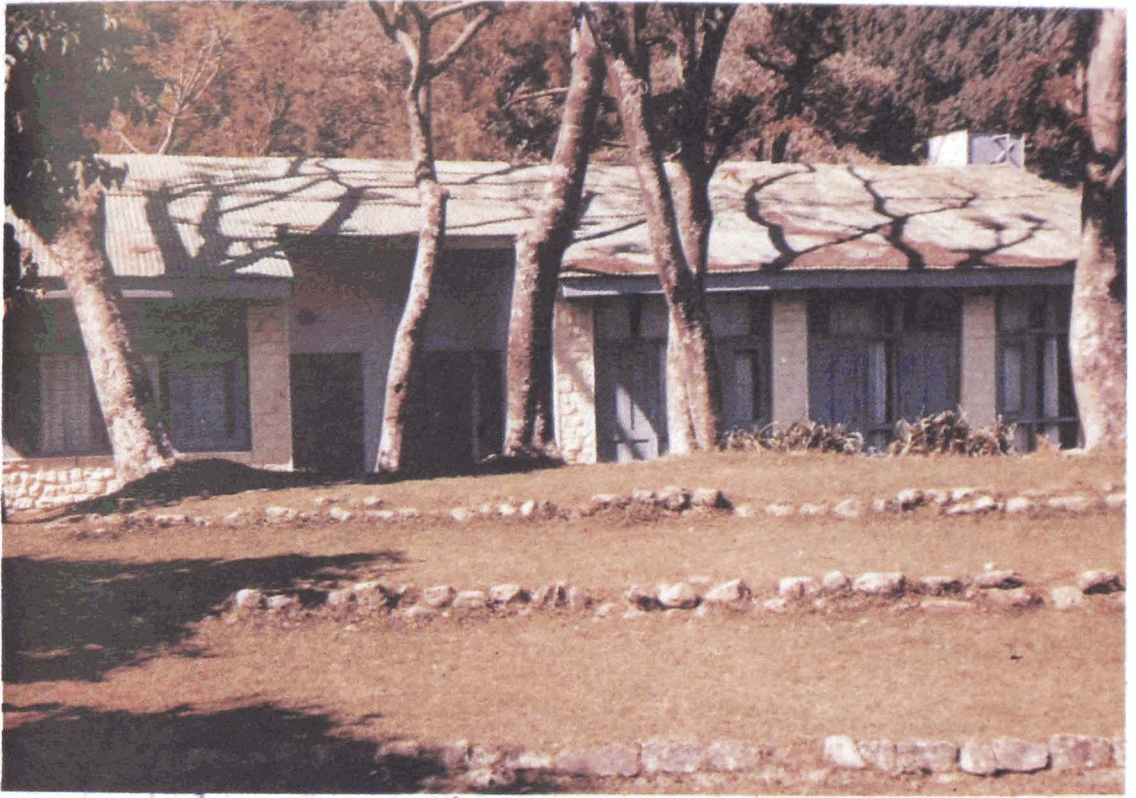
26. Tara Palace, Al-Hilal, Palampur



27. Panoramic view of Himachal University, Shimla



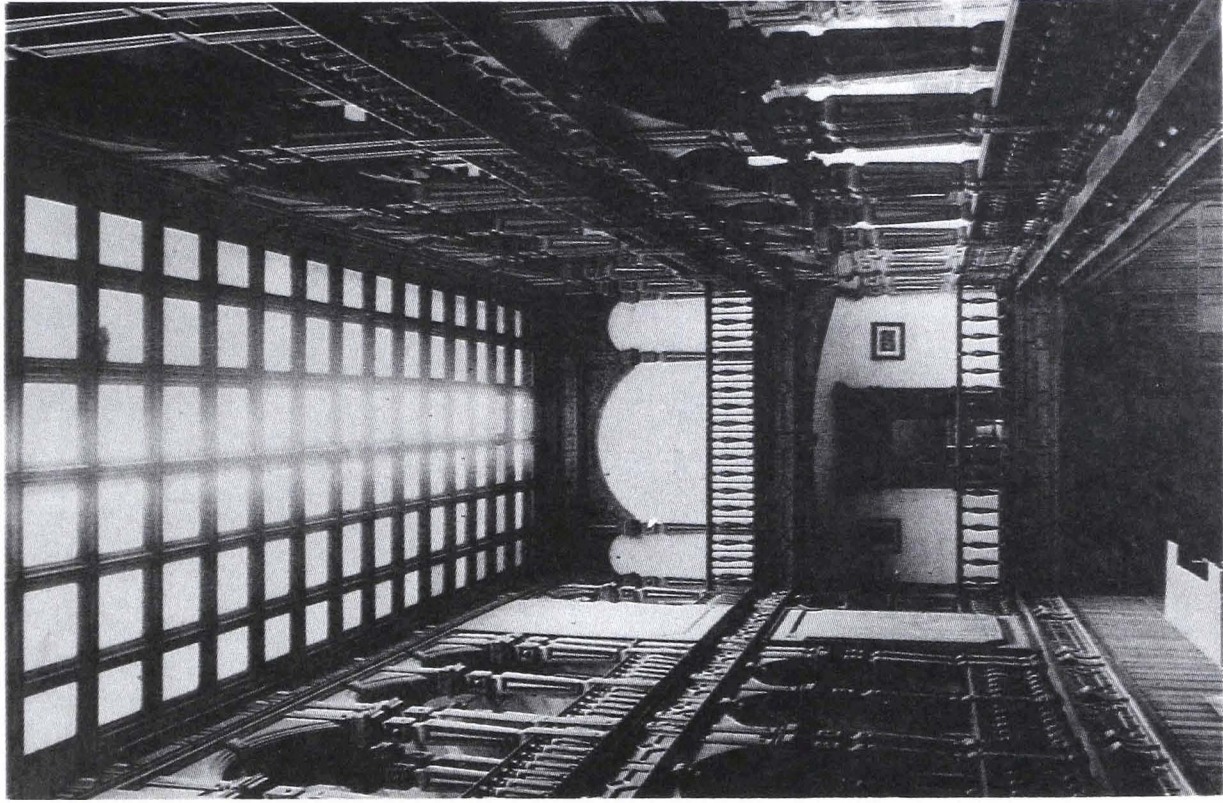
28. Sculpture of Lord Shiva at Chamunda Devi temple, Kangra



29. Open air theatre of Nora Richards



30. Nicholas Roerich Art Gallery, Naggar



31. Internal view of Rashtrapati Niwas, Shimla

Lord Krishna has been painted with Mughal dress of royal courts. It is of yellow colour. Two necklaces of various sizes decorate the whole attire. The necklaces are of white beads having two pearls prominently displayed against the blue visage. The crown of Lord Krishna is of yellow colour studded with precious stones. Radha is painted with half-sleeved blouse and flowered Sari with green colour border. She is also putting on two necklaces of the same style but they are smaller in size. All the lady characters shown are decorated with richly adorned ornaments of yellow metal. They are having prominent eyes with arched brows. Though lady characters are well balanced but the neck of Lord Krishna is painted fluffy and short as compared to his body.

Chamba paintings are painted in red, crimson, yellow and green colours. Blue colour is very rarely used in these paintings. Almost all the paintings possess red border with black inner lining. The background is shown in white or in light shades with sky tinge. The structure of plants is like that of the paintings of Kangra or Guler styles, with open flowery twigs. Flowers are arranged in ecropetal succession and they are white in colour. In some of the paintings with green foliage red coloured flowers are also used. Animals like cattles again are having balanced bodies but fluffy and short necks in comparison to the whole body.

PAHARI MINIATURE PAINTINGS: ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION

Miniature painting came into existence in India almost in 15th century. Though the history of making colours from minerals and organic material and applying them on broader canvas of the wall to create beautiful image can be traced thousands of years back, especially when we consider the frescoes of Ajanta and Allora caves. But the world of miniature paintings is a bit different as far as the technique, the style and the subject matter as well as the size of these paintings are considered. As the name suggests these paintings are smaller in size. Though, even smaller paintings of stamp size are also painted like those of P.K. Joshi of Almora but normally the miniature paintings range from 10'' × 8'' to 22'' × 18'' in size. Later measurement is that of the paintings done on the life of

the uncle of Prophet Mohamad, Amir Hamza. The series of paintings which numbered 1400 was popularly known as Dastan-e-Amir Hamza. It took fifteen years by a caravan of artists to complete the series of paintings. They were done on cotton cloth pieces. Perhaps, this was the series which created the foundation of miniature world of paintings in India during Mughal period.

Art historians believe that this technique came to India from Minor Asia. When Jain art was at its zenith in India the artists in Central Asia were busy in creating miniature paintings. Taimur had patronised a number of artists at Samarqand and Bukhara. Khurasan had been pioneer in this field where a caravan of these artists, writers and thinkers was busy in giving new horizon to art and literature. Among these artists Bihzad was superb. Babar, while coming to India, brought a number of paintings of these artists and persuaded them also to come to India. Thus a number of artists came to India from Minor Asia. Babar earnestly desired Bihzad to accompany him to India but could not persuade him. However, Humayun, the son of Babar, succeeded in bringing two pupils of Bihzad named Khawaza Abdul Samad and Sayyad Ali to India. These were the artists responsible for painting the long series of Dastan-e-Amir Hamza. During the reign of Akbar this style of painting flourished well. Abul Fazal in *Ain-e-Akbari* states that hundreds of artists were serving in the royal workshop supervised by the chief artists. A number of Hindu artists are also working and had expertised in different styles of paintings. Among them Kesu Lal, Mukund, Mushkin, Tara, Samwala, Khemkaran, Madhu, Jagan, Bhagwati were the most demanding artists of that period. Baswan, Daswant, Nanha and Bishandas were the master painters who had mastered this style of paintings. These artists selected the subjects from the Persian locales but slowly and gradually picked up the Indian atmosphere and subjects from the great Indian epics. During Akbar's time *Mahabharata* was translated into Persian under the title of *Razamnama* and it was painted into a form of manuscript. The great biographies of Babar and Akbar were written in this period only under the titles *Babarnama* and *Akbarnama*.

Though the artists were free to select their own subject, yet there is hardly a painting of this time depicting a female character as the artists were not allowed to enter the Harem. If such paintings

are there, they were painted out of sheer imagination. Manusi, a celebrated western artist tried his best to portray the queens and the princesses in person but could not.

Jahangir, the fourth Mughal lord, was very fond of hunting and used to take artists alongwith him during his sport. He was fond of paintings of wildlife and birds. Mansur was expert in drawing the caricatures of birds readily. During Jahangir's period, several paintings of horses in action were drawn and painted. During his period portraiture and *Khakakashi* also flourished. He was a great connoisseur of art. Sir Thomas Row once presented him a painting done by a European artist and told the king that no Indian artist was capable of doing such beautiful work. Jahangir accepted the challenge and invited him after a few days to select his painting out of the six similar paintings of which five were done by the royal painters. In the first instance Thomas Row could not pick up this painting and appreciated the work of Indian artists.

Shahjahan, the fifth Mughal king, was also fond of paintings. He asked the artists to draw the designs of buildings and gardens which were painted afterwards with due acumen. During his reign, paintings of flowers, plants and buildings were created. The artists created the Darbar scenes with the king in the centre. After Shahjahan, Aurangzeb stopped royal patronage to the artists. They were stopped doing any portraiture as according to Islam drawing of a human figure was a sin. The king especially believed so. Thus the artists were led astray and migrated to different kingdoms where they could seek patronage. Rajputana was the best resort for them and most of the artists migrated to Rajputana and a few went to hill states where the art and literature flourished much. Garhwal was a flourishing state in those days, so were the states of Jammu and Kangra. We can trace a family of artists which travelled from Mughal courts to Garhwal. It was the family of forefathers of Moularam who afterwards became the legend of Garhwal Kalam. But no other family of Garhwal Kalam has been traced out till now. However, stray artists are named who migrated from the Mughal courts to Jammu and Kangra hills. Some art historians point out that there were a number of artists who migrated to other hilly states. It is said that Seu, the originator of the most celebrated family, which afterwards maintained the style of Pahari paintings,

served the Mughal Darbar but till date no documentary proof has been found. However, his two sons Manak and Nainsukh were the originators of two world famous styles of miniature paintings, Basohli and Jammu Kalams. It was this family which afterwards created some unparalleled works in Guler and Kangra style. Even Chamba, Nurpur and Bilaspur Kalams owe much to this family. There were three distinct schools of Pahari painting. Basohli Kalam which influenced to some extent Nurpur and Chamba styles. Arki paintings of early period were also influenced by Basohli school. The second school was of Kangra style of miniature paintings which influenced almost all the hill styles of the states existing in the valleys of Satluj and Vyas. Thus Bilaspur, Arki, Mandi, Kullu and Garhwal Kalams were influenced by this style. In fact, the style took its shape at Guler and flourished in Kangra and from there the artists, especially at the time of Raja Sansar Chand, spread in all hill kingdoms and established the domain of Kangra Kalam in all directions. However, from time to time some of the paintings and series of paintings were created to establish the individual styles of the locales. Kangra Kalam influenced the styles of Sirmour, Jubbal and Suket where workshops were started late. The third school was that of Jammu style. Jammu Kalam took its shape at Smadhian near the bank of river Tawi. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev, the school flourished. So much was its impact that the artists from Bandralta, Bhumag, Bhoti, Jasrota and other surrounding states came there to have the experience trickled down to them from the master artists of this Kalam. Later on, this workshop was shifted to Jasrota and its centre was established at Saruinsar by the side of natural lake resort. Raja Balwant Dev, the younger brother of Maharaja Ranjit Dev, was a great connoisseur of art. He was having a notion that he could immortalise himself through these paintings and to some extent he succeeded. Till now, no painting of the most powerful king of Jammu, Maharaja Ranjit Dev, could be traced out but there are a number of paintings of Raja Balwant Dev, busy in his daily routine work, which have been traced out alongwith their creator, Nainsukh. In fact, Nainsukh gave the shape to Jammu Kalam. It is said that Nainsukh had enough freedom to visit the *Harem* of the king. Whatever may be the subject of these paintings, the central figure of the feudal lord was always there, highlighting

his personality. So was the case of Manak, the elder brother of Nainsukh, who was employed in Basohli court. Manak was the originator of Basohli Kalam. It is good that the family tree of these two stalwarts has been traced out with the genuine efforts of M.S. Randhawa and Dr. B.N. Goswami. The descendants of this family were responsible for the establishment of other Kalams alongwith some other artists who were either working independently or in families. Five such families of artists of Pahari style have been traced out till now. They are:

- 1) The family of Seu, who was responsible for Jammu, Basohli, Guler, Kangra, Nurpur, Chamba, Mandi and Bilaspur Kalams. To some extent they were the artists who directed Garhwal school too. Among the stalwarts were Manak, Nainsukh, Ranjha, Nikka, Fattu, Khushal, Gursahai, Damodar, Gokul, Atra, Soudagar, Gurdas and Chaitu. The art historians could trace down some of their works.
- 2) The second family which was engaged in this art was that of Dhuman. Some of the artists who assisted in the establishment of different Kalams belonged to this family. They include Purkhu, Ramdayal, Gulabu, Nandu, Hazari and Lakshman. Gulabu was responsible for the wall paintings done on the inner walls of Brijeshwari temple, Kangra.
- 3) The third family was that of Tiddu, Basia, Shiba, Padnu, Doukhu and Lakshman Das of this family were celebrities in this field and they have done some unparalleled work. But most of these artists kept themselves in Kangra only.
- 4) The fourth family engaged in this field was that of Durga. Durga and Magnu of this family were famous artists.
- 5) The fifth family was limited to Garhwal only. It was the family of Moula Ram, the creator of Garhwal school. Moula Ram was in the fourth generation of Shamdas, a goldsmith who came to Garhwal alongwith the retinue of Suleman Shikoh, the nephew of Aurangzeb. Suleman Shikoh left the Mughal Darbar to escape the wrath of his uncle and came to the hilly kingdom of Garhwal in the reign of Raja Medani Shah to seek shelter. But the later forced the prince to surrender to the Mughal forces. However, Shamdas and his

son Hardas, goldsmiths by profession, settled there at Garhwal and started creating paintings for the royal court. Their work was not so cute to be mentioned but Moula Ram, the great grandson of Hardas created some splendour in Pahari style. It is again a controversy whether the paintings credited in the name of Moula Ram were created by Moula Ram himself or by other well known artists of Kangra schools. As the art historians confirm that most of the Kangra paintings were brought to Garhwal by Anirudh Chand, the son of great connoisseur of miniature painting, Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra. Some of the art historians name Manak and Chaitu also as the artists of this style but latest studies in this field have shown that they belonged to Basohli and Kangra and their paintings were carried to Garhwal. However, Chaitu belonging to Seu family settled in Garhwal in his later age and worked for Garhwal Darbar.

In addition to these artist families some individual artists also worked in different workshops organised by different Pahari kingdoms. Their names appear on some paintings and some references can be taken from the art histories.

Preservation

It is a tremendous task to preserve the Pahari paintings though some organisational and individual efforts in this field have yielded some positive results. These efforts could hardly fathom ten percent of the total lot. The collection of these art pieces is the most difficult job. The people who possess these paintings seldom get them registered with the society of antiquities due to the fear they might be taken away from them. Individual efforts in this fields have yielded some dividends but at large it proved to be a futile exercise. Earlier, when the people did not know their value they sold away these precious art pieces at a throw-away price and the businessmen from Amritsar, Delhi and Bombay thrived well. Most of these paintings were destroyed in transition and due to natural calamities. A set of half burnt paintings acquired by the State Museum, Shimla from Nurpur speak the fact. A few of these paintings were de-

stroyed as they were not preserved properly. For instance, at Mandi with an individual effort, an art gallery was created by a teacher with his meagre financial resources. A number of paintings and precious manuscripts have been collected by him but he does not know how to preserve them. The stinky atmosphere full of moisture may further deteriorate these art pieces in the time to come. In the same way a number of paintings have been eaten by the white ants. What will be the fate of these paintings no one knows.

It lies in the hands of museums, art galleries and art and archival departments of the government to take some positive steps in this field. If some lucrative price is declared to both registered and unregistered paintings it may yield good results and the people may come forward to give away their stored artefacts in lieu of good earnings. The family members of the erstwhile hill states may be approached to donate the paintings they possess. Most of these paintings are still lying in their stores but for want of proper persuasion they are not coming forward to give these art pieces for display or donate them for ever. The first step is to collect these art pieces which are thousands in number. The second one is to preserve them. The art galleries and the museums are doing good job in this respect but still some individually organised art galleries need support in this regard. Their organisers may be persuaded to have the training in preservation of these artefacts or free services may be provided to them periodically so as to ensure better preservation of these paintings. The departments of archives and museums may also organise some short term courses on the collection and preservation of these paintings.

Propagation of Miniature Paintings

For the propagation and development of this art, the cultural departments, academies and the departments of education can play significant roles. The potential artists may be encouraged and pursued to create these paintings. Languages and Cultural Department with the help of Academy of Art and Culture of Himachal Pradesh has done a good job in this field. A scheme of Guru Shishya Parampara was adopted years before and some master painters in this field were selected to train the young artists. A remuneration is

paid to both master painters and the budding artists. Four such schools were in vogue. The planning was very tempting but execution part needed some recasting. For want of financial help a number of house wives offered themselves as young artists but after sometime it was inferred that they were there only to get the financial assistance. These schools have been working for the last so many years but with the exception of one or two artists they could not give the feedback which was expected of them. There is no job security as such the potential artists would not like to waste their time merely getting the training. The marketing of these paintings has not been explored yet, thus the learners and the pupils do not expect a bright future. They would prefer to get diploma course in recognised institutes after which they can be employed as drawing teachers. As such these departments and social organisations have to come forward to assure these pupils about the security of their livelihood after the training. This art can be introduced in school curriculum and the institutions may be recognised by the government where the potential artists get proper training of miniature paintings. Marketing process may also be explored so as to give due value to these paintings created by the young artists.

Popularising the Art of Miniature Paintings

Art and culture departments have been organising exhibitions of artefacts in isolation for the elite audience and that too in their art auditoriums and exhibition centres of the museums where there is a very little access of the commoners. The artists and art critics, alongwith art historians, come there to see and appreciate these artefacts but there is hardly a customer to buy them. The Academies must come forward and try to negotiate with the businessmen for the sale of these artefacts. Generally the rules and the regulations of the government departments are so rigid that they cannot come in terms with the business centres, hence the artefacts remain stored in the godowns.

These departments can approach the emporias and other commercial centres and exhibition authorities to carry on the process of marketing of these artefacts. The individual efforts in this field have yielded positive results while the departmental approach is always lukewarm.

Greeting cards and calendars can be made on the layout of these paintings and sold in the market. Some commercial centres are doing good business in greeting cards and calendars made out of the layouts of the original paintings. Especially in foreign countries there is a great demand for these articles. The embassies and cultural centres of different countries can be approached for the commercialisation of these articles at their end. Private firms can also be approached and they may be given lucrative discounts so as to make them sell these paintings through their own outlets.

New generation can be encouraged in this field by giving them incentives of remuneration and awarding their work from time to time. The exhibitions of their work can be arranged with the assistance of different voluntary organisations. They can encourage the young artists and scholarships can be awarded so as to make the young artists work in this field. The politicians also have a lot of role to play in the recognition of miniature paintings. They can persuade the educational departments to include this art as one of the subjects in the curriculum at school level so that the potential artists may have the security of service.

Individual efforts by the artists have yielded positive dividends. A few of the artists have made way to sell their paintings in the open market and they have adopted this art as their only profession. They are earning handsomely from different sources. A few of them have been recognised by different art institutions and Academies and have been awarded by different states.

On the whole this art can be revived and sustained with the coordination of government departments, voluntary organisations and individual efforts. There is no reason why this art cannot flourish with the combined efforts of all those concerned with the promotion of this art.

HANDS THAT CREATED THE BEAUTY

It was in 1916 that Dr. Coomaraswami placed the Pahari miniature paintings into two classes—north and south series of paintings. By north series he meant the paintings created at Kangra while by the south series he meant the paintings created in Dogra Jammu style. He included the Basohli paintings also in the group. In fact, they belonged to Basohli, Nurpur, Guler and Kullu. In

1920, J.C. French visited various hill states and found the same Basohli style in Chamba, Mandi and Suket paintings. Such paintings are still lying in the possession of Raja Baldev of Haripur, Guler, Raja Dhruv Dev of Lambram Gram and Mian Devi Chand of Nadaun. In addition to these paintings a few are lying in the personal collections of Wazir Kartar Singh of Nurpur, Raja Raghubhir Singh of Sangri in Kullu valley, Raja Rajender Singh of Arki and Kunwar Braj Mohan Singh of Nalagarh. Before the Kangra Kalam came into limelight and adjudged superb, the Basohli style was dominant in almost all the hill states. Jammu was powerful state in those days. It was a great centre for cultural exchange among all the Pahari states. The artists from far and wide assembled there to get better patronage in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev of Jammu. A family of celebrated artists of this style did work in the hill states nearby Jammu. It was the family of a person named Seu, carpenter by profession, belonging to Guler. Manak and Nainsukh, the two sons of Seu worked in Basohli and Jammu respectively. Manak was the elder one who has done some remarkable work in creating a number of series of *Ramayana* and *Bhagwat Purana*. It was Manak who established Basohli style while Nainsukh was the younger one and he worked in Jammu. In fact, he was the favourite artist of Raja Balwant Dev of Saruinsar. Balwant Dev was the younger brother of king of Jammu, Maharaja Ranjit Dev. Nainsukh has painted some of the most beautiful paintings catching the intimate moments of Raja Balwant Dev with his queens in his Harem. It was Nainsukh who started the school of portraiture among the Pahari artists though we find some other artists prior to Nainsukh working in Mankot almost a century earlier to his contemporaries trying in the field of portraiture. A few of the portraits of the feudal lords of Mankot have found their place on the panels of art galleries.

Nainsukh, after the death of his patron, migrated to Basohli where he joined with his elder brother for a while and then shifted to Nurpur and other adjoining states of the region. Manak remained in Basohli, occasionally visiting other hill states on royal invitation. The progeny of these two great artists of Pahari miniatures spread out to the hill states of Kangra, Kullu, Mandi, Chamba, Nurpur, etc. Detailed study of this family has been dealt with elsewhere in this book. This was the family responsible for the lot of work done in

field of miniature paintings of Pahari styles. The family tree of the clan has already been traced to some extent with the exception of some missing links. Art historian B.N. Goswami has done a lot of work in this field.

As already mentioned, Mankot was another popular centre of this art in Jammu hills. It is not sure who was the actual patron of this Kalam but the portraits of feudal lords displayed on the panels of a number of art galleries alongwith several paintings done on the guidelines of the scriptures and series of *Bhagwat Purana* painted in the best of the Pahari styles speak of their origin in 17th century, almost a century earlier to the series produced by Manak in Basohli style. Manak painted these series in the first half of 18th century. Nothing is known about these artists whether they were local artists or artists migrated from other states. It needs a thorough study in this field.

In the same way, there was another set of painters and artists in Chamba, either contemporary to Manak and Nainsukh or earlier to them. Chamba school established its supremacy in the reign of Raja Umed Singh when he built a Rang Mahal for the purpose. Even prior to Umed Singh, in the reign of Raja Prithvi Singh this tradition chiselled its way in the reign of Raja Raj Singh of Chamba. His progeny Jeet Singh, Charat Singh and Shree Singh carried on this tradition. Raja Raj Singh was killed while fighting with Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra, thus supremacy of Kangra Kalam was established in Chamba school thereafter. It was in the reign of Raj Singh when Nikka the famous artist and son of Nainsukh, migrated to Chamba and settled there. In addition to the family members of Seu, two more families were working in Chamba. They were the families of Banshi Dhar and Krishan. Ishwar, Ramdayal, Magnu, Durga, Jwahaar, Sonu, Motiram (Poria), Hoshiar Lal and Hira lal belonged to the clan of first family while as Lave, Ganga Ram, Billu, Premlal belonged to the family tree of Krishan. Leheru Mian, Tara Singh, Dhyan Singh, Dhindi Das, Jameel and the grandson of Nikka, Atra also served the royal court of Chamba and created some exceptional paintings.

Guler and Kangra styles became the names of Pahari Kalam in their superb forms. Most of the family members of Seu worked there in both of the kingdoms. The names of Vasia and Purkhu also

came in limelight in this styles of painting. The great-grandson of Vasia, Lakshman Das met the art explorer Frank in Samloti. Vasia was the court artist of Raja Sansar Chand. Padnu and Doukhu, the twin artists, also worked in the royal court of Kangra. Another family of artists with Dhuman or Ghuman as the head of the family settled in Kangra during the reign of Raja Sansar Chand. Dhuman was having two celebrated artist sons named Purkhu and Fattu. Among the progeny of Purkhu, Ruldu, Chandu, Ramkrishan, Ramdayal, Kirpa and Gulabu became famous in this field and a few of them migrated to Chamba seeking better patronage.

Kangra Kalam influenced the Mandi and Kullu styles. Sajnu of Kangra migrated to Mandi during the reign of Ishwari Sen of Mandi. He served him with a series of Hamir Math paintings. Another artist who worked on the series of paintings based on *Ramayana* was Kapoor Giri. This set of the series is preserved in the National Art Museum, New Delhi. Muhammadi or Muhammad Baksh was again a celebrated artist of Mandi school in the reign of Raja Salbir Sen of Mandi.

Garhwal school of miniature paintings is lucky in this regard as its artists, to some extent, have been registered with the main artist Moula Ram ahead of them. It so happened that Suleman Shikoh, the nephew of Mughal king Aurangzeb left Delhi to escape the wrath of his uncle. He came to Garhwal with retinue of twenty persons. Later, Suleman Shikoh was sent to Delhi under pressure but a few of the people accompanying the prince settled in Garhwal. One Shyam Das and his son Hardas were having a knack for painting. It was Hira and the son of Hardas who started the school of Garhwal miniatures followed by his son Mangat Ram and thereafter by Moula Ram. Moula Ram was more of a poet than an artist but he became famous as an artist of repute. Moula Ram was born in 1743. It was the feudal lord Jai Kirti Shah who patronised Moula Ram and bestowed him a Jagir of sixty villages and was paid a salary of Rs. five per day. This fact is mentioned by the artist in a couplet.

It is interesting to note that most of the paintings credited to Moula Ram are having peculiar Kangra style very close to the paintings created by the artists of Seu family. It is said that Moula Ram himself visited Kangra and Guler and he might have brought the

paintings from these states and afterwards they are shown as his paintings. The exhibition was organised by the great-grandson of Moula Ram in Lucknow in 1925 in which he displayed some paintings of Moula Ram. These paintings were not so fine as shown by some art historian like Mukundi Lal in his book on Garhwal paintings. These paintings were sketchy and rough. It is possible that a few of the artists from Kangra might have gone to Garhwal on royal invitation and had created a few paintings in Kangra style. Two such names which frequently appear alongwith these paintings were the great artists of the family of Seu—Manak and Chaitu who were taken as the pupils of Moula Ram which is again misleading fact. Manak was the son of Seu who worked at Basohli and he had created some beautiful series of *Ramayana* and paintings on the theme of *Mahabharata* as well as on *Bhagwat Purana*. However, he occasionally visited other Pahari states. He might have visited Garhwal also and might have painted a few paintings on the themes mentioned in this work but he was definitely not the pupil of Moula Ram. In the same way the name of Chaitu is wrongly registered as the pupil of Moula Ram. We find several references of Chaitu visiting Garhwal and also that he belonged to Garhwal. However, he worked in the royal courts of Garhwal. Chaitu was the great-grandson of Manak. However, dates do not coincide. There may be another person named Chaitu of local origin.

Apart from the paintings on the theme of religious scriptures and general nature there was another school of Tantrik paintings which flourished in the reign of second Dogra king Maharaja Ranbhir Singh in the 19th century. Ranbhir Singh was a great connoisseur of art and letters. The artists and the writers came to work under his patronage and the atmosphere for the artists was very congenial. Maharaja himself was a great lover of paintings and was the disciple of Tantrik cult of worship. Pt. Jagdish Vedpathi, a Tantrik was well versed in Tantrik Yoga and he had acquired occult powers by dint of his trans. He inspired Maharaja to create the Tantrik paintings of various aspect of Shakti as given in the Tantrik scriptures. Thus a workshop was started at Smadhian, the old place where once a school of miniature paintings existed in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev. Pt. Jagdish Vedpathi, afterwards became the religious teacher of Maharaja Pratap Singh, the heir-apparent of the

throne. A number of artists from far and wide were invited to explore the possibility of paintings of the facsimile of different aspects of Shakti. Chhunia, a local artist of repute, was requested to assist Vedpathi in drawing the caricatures of these aspects followed by junior artists' assistance in colouring these paintings. Each painting was having two parts—one part was to draw the portrait of the aspect of Shakti while the other part was to be used to draw Yantra, the physical manifestation of the aspect of Shakti. The first part was completed by these artists but Yantrik portion remained blank. It is said that the terms in between the artists and the regime could not be settled, as such most of these paintings were left incomplete. Twenty-nine of such paintings are lying in Raghunath Sanskrit Anusandhan Pustkalaya, Jammu while a number of them are there in the possession of individual connoisseurs of art.

MANKU, THE MASTER PAINTER OF PAHARI MINIATURES

Among the families engaged in miniature paintings of different Pahari schools, the family of Seu superseded the rest. There is a controversy over the origin of this family; some believe that they hailed from the hill states while others think them of Kashmiri origin. Manak, the eldest son of Seu had done some commendable work in this field. His connection with other members of this family can be ascertained easily now from the log books of the Pandas of Haridwar and Kurukshetra. Dr. Goswami has done some significant work in the field.

One log book of Rakha Ram of Haridwar contains the writing of Nainsukh, the younger brother of Manak, which introduces the whole family of celebrated artists. It reads:

गोत्र सांडल

लिखतं नैणा चित्रेहरा गोलेर दाबासी। बेटा सेऊए दा।

पौत्र हस्नुए दा पडपोत्रा भरथुए दा. . . . जे भाईए माणके दा लिख्या
जे दुए प्रोहते कच निकले तां प्रमाण सेहे लिख्या. . . . संमत १८२०

It is clear from this writing that the family belonged to Guler and that they were carpenters by profession and that they expertised themselves in the field of painting, thus were called *Chitereras*, i.e.

painters. It indicates that Seu, the son of Hasnu, grandson of Bhartu and great-grandson of Data was having two sons, elder one named as Manak or Manku and the younger one as Nainsukh. Alongwith the parental details he had also scribbled maternal details. It is the writing of Samvat 1820, i.e. 1763 A.D.

In the same log book Manak also scribbled about his visit to Haridwar but much earlier. It reads:

माणकू तरखान बासी गूलेर दे लिखतं. . . .
बेटे सेऊ के पोता हसनू का । संमत १७६३

These two writings ascertain that both Manak and Nainsukh were the real brothers belonging to the family of Seu. This family was responsible for the creation of various styles of Pahari miniature paintings. Manak served in the court of Basohli kingdom while Nainsukh went to Jammu and finally settled at Saruinsar in the royal court of Raja Balwant Dev, the younger brother of Maharaja Ranjit Dev of Jammu.

Manak had a pleasing personality as seen in his only available portrait preserved in Chandigarh Museum. He is shown with an open appraisal a Muglia turban on his head and having a bearded acute visage. On the canvas of the painting his introduction is scribbled on the top—Manku Mussavar Meesar. The script is in Takri but on one corner of the portrait, at the base, another writing in Devnagri can easily be deciphered as—The sons of Seu, elder Manak and the younger Nainsukh. It was the scholarly study and researches of Dr. B.N. Goswami that the real person came into limelight. In fact, controversy of Manku as a lady artist came on the surface with the analysis of the famous *Geet Govind* series of paintings done in Basohli in the year 1730. Manku's name occurs in the colophon. It is a rendering in Sanskrit which conveys the date of its creation and the situation in which it was created. It reads:

मुनिवसुगिरिसोमैः संमिते विक्रमाब्दे
गुणिगणित ग्रसिता मालिनी वृत्तचित्तः
व्यर चयद अजभक्ता माणकू चित्रकर्ता
ललित लिपिविचित्र गीतगोविन्दचित्रम्

This important Sanskrit rendering was discussed in detail by N.C. Mehta in 1926 in *Studies in Indian Paintings*. And perhaps he was the first person who discovered the name of Manak. But he interpreted the verse in wrong context and thought Manak as the lady artist who created this series of *Geet Govind*. He writes: "I came across the name of Manku while examining an album of paintings lent to me by his highness the Maharaja of Tehri. The painter introduces himself in a Sanskrit verse written at the top of rather inferior painting depicting Krishna and Radha sitting on a balcony. . ." "The meaning of the verse is not altogether clear. The sense of it is that in Vikram Samvat 1887 (1830 A.D.) Aja-Bhakta (a devotee of Vishnu, the immortal), the florist famous for her character and celebrated for her accomplishments got the painter Manku to compose the illustrated *Geet Govind*, varied and elegant in style. It is not possible to say definitely whether Aja-Bhakta is a proper name or not. What is, however, plain is that the artist was inspired by a lady of distinction to 'compose' as he calls it—His pictorial version of Jaideva's celebrated masterpiece. If a conjecture be allowed, I should think that the lady referred to in the verse given above is probably some royal benefactress of the house of Tehri, and in that case it is possible that the word 'Malini' may refer to a place name in Garhwal. . ." It was a mistake on his part as the same verse was written in the colophon of the *Geet Govind* series of paintings created almost a century earlier in Basohli. After seeing this series he asserted that perhaps that was the original one. It was preserved in Lahore Museum and it was dated 1730. He reported its discovery in *Illustrated Weekly of India* in 1938 and he found the same verse and acknowledged that it might have been given to some later artists to honour his memory. He was confident that the series was not painted by Manku, the creator of the series of Kangra series found in Garhwal. And at this time the great critic and the appreciator of the miniature world of paintings Khandalavala jumped into the fray. In a review of Basil Gray's Rajput painting, he suggested: "The Basohli series dated 1730 A.D. is not painted by Manku. Mr N.C. Mehta who wrote about this series has misinterpreted the inscription. . . (it) is clear that the series was painted by a male painter and not a female painter as N.C. Mehta thought and that Manku was his patroness and herself apparently a high born

lady who wrote elegant verse in the Malini meter” (*Marg*, iii, 1948-49, p. 54).

N.C. Mehta could not leave the matter open with the last statement of K. Khandalavala. He gave a second thought to the Sanskrit verse and got it translated again with the help of Pandits of the language and wrote its literal meaning:

“In the year 1787 A.D. (Vikram Samvat 1730) Malini, noted for her qualities of discrimination and judgement and who prized her character as her principal wealth, who was the devotee of the immortal one (Vishnu) had a pictorial version of *Geet Govind* in beautiful and varied script composed by the painter Manku.” In his writing he admitted that it was an error on his part to have amended the language of the verse earlier but again stressed that Manku can be the name of both male and female painters. But he was again wrong. Manku was the male painter. Thanks to the researches of Dr. B.N. Goswami who authenticated his statement through the writings given in the log books (*Bahis*) of the Pandas of Haridwar and Kurukshetra, that too in the handwritings of the painters like Manku and Nainsukh. It was also confirmed through these writings that Manku was serving in the court of Basohli feudal lords and he was a painter. This ends the discussion.

Again it was a matter of discussion that how the same Sanskrit verse was scribbled in the colophon of Kangra series of *Geet Govind* which was created decades afterwards and perhaps then the painter Manku was not alive. This later series of the painting was in the possession of Lord of Tehri Maharaja Manvindra Shah. Dr. M.S. Randhawa got it published by National Museum, New Delhi. It was painted in Guler style. Perhaps, as most of the critics think, the artists from Guler or Kangra might have seen the verse on the *Geet Govind* series of paintings created earlier at Basohli and might have copied the same verse or it might be possible that Manak might have started work on the second copy but till then he was very old and needed assistance in its completion as such a number of artists from the same family or few of his disciples might have worked till its completion and thus the name of the main painter was given in the colophon of the series of paintings. As for its style is concerned some deviation from the original style of Basohli Kalam was taking place when most of the artists from Basohli royal palaces went to

other states to find the better patronage. This later style emerged in Guler and finally finished in Kangra. In fact, a Basohli princess, Balouria Rani was wedded to Goverdhan Chand of Guler and series might have been gifted in the marriage. This was the first series of *Geet Govind* which might have inspired the artists of Guler to create another series but it is sure Manak was involved with this series also. It may also be possible that Manak might have come to Guler along with other artists accompanying Rani Balouria.

W.G. Archer suggests that Manak as well his son Kushala moved to Kangra at the time of Sansar Chand. He gradually shifted his style but no documental proof as well as the painting executed in the court of Sansar Chand is available to this extent. Moreover, most of the Seu family members were at Basohli, even Nainsukh migrated to Basohli perhaps after the death of his patron Balwant Dev of Jammu as is evident from the records:

लिषतं नैणा व मानक। बटे सेऊ के।

नैणा जगन्नाथ को जात्रा को राजा अमृतपाल के साथ आया 1 स. 1820

This reads: Naina and Manku the sons of Seu. Naina came to Jagannath on a pilgrimage with Raja Amrit Pal in Samvat 1820 that is in A.D. 1763. Raja Amrit Pal was the feudal lord of Basohli from 1757 to 1776.

There is another entry in the log book of Pt. Hari Bilas Atri of Kurukshetra which confirms that most of the artists belonging to Seu family resided at Basohli till 1827 A.D. It reads:

श्री गुरुचर्णो कमलेभ्यो नमः

श्री सं 1885 चैत्र प्रवीष्टे 21 शुदि पंचमी कुरुक्षेत्र में रांझा आया।

घर पुराने गुलेर के। वासी अमृतपाल की दीती दी बसोहलीया की।

भाई चारः कामा, गोहदु, नीका, रांझा नेणसुख के पुत्र सेऊ के पोत्रे. . . .

It is very clear from these evidences that most of the members of the family were still working at Basohli. It might be possible that occasionally they might have been invited to execute some paintings in different royal courts and after the execution of their jobs might have returned to work again in the workshop at Basohli.

Archer has given the details of Manak that he might have born

in 1710 and lived until 1780. This theory does not cater to the hypothesis. First, there is no evidence or documental proof and the second, as according to the Archer and also according to the inscription in the colophon of the first series of painting of *Geet Govind*, he must be of fifteen years of age when he started working on the project because it was completed before 1730. Manak would have not completed that series in such an early age. The only documental proof is the log book of Pt. Rakha Ram where he had given the date of his visit to Haridwar. It was the writing of 1736 A.D. The only possible answer to this question is that he might have been more than twenty years of age if he had painted the series or there might be another Manak, but till now no such person named Manak who did that work has been exposed yet. Definitely the dates are not corresponding to the fact. We can infer with all the evidences and logic that the celebrated painter might have existed before 1710, most probably in the beginning of the century. Then the question arises who painted the second series of *Geet Govind* which is in the possession of the feudal lords of Tehri Garhwal? It might be possible that the old Manak might have started the series in his life time but could not complete it and as a gesture of honour his family members might have given his name in lieu. But it is only a presumption and not the evidence. There is no evidence available of his death even. As according to O.C. Ohri, the reseacher in this field, there was another Manak. He had acquired the evidences from an astrologer of Balour named Nath who gave him the photo copy of the person who was an artist also but nothing is available of his being an artist. Until the riddle of Manak is solved through the revenue records or otherwise the matter will remain as it is. Let us hope some written documents will be traced of birth and death of the celebrated artist who was responsible for the Basohli Kalam and also for the most celebrated paintings in the series of *Geet Govind*.

The author of these lines had met the last living artist Shri Chandu Lal Raina of Rait in 1992 who belonged to the family of Pt. Seu. He narrated an event that when the feudal lords of twenty-one hill states met at Matore, a crossing which leads to Kangra and Dharamshala, and wanted to explore the possibility of the best artist, they declared that the artists might come to display their talent to

prove their worth. Accordingly, the artists from far and wide came there to prove their worth. Some created an elephant's structure on a piece of gram and others carved the caricatures of animals on the tooth but when Manak was invited he asked for a complete *than* (roll) of Dhaka Mulmul having the length of hundred metres. He picked up a thread of yarn and without disturbing the other thread painted a single line throughout the length. That was the achievement of the great artist which was applauded much and an asset of several villages was awarded to him.

NAINSUKH, THE CELEBRATED ARTIST OF PAHARI MINIATURES

Nainsukh was the younger brother of Manak whom we have already discussed. Both the brothers left their native place Guler to engage themselves in the field of painting and found Basohli and Jammu most conducive for their work. Manak went to Basohli whereas Nainsukh went to Jammu. It was the time of Maharaja Ranjit Dev under whom Jammu flourished as the centre of art, culture and business. As according to the old men of Jammu and also according to the documents available at Smadhian by the side of river Tawi, there was a workshop of painters where some wonderful portraits of the royal personalities were painted. Since Maharaja Ranjit Dev was busy in politics he could not attend to these painters and their work personally but his younger brother Balwant Dev or Balwant Singh was the connoisseur of art. He was given the Jagir of Saruinsar where he shifted alongwith the retinue of painters. His summer resort used to be at Saruinsar where he had erected a lavish building which was airy enough to shun away the scorching heat of the lesser hills with the cool breeze coming over the waves of the lake Saruinsar. It is here that some historic paintings of his person were executed by Nainsukh and his assistants. Nainsukh has done tremendous work in this field but the only signed painting available is of Balwant Dev listening to the music of a party sitting in front of him. This party includes the musicians, both males and females, having ten portraits with four ladies and rest males. Raja is shown sitting on a seat supported by pillows and enjoying *hukka*. On the top of the painting there is an inscription in Takri which

suggests that it is the portrait of Maharaja Balwant Dev/Singh done at the behest of certain nobleman by Nainsukh at Jasrota, on the occasion when Mughal Mir Munnu came to Lahore after his victory over the Pathans. The inscription reads:

संमत विक्रमी अठारह सौ पंज था। जेठ महीना था।
 तिन्हें दिनें एह तस्वीर लिखी। तिन्हें दिनें उमर बारह चौबीस थी
 श्री माहाराजे श्री बलवतं सिंघजी दी। तां एह तस्वीर नैनसुखे जसरोटे लिखी थी।
 तिन्हें दिनें मीर मुन्नु लाहोर आया था पठान पर लडाई फते पाई के।
 'तोरी मानो हार आली री अब न मानो'

There are four such portraits available without any inscription on them, but they can also be credited to Nainsukh due to their similarity in style and the treatment of the colours with that of the signed painting mentioned above. They include a portrait of Raja Balwant Dev sitting on the same style of seat richly decorated with floral designs. He is watching a painting created by the celebrated artist Nainsukh. The Raja is shown sitting cross-legged supported by pillows and enjoying *hukka* and a number of attendants are attending the feudal lord. The space is divided magnificently to make room for the *Baradari* catering to the architecture of the Haveli erected at Saruinsar, his summer resort, with the background of lush green atmosphere created by the trees densely painted. The second portrait is also having the similarity as far as the portrait of the feudal lord is concerned. He is shown with the same dress and posture sitting on the same style of seat which is covered with the help of a square sheet of carved wooden planks supported by four cylindrical supports. The king is enjoying *hukka* and watching a male dancer performing and a number of singers are shown supporting the rhythm. In the next portrait, again, the Raja is shown sitting in the same posture on the same style of seat placed on a dais. He is attended by his courtiers. Raja is enjoying his *hukka* and inspecting a horse. Again the division of space is magnificently used to highlight his palace and the horses led by a man. In another portrait, Balwant Dev is shown attending his daily prayers and the women musicians are reciting the *Bhajans* favourite of the feudal lord. Again the division of space is typical of Nainsukh style.

The paintings of Raja Balwant Dev available in Chandigarh

Museum include an earliest portrait of Balwant Dev wherein he is shown clean-shaved prince with Mughal style Jama and Turki turban. He is painted in standing posture enjoying *hukka* which is supported by an attendant. The painting seems to be created by immature hands. Perhaps this may be the earliest possible painting of Nainsukh. Its time of painting is supposed to be 1743 A.D. There is another portrait of Balwant Dev with an inscription wherein a dancer named Zaffer is performing before the king and the musicians are accompanying the dancer, perhaps the names of the musicians are also given in the inscription. Here, in this painting, only portraits are visible. No atmosphere is created, there is no background of the architecture or the greenery which became the part of these paintings afterwards.

Nainsukh was the main artist in the court of Raja Balwant Dev and almost all the portraits of Balwant Dev can easily be credited to Nainsukh by their style and treatment. However two more names have come to light—they are those of Didi and Vajan Shah. Though one or two paintings bear their names yet the style of these paintings is peculiar of Nainsukh. They might have assisted Nainsukh in various drawings and the sketches drawn were coloured afterwards. It is very much clear that Nainsukh was the favourite of Raja Balwant Dev. He was having access to the paintings of the intimate moments of the king. It is said that most of the paintings of the intimate moments of the king with his queens in the *Harem* have been lost or taken away by the descendants of the royal family, and they are not available for appreciation. Balwant Dev was of the opinion that through these paintings one can live forever and become immortal. That was why he gave all the freedom to the celebrated artists like Nainsukh.

Apart from the portraiture of Balwant Dev, a few more paintings created by Nainsukh have come to light. One is of 'Begam out hunting' and another of 'Rani receiving two falcons with two attendants'. The Begam in this painting is the Mughal queen who resided in the Begam Haveli, Jammu under the patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Dev of Jammu. There is another painting of Raja of Guler, Govardhan Singh listening music and enjoying *hukka*. It is also done in the same style as that of Balwant Dev listening to the musicians' party as discussed earlier.

Nainsukh served the royal palaces of Jasrota till the death of his patron Raja Balwant Dev. The date of the death of the king could not be ascertained. However, Nainsukh was at Basohli during the reign of the most religious-minded and pious king Amrit Pal. Nainsukh was at Basohli long before 1763 A.D. as an inscription shows on the pages of log book of Pt. Pyare Lal of Haridwar which shows that he was an intimate painter of Raja Amrit Pal of Basohli and that he visited Haridwar with the feudal lord. It reads:

लिखत नैणा व मानक बेटे सेऊ के।
नैणा जगन्नाथ की जात्रा को राजा अमृतपाल के साथ आया। सं. १८२०

It shows that while visiting Jagan Nath Puri on pilgrimage both of them stayed at Haridwar.

Nainsukh died in 1778 A.D. or a little before as is evident from the writings of Fattu who was the son of Nainsukh's elder brother Manak. Fattu along with Goudu came to Haridwar with the last remains of Nainsukh. Raja Amrit Pal was also accompanying them. It reads:

संमत 1835 नैनसिंध अस्ते का श्री राजे अमृतपाले कन्ने स्नान कीता।
गोदू भी साथ था। लिखंत फत्तु चित्रेहरा।

Nainsukh had four sons which is again evident from the writings of the pages of log books of Pandas. They were Kama, Goudu, Nikka and Ranjha. Fortunately the portraits of all these artists are available in different museums and art galleries. All of them were artists of repute. The names of Nikka and Ranjha have appeared in the critical appreciation of different paintings done by them.¹

1. Details of log books were taken from *Marg*, Sept. 1968, No. 4, Vol. XXI, pp. 20-23.

5

Wall Paintings

WALL PAINTINGS OF ARKI

The magnificent turrets of Diwankhana, the sitting place of ministers to the royal court, shine in glamour with the first shower of mild sun of the early morning. The scene spellbounds the viewers capturing the lure of nature of the medieval times perpetuating with that of today. Its inner walls are the epitomes of the miraculous power of the beauty of line and colour, unfolding several chapters of history with manifold sequences altercating with the modern times. The legendary haunt of the frolics of Lord Krishna with Gopis, the mirthful sports of Lord Shiva and the divine touch of gods and goddesses in addition to the Darbar scenes from the feudal system and war scenes fascinate the viewers.

Arki was once the most powerful state of the hills. As According to Raja Rajender Singh—the last crowned king, who, of late, became politician and was the member of assembly two times—this state sheltered the monarchs of several hill states owing to the strategic position of its fort. Even the royal family of Kangra came there to have shelter to avoid the continuous attacks of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. The fort of Arki was built with the sole aim of shifting the capital of Bhagal hill state. Arki fort is situated at about forty kilometres from Shimla on a hill top overlooking the splendour of the vast valley stretching upto Solan, hundreds of kilometres away. The lavish structure contains the chamber specially constructed to accommodate the staff to maintain the building and also to attend the royal family. It has a beautiful temple meant

for daily prayers which were attended by the court ladies accompanied by maids.

The second phase started with the construction of huge chambers meant for the administrative work attended by the ministers of the royal court. The first building is the massive structure built with the traditional designs of the architecture. Its ceiling is highly decorated with the carvings and coloured expression of the artistic taste of the feudal lords. Situated on the left side is a Diwankhana, the dreamland of the artists, standing the silent testimony of glorious past. It shows the technical venture and many expeditions into the wonderful world of the wall paintings. The facade, the old and sensuous structure which opens on the vast field, might be meant for the *darshan* of the feudal lords to his public and the courtiers. Diwankhana is a big chamber with almost thirty five feet length and fifteen feet breadth. In the centre, there is a huge wall with four open door-like structures joining the two sides with the narrow path. Each side of the Diwankhana opens on either side with four niches each. Thus the whole chamber is divided into two equal parts which are lavishly decorated in different panels. The porches are having three panels each. The upper panels are profusely decorated with runners, twinned and trailers intersected by several forms of geometrical designs. The second panels are having multi-myriad paintings drawn from legendary characters. The subject matter of these drawings is versatile. The colour scheme is almost the same but from the drawings sketched on the walls one can easily conclude that there were at least three schools either working simultaneously or at different times. One is the traditional Pahari style including the subjects of the classical epics and the expression of the royal courts with battle scenes here and there sparingly using the folk aspects. The other major school is that of company painting. The harbours and British Darbar scenes with British army fighting against the state army. There is a significant difference of styles in these paintings. The third type of the paintings are conspicuous of rustic touch. These paintings are of quite late period. Ironically the finishing touch disappears with the time.

Paradoxically these paintings are carefully preserved contrary to the diminishing taste of the royal families after the fall of feudalism.

Arki was once famous for its miniature paintings which we

seldom find now in market. Most of these paintings are destroyed and have disappeared from the world of art and culture but the wall paintings have survived the parabola of time.

WALL PAINTINGS OF SHEESH MAHAL

Ramnagar, the capital of erstwhile state of Bandralta is situated at about 105 kms from Jammu and 38 kms west to Udhampur by the side of Dhar road. It abounds in the natural bowl of the Shivaliks watered by several streams which owe and decorate its surroundings with greenery, a feast for the eyes. Bandralta was once a Pahari state ruled by Bandral Rajputs. It was founded by the royal family of Chamba belonging to Chand dynasty. The first king of the state was the brother of Raja Vichiter Verma of Chamba who ruled Chamba in 10th century A.D. Though this dynasty ruled Bandralta till they were overthrown by Sikh forces in 1821 A.D. nothing is known about the genesis of last Bandral king named Bhupendra Dev who was forced to leave Ramnagar and retired in the hills of Ambala in 1821. The Pahari state was given to Raja Suchet Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh, as Jagir in token of his services rendered in Punjab Darbar. Suchet Singh ruled Bandralta from 1822 AD to 1844 A.D. that is more than a score of years. After the death of Raja Suchet Singh, Ram Singh, the son of Maharaja Ranbir Singh became the feudal lord of Bandralta which was renamed as Ramnagar during the reign of Raja Suchet Singh. Both Raja Suchet Singh and Raja Ram Singh were having no progeny as such the Jagir was merged into Jammu kingdom after the death of Raja Ram Singh.

Raja Suchet Singh was honourable courtier in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab besides a great general. He, like that of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra, was a great connoisseur of art and architecture. Bandralta school of paintings which took shape in the reign of Bandral feudal lords flourished in the reign of Raja Suchet Singh. Raja Suchet Singh gifted some rare monuments to Ramnagar, among them Sheesh Mahal is superb in its execution of frescos. Sheesh Mahal is a peculiar building constructed on the pattern of old Havelis with a wide decorated entrance flanked by lavish chambers profusely decorated with wall paintings. On to the right side of

the entrance there are three prodigal halls popularly known as Darbar Hall, Sheesh Mahal and Rang Mahal. Darbar Hall is a big chamber having size of 46' × 18' the walls of which are profusely decorated with frescos. These wall paintings are done peculiarly in Pahari style of Bandralta school. Great epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana are the subject matters exhibited with due acumen. A few wall paintings carry the portraiture of Raja Suchet Singh attending the Darbar along with his courtiers in enchantment. A few of the battle scenes with Raja Suchet Singh in the centre of each episode add glamour to the whole atmosphere. This hall, as the name suggests, might have been in use as royal court. The wall paintings were well suited to the psyche of the courtiers. The second big chamber is smaller in size but profusely decorated in several panels richly adorned with the paintings of runners, creepers, trailers and flowery borders covering the frames of hunting scenes, working court scenes and portraits of kings and the courtiers. Unique feature of this part of the palace is the beautiful portraits of *Nayikas* adorned with transparent petticoats through which trousers peep out. Large elliptical eyes, narrow head, pointed nose and slim body catches the glimpses of styles of Basohli and Jammu school of miniature paintings with still background. *Nayika* is well covered with upper garments ornamented with necklaces, earrings, noserings and hairclips. The very balanced body depicting perfect bodylines speak the acumen of the artists. A scene done in a niche of Raja Suchet Singh proceeding for a hunt is again a feast for the eyes. Raja Suchet Singh seated on the back of a galloping white horse is led by a hunting dog followed by a servant carrying umbrella to protect the feudal lord from the scorching sun. The painting is decorated with red, white and sky coloured borderlines which again are bordered by golden leaflets, trailers and at the corners adorned by cutglasses of golden and blue colours. Some of the niches, once done with the paintings of princesses and *Nayikas* are now replaced with the portraits of English beauties of European origin. The most interesting and penetrating work of these paintings is done on the apexes of these niches wherein thousands of characters are painted with perfect division of space in such a meticulous way that each character, despite its minute structure can be segregated with ease. They include battle scenes with thousands of cavaliers, elephants, armoured

soldiers marching to the battlefields. They are equipped with weapons followed by guns on wheels. These battle scenes are so perfectly done with due penetration that in a very limited space a world of weaponry and thrills of hand to hand fight surcharged with emotions come on the surface and the onlookers are much fascinated. This part of the palace was popularly known as Rang Mahal. It might have been in use for entertainments, music and dance for the royalty. Usually the professional dancers and the singers were there in the retinue of the feudal lords. Some of the paintings depict such dancers in action. In addition to the above said paintings, the walls of Rang Mahal are decorated with a series of love frolics of lord Krishna with Gopis. Several such scenes are feast for the eyes. Ragas and Raginis personified in shining colours are again a source of attraction for the art historians and art connoisseurs. All these paintings are bordered with several running motifs, creepers, runners, trailers with alternate flowers and green leaves along with a number of geometrical designs in the form of multiangular structures. Tops and the corners of these niches are decorated with beautiful red flowers again internally shining with golden colour.

Third chamber adjoining to the Rang Mahal is that of Sheesh Mahal. As the name suggests, the walls of this hall are decorated with cutglasses intermittently woven with fine paintings. These paintings are done in a number of panels and the subject matter of these paintings is almost the same as those of the Rang Mahal. However in the corners some paintings of English ladies have taken place of the paintings done by masters of Bandralta school. It may be possible that original paintings done by the great artists of Bandralta school might have been taken away by the persons responsible for the upkeep of the palaces after the feudalism vanished. Who were these persons and how the portraits of English ladies came into existence no one knows. Some people are of the view that before the merger of erstwhile states into the Union of India an English resident was residing in Sheesh Mahal. If it is true then the riddle is solved that he might have taken away the prized miniature paintings done by the master artists and to keep the frames straight and to set the records in right direction he occupied the vacant spaces with the portraits of English ladies. However paintings in the form of frescos are still preserved. The most fascinating wall paintings are those of

the *Nayikas* painted on the upper panels of the corner slabs. Perfectly balanced body clad in ornamental attire adorned with semi-precious stones stuffed with the help of fine needle work and myriad shining colours are but a few of the features of these paintings. The features of these lady characters are conspicuous of Bandralta school which in its turn might have taken the impressions from Jammu and Basohli schools of miniature paintings. Most of these paintings are preserved in their natural form, however, a few of them need paramount care as they are at the verge of deterioration. Archaeological Deptt. of India has taken over these palaces in the list of protected monuments and they are trying their hard to protect and preserve them in their natural form. This is our heritage which ought to be carried to our next generation lest they may forget this unique school of wall paintings which flourished in the middle of 19th century.

6

Famous Shrines

CHAMUNDA DEVI TEMPLE—A RESERVOIR OF SCULPTURES

Dharamshala is a plateau in the long stretched valley of Kangra from where the ridges start to meet the Dhauladhar ranges. From Dharamshala a motorable road leads to the village Dhad about fifteen kilometres away. Dhad village is lucky to have the view of Dhauladhar ranges on three sides nourished by Baner khud and surrounded by the lush green forests of Pathiar and Lahla. While climbing down the hamlet we find the holy shrines of the goddess Chamunda Devi. Chamunda temple is famous for easily propitiated wishes as such the needy worshippers come here to have Darshan and to have their wishes fulfilled. The temple of the goddess is erected on the ridge by the side of Baner stream which nourishes the tank constructed at the foot of the shrine. It is a big reservoir of water like a lakelet artificially created to get the stream of water regularly. By the side of this tank several sculptures are created with lively appearance having all the acumen of the artist. There is life-size sculpture of a Gaddi-man sitting on his umbrella enjoying his *chilam*. It is so lively that the visitors mistake him as a living man sitting to have a few moments of leisure after a long walk. Even the author of this book mistook him as a living man enjoying the tobacco from his *chilam*. The man sculptured is having wrinkles on his forehead finely-created with protruding eyebrows, thick moustaches and finely-cut nose tense due to fatigue. He wears a Himachali cap richly embroidered, a vasket on the full-sleeved sweater, fold trouser and the local shoes. He is shown sitting on his

umbrella with folded legs and enjoying his *chilam* gripped in his two hands with a peculiar style of a villager. The statue overlooks the big tank with an image of Lord Shiva created on a two-panelled dais. The statue of Lord Shiva is again a man-size image with muscular body sitting on the skin of lion with full face of the lion created in the centre. Three necklaces decorate the image and a cobra with his hood raised encircles the neck of the image. The long hair are curled and bound on the head decorated with crescent moon. A large python is shown lurking at the lower panel of the dais. A squirrel, finely created, is climbing the dais. The statue faces the main shrine of the goddess. There is another sculpture of a villager by the side of a pond created with the same fineness and acumanship. The statue is so lively that the monkeys, who frequented the shrine would mistake him as a man sitting to bask in the sun and do not come near even if eatables are placed very near to the image.

There is another sculpture of monkey god created on the dais outside of the temple Parikrama. It is again a life-size statue. He is shown standing with muscular body having crown on his head and ready to leap forward.

The tank receives the water from one side and on its lateral side it trickles down to the stream through several falls. On the other side of the tank some bathing enclosures are constructed for the ladies while the gents enjoy the swimming in the pool which shapes itself by the showers of the water flowing out of the tank through canallets. It is so enchanting that the travellers after travelling long distances do find time to enjoy the coolness in the scorching sun. Nearby the main shrine of Chamunda Devi there is a Shiva temple carved out of the natural cave. The visitors have to bend down and virtually crawl to reach the image of Lord Shiva. It is popularly known as Bhu Svayambhu, i.e. born self from the earth. During Mondays and on the occasion of Shiv Ratri, there is a huge rush. The people from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh go there to pay their homage to twin deities of Chamunda and Svayambhu. There is a large inn by the side of the main shrine meant for the night stay of the worshippers. A small market nearby serves the purpose of shopping for the articles of daily use at reasonable rates.

BAIJNATH TEMPLE—A MARVEL OF ARCHITECTURE

Situated at the ridge overlooking the snow-clad ranges of Dhauladhar are the splendid buildings with a spire which can be seen from miles away. These are the buildings of the famous temple attributed to Lord Vaidya Nath, i.e. Shiva.

About 36 kilometres from Kangra is a flourishing town of Baijnath. In the heart of this town is situated the famous temple. Earlier this was a small settlement named as Kiragram as indicated in the inscriptions of the pillars of the Mandapa of the temple. This inscription is the series of two writeups. One starts with the religious hymns attributed to Lord Shiva and the other narrates the history and background of the temple. It suggests that the temple was constructed by two merchant brothers named Manyuka and Ahuka. They were the dealers in iron trade. It so happened that a pilgriming saint while moving to Mani Mahesh passed through the Kiragram. As the anecdote prevails, he stayed for the night in the inn erected by the twin business brothers. Both of them served the saint so well that while leaving Kiragram the saint left his bag with them with the request that he would collect the bag after his return from the pilgrimage. The bag was kept in the store where the iron rods were stored. During rainy season the roof trickled and the water drops fell on the iron bars through the bag of the saint. When the saint came back and asked for his bag, both the businessmen were astonished to find that instead of forming the oxide the iron bars were converted into gold. Both the men were very religious and pious as far as their thinking was concerned. Both of them implored the saint that the gold was due to the miracle of the bag hence that belonged to the saint but the saint advised them that the gold might be used for some religious purpose on his behalf. Manyuka and Ahuka were the disciples of Lord Shiva hence they got constructed the temple which was afterwards named as Baijnath temple.

There is another anecdote prevailing in the locality that initially the temple base was installed by the most powerful Rakshas king of Sri Lanka, the Ravna. It is said it was here he meditated and offered his heads in the Yagna Kunda and that Lord Shiva appeared and bestowed on him the wish of immortality. The Ravna wished the

blessings of Lord Shiva in his kingdom—Sri Lanka which was agreed upon with the condition that the Lord would convert himself into an idol which ought to be carried to Sri Lanka without resting that on any platform. If the deity was rested any where it would not be possible to carry it from that place. In fact, it would incarnate its effect there only. Ravana instructing his courtiers left the place leaving the job of carrying the deity by the courtiers. It so happened that the person responsible for the deity forgot the instructions and rested the deity on a local platform resulting in the incarnation of the deity in this temple.

It is believed that the temple, though constructed in 8th century, during the reign of Rana Lakshman Chandra of the locality who was the relative of the most powerful king of Trigarta named Jaya Chandra, yet from time to time it was renovated in the same style by several feudal lords of Kangra. The present form of the temple came into existence in the reign of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra in 18th century.

It is a temple of Shikhra style having its Mandapa resting on four cylindrical columns. Of late their deteriorating base was replaced by new slabs by Rajasthani artisans. The square of the Mandapa thus formed contains two parallel running platforms meant for sitting purpose. On the lateral sides the Mandapa opens to the surrounding courtyard with a window on each side. The ceiling is beautifully ornamented with a big flower carved out of a big stone structure.

HIDIMBA DEVI TEMPLE—A MASTERPIECE OF PAGODA STYLE

Legendary Rakshasi goddess Hidimba was a historical character who was married to the mighty Pandava, Bhimsen during his exile period. Hidimb was a most powerful king whose kingdom spread from Lahul to Garhwal. During their exile the Pandavas happened to visit this land after escaping from the Laksha-Griha. Here Bhimsen came into contact with Hidimba, the sister of the king of the land. He was very much impressed with the vitality of the lady as well as her reception given to the Pandava brothers. He asked the permission of his mother to marry the lady which was

granted and he was allowed to stay with her for a period of one year. The idea could not be relished by the mighty Hidimb hence there was a duel between Bhimsen and Hidimb which went on for days together and Bhimsen finally got edge over the king who was killed in the combat. Bhimsen was now free to marry Hidimba. He remained there for an year enjoying all the powers of a king. Hidimba gave birth to a male child who became a great warrior named Ghatotkachh. He was having chrismatic personality adorned with mystic powers. He was instrumental in saving the life of his uncle Arjuna in Mahabharta battle from the Shakti used by Karan. He sacrificed his life to save his uncle and became immortal.

After the elopement of Bhimsen, Hidimba nourished the child and cultured him to be a great king and great warrior. When Ghatotkachh became king, Hidimba, his mother went to a solitary place to meditate. She belonged to the clan of Rakshasas who were supposed to be rustics but with her submissive behaviour and meditation she was raised to the rank of a goddess. The place where she meditated is situated about three kilometres from the town of Manali called Dhoongari. It is a plateau under the groove of Deodars where she meditated under the shelter of protruding rock. Covering this huge rock shelter a temple was built afterwards in a crude style by the ruler in those days. It is said that after the death of Ghatotkachh, an ordinary person but with exceptional qualities was given the crown of the kingdom. He was potter by profession. His descendants served the kingdom for 1800 years. They worshipped Hidimba as their family goddess. Even the commoners started worshipping her image thus she was raised to the status of a goddess. A temple in a Pagoda style was built afterwards which is still in vogue. It has four rooflets square at the base but gradually taper up. The upper most rooflet is round in structure and finishes into a perchant. The frame of the entrance is richly chiselled with the carvings of the images of gods and goddesses shown in different postures. The frames of other doors carry different mask-like structures which are decorated with the horns of the stags. The entrance can be approached with the flight of fifteen steps. Interior of the chamber is dark enough and is smoky due to the burning of incense. A big rock shelter can be seen there. Under the protruding rock shelter there are the impressions of two feet. It is said that these are the feet of

Hidimba. they are worshipped and the visitors wish for the health and material gains here. On the surface of the protruding rock, an image of Mahishasur Mardini is placed which is symbolic of the female energy. People from far and near come here to pay their respect to Hidimba. A few shops have crop up there serving light snacks. The whole locale is wonderful and is conducive for the solitary meditation and is preserved as it was. However, a few of the commercial centres have mushroomed lately affecting the atmosphere. The government must keep close watch on these growing centres to keep the atmosphere serene and pious.

BJALI MAHADEV

There is a strange phenomenon of nature. Every year lightening takes place on a particular plateau. It is so forceful that the entire locality around resounds with the violent howel. What is amazing is that no destruction ever takes place. According to a legend, Rudra, one of the great gods has to spit its anger in the form of tremendous fire once a year which damaged earthly life and material. The saint Vashishitha approached Rudra to shun away the habit but he was refused with the reason that it was the nature of Rudra otherwise tremendous energy stored in the body would destroy Rudra himself. It was decided that a particular place might be chosen for that action and some of the great gods must come forward to the rescue of the people suffering due to that fire as there was no fault of the inhabitants living on that spot. Lord Shiva was approached and was requested that several times he had rescued the life on earth and he might suggest some way to avoid unnecessary destruction. Lord, with a serious thought, agreed upon the proposal and offered himself that he would bear all the consequences of the lightening on his symbolic structure of Linga, but after the lightening some one from the locality had to give a healing touch to the symbolic structure on the top of the hillock. Thus the problem was sorted out. This was the strange phenomenon that Rudra was another aspect of Lord Shiva and Lord Shiva was there to bear the consequences of his wrath. There is a hymn in Rigveda (3/46/7):

“O Rudra the lightening that appears on earth from the sky may leave us, on this, earth, in peace.”

and then there is another hymn—

“Swapivat, Oh great god there are several cures in the form of medicinal herbs, don't destroy this earth.”

‘Swapivat’, is the term used for self affliction. It was the fire emitted by Lord Shiva and it should be engulfed by himself only. There was no other god to face the thrust of that energetic emittance. With the result that Rudra himself came to rescue and absorbed the powerful thrust on himself in the form of Linga which was erected on a hillock on the confluence of rivers Parvati and Beas. There is a small temple known as Bijali Mahadev or Bijaleshvar. It is said that the tenure of lightening was changed from once in a year to once in twelve years. The people and the priest of the temple narrate that after every twelve years, phenomenon of lightening is repeated and the Linga shatters into pieces. The pieces are collected piece by piece and glued together with the help of butter collected from the public. The butter is pure one and the people themselves offer in bits. The priest while chanting the hymns recreates the Linga by assembling small pieces glued together with the butter collected in this way. The butter leaves behind its melting point and solidifies as stone. This is a strange phenomenon and the scientists are baffled that how this metamorphosis takes place.

The place is called as Mathana or Thamana which is situated at about eight kilometres from the town of Kullu at the height of about 9000 feet. There is a small temple erected on a plateau. It is a hill style temple and the main deity is of Lord Shiva. One has to climb a steep path to reach the temple. The narrow path twins along the apple orchids and virtually ends on the top of the Kullu valley overlooking the vast span of the lush-green forests, the cascading waters of Beas shimmering in the sun and the small box-like huts as if toys are placed in the lush green fields.

There are a number of anecdotes prevalent in the valley about the mystic aspects of Bijali Mahadev. As according to one, the deity was discovered from a field while ploughing. The farmer took it alongwith him and kept the image in his box of corn. It so happened that the corn overflowed from the box the next day. The villagers were astonished to see the phenomenon. The next day when a dumb cowboy was escorting the cows back from the grazing site he found

that a cow was missing. He searched for her and was astonished to find that she was giving milk nearby a rock. He tried to explain the strange process to the landlord but he did not believe. On the second day again cow was seen on the same spot giving milk. The cowboy rushed to the house of the landlord to show the family members the strange phenomenon but till then the cow had returned. In the night, the landlord had a dream that the image of Lord Shiva be established on the place where the cow voluntarily showered her pleasantries. The landlord questioned the validity and asked in the dream to the heavenly voice that he would agree to the proposal provided the dumb cowboy gets his voice back. As according to the old men of the locality the cowboy got his voice back the next day and returning from his toil he demanded the food in his voice instead of gestures. Thus the temple of Bijali Mahadev came into existence.

Nearby the temple of Bijali Mahadev there are a number of other religious places where the god rests a while before it is carried on to the assembly of the gods during Dussehra. The people from far and near come there to offer their homage and get their wishes fulfilled. Once in a year, a fair is held there and the people from the locality and Kullu come there to participate. There is a small inn by the side of the temple where the pilgrims can stay overnight.

7

Centres of Culture and Learning

SARDAR SOBHA SINGH ART GALLERY, ANDRETTA

Sardar Sobha Singh was an artist of eminence especially in painting life-like portraits who became a legend in his lifetime. Prints of his romantic portrait of Sohni Mahiwal find a place in almost every Punjabi home. This is the painting which fascinated so much that Dr. Karan Singh decided to establish a separate gallery of the paintings done by Sardar Sobha Singh in the Amar Mahal Museum, Jammu. A Gaddi damsel with her flock, the portraits of Sikh Gurus—Guru Nanak in meditation, Guru Govind Singh riding his horse with a falcon in his hand and several other paintings of Sobha Singh are his masterpieces, which made him to be acclaimed as an expert artist. Almost all the Sikh families possess the prints of these paintings which they display on the walls of their drawing rooms and in their pooja chambers with pride. Other paintings like a Kangra bride and Sohni Mahiwal have become craze for elite and the commoner alike. Thus they have occupied place on the walls of the palaces, classified hotels and tourist resorts. The painting of Sohni Mahiwal was gifted to Dr. Karan Singh but it was so dear to the artist that he created another facsimile of that, the prints of which were made available to anyone who desired. There were a few paintings which could not get their due place, may be due to neglect of publicity or positive criticism. These include paintings of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. Sobha Singh also created some portraits of the celebrities like Norah Richards, Prithvi Raj Kapoor and Dr. M.S. Randhawa which are still intact and displayed in original on the walls of his art gallery.

Sardar Sobha Singh was born on 29 November in the district of Gurdaspur in Punjab. He studied at Amritsar and started his first studio there in 1923. He was too eager to stay in Amritsar but since he wanted to become a reputed artist he shifted his studio to Connaught Place in New Delhi which was the centre of activities of art and culture in the early forties. He worked there for eleven long years when he was again restless to find the most suitable place which could be conducive to his work. As such he shifted to Preetnagar to find the place far from the maddening crowd. During his stay at Preetnagar he travelled extensively to find a place of his choice where he could settle for life and do his work in peace and tranquillity. He visited Kangra valley, the natural abode situated at the feet of Dhauladhar mountain ranges which fascinated him most thus once again, he shifted his studio to a hut provided by Norah Richards nearby her Woodland resort. His search for the most congenial and serene atmosphere was ended now. He erected a building there at Andretta by the side of the Woodland Resort of Norah Richards and constructed his permanent studio wherein he worked till the end of his life. It was there he created some wonderful pieces of art which made him legendary artist.

A few years ago, after his death, his studio as well as main chamber was converted into an art gallery. The whole building possesses a dream-like vision with cascading waters, ponds with blooming lilies and bordered by flowery creepers, climbers and trailers spreading their aroma in the serene atmosphere. This building was constructed and designed by the artist himself. It has two wings. The main building constitutes the art gallery as well as the personal chamber of the artist and backside has ample accommodation for the family to live in. The art gallery comprises of large room on the walls of which are displayed the portraits of Sikh Gurus, Lord Rama, Lord Krishna and the paintings of legendary Sohni Mahiwal and Gaddi damsel, a hut in the forest and other several paintings painted by him during his lifetime. His daughter Bibi Gurcharan Kaur has got the reprints of these paintings to be sold to the visitors on nominal cost so as to meet the cost of the production, as well as to get some money for the maintenance of the gallery. They don't have any other source of income. Bibi Gurcharan Kaur herself is a good painter. She has painted a few

paintings of still life. Some of her paintings of fruits and flowers have been displayed on the walls of varandah which forms the part of the art gallery adjacent to the main chamber. While entering the main chamber the visitors are welcomed by the sweet melodies of birds with magnificent coloured plumes caged by the side of the main chamber.

The personal room of the artist has been kept as it was in his lifetime with his books cleanly arranged in the selves with his working table and working material—colours, brushes, pens, pencils and other ingredients used in the process. The main attraction of the chamber is the life-size portrait of Ravi Das on which he was working in those days. It is left incomplete as it was. The walls of the room contain a few rare paintings painted by the artist which include the painting of Norah Richards (sketch), the painting of Dr. M.S. Randhawa and a portrait of Prithvi Raj Kapoor. In addition to these paintings a number of portraits which are unknown to the world of art have also been displayed. There is an anthology written on the artist and published by the Punjabi University, Patiala, a rare book which has been kept in the bookshelf. Sardar Sobha Singh was a voracious reader as his collection shows. Anthologies of the world classics can be seen among the books in the shelves. Hriday Pal Singh, the grandson of the artist who is serving in Himachal Agricultural University, Palampur is eager to create a museum for his grandfather's assets. Recently the Director of Language Deptt., Mr Lalit wanted to declare it as the state art gallery, but due to sentimental attachment, Mrs. Gurcharan Kaur would not agree, hence an idea was floated that the art gallery may be declared as an autonomous institution after its registration with the Directorate of Museums and Art Galleries, Govt. of India. They are looking into its prospects. As Norah Richards' Woodland Retreat has become an institution of research and studies of the performing arts, Sardar Sobha Singh Art Gallery may also become one day a reputed institution itself. Even now the scholars of art and culture pour in from far and near to satiate their hunger for applied art.

In the back of the main chamber, a life-size statue of Prithvi Raj Kapoor has been created which opens another facet of the artist that he was not only a painter but also a sculptor of high calibre. Time was short and enough work was to be done but the painting

process is a very slow process which needs ample time and patience to create art pieces of real worth. Sobha Singh created life out of the raw material which made him a legend. He is no more but his creation of paintings of Sikh Gurus, Sohni Mahival, the Kangra bride and a Gaddi damsel made him immortal and a giant among the portraitors.

OPEN AIR THEATRE OF NORAH RICHARDS

Among the best cultural centres of the valley of Kangra, the Open Air Theatre at Woodland is superb in its experiment. Conceived almost fifty years ago by a house wife, Norah Richards who came to India in 1913 alongwith her husband Philip Earnest Richards, who then was a teacher in Dyal Singh College, Lahore. While in Lahore, Norah evinced keen interest in dramatic activities, acting and directing plays at Dyal Singh College, the centre of cultural activities of the town then. After the death of her husband in 1920 she could not withstand a lonely life and returned to her native place England.

But her deep interest in dramatic art brought her back to India four years later. In her passion for peaceful and secluded place she came to Banuri, a fascinating resort in Kangra valley.

She did a lot of work there mostly writing her experiences of the rural life of the hills stretching apart from the active life of a performer. She compiled the letters of her husband during that time which were published after sometime, under the title of *Indian Dust* from England. She finally settled at Andretta, a beautiful locality under the shadow of Dhauladhar ranges in the Kangra valley. It was the year 1935, almost ten years after her return from England that Andretta became the centre of cultural activities for the intellectuals and a haunt for the artists much frequented by the scholars of performing arts. She named the place as Woodland Retreat where she erected an open air theatre for the regular performance of rural plays drawn from the local legends and folklore. Among the celebrities who frequented Woodland open air theatre were Prithvi Raj Kapoor, Prof. G. D. Sodhi. Prof. B.C. Sanyal, Mrs. Farida Bedi, Dr. M.S. Randhawa and scores of others. It was a dream of Norah that Woodland would one day become a centre for creation of rural

drama and also for cultural research which did materialise in the years to come. She constructed a retreat for the scholars to stay for a holiday. The two-storeyed building was constructed purely of rural designing with mud thatched walls and *kuchha* floor where she could feel the rural touch.

Norah was conferred an honorary D.Litt. degree by Punjab University in 1970 when she was 80. She passed away on March 4, 1971.

Norah Richards was a writer and an author of several papers on art and culture in addition to her three books among which *Country Life* is the portraiture of her surroundings in which she spent creative years of her life.

Unfortunately Norah did not leave for us any record of her life and works in the form of a biography though her book *Country Life* gives us an insight into her innerself and her comments on the country where she spent her whole life. The reputed artist Sardar Sobha Singh painted her portrait on her 80th birthday. This portrait is supposed to be on one of the several masterpieces of the artist.

Norah Richards was fascinated with India to the extent that she tolerated nothing against her. During her short visit to England she provoked an arrest for having agitated for many days against a film entitled 'Through Romantic India'. This film by Lowell Thomas, as according to Norah, was damaging the prestige of the country she had known intimately.

Norah Richards wished that her Woodland Retreat at Andretta should be a centre of cultural and dramatic activities. As such, the whole asset was gifted to Punjabi University, Patiala. The Department of Performing Arts organises a Drama Festival enacted in open air theatre every year. The dramatists, artists and scholars assemble every year to commemorate the contribution of Norah Richards to Indian culture.

HIMACHAL LOK SANSKRITI SANSTHAN, MANDI

Individual efforts in the field of art and culture for the preservation of traditions and the collective assets of the society are very few. Generally the societies are engaged in these efforts. A person with meagre sources as far as the financial resources are concerned

can hardly dream of collecting the rare art pieces to be preserved for the scholars and art lovers. For the erstwhile princes and the members of their families it was a hobby to display the elements of art in their possession and to form a museum in old palaces. Most of the persons belonging to the erstwhile royal families tried that because there was no problems of money, space and the artifacts but for a person like a primary school teacher, to start from the very beginning, having very little finance at his disposal was really a herculean job. This job was satisfactorily done by a person named Chandramani Kashyap, a retired school teacher.

Chandramani Kashyap started this venture after the visit of great scholar Rahul Sankrityayan who visited Mandi in 1954. Chandramani was much influenced by the work of the great scholar who had several precious pieces of art and craft and a number of manuscripts collected during his tour to the Himalayan states. Chandramani's only asset was a portrait of Mahakali standing on the dead body. This painting was created by Narottam, the famous artist of Mandi. He started collecting coins and the manuscripts which he got from Tibetan travellers moving through Riwalsar. He came to Mandi in 1955 and started vigorously a search for the place and the elements to be displayed. It was in 1962 that the true picture of an art gallery came into existence with the name—Himachal Lok Sanskriti Sansthan. Its venue was the house of the teacher itself. It was in the year of 1958 that the art historians and the critics—Archer, Mulkh Raj Anand and M.S. Randhawa visited Mandi and came to know about the collection of Chandramani Kashyap. They were so fascinated that they requested the erstwhile feudal lord of the town to provide the place, and if possible, help the man financially. They also requested the king to deposit the artefacts he was in possession of in the repository of Kashyap. Chandramani Kashyap was given place of twin room set in the old palace of Mandi but other assistance required was not considered.

This institution contains about 5000 rare manuscripts of Sanskrit, Pali and Tibetan languages, in addition to about 500 historical coins belonging to the periods of Kanishka, Yodhay, Mughal and other dynasties of the rulers. Some of the coins minted at various local places and the Himalayan states are also preserved. There are several pieces of wood carvings of artistic taste and a number of

Tamra-Patras preserved in the chambers of the gallery.

There is a collection of paintings both miniatures and of the contemporary schools which include the paintings of Narottam, the celebrated artist of Mandi. A few of the paintings displayed belong to Tantric school of paintings. There are a number of manuscripts containing the miniature paintings of Mandi school. A manuscript of Ramchandrika by Keshav belonging to 18th century contains several paintings created with rustic touch has also been displayed.

A tremendous horoscope belonging to one Pt. Shibu, who was the Rajpurohit of Mandi, contains the paintings of Navgrahas painted in their symbolic colours. It is forty feet in length. There is another micro horoscope about four feet in length which can be kept in a film box when rolled. This horoscope also contains the paintings of different planets affecting the destiny of an individual.

ROERICH NICHOLAS AND ART GALLERY, NAGGAR

Situated on a cup-shaped hillock is a magnificent building, almost a kilometre away from Naggar castle. It is the building of Hall estate, once the living place of the most celebrated artist of the Himalayas, Roerich Nicholas. Nicholas was the artist of rare genius who painted the Himalayas in different moods and colours.

Nicholas was born in Petersberg, then the capital of Russia, in 1874 in a rich family. From the very beginning young Nicholas was interested in art and history. He got education in Art Academy as well as pursued his training for becoming a lawyer which was the wish of his father. In due course of time, Nicholas came into contact with the famous artist Stasov which opened a new horizon for him. He was now interested in painting only. He created some very beautiful paintings on the subject of ancient history of Russia. These paintings were appreciated at large by the art historians and critics. The great literateur like Tolstoy was one of them who liked the art pieces painted by Nicholas. In the second phase of his career, Nicholas visited several regions of his country and expressed his impressions through colours. He painted the rituals and the various moods of the people belonging to old tribes. He wanted to explore the old culture of the Slavs for which he extensively travelled European and Asian countries. The second world war and the incidents

afterwards, were not conducive to the sensitive mind. He wanted to be in a place where he could carry on his search for the attainment of the self and where he could give colours to his feelings and emotions. Thus, he travelled Mangolia, Tibet, Sikkim, etc. but the natural and scenic beauty of the Himalayas spelled him so much, especially of Kullu valley, that he decided to settle there. He was so enchanted with the beauty of the Himalayas that he created an institution to study the art and cultural aspect of the people of the Himalayas. The institution was named as 'Uruswati Himalayan Research Institute'. It has several institutions in various countries where they carry on research on the subject.

While in Kullu, Nicholas studied various aspects of art and culture of the Himalayas and wrote several books on the subject. Even during the second world war, he inspired people to eschew the ways of conflict and to understand the common problems of the humanity. He was a peace-loving artist of rare faculties. He was a thinker, an author and above all he was a humanitarian. Pt. Nehru was much impressed by the writings of the artist. He visited Naggar with his family in 1942. Five years after the visit of Nehru family, Roerich Nicholas died at Naggar.

Nicholas thrived for the beauty in his whole life. He painted it and perceived it in his writings, poems and his canvas through the perceptions of myriad images. He writes: "The pledge of happiness for humanity lies in beauty. Hence we assert art to be the highest stimulus for the generation of the spirit. We consider art to be immortal and boundless."

Some of his world famous paintings carry the message of beauty which lies in peace. They include the Last Angel, Ominous Signs, Human Deeds, etc. Nicholas created some fantastic paintings on the subject of religious beliefs which include the teachings of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. They include Saint Sergius, Sainly ghosts, Buddha—the giver, Sri Krishna and Kali Avtara, etc. The most enchanting and captivating paintings of Nicholas are the landscapes wherein the symbols of colours emerge on the surface. His work on the Himalayas fetched him the name of Maharishi, as through these paintings he could contemplate the essence of the Himalayas in goodself. To commemorate the memory of the great artist and the preserver of the Himalayan culture, a museum was

created at Naggar where he spent his last days and created some marvellous paintings. In addition to his work, traditional artifacts and chiselled stone work is also displayed in this museum. The visitors are received by the finely chiselled horse riders kept on either side of the entrance to the main chamber. The carved stones are so fascinating that they seem to be alive.

The main chamber contains fourteen paintings of Nicholas. They include four paintings on the frontal wall, five paintings on the left lateral wall and five paintings on the right lateral wall. On the front wall, snow-clad mountains with shining cliffs and gods of the Himalayas are displayed. On the left lateral side, a moon with three cliffs, lamas worshipping the Buddha, the Himalayas in different moods are displayed. On the right lateral panels again the paintings of the Himalayas and the most celebrated painting of comet is displayed.

Two more chambers on either side of the main chamber contain the paintings on the Himalayas in different situations and locales displayed symmetrically. Each chamber, in addition to the paintings of Nicholas, contains the wood carvings of different objects. Figurative structures carved out of the solid wood have been displayed. A number of carved wooden boxes add glamour to the whole museum.

The museum is looked after by a local lady who, with her limited knowledge, tries to accommodate the queries of the visitors. Perhaps, taking in view the fact, an expert is employed of late—a German lady named Ursula Eichstaidt, who is also interested in art and culture of the Himalayas. She occasionally comes out of her chamber only when asked for.

Though the museum is perfect so far its situation, locale as well as artifacts are concerned but nothing is available about the life history of the painter. There should be some source to help the visitors to understand the artist.

ENCHANTIG CASTLE OF NAGGAR

While moving towards Manali from Kullu town, a narrow road bifurcates the main highway at 20th milestone and ascends to the altitude of about 6000 feet. Here we find ourselves in the ancient

town of Naggar, once the capital of Kullu chieftains. Naggar is situated on the left bank of river Beas on a lush green wooded slope dancing in its pristine beauty. Zooming out of the outskirts, there is a splendid building complex situated just on the top of the slope. It is the legendary castle of the feudal lords of Naggar. Naggar remained the capital of the kings of Kullu for fourteen hundred years but the castle came into existence only when Raja Budhi Singh reigned Kullu. It is a splendid building constructed with the help of chiselled stones and logs of wood intermittently woven to keep the balance. The entrance is simple with a lavish wooden framework meticulously decorated with the carvings. It leads to a big chamber separated by a small *Deodi*, which could have been meant for the guard of the castle. The interior of the building opens into two verandahs from where terraces overlook the splendid scenic view of the Beas valley. Around these verandahs, a two-storied building is constructed with massive woodwork. The framework of the upper storey is carved in magnificent designs. The interior chambers are kept as they were during the feudal regime. They are luxuriously decorated with modern furniture, perhaps imported one. One of the comfortable sofa-set bears the insignia of a firm of Lahore. The chamber contains a lavish chandelier hanging in the centre of the roof, shedding its mystic light in all directions.

This building has been taken over by the Toursim Development Corporation of Himachal Pradesh. Hence some renovations were made without shifting the medieval structure.

The central chamber dividing the two verandahs has been converted into a museum wherein some artifacts of local cultural background have been displayed. They include Chamba and Kullu rumaals, local dresses, ornaments and jewellery. The local shoes, made of jute, are also displayed. In the second chamber adjoining the first one, there are two humansize idols decorated with local dresses and jewellery. Kullu pottery and articles of daily use like *hukka* and *chilam*, etc. are decoratively displayed in this chamber.

The first verandah, which opens on the valley, accommodates easy chairs and tables for the tourists basking in the sun. A few chambers are available to relax in. Culinary service within the castle is also available.

In the second verandah towards the open valley there is a cell

wherein a square slab is kept. This slab is called the seat of gods—Devasan. It is also known as *Jagti* with reverence. As the legend goes this slab was brought here by 33 crores of gods in the form of honey bees. The slab was the part of the cliff called Bhrigutung. Whenever a calamity befalls, all the gods of the valley assemble here to communicate with the masses with the help of their disciples in trance. The phenomenon is called *Jagti Puchh*, i.e. the queries of the masses. It is said that the great saint Jamdagni carried the idols of 18 gods in a basket. These gods were the symbolic of all the gods of the world. The idols were scattered throughout the valley by a strong wind resulting in their establishment in those places where they were dropped. They were worshipped as village gods but their central place was agreed to be in Naggar where the slab is kept. These gods were named as 'Atharah Karadu', i.e. 18 gods. Once in twelve years, these eighteen gods are carried to this place on their chariots with a fanfare and rituals are performed with the communicating disciples, popularly known as 'Gur' and 'Chela'.

MCLEODGANJ—THE MYSTIC LAND

From the valley of Kangra, overlooking the Dhauladhar ranges a motorable road leads to Mcleodganj, situated at the height of about 13,000 feet above the sea level almost nine kms from Dharamshala. The road bends, binds and twins the serpentine path in the forests of conifers and rhododendrons blooming in early March every year and receiving the visitors with their full blossomed flowers of Buranse. It is also named as valley of Buranse.

Mcleodganj is famous for the Tibetans settlement. The settlement starts two kilometres ahead of the main market. There is a big market of Tibetan jewellery, clothings and ornaments and pieces of decoration. The foreigners pour in from far and near to shop and for various other reasons like studying the Tibetan philosophy in the Tibetan library which is an institution in itself, with thousands of manuscripts scribbled in holy language of Buddha country. The Tibetan library is housed in a lavish building with two storeys. The first floor is having a museum with several profiles and incarnations of Buddha displayed on dias in different panels. The walls of

this big chamber have been decorated with a number of photographs of the people of Tibet and its monasteries. Tibetan library has been recognised by Himachal Pradesh University. It runs several diploma courses in Tibetan language and philosophy. The scholars who want to study there can have the accommodation and boarding on some nominal charges. As according to Chhajo-Tsang, the niece of his holyness Dalai Lama, a number of scholars come there to study Tantra sect of Buddhism. A few of them practise the teachings under the guidance of the reverend teachers of the monastery. This library contains some very rare manuscripts probably not found anywhere else in the world. Casual visitors are not allowed to enter the library chambers, perhaps to avoid rush and to keep the atmosphere conducive for learning and research. However, the researchers and even visitors can visit the library with the permission of the librarian or the director of the institution. Generally the photography is not allowed but with the permission of the authorities, having genuine reasons one can do so.

While coming down the library steps one can find a cluster of tremendous buildings. They are the offices of Tibetan Government in exile. The ministerial chambers, the chambers of the designers and the cells meant for the monks of the monasteries as well as the scholars, are built in exact designing of the lost empire.

About a kilometre, in direct range, is the chamber of Mrs. Chhajo-Tsang, the niece of Dalai Lama, who acts as the secretary of the Institute of International Studies and public relation department of Dalai Lama. It is a building created in perfect congenial atmosphere, having a touch of modern architecture. Several brochures and periodicals publicising the view point of Dalai Lama and the condition of the old empire of Tibet, are published here. A Tibetan bulletin is brought out periodically in two languages having a circulation in thousands. Its Hindi version is superb with all the relevant material one likes to know about Tibet. From time to time, some pamphlets are also published, with upto date information, which are circulated throughout the world. The feedback is received with all the electronic equipments like teleprinters and fax services. From time to time they publish books on political and socio-economic structure of their country.

The main market of Mcleodganj is almost entirely occupied by

Tibetan people. Occasionally we find, foreign or local tourists busy in shopping. In centre of the market, there is a big monastery, surrounded by prayer wheels. Pagoda type monastery built in Tibetan style is the main attraction for the tourists. People of Buddhist faith visit Mcleodganj from far and near to pay their homage to Lord Buddha.

There was, once upon a time, a Tibetan doctor named Dolma to whom patients from throughout the country poured in along with a few foreigners to cure themselves of chronic diseases. In fact, Mcleodganj became famous due to that doctor. She is no more alive but her daughter is looking after the dispensary now. Patients still come there to get themselves cured but their number has been reduced.

Just three kilometres from Mcleodganj is a natural abode of Bhagsu Nag. It is a beautiful natural resort with springs and cascading waters from the lion mouth chiselled out of hard rocks. There are three such water reservoirs used for bathing and for drinking. The local people as well as tourists enjoy the coolness of its water during hot weather. It is strange that the water during winter months is warm and during summer months it is ice cold.

There are several restaurants and hotels to stay in. Tourism Department of Himachal Pradesh has constructed a hotel named Bhagsu Nag. It is a lavish building facing splendid view of the Dhauladhar ranges. The big lush green lawns give soothing relief to the eyes of the tourists. A number of private hotels provide ample accommodation. Department of Tourism provides tents during peak season along with other facilities for the tourists and adventurers.

VICEREGAL LODGE—THE CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES, SHIMLA

The splendour that was created almost a century ago, is the brilliance of art and architecture, in form of colossus building, popularly known as Viceregal Lodge. It is the complex of three buildings, the library, entry building and the observatory house. The main building, housing the library of the Institute of Advanced Studies is the specimen of splendid structure, erected on five panels of which the main floor opens on one side to hilly tract whereas the

second storey is at the level of a hillock on other side thus forming another ground floor which houses several cells on the lateral as well as central panels. On the right lateral side there is a dark cell closed with iron grills. It was used as dungeon once upon a time to imprison the persons of authority during the period of viceroyalty. Now they are meant for stores. A massive kitchen of 30'×30' in size with dome-shaped ceiling and a number of marble-top tables and a few high hotcases for the meals of the staff stands the testimony of time. The hotcases are out of order now-a-days but were in use during the period of viceroyalty.

The building has been occupied by Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. The second floor, once in use as a lavish dining hall, has been converted into a vast library. The walls of this vast hall were decorated with the lively portraits of Viceroys and other important personalities of England in those days, but now only vacant spaces are left behind. There is a narrow path by the side of this hall containing a number of hotcases which might have been in use for keeping food warm in waiting while the royalty was busy in routine formality. Other important chamber is the lounge for the guests of the viceroy.

Third floor is having vast chambers two of which were used as bedrooms by the Viceroy and Vicereine, they are still kept intact. These bedrooms are lavishly decorated and furnished. Other chambers meant for important guests of the Viceroy have been converted into study rooms for the scholars of the Institute. There are almost nine such chambers. The fourth floor was exclusively meant for the guests.

The second building, popularly known as public entry building was built up late in 1918. It is the building housing the officials of the Institute. Earlier this building was meant for the officials and personal staff of the Viceroy.

The third building, popularly known as observatory. is having a few chambers and a lush green lawn in front with floral creepers and climbers adding aroma to the atmosphere. This building was meant for important guests and advisors to the Viceroy. Now-a-days it is in use for the scholars. A canteen has been developed there to serve the scholars of the Institute.

The whole complex of Viceregal Lodge has been renamed as

Rashtrapati Bhavan after independence. It was formally handed over to the Institute of Advanced Studies on 20th Oct. 1965 by the President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Owing to the topographical conditions it was considered as an ideal place for the scholars to study and to research at higher level. The building with idyllic surroundings is situated on a hamlet, popularly known as Summer Hill.

Indian Institute of Advanced Studies is headed by a Director with a number of other officials to assist him. It is financed by the Central Ministry of Human Resources. It also gets some funds by way of selling its publications. The Institute awards fellowships for advanced research through open advertisements. It covers the areas like art and aesthetics, literature and religion, social sciences, etc. Many scholars have done their work in this Institute and have submitted their theses. Many scholars were invited to deliver the lectures on various subjects. They were the persons of eminence in their fields. The celebrities among them were Prof. Mulkh Raj Anand, Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Prof. K.S. Sacchidananda, Prof. B.N. Goswami, etc. A number of seminars have been conducted during the last many years. The Institute has also published many books. Among the various activities of the Institute, seminars, symposia writers' workshops are but a few. Weekly seminars are organised on different subjects and sometimes catering to the studies of the scholars wherein outsiders can also participate. Working scholars have to submit the report of their work periodically in a stipulated time. In addition to these activities the Institute organises three national level seminars in a year which are supposed to be essential part of its academic sessions. Eminent scholars are invited to participate in these seminars.

The executive head of the Institute is a Secretary who supervises all the activities of the Institute. However, for the selection of the scholars and other policy matters a team of eminent scholars and academically highly placed persons is there to guide the executive staff.

TARA PALACE—A CASTLE IN THE VALLEY OF KANGRA

Among the most impressive royal palaces and buildings of the feudal lords of erstwhile states, Al-Hilal is superb in its setting and

locale. A legendary nomenclature suggests the world of Arabian Knights particularly during moonlit nights when the whole atmosphere becomes mystical. There is a lavish structure of two buildings constructed in a single panel on the style of open palace.

Al-Hilal is situated at a distance of about five kms from Palampur, very near to Himachal Agricultural University, overlooking the Dhauladhar ranges. The main building of the palace consists of luxurious chambers with a corridor running in between. These chambers are lavishly furnished and decorated with folk paintings, Chamba Rumals and of course a number of replicas of the Thankas painted in traditional style. Miniature paintings of Kangra style are also the objects of attraction for the visitors. In fact, this is a retreat for nature lovers who come here to shun the scorching heat of the plains. The palace, once constructed for the purpose by an erstwhile prince of a state of Punjab was taken over by Dogra prince Dr. Karan Singh who renamed it as Tara Palace to commemorate the memory of his mother. It became the summer retreat for the royal family.

The visitors are fascinated with the beauty of the resort and are received by the lavish structure with a high chandelier sprinkling the specks of light through its glass. In the corridor, leading to the interior chambers, a number of portraits of the Dogra feudal lords and their retinue alongwith their family members have been displayed on separate panels. The corridor is obstructed by a large plank richly carved with flowery creepers. The ceiling of the building is highly decorated with teakwood designs. The second building is situated at a distance of about a furlong on one side of a lush green garden. It is a glass house with a glass roof from where the light sneaks in at all hours of the day. Once it was the sitting chamber of the royalty but of late it has been converted into a temple with a number of portraits of gods and goddesses. Some of these portraits belong to Tantrik school of paintings. Since the Dogra feudal lord, Maharaja Ranbir Singh and his descendant Maharaja Pratap Singh believed in Tantrik way of worship most of Tantrik paintings were created in original colours during their tenure. These paintings belong to ten aspects of Shakti and incarnations of Purusha. During the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra king, these paintings alongwith some statues were shifted from the royal wor-

ship place, *Pooja Ghar*, to Ranbir Sanskrit Shodh Pustkalaya. A few of them are still preserved there in one of its chambers.

There is a large water tank by the side of the main building. It was used as swimming pool by the royalty. Visitors are allowed to swim in with the permission of the administration now-a-days. Marble-slatted tank is cleaned every year before the start of rainy season as during rainy season it can be revitalised with enough natural water pour.

Natural locale and luxurious setup of the palace attract a number of visitors daily. Of late there was a suggestion of converting it into a commercial hotel.

8

Legends of Art and Culture

To squeeze out a few moments of leisure from the hectic life is really a hard job for the ladies of the hills. They toil, look after their children, manage the kitchen in addition to serving their husbands but still a few of them have played a significant role in the cause of cultural development.

GAMBRI DEVI—THE LEGENDARY FOLKLORIST

Gambri Devi is famous for her great urge for developing the field of folk culture. Born in a village of Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh in early twenties, Gambri Devi like other village girls was married in early age which not only debarred her from singing in which she was fully involved but her emotional life also came to stake. She could not adjust herself with the restraints of the orthodox society. She was of an independent character and was fully devoted to singing and dancing, despite opposition from the members of family, as well as, the society at large. She was determined to create new vistas of folk art thus the married life could not bind her for long and she broke all the shackles to prove her worth. She became the source of jeers and taunts of the society. Sarcasms of the society for a time forced her to leave her village but these enforcements could not deter her from display of her artistic faculties. She was equipped with a golden voice and her dancing steps fascinated the audience to such an extent that slowly and gradually the people forgot her stigma and would invite her to perform a show of folk songs and dances. Eventually, she became so famous in her locality that no festival was complete without her performance. Such was the impact of the lady that she was considered as

the idol of romance. People would pour in from far and wide to see her and listen to her musical renderings that every function and marriage in the locality was supposed to be unceremonious without her performance.

She was considered as the matinee idol of the time. She was always assisted by a drummer, a wrestler, who also became the legend alongwith Gambri Devi. We hear and quote Sartre and Madam Bavoire, the great literateurs, philosophers and reformists of France who challenged the verdict of the society and remained emotionally allied throughout their life without taking the certificate of marriage from the society. That was the society of France, almost a century in advance from a village of this country where one cannot even think about such liberty from the clutches of the society. But both Gambri Devi and the drummer created an example of individuality in the heart of a remote village cordoned by the rituals and deformities of the society. It is irony of the situations that the people would have liked to enjoy the artistic faculties of Gambri Devi, but were not ready to adapt her liberal behaviour. She never justified her individuality as a philosophy but in fact lived it practically. In her seventies, she is still active in the field of folk culture. Her renderings of folk songs are simply superb having no parallel in this field and that a number of songs narrating her lifestyle found their way to register the nomenclature of folk songs in her life. These folk songs are known as Gambri, associated with the name of the great folk singer. If asked, Gambri sings these songs narrating her own lifestyle with all the vitality. Gambri is a group of songs devoted to the individuality and lifestyle free from any inhibitions. The present age loves romanticism and so we too should enjoy the folk songs of Gambri Devi and others with all the enthusiasm and gusto. We may assume that it is this romantic element that being over seventy she is still young creating flutter in the audience with her musical renderings and the rhythmical steps. She has become a legend in her life.

SHANTI BISHT—A FOLK SINGER OF REPUTE

Apart from her achievements in the field of folk art, Shanti Bisht is a housewife, a teacher and a mother, thus she is an individual with many facets. It may be a bit easy task to face the jeers of

the society single-handed but definitely it is a difficult task to live the life of a social person participating in all the rituals and to carry on the customs of the society devoting oneself sincerely to one's duties towards the spouse, family and the society and still find time to train one's faculties for acquiring magnificent art. Shanti Bisht is the name of such multi-faceted personality. She was born in a Nepali family at village Darhi near the town of Dharamshala. From the very childhood her interest in singing flowered in the days to come. She used to participate in school functions and her voice lured the school teachers and the administration at large to such an extent that she was there in collective functions to give her vocal and dance performance. Her name became synonym with folk art. Whenever there was a get together she was requested to participate and give her performance.

When asked about interests and learning process she explained in details that she was inspired by the musical renderings of Shri Ram Singh Thappa who was the director of music in the Indian National Army, thus she took music as her main pursuit. She learnt music from late Shri B.D. Kale. She joined the school as teacher and started giving training to the students in music and dance which were not the main subjects of her teachings.

Shanti Bisht is a reputed singer and stage artist. Gojri, Dogri, Punjabi and Pahari songs sung by her were broadcast from different stations of All India Radio. She was the first artist from Himachal Pradesh whose songs were telecast from Doordarshan Jalandhar followed by a number of performances in different stations of Doordarshan. Apart from stage performances she has trained a number of school children in collective singing popularly known as community singing. She has recorded many Bhajans and folk songs in addition to pahari songs recorded by her in the form of a cassette which are very popular among the people. Pahari song, "*Isa Granyen Deya Lambra Ho In Chhoruwan Jo Le Samjhai Ki Batta Jande Siti Marde*" sung by Shanti Bisht became so popular that it became a symbol of pahari folklore.

Shanti Bisht is also a poetess having written a number of lyrics sung by herself. She is the recipient of several honours and awards bestowed upon her by reputed organisations of culture. She is an approved artist of All India Radio and is frequently invited by

different stations of All India Radio to give her performance. She is a dynamic teacher and still active in her early fifties.

LEGENDS OF KANGRA PAINTING

The soft touch of Kangra painting has always captivated the critics and connoisseurs of art. Several artists tried to master the lines and colours used in this style.

A famous family of one Seu, who was a carpenter, and his two sons, Manak and Nainsukh, created history in establishing different schools of miniature paintings under the patronage of Rajas and nobles.

Manak, the elder brother of Nainsukh served the hill state of Basohli and created some fascinating series of *Geet Govind*, *Bhagwat Purana* and *Ramayana* in addition to several paintings on ragas and raginis. In fact, Manak spearheaded his family members in this field. Nainsukh went to Jammu; the most powerful hill state in the 18th century, ruled by Raja Ranjit Dev. The younger brother of Raja Ranjit Dev, Raja Balwant Dev was a great lover of nature. He was the feudal lord of Saruinsar. During the summer months, he would shift his capital to a health resort of Saruinsar. Nainsukh always travelled with the Raja and his retinue. Raja Balwant Dev patronised him to the extent that he was allowed to draw any subject but of course the central figure of these paintings used to be the Raja himself. Nainsukh was so close to the Raja that he was permitted to visit him even unannounced.

Nainsukh was invited by the Raja to paint the intimate moments in his *Harem*. After the death of Raja Balwant Dev, Nainsukh and his family shifted from Jasrota to Basohli and Nainsukh joined his elder brother Manak. Nainsukh had four sons. Kama, Goudu, Nikka and Ranjha. Nikka the third son came back from Guler to Rajoul in Taluka of Rihlu which was the part of Chamba under the regime of Raja Raj Singh of Chamba.

This is evident from the writing on the back of a painting displayed on the panels of Bhuri Singh Muesum, Chamba. Attra the grandson of Nikka, mentioned in the log books of Pandas that he and his brothers were there in the royal service of Chamba court. Gokul, the son of Nikka, was a rich person by dint of assets provided and gifted to him by the royal court of Chamba.

Chandu Lal, the son of Lachhman Dass and grandson of Ram Dayal and great-grandson of Gokul, is the only member of the family who adopted his family art and tried hard to make it alive. The author met this last artist of Kangra style and was overwhelmed to see his work. Chandu Lal, earlier, was trying his hand on designing different forms of the ornaments when his father, Lachhman Dass was alive, and was a reputed painter of this style. When his father died and feudal system vanished, he adopted his parental profession and created some beautiful paintings.

His painting of Durga and ten Sikh Gurus won him acclaim from art critics. He has created hundreds of paintings in this style and several one-man shows were organised by him in different art galleries and institutions to highlight his art pieces.

When asked how he started his career as an artist, Chandu Lal narrated his past stating that he owed his art to the traditional ways of learning. The old ladies of the family were the source of inspiration to their work. They practised making different facial expressions on the pieces of wooden planks for years together and were supervised by the old ladies when the menfolk were generally out of their home. When back they would examine their work and assess the progress. It was only years later that they were allowed to paint on paper. The caricatures were sketched by the elder artists and they had to fill in the appropriate colours. Afterwards they were allowed to use their imagination on the canvas.

Om Sujanpuri

Among the artist who have become the legends in their life time is one Mr. Om Sujanpuri, the resident of Sujanpur Tihra, once a very important town in the time of Maharaja Sansar Chand, the most popular feudal lord of Kangra, who patronised the artist of Pahari miniature paintings throughout his life, even during the tenure of turmoil when his kingdom was annexed by the Gurkhas followed by the attack of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab.

Om Sujanpuri studied upto matriculation at Sujanpur followed by training in painting for three years at Swai Ram Singh Shilp Kala Mandir. It helped him to become a Drawing teacher in Govt. High School, Hatli in Hamirpur. He served there for six months.

Impressed by his work, Shri Lal Chand Prarthi brought him to Himachal Academy in 1974. Prarthi was then the Minister of Culture in Himachal Pradesh. Sujanpuri served in the Academy as an artist and in due course he became the technical assistant.

Om Sujanpuri tried his hand in almost all styles of Pahari schools but he specialised in Guler and Kangra styles. He has created almost a thousand of paintings in Pahari style out of which almost one hundred paintings are original, created by his own imagination. His individual exhibitions brought him fame. They number upto twenty-five, and in combined effort he has participated in almost ten exhibitions out of which two were the national exhibitions. He is credited with a number of state awards from Himachal Pradesh and Punjab Lalit Kala Academy.

Om Sujanpuri has painted almost all aspects of life but he is very much interested to portray the rural life and folk aspects. A number of his paintings on the subject were acclaimed by the critics and the connoisseurs of art and culture.

He has painted a number of paintings of Gaddi life and culture. One of his paintings on the subject was awarded by Punjab Kala Academy in which a Gaddi damsel is rearing the flock as well as weaving the wool with a spindle, having a background of lush green atmosphere, sparingly overcast by the travelling clouds.

He is also working on folk songs recreating them into paintings which is a rare feat hitherto dared by any artist.

While working in the Academy he is always busy in creating paintings. Hundreds of his paintings have been sold, which have fetched him Rs. 300/- to 500/- per piece. A painting takes at least one week, a very laborious job and to do the fine work a painting may take more than ten days depending upon the subject of the painting. He does not want to sell these paintings but to keep the wolf away from the dove, he has to depend upon their sale. He uses traditional colours extracted from minerals, vegetation and of course from other different materials; sometimes even pure gold is used which is very costly.

He learnt the traditional paintings from Shri Kirpal Singh Shekhawat who is expert in Rajasthani school of paintings. Afterwards he learnt about Kangra and Guler schools and the colours, etc. from Chandu Lal Raina. In fact, the technique of making colours

was understood from the wife of Shri Chandu Lal Raina who tried her hand on the process of colour making during the tenure of her father-in-law Lachhman Das. She used to make colours at home under his instructions. Regarding brushes and other ingredients he learnt it from his Rajasthani Guru, Kirpal Singh. He used a special hand-made paper which is made in a small village Sanganer of Rajasthan situated at about 12 kms from Jaipur. Some Muslim families are still working on this type of paper.

As told by Sujanpuri, the rough papers are layered with gum followed by a layer of white colour made out of zink oxide, and on this canvas the caricatures are drawn in black colour.

Colouring of these caricatures is the second phase of the work and the border lines are created in the end. After paintings the caricatures in colours are smoothed with smooth surface stones.

Basic colours are prepared from minerals like zink oxide, red oxide, Hartal and green stones. Some flowers and bark of the trees are also used for the purpose.

The artist is ambitious to create some rare paintings based on the folk culture of this region.

O.P. Taak

O.P. Taak, a drawing teacher at a school in Dharamshala, has nurtured a life-long passion for Kangra paintings. He is both a painter as well as a collector of old Kangra miniatures. Till date he has done nearly 1500 paintings, yet he has had to overcome several handicaps in this task.

For most painters, the Kangra style came as a family heritage, and they had the rich experience of their forefathers to guide them along. Those who hailed from such traditional artist families were trained in making colours and preparing brushes and other fundamental aspects of the Kangra painting. But Taak has had to teach himself the basics from a scratch.

In 1959, Taak, then only 21 years old, launched himself as a painter of Kangra miniatures. There were, then, only two families who still practised this style. One was the descendants of renowned Kangra painters like Manak and Nainsukh (Seu family), while the other was Dhuman, Gulabu and his family. Gulabu was the only

artist still doing wall paintings. Some of the frescos painted on the inner walls of Brijeshwari temple in Kangra still look as fresh as if they were painted recently. He learnt many aspects of Kangra style from Gulabu but O.P. Taak was restless in acquiring full knowledge of miniature paintings. He approached the last living artist, Chandu Lal of the Seu family and requested him to teach him. Thus O.P. Taak was the first stranger to acquire this secret knowledge from two different streams. He was able to get the best of the two. It was in 1975 that the first exhibition of his paintings was organised on the panels of Bhuri Singh Museum. Thereafter, several exhibitions of his work were organised in different parts of Himachal Pradesh.

In 1980, his first national-level exhibition was organised in New Delhi. In 1986, another one was organised by the language deptt. of Himachal Pradesh. A one man show of his paintings was organised by NZCC at Patiala in December 1989. He has been awarded by different organisations. O.P. Taak has painted almost 1500 paintings out of which he has sold a few to meet out the expenses. Some of the ingredients are very costly. He prefers to sell these paintings to foreigners because they pay more. "However, if my requirements are met out of my resources, I would prefer to preserve all my paintings", he says. He hopes to establish an art gallery of his paintings.

O.P. Taak is one of the four artists selected by the Himachal Pradesh Academy of Art, Culture and Languages to teach young artists. He gets some amount for this but it is so meagre that it hardly meets his expenses.

Most of the colours prepared were poisonous. While preparing colours, they were tasted a bit to know the genuineness of the pigment. The family members of these two families were very cautious not to taste these colours but they acquired such experiences that by only observing the pigments and with a touch they could feel the nature and genuineness of the colours.

I have seen several of the paintings painted by O.P. Taak. These paintings are painted with natural colours the brilliance of which spellbonds the viewers but, as far as lining and fineness is concerned, it needs critical appreciation from the art critics.

O.P. Taak is trying hard to improve this aspect of his work and

a few of the paintings do show very positive results but still he needs much experience and practice.

Lately, he is trying his hand on the subject of Gaddi cultural and social milieu which he proudly displays. He has painted a series of paintings on the subject. The beautiful Gaddi damsels in the best of their glamour in action, speak of his work. The visage of these characters in true Pahari curvatures and accordingly colours are used true to their nature. The most important aspects to these paintings is the emergence of the feelings and the facial expressions parallel to their thoughts.

He hopes to paint several of such series. I have seen a marvellous painting of Chandu Lal in this subject. A Gaddi lad is shown in action fighting with ferocious bear while another Gaddi looks as if the action is on before the viewer and at any time either bear will be the winner or the Gaddi.

UNSUNG HEROES OF FOLK BALLADS

Dresas were once very popular folk singers who sang the praises of the kings and the courtiers of the Dogra era. These people would accompany the Dogra warriors to the battle fields and would gather the details of their valour which they afterwards wove into ballads narrating the saga of the brave Dogra warriors. They would also narrate with vigour the heroic anecdotes of Suryavanshi Lord Rama just like the Charan poets of Rajasthan whose heroic renderings of the battle fields would excite the soldiers in the battle fields to fight with vigour and bravery to achieve victory.

Dresa is derived from Darvesha, i.e. the courtier. They were supposed to be the intellectuals and the persons endowed with wit and humour would surcharge the court atmosphere with liveliness and joy. Most of them had friendly terms with the kings and the courtiers in addition to the members of the royal families. They would accompany the feudal lords on their long outings and tours especially outside their territories and enriched their knowledge about nature and human behaviour. Of late they accompanied the head of the state and of course with the members of the royal blood during their march to the battle fields. They noted details of the fight and the furiousness of the battles and would afterwards add

much from their imagination to highlight the achievements of their masters to such a great extent that in the pages of history they became the epitomes of heroism. It is true that much of the material contained in these ballads was based on facts. That is why several historians quoted these folk ballads sung by Dresas to support their findings. History written by the famous author Narsingh Das Nargis on Dogras contain several folk ballads quoted to support his point of view. They provide the missing links between the gaps left undiscovered.

Sometimes these ballads authenticate the already discovered stories, thus in a way they help the researchers especially in the fields of history and anthropology to establish the facts. The scholars of the folk culture and social anthropology, to some extent, depend on these folk ballads.

Dresas, not only won the confidence of the royal blood but sometimes they also sang the songs of valour of the popular warriors and of course the revolutionaries who were against the regime but not against the masses. In fact, the commoners had a great faith in them. Mian Dido can be taken as the best example of such social behaviour. He was supposed to be a dacoit and was banned to come in the boundaries of the state. On the other hand he was the Robin-hood of the Dogra land—a legend among the common masses, a celebrated hero. Dresas would weave ballads in his favour. There was a popular anecdote that once a Dresas was singing on his Chakara the valour of the legendary hero that Mian Dido happened to pass by the side of the folklorist. He stopped his galloping horse a while and listened attentively to the musical renderings of his own personality. He was so overwhelmed that he got down from the horse and asked the folklorist that whether he knew the person about whom he was singing the ballads? The folklorist replied immediately—“Yes Sir, I am in front of him at this time”. Mian Dido was so impressed that he gave away his precious necklace to the folklorist.

Dresas use Chakara as musical instrument while singing the ballads. They are, due to lack of proper patronage, disappearing. Most of them have adopted other professions and the new generation would not like to adopt the same profession. Their heroic ballads and the dynastic musical renderings which once upon a time were supposed to be the source of inspiration for generations to-

gether have lost their value. The electronic devices and the media have given the greatest setback to these folklorists. In old times they were invited respectfully at the time of marriages and other family rituals and their ballads were listened to with interest but the same families, with the change of time, do not invite them any more. I have come across an old man of about 100 years age, he had seen three dynasties of the Dogra rulers and have appreciated them in his folk ballads.

His name is Piranditta. He was admired much for his musical renderings and according to him he belonged to a celebrated family of the popular Dresas. He is totally forsaken and moves about the streets of Jammu in rags with a begging bowl in his hand. But sure enough he has the treasury of legends and anecdotes enshrined in folk songs. At this age, even, when he sings on his old ridden Chakara, his whole body moves with his shaky hands and his shrieks compel the listener to enjoy the vitality of the matter woven in a magnificently arranged diction and rustic touch of the background. If they are not given proper assistance, a time may come when their name will only be there in the pages of history.

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Index

- Ajanta and Allora 97
Akbarname 98
Akhada 53, 57
Akkharh Devta 17
Alaknanda 25
Al-Hilal 149
Alkapuri 25
Almora 25, 68, 71, 72, 97
Amalaka 67, 71
Amir Hamza 98
Amravati 26
Amrit Pal (Raja) 119
Anand Mulakraj 139
Anantnag 25
Andretta 134-38
Apsaras 31
Archer 88, 114, 139
Arki 100, 106, 120, 121
Aryans 17, 27, 36, 46
Asuras, Asuria 26
Atra 101, 107, 150
- Babarnama 98
Babor 68
Bairnath 68, 71, 128, 129
Bakarwals 19, 21, 22
Balwant Dev (Raja) 91, 100, 106, 116, 118
Bandha 61
Bandralta 100, 122-25
Banthara 57-59
Banshidhar 107
Baramasa 86, 92
Basia 101
Basohli 62, 82, 94, 96, 100, 105, 106, 113, 114
- Bhaga 33, 34
Bhagsunag 146
Bhagtan 55-57
Bhagwat Purana 83
Bhan Bhat 17
Bharata 26
Bharmour 13, 14, 15, 60, 68-70, 72, 75, 95
Bhimpul 26
Bhoti 100
Bhubaneshwar 68
Bhumag 14, 70, 100
Bhuri Singh 92, 95, 96, 154
Bihzad 98
Bijali Mahadev 131-33
Bilaspur 95, 100
Billu 107
Buddha 59, 60
Bodhisattav 69
Bodhs 34, 36, 37
Boula Devta 18
- Chaitu 101, 102, 109
Chamba 14, 26, 33, 34, 48, 52, 55, 62, 68, 69, 76, 82, 84, 90, 92, 95-97, 100, 101, 105, 106, 108
Champavati 95
Chamunda Devi 126, 127
Chanderkhani mountain 42
Chandermani Kashyap 139
Chandrabhaga 33, 36, 38, 50 69
Chandravali 53
Chandu 108
Chandu Lal 90, 114, 155
Changpas 13
Chariana 77

- Chela 17, 59, 78
 Chenab 34
 Chhang 38, 40
 Chhari Mubarak 78
 Chhatrari 60, 76
 Chhunia 110
 Coomaraswami 82, 69, 105

 Dabla Dev 27
 Damodar 101
 Darcha 53
 Devas 24, 26, 27
 Dhandi Das 107
 Dhian Singh 107
 Dhauladhar 149
 Dhaulagiri 25
 Dhuman 101, 108, 157
 Diwankhana 121
 Dogra 92, 105, 150, 160
 Dogra Art Gallery 92
 Dokpas 13
 Doukhu 90, 108
 Dras 18
 Drasas 159-61
 Durga 101

 Fattu 90, 101, 108, 119
 Frank 108

 Gaddis 13, 14, 59-61
 Gadheran 13, 60
 Gambri Devi 151-52
 Gandharvas 24, 26
 Ganga Ram 107
 Gara(s) 33, 37
 Garhwal Kalam 99-102, 108, 109
 Garud 71
 Gatha Temple 77-78
 Geet Govind 86, 92, 112-14
 Gokul 101, 154, 155
 Goswami, B.N. 101, 110, 111
 Goudu 154
 Goumukh 25
 Gujar 13, 17, 18-22
 Gulabu 101, 108, 157

 Guler 82, 84, 88, 90-92, 96, 101, 105-107, 113
 Gumery 18
 Gurdas 101
 Gurjar 72
 Gursahai 101
 Guru Ghantal monastery 34-35
 Gyephang 34, 35

 Hameer Math 108
 Harnatra 60-61
 Harshchrita 17
 Hazari 101
 Heer Ranja 20, 87
 Heera Lal 107
 Hidimba 73, 74, 129-31
 Hill style 74
 Himachal 52, 55, 57, 58, 59, 68, 149, 151, 156, 158
 Hindukush 18
 Hiran 60-61
 Hoshiar Lal 107
 Huns 17

 Indira 26, 27
 Ishwar 107

 Jads 13
 Jagdish Vedpathi 109
 Jagati Puchh 144
 Jageshwar 68, 71
 Jakhni Devi 17
 Jalsar Nag 17
 Jamlu 34
 Jameel 107
 Jamlu Devta 42-44
 Jammu 48, 55, 62, 63, 65, 68, 70, 71, 82, 83, 91, 99, 100, 105, 106, 110, 116
 Jasrota 100, 116
 Jatr 15, 16
 Jhanki 61
 Jhoya 40
 Jimutvahan 78

- Kalpa valley 28
 Kama 150
 Kamru fort 33
 Kanashi 46
 Kanets 36
 Kangra 26, 33, 55, 56, 62, 82, 84, 91, 95, 96, 99, 100, 101, 106-108, 113
 Kaplash Yatra 78
 Kapoorgiri 106
 Karan Singh, Dr. 149
 Kardhang 36
 Karyala 52-57
 Kashmir 67
 Khakakashi 99
 Khampo 36
 Khandalawala 113
 Khapper 60-61
 Kharamukh 14
 Khatak 40, 41
 Khokan 73, 74
 Kinnars 23-33, 61
 Kirmachi 68, 70, 71
 Kirpa 106
 Kounsar Nag 17
 Krishan 107
 Kuber 26
 Kukarnag 25
 Kullu, Kooloo 33, 35, 43, 44, 46, 47, 73, 79, 82, 93-95, 105, 108
 Kumaon 71
 Kushala 90, 101
 Kyang 27, 31, 32, 36
 Kye 36

 Ladakh 33, 34
 Lahoulis 13, 33
 Lakshman Das 101, 106
 Lamas 28, 35, 36, 37
 Lave 107
 Leheru Mian 107
 Lha 38
 Lingraj temple 68
 Lok Sanskriti Sansthan 138

 Maghu 101, 107

 Malana 42, 47
 Mana 13, 26
 Manak 90, 101, 102, 106, 109, 110, 114, 154, 157
 Manali 73, 106, 131
 Mandi 57-59, 73, 74, 82, 84, 95, 101, 108, 138, 140
 Manibhadra 26
 Manikaran 42
 Manimahesh 69, 70
 Mankot 107
 Mansa 17
 Marchhas 13
 Masnavis 20
 Mcleodganj 144-46
 Mian Dido 160
 Mohammad Baksh 108
 Monogamy 30, 40-41
 Motiram 107
 Moula Ram 99, 101, 102, 108, 109
 Mughal art 82, 84, 87, 94, 99, 116
 Mukundi Lal 109

 Nadaun 106
 Nagas 25, 26, 66
 Naggar 73, 74, 140-42
 Nainsukh 90, 91, 100, 101, 106, 110-19, 154, 157
 Nandu 101
 Nesang 32
 Nikka 101, 107, 119, 154
 Niti 13
 Nomads 19
 Nono 37
 Nora Richards 157-58
 Norottam 136
 Nurpur 82, 88, 90, 95, 100, 101, 105

 Om Sujanpuri 155-57
 O.P. Taak 157-58

 Padmasambhava 35
 Padnu 90, 108
 Pagoda temples 73-74

- Pahari paintings 82, 101, 107, 110
 Panchary 51
 Panchjanya 24
 Peer Panjal 52
 Pent roof temples 78-79
 Pingla 17
 Pishachas 26
 Polyandry 28, 38, 39
 Polygamy 30, 39
 Prabhakar Vardhan 17
 Pratap Singh (Maharaja) 109, 149
 Prem Lal 107
 Puh 28
 Pulastya 24, 26
 Purkhu 90, 101, 107, 108

 Raagmala 92
 Rahul Sankrityayan 139
 Rajis 13
 Rakshas 26
 Ram Dyal 101, 107, 108
 Ram Krishan 108
 Ramayana 86
 Ranbir Singh (Maharaja) 109, 149
 Randhawa 82, 89, 101
 Ranjha 101, 109, 154
 Ranjit Dev (Maharaja) 100, 106
 Ravi 26
 Razamnama 98
 Reasi 95
 Roerich Nicholas 140-42
 Ruldu 108
 Rumaals 61-64

 Saifal Malook 20
 Samloti 108
 Sansar Chand (Maharaja) 85, 90,
 92, 100, 102, 108, 114, 155
 Saraswati 25
 Satsai 86, 92
 Seu 90, 99, 101, 106, 108, 114, 157
 Shankracharya 67
 Shanti Bisht 152-53
 Shashur monastery 36
 Sheesh Mahal 122-25
 Shiba 101
 Shikhra temples 67-73
 Shimla 73, 79, 146-50
 Shivaliks 52
 Sobha Singh 134-36
 Sohni Mahiwal 134
 Sonu 107
 Soudagar 101
 Spiti 34, 37
 Sudh Mahadev 51
 Suket 106
 Surgal 17
 Swangla 36, 37
 Swarga 23, 24, 25

 Tandi 33
 Tansu Nag 17
 Tara Singh 107
 Tawi 50
 Tibet 33, 34
 Tiddu 101
 Triloknath 34, 69

 Udhampur 48, 50, 51

 Vasia 90, 107, 108
 Vasuki Nag 17, 77, 78
 Verinag 25
 Viceregal lodge 146-50
 Vishnu Loka 25
 Vyas Gufa 25

 Wall paintings 120-25
 Woodland resort 135-37

 Yagna 16
 Yakshas 25, 26
 Yogpas 37

 Zanskar 18, 25
 Zhozho 37