

*FORTS AND PALACES*  
— OF THE —  
*WESTERN HIMALAYA*

ASHOK JERATH



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I N D U S

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## *Preface*

Before the growth of civilizations early settlers, forming small settlements, tried to fortify their surroundings to secure themselves from the wildlife, but in due course of time the battle for existence made the clans to rush against each other thus a feeling of insecurity enveloped them both from the wildlife as well as from the attacks of other clans. Generally the technique of fortification was rustic with big boulders forming the boundaryline of the settlements but with the growth of civilizations and change in mannerism, while the man searched for more luxurious, cozy and secure surroundings, concept of forts and castles developed which contained each and every facility of water, vegetation, stylised buildings to live in and stored foodstuffs to suffice the needs of the inmates for sufficient time, especially during emergent situations. They were the self-sufficient mini towns. Several clans joined to elect their leader who could lead them in ticklish situations especially at the time of external attacks, thus the settlements were fortified to form formidable structures. The power of the erstwhile monarchs of these settlements, popularly known as erstwhile states, always depended upon these citadels, the seats of their power. Thus the history of Nagarkot, the erstwhile state of Kangra, is the history of Kangra fort. It was the citadel of Katoch lords who ruled Trigarta for thousands of years, right from Mahabharata period till pre-independent era, but as and when they lost their fort their power deserted them. Bahu fort of Jammu was the seat of power of Jammu and Bahu kings for several centuries until it was conquered and deserted and the erstwhile state of Jammu was ruled from Jammu fort henceforth otherwise it was Bahu fort the seat of power. Nurpur, Taragarh, Mau fort, Haripur fort, Katoch fort, Tira, Bhingarh, Reasi; Ramnagar fort, Bandralta; Rajouri fort, Rajouri etc. were some important forts situated on both sides of the Ravi and were the seats of power of their respective states. The lords of these forts were the undisputed lords of their erstwhile states.

After independence several erstwhile states joined to form a dominion thus the role of these forts and fortresses was reduced to naught, they

were left deserted with the result most of them have been reduced to rubble. Some of them were dismantled by the invaders and were never repaired whereas some others faced the onslaught of the vagaries of nature and human vandalism.

During my sojourn in Kangra, Nurpur and Dharamshala I came across the beauty of the crumbling structures, once supposed to be most formidable castles of power, which fascinated me to the extent that I started working on them. They were the symbols of our heritage and source of history, their columns echoed the struggle of races, battling for existence and cries of the folk crushed under the load of the whims of the chieftains holding the reins of these formidable structures. The stories of their construction remind me about the construction of the great pyramids, the foundations of which were soaked with the blood of the slaves. Several forts were built after sacrificing human beings for the benefit of the royalty. Even stories of sacrificing the members of royalty were in vogue among the bards.

I worked on these fast decaying ruins, collected data from both sides of the Ravi, documented them with still photography and collected several stories and legends in vogue of their construction and about the chieftains and their kith and kins living a life of eclats.

Most of these forts and castles have been dismantled or ruined to the extent that we do not find their existence physically but they do possess historical background. Some of them had been levelled to ground to erect new buildings there thus finishing them to non-existence. However, what I could get to weave the stories I did with the active assistance of elders and my friends. Shri D.C. Prashant, ex MP and Thakur Atma Singh Slathia both added to my knowledge of the historical perspective of the palaces of Jammu and Baradari of Wazir Kahnu Slathia, I owe my regards to them. My thanks are due to Shri Tirath Singh Jamwal who chiselled my appetite and wandering lust while tracing the old route to Vaishno Devi via Jagati, the village of legendary warrior, Mian Dido.

I hope the study will be of value to the research scholars working in this field and stimulate them to do further research in this context.

All India Radio,  
Jammu

ASHOK JERATH

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# 1

## *Forts in the Making*

From the study of ancient tribes one can easily infer that earlier human beings were the cave dwellers. They occupied the caves, protruding rocks as shelters and tried to secure these shelters from the wildlife with the help of big boulders bordering their shelter or fencing was done with the help of logs of wood, thorny bushes and fibres collected from the bark of certain trees. With the passage of time they started rearing cattles thus nomadic life came into existence. They wandered from one place to another in search of greener pastures as no cultivation was done till then. They spent nights under the shelter of rocks or erected rustic dwellings with the help of stones, wooden logs and mud and cordoned them with heavy boulders. The conception of community living developed out of sheer fear against the wild beasts followed by the attacks of other clans thus village life with community living came into vogue and much stress was given in the matter of security. Big walls were erected around the settlements for the protection of the settlers. Giving example of such walls, we find Mane walls near each village of Ladakh, several feet high, three to four feet in width but running for miles together. These walls, afterwards were named as Mane walls as they were decorated with Mane stones on which the hymns like '*Om Mane Padme Hum*' were carved or the caricatures of lord Buddha or incarnations of the lord were chiselled. These Mane stones were supposed to be very powerful against the attack of ill souls as they protected the settlers from their vicious designs. The most popular example of these protecting walls is the China wall which is several feet wide and runs for miles together. In fact it was a fortalice constructed by the lords of China to secure their kingdom from possible attacks from aliens, thousands of years ago. Perhaps this was the beginning of the age of forts. The ruins of several ancient settlements of the world tell us that earlier forts were certainly not technically equipped

with all those accessories meant for security and undermined the attackers' skills. In fact they were the big walls erected around the settlements intermittently disrupted by the wide crude chambers, as observation points. Slowly and gradually, need of the hour made these early settlers to think more and to develop ways of fortification of their settlements and as such more formidable forts came into vogue.

The art of making fort in India was at its ebb even during Vedic period. The author of *Buddhist India*, Mr. Rice has referred an architect named Mahagovinda who had designed a fort named Giribraj which was built in an area of about 4.5 miles. During Buddhist period, Raja Bimbisar, a contemporary of Lord Buddha, got constructed several *chaityas*, palaces and shrines and the area was fortified for almost three miles.<sup>1</sup> In fact during Vedic period and afterwards the conception of a fort without the settlement was not possible as they were analogous to each other. We come to know from the Vedic literature that '*Pur*' were the fortified settlements. *Shabdkaalpdrum* also refers to the same fact:

पुरं दुर्गमधिष्ठानं कोट्टो स्त्री राजधान्यपि ।

*Pur* meant a fort, abode, fortified area or the capital. Not only the settlements even the shrines and the temples were covered with thick surrounding walls. Such temples are still there in southeast and northeast India.

In due course of time the forts were erected near the settlements, turns and corners. Generally such forts were erected away from the settlements, on the ridges, keeping into consideration the strategical points. Thus we find that the fort of Jaipur was erected keeping in view the same strategy. Earlier settlements were there in the forts which, in due course of time, shun their limits and became Nagars and Mahanagars analogous to towns, cities and greater cities. Mathura and Indraprastha of the age of Mahabharata and Ayodhya and Sri Lanka of Ramayana age were in fact the forts which expanded into large and larger towns.

We can count a number of examples that small settlements which started in the forts were converted into towns and greater towns afterwards. Chitorh is the befitting example; it started as a fort merely to fight against the invaders but in due course of time it was converted into a town. This was the tradition right from the Vedic age. We find a reference in *Shanti Parva* of Mahabharata. Chanakya was supposed to be the most practical man that India had ever produced almost 320 years B.C. He had given the description of forts in his treatise:

चतुर्दिशं जनपदान्ते साम्परायिकं देवकृतं दुर्गं कारयेत्  
 अन्तर्द्वीपं स्थलं वा निम्नावरुद्धमौदकं प्रास्तरं गुहां वा पार्वतं  
 निरुदकस्तम्भमिरिणं वा धान्वनं रवजनोदकं स्तम्भगहनं वा  
 वनदुर्गम तेषां नदीपवर्तं दुर्गमजनपदा रक्षास्थानं धान्वनवनं दुर्गमटवी स्थानम्

It tells us that security arrangements must be done in all directions of the settlements but strictly with the assistance of the natural resources. Different aspects of this arrangement include the water fort, a fort surrounded by water, or a hill fort that too is of two types one which is surrounded by the hills and another a plateau surrounded by the slopes not easy to climb. Third arrangement is that of making the desert fort, a fort surrounded by an ocean of sand not easy to traverse, and the fourth arrangement is to construct the forts in and amidst forests. They were of two types one was a fort surrounded by marshy land with shrubs grown on the surface and the second type of forest fort was constructed under the canopy of tall trees, thus for the enemy it was rather difficult to judge the activities of the inmates while on the other hand the inmates of the fort had the facility of watching the invaders from their probable attacks.

Mayamat and Mansar, the twin treatises on the construction of forts tell much more about the natural forms and unnatural forms of the forts. According to Mansar forts can be placed in eight categories named Shivir, Sthaniya, Sanvindhathak, Nigam, Vahineemukh, Dronak, Kolak and Skandhavar. Further, depending upon the situation, these forts are again placed in seven categories—hill fort, mixed fort, water fort, forest fort. Dev Durg, mud fort and Airin Durg. Giri Durg or the hill fort is again placed in three categories whether the fort is situated at the top of the hill, or at its slopes or on the plateau of a hillock surrounded by the hills. *Ykti Kalptaru* authored by Bhoja explained the situation and the construction of these forts separately—both the natural and unnatural forms. Samarangan tells us six types of forts, i.e. Jal Durg, Pank Durg, Vana Durg, Airin Durg, Parvtiya Durg and Guha Durg, i.e. water, mud, forest, desert, hill and cave forts.

Analysing the above details we come to know some definite forms and categories of the forts which include forts constructed on the hills, slopes and plateau; forts constructed on the islands surrounded by deep waters; forts surrounded by marshy lands not easy to traverse; forts surrounded by ocean of sand and for miles together there should not be water source or it may be surrounded by the saline soil; forts surrounded by dense forests; forts made of earth and mud, the walls of which should be wider and their length should be double their width; forts constructed

in mixed style of forest and water forts. The superb form of the fort is the Dev Durg i.e. godly fort, the fort which contains the miraculous powers of the heavenly bodies. In fact this type of the fort is secured with the help of godly hymns so that the super powers themselves get down to protect it. According to Shilpratana it is named as Divya Durg that is celestial fort. On its walls settle down the gods like Indira, Vasudeva, Guha, Jayanta, Vaishravana, Ashvinou, Shreemandir, Shiva, Durga and Saraswati. According to Manu this is a type of hill fort protected by the gods. According to Datta, Dev Durg is summed up in this hymn:

ब्रह्मराक्षसवेताल-भूत-प्रेत-गुहैरपि ।  
 शिलावर्ष-प्रवृष्टिभिरालोक्यावेशनिर्गमे ।  
 मंत्र तंत्रादि सायकैरुक्तं देवदुर्गकम् ॥ २

In this region, forts are either hill forts or surrounded by dense forests or the mixture of the two. Most of the forts of this region were built up on the top of a hillock not easy to traverse, surrounded by deep ravines, nullahs or the rivers on their three sides, while the fourth side was connected with land through a moat which was bridged with the help of a mobile bridge or a temporary bridge which could be destroyed on the approach of the enemy. Thus all the important forts of this region like Nagarkot of Kangra, Nurpur, Bahu, Jammu, Bhingarh, Reasi, Mahorgarh near Samba, Jasmer Garh, Heeranagar; Thein fort at Thein etc. were constructed at the top of the hills considering the strategy and the topography of the region. Some of the forts were constructed on somewhat plain area or on the plateau. Forts of Jaganu and that of Ramnagar can be placed in this category. Even the fort of Ramgarh was built up in the plain area but it was covered by dense forests. Thick walls of stones were supported by the masonry work of strong bastions on which were erected the towers with slanting gun points. These towers were connected with each other by cloisters so that in need or emergency instead of climbing down the steps the soldiers defending the forts could go from one turret to another freely. Such cloisters are predominantly visible in the fort of Ramnagar. Generally these forts were erected by the sides of deep ravines and straight slopes, not easy to cover that too when there was an attack from the overhead. These forts invariably had chambers for the Quiledar or the Mansabdar and for his soldiers, commanders who assisted them in forming the strategy. Chambers for storing the ammunition used to be concealed or covered by wide walls, generally in a pyramidal structure. We find such enclosers in Bahu, Bhingarh and Ramnagar forts. There

used to be a religious shrine meant for the clan god, popularly known as Kul Devta or Kul Devi thus we find Mahakali temple in Bahu fort, Girdhar Gopal occupies the central place in Nurpur fort while as Bhimdev was worshipped in the temple constructed in the fort of Bhingarh, Reasi. Sometimes Havelis and palaces were built in the forts wherein the monarch and the members of the royal family used to reside. In fact these forts were the capitals of various states of yore, thus magnificent buildings, palaces and Havelis came into vogue in these forts. Thus forts of Jasrota, Basohli and Jammu were decorated with these palatial buildings. In fact these forts were converted into cities afterwards and series of palaces by different clans were constructed and added subsequently to the buildings already existing.

Almost all the forts did possess a secret path through which the members of the royal family could slip away in emergency without being noticed by the enemy. Thus the secret path from Nagarkot carried the royal family to the bank of a stream opening into a cave-like structure covered by shrubs. Here a boat was always kept ready to take the royal family to the other side of the river bed. History tells us that Raja Sansar Chand left the fort along with his kith and kin through this secret route only when surrounded by the enemy. The concealed path from Jammu palaces and also from Bahu fort led the members of the royal family to river Tawi wherefrom they were taken to other secure places. We can easily trace this secret path from Bahu fort. In fact this path is cave-like structure connecting the underneath chambers of the pyramidal structure meant for the ammunition, with the dungeon and through it opened to outside world. From Jasrota fort a secret path led to the river Ujh and from Ramnagar palace it led to a nullah at the back of the palace where it opened into a cave now converted into a religious shrine by the side of the nullah which is fed by the water coming out of natural spring called Aksharkund.

Some of these forts were erected away from the settlements, at strategic situations so that they might be able to defend their public. Unfortunately they remained isolated and in due course of time these were deserted even by the army and after independence these reduced to rubble. Some of them were declared as historical monuments and were repaired accordingly to stand the parabola of time and face the onslaught of natural calamities. Thus Bhingarh in Reasi, Bahu at Jammu, the fort of Rajouri, Mahorgarh near Samba, Thein at Thein, Lakhampur, Bilawar, Ramkot, Chinas, Akhnoor, Laddan fort etc. are a few examples. Out of these forts Laddan fort Udampur, Mahorgarh near Samba, Ramgarh fort, Thein,

Bilawar fort and Krimachi disappeared from the pages of history, only their rubble inform us that there existed some lavish structures in the past. However the forts of Rajouri, Lakhampur, Ramkot, Jaganu etc. somehow have preserved their legacy as their being away from the settlements might be one of the reasons of their natural preservation. Bhingarh at Reasi, Bahu near Jammu, Ramnagar fort, Akhnoor etc. are remarkably preserved owing to the assistance provided by the Archaeological Survey of India or by the State Department of Museums and Archives. Even Jasrota has also been looked after by three government agencies including Department of Museums and Archives, PHE, and Department of Horticulture. Jasrota clan is also looking after this fort as their legacy. Bhingarh fort is being looked after by Mata Vaishno Devi Trust besides the Department of Horticulture.

Some of the forts were erected near the settlements wherein the palaces and lavish buildings for the royalty were constructed and in due course of time they were added additional structures for their retinue to live in. The subsequent lords went on adding more structures to fulfil the growing need of the hour on one hand and to satiate their urge to build lavish structures by their names on the other hand. Thus towns were developed within the fortified area and in due course of time these towns took the shape of developed cities with infrastructure developed manifolds. Two glaring examples of these forts are those of Jammu and Jasrota. The boundaryline of Jammu was limited to old palaces in the north, Gumat in the south, Ajaibghar in the west and river Tawi in the east. The remains of the Gumat Darwaza and the fort wall were quite prominent a few years ago but with the development of the city manifolds the fort disappeared and in its place city in a form of the Mahanagar has come up on the surface. Jammu took turn in the nineties when almost 50,000 families migrated to Jammu, due to the upsurge of the militancy in the valley of Kashmir. They constructed buildings in and around Jammu especially in its suburban area; thus new mohallas developed as Bhagwatinagar, Pamposhnagar, Durganagar etc. and the city went on adding new structures. With the result the fort disappeared and the settlement area has been developed manifolds superimposing the fortified area.

The fort of Jasrota is another example wherein the palaces were erected by the Dev dynasty during its development phase around 12th century. Subsequent lords went on adding the palatial buildings, Baradaris, shrines, water tanks etc. so that the settlement area was developed manifolds. It took a dramatic turn when Jasrota was gifted to Raja Heera Singh,

the elder son of Raja Dhiyan Singh, the then prime minister of Punjab. Raja Heera Singh lived a few years after the death of his mentor, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and occasionally visited Jasrota but he was much fascinated with the layout of Jammu town as such he always desired to develop a town analogous to the town of Jammu. Luckily the topography and surroundings of Jasrota matched with that of Jammu. It was situated on a slope like that of Jammu and Ujh replaced the Tawi. Even palaces were built in the same fashion. The nomenclature analogous to the mohallas of Jammu and different installations were bestowed upon. Thus like those of Jammu we find Gumat Dhakki, Gumat Darwaza, Raje di Mandi, Panjtirthi etc. Like that of Gumat bazaar shops on both sides of the slope, the Gumat, were built, the ruins of which are still there. In fact, we find two definite complexes of the palaces besides a number of water tanks, temples, Baradaris, open court platforms etc. The fortified area around these palatial buildings has almost turned to rubble, not prominently visible. The whole area had been converted into a city but unfortunately frequent attacks of Sikh army of Punjab, who ruthlessly killed the people including children forced the public to run and migrate to other safer places and the fort was left in ruins of rubble. The building never came into life after the attack of Sikh forces in A.D. 1845.

There are a number of forts which acted as bridge between the past and the present. Jasrota is no more but Jasrota village situated at the foothill of the fort is still alive. In the same way Bahu fort has emerged now as the most popular shrine and the village around it is still named after the fort. The forts were planned strictly accordingly to the demands of the strategy of the location. Generally a plateau was selected among the hill forts and solid bastions were erected with strong foundation. The masonry work was done with solid stones chiselled and mortared with lime and brick powder. Sometimes the paste of the legume powder was added to the structure to make it more adhesive. These bastions were joined together with the help of wide walls ending into cloisters used for the soldiery to combat the enemy. These bastions were constructed into many storeys like that of Ramnagar where three storeyed fort was developed, or Bahu fort where two-storeyed fort was developed, and Laddan fort where three tier system was developed. The uppermost portion was finished into an open turret where the commanders of the forces monitored the activities of the enemy.

The fort irrespective of its structure and the topography possessed a moat that is a furrow between the fort and the main land to make it more secure against the onslaught of the enemy. Generally they were



constructed in square area where the bastions played very important roles. They were erected in such a way that they supported the vertical as well as horizontal walls. These bastions were generally polygonal but sometimes perfect round or quadrangular bastions were also erected. The fort at Laddan is unique in its structure that out of the four bastions three are polygonal but one is quadrangular. These bastions were constructed with solid stones, foundation went several feet deep and at least for one or two storeys they were erected with solid stones and the uppermost storey opened into chambers with slanting gun points. It served as observation post wherefrom the guards could easily monitor the activities of the invaders, if any, and plan the strategy to check them accordingly. Generally these bastions were interconnected with cloisters so as to facilitate the forces to move from one direction of the fort to another freely without getting down the stairs. Ammunition chamber, a shrine attributed to the family god or goddess, chambers for the Quiledar and his assistants to live in were the other accessories needed for a fort. Above all water reservoirs were built to store water for daily use as well as for emergent situations. Large tanks were built up with such techniques that rain water would be collected in the tanks which automatically filtered through sedimentation. Some forts like Jasrota, Bahu etc. had multiple water reservoirs. Jasrota fort especially was famous for its large tanks like swimming pools which dried up in due course of time due to non-maintenance. If they are repaired and maintained properly they can prove to be assets and source of tourism in this region. Some forts possess natural water resources like natural springs which were maintained properly. Fort of Laddan contained a large water spring which was in vogue of late when the rubble filled the water source and it was finished for ever. Ramgarh fort, very near to Jammu had a natural water source which was exploited by Department of Agriculture and afterwards by the army units. Since the fort is situated in the plain area as such the water level can be reached easily, hardly six or seven feet depth of a well can produce positive results. In the same way source of water at Jasmergarh was a deep well which afterwards became the source of several legends after the fort was deserted. Likewise Basohli fort and palaces, Nurpur fort, Nagarkot fort, Kangra, Mahorgarh, Teera Sujampur fort and palaces contained some popular water sources.

Generally the forts were erected by the side of streams, rivulets, rivers and furrows filled with water. The situation served two purposes i.e. on one side they blocked the easy access to the fort and on the other they served the source of water during peaceful days. The third and the most

important aspect of these rivers and furrows surrounding the forts was that they concealed the secret exits to be used during emergency. The ruins of most of the forts contained secret exits and they have been detected in most of the cases.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Dwijendra Lal Shukla, *Bhartiya Sthapatya*, 1968, p. 47.
2. *Ibid*, p. 71.

## 2

### *Forts on the Left Side of the Ravi*

Forts were in vogue in almost each and every erstwhile kingdom and state for defence as well as to store the riches and grains secretly to avoid their theft. They were the formidable structures against any attack and would not yield easily to the enemy. Erstwhile state of Kangra was famous for such formidable structures. Among them Nagarkot or Kot Kangra was superb and remained the bone of contention for the invaders, aliens and Mughals right from medieval times. Here are the details of some of the important forts situated on the left side of the river Ravi.

#### KANGRA FORT

The Kangra fort is situated at a peculiar strategical situation overlooking deep furrows leading to wide spanned stream. The fort, now in ruins, once commanded respect among the hill chieftains. Perched on a hillock about two kms from the town of Kangra it still demands excavations to fill in the gaps created due to missing links. It was popularly known as Nagarkot or Kot Kangra. Kot denotes a fort and Nagar denotes a town, so collectively it meant the fort of the town. The clan who ruled Kot Kangra was named Katoch after Kot. In fact, this fort was so peculiar in its situation and formidable features that it became a unique structure among the prevailing forts. So the clan ruling this fort was known as Katoch. According to an old man of the town the people responsible for its administration and supervision were always present in the fort, and in vernacular they were called *Kot'ch* that is why they became popular as Katoch. The old town of Kangra alongwith this fort came into existence in post-Mahabharata battle through the efforts of Susurman, the king of Trigarta and an ally of Kourvas. Susuraman is mentioned in Mahabharata in several chapters and sections of the epic.<sup>1</sup>

This king of Trigarta is also mentioned in the 30th Chapter of Virat Parva of Mahabharata in addition to several chapters of Karan and Bhisham Parvas. Susarmpura is referred in Baijnath Eulogies and also in *Rajtarangini*.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the town of Kangra was named after its originator Susurma earlier.

Several legends are in vogue pertaining to the nomenclature of the fort. According to a popular belief, the name was derived from Kangarh, 'the fort of the ear' referring to the legend that the fort stands over the ear of the giant demon Jalandhara, who was overcome by Lord Shiva and buried under a mass of mountains, his head being in Kangra valley, his ear under the fort, his mouth at Jwalamukhi, his back under the town of Jalandhar and his feet at Multan.<sup>3</sup> The story of the death of the demon is described in detail in Jalandhara Purana. As according to the myth Jalandhara did not allow the people to settle down in peace in the area of Doab. He was killed several times by Lord Shiva but he would not die due to the boon bestowed upon him by Brahma. Finally Lord Shiva buried him in the soil. So huge was the body of the demon that it covered the area of 48 kos (104 kms approx.). It is presumed that it is the exact extent of Jalandhar Peetha pilgrimage.<sup>4</sup> Alternative name for the kingdom of Jalandhar in ancient documents is Trigarta, meaning the land of three rivers.<sup>5</sup> The three rivers referred are the Ravi, the Beas and the Satluj. But Moorcroft differed and according to him, "In those documents the name Trigarta is always applied to the lower Beas valley—that is Kangra proper. Hutchison and Vogel point out three tributaries of Beas namely Banganga, Kurali and Nayagul which unite at Haripur, under the name of Trigadh. According to them this Trigadh is the colloquial form of Trigart. According to these authors there may be two kingdoms, Jalandhara belonging to plains and Trigarta that of the hills."<sup>6</sup>

However, Cunningham quoting a Sanskrit rhyme credited to some Hema-Chandra (source is not given) affirms that both Jalandhara and Trigarta are synonymous:<sup>7</sup>

*Jalandhara Trigartah Syuth*

Since these two names have been referred again and again in Rajtarangini, Hemkosha, and Puranas it is inferred that both the names were in vogue in those times. But in Mahabharata only Trigarta is referred. Hiuen Tsang, a famous Chinese traveller passed through Jalandhara during his travels in north India and had given the details that it was a country 1000 li (about 267 kms) in breadth from north to south. According to Cunningham if the dimensions given by the Chinese traveller are

correct then Jalandhara must have included the state of Chamba on the north, with Mandi and Suket on the east and Stadru on the southeast.<sup>8</sup>

Some historians named it Bhimkot<sup>9</sup> and Bhimnagar<sup>10</sup> perhaps it might have been re-erected or renovated by a feudal lord named Bhim Chand. However Jalandhara and Trigarta both names are used for the same country in the second Baijnath Eulogy. Jaya Chandra, the overlord of the Rajanaka of Kiragrama (Baijnath) is called “the supreme king of Jalandhara”. Hridaya Chandra is also called, “king of Trigarta”. The names thus indicated a well recognised territorial area at the time when the Eulogies were inscribed (A.D. 1204).<sup>11</sup>

Nagarkot or the fort of Kangra was so famous for the storage of riches that Mahmud Gaznavi in his fourth expedition to India defeated Punjab and directly came to Kangra in A.D. 1009 and Nagarkot was seized. No strong defence was there to oppose or face the enemy as most of the local forces alongwith their feudal lord were out to face the invader at Sindh (Indus), thus there was no major problem for the conqueror. Mahmud looted all the wealth. According to Utbi, the historian and the secretary of Mahmud, “The amount was so huge that the backs of camel could not carry it, nor vessels contain it, nor writers’ hands record it, nor imagination of an arithmetician conceive it.” Ferishta states the amount as 7,00,000 golden Dinars; 700 maunds of gold and silver plate; 200 maunds of pure gold in ingots; 2000 maunds of silver bullion; and twenty maunds of various jewels, including pearls, corals, diamonds and rubies, and other property of value. All of it was taken to Gazani and displayed on a carpet spread in a courtyard of the palace.<sup>12</sup> A garrison was left in the fort which held possession till A.D. 1043 when it was freed with the assistance of a Hindu king of Delhi, who according to a myth, met the deity in his dreams and was told that it was coming back to its place in Nagarkot. It is said that a facsimile of the original idol was prepared and placed in a garden near the temple secretly which being discovered in the morning was carried to its establishment with all pomp and show. Devotees visited the shrine in thousands and showered riches to the tune of its deposits carried away by the invaders.<sup>13</sup> Cunningham was of the view that such vast accumulation of wealth was only possible by the deposits of treasures of Turki Shahi kings, whose pedigree for 60 generations was found recorded on a piece of silk at the capture.<sup>14</sup> Turki Shahi dynasty which ruled Kabul stretched upto Punjab was overthrown by a Brahman Wazir of last Raja of the line named Lalliya, who founded the Hindu-Shahi dynasty and changed the capital to Udbhandapura, now Ohind, on the Indus but afterwards the capital was shifted to Lahore in

A.D. 962 and due to the frequent attacks of Muhammadans the dynasty Hindu-Shahi came to an end in A.D. 1021.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps Nagarkot was the part of Hindu-Shahi kingdom and might be considered the most safe place for such deposits.

Alberuni also confirmed that the names of the Turki-Shahi princes on the piece of silk were found in the fort of Nagarkot at its capture. They had reigned for sixty generations. The Turki-Shahi kingdom may have been founded about A.D. 50, possibly on the overthrow of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. Kanishka was the most famous king of the dynasty, which came to an end about A.D. 870.<sup>16</sup> Henceforth for almost three centuries the fort remained in the hands of its natives, more or less in peace till Mohammad Tughlak seized it in A.D. 1337. A vivid view of the seize has been recited by Badr-i-Chach, a poet at Mohammad's court, "when the Sun was in cancer, the king of the time, took the stone fort of Nagarkot, in the year A.H. 738 (A.D. 1337). It is placed between rivers like the pupil of an eye, and the fortress has so preserved its honour and is so impregnable that neither Sikandar nor Dara was able to take it . . . The exalted king of kings of the earth arrived at night at this fortress with 1,00,000 companions. His army contained 1000 stars and under each star 1000 banners were displayed."<sup>17</sup> This seize of the fort, in fact, was the imagination of the poet as no historian mentioned it. Even Barni, the contemporary of Muhammad Tughlak and author of *Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi* had not mentioned this incident. In fact the king invaded China in A.D. 1337 with a strong force of 1,00,000 soldiers but miserably failed. Only ten of them returned to tell their tragedy to Mohammad Tughlak, who did not accompany them. They were at once executed. While returning they might have travelled through Kangra and were informed about the formidable features of the fort which were woven by the bard to soothe the wounded pride of the king.<sup>18</sup>

It was Raja Prithavi Chand who reigned Kangra from A.D. 1330 to A.D. 1345. He was followed by Parab Chand in A.D. 1345. Parab Chand was followed by Rup Chand. In A.D. 1365, during the reign of Rupchand, Feroz Shah Tughlak, the descendent of Mohammad Tughlak, invaded the fort. In fact Rup Chand was an ambitious king. He recruited soldiers to stand a military invasion to the plains. Having achieved his objective he attacked the kingdoms of plains and even went upto Delhi. On his return journey he was surrounded by Shahab-ud-din of Kashmir. Rup Chand surrendered before him and submitted the booty looted by Rup Chand. By A.D. 1365. Feroz Tughlak seized the fort to avenge Rup Chand for his attack to the places around Delhi. The seize went on for months together

but there was no way to penetrate the formidable walls of the fort. Feroz Shah Tughlak was exhausted. One fine morning, "he perceived the Rai standing on the top of his citadel. There he stood in an attitude of humility, and stretching out his hands in sign of distress, he clasped his hands and vowed in subjection. When the Sultan observed this he withdrew a handkerchief from his bosom, and waving it kindly towards the Rai, he signed for him to come down. The Mehtas of the Rai assembled and counselled surrender so the Rai, throwing off his pride came down from his fort, and making apologies cast himself at the feet of Sultan; who with much dignity placed his hand on the back of the Rai, and having bestowed on him robes of honour and an umbrella sent him back to his fort."<sup>19</sup> According to Ferishta the idol worshipped by Hindus in Nagarkot as goddess was the image of Nowshaba, the wife of Alexander the great, and that the conquerer had left the idol with them. There was a library of 1300 books on religion, philosophy and astrology in the temple and the Sultan ordered one of these books to be translated into Persian. Thus Eizud-din Khalid Khani translated a volume into Persian language and named it *Dalayil-i-Feroz Shahi*. But Ma'asir-ul-Umara referring to the seize of Kangra mentions that despite his resources the Sultan could not carry on the seize of the fort and contented himself with an interview with the Raja. The Raja invited the Sultan and some of his courtiers into the fort. The Sultan, astonishingly, asked the Raja how did he believe the positive designs of the Sultan. He could have attempted on the Raja but the Raja shrewdly signalled and his men, at once, crowd after crowd came out of their hiding equipped with arms that the Sultan was in consternation. The Sultan was assured that he was not to be harmed, measures of prudence were necessary.<sup>20</sup> It seems to be a fact as earlier quoted reference from *Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi* possesses many flaws in that theory that why a Sultan would pardon a Raja that too after capturing the formidable fort. Why should he honour his enemy after victory? The quotation quoted from the rhyme created by Manik Chand in A.D. 1562 has also been interpreted wrongly. The couplet is:

*Rup Chander Bharkar Charho Dileswar Surtan  
Bahut hetkar pag paro pith hath lei san.*

It has been interpreted by Hutchison and Vogel in their work, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I and also by the author of *Kangra Gazetteer* in the same manner. In fact both the scripts possess several anomalies. Both the authors have observed and analysed the facts subjectively and twisted them according to their own whims. Here in

this couplet the words 'Bharkar Charho' have been interpreted for welcome but in fact they connote attack. It meant Raja Rup Chand attacked Delhi Sultan fiercely and the haughty Sultan was on his knees. The Raja did not harm him instead showered his friendly gestures and invited him to the fort where already-said incident took place. The question as to why the Sultan was pardoned has its answer that the Raja did not like to enhance confrontation but instead liked to live in peace. Cunningham states that after the capture of Kangra fort a Muhammedan garrison was left there does not corroborate with contemporary writings of Ferishta as well as *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. Even the Ma'asir-ul-Umara confirms that the fort was not occupied. After the death of Firoz Shah, his son, Nasur-ud-Din could not hold the reins and was driven from power by his two cousins. He fled towards mountains for his safety and retreated to Nagarkot. He remained there till the end of A.D. 1390 and was treated generously by Sangara Chand, the son of Raja Rup Chand, who was the lord of the fort. Thereafter in A.D. 1540 when Sher Shah Suri came into power he ordered his commander, Khawas Khan, to subjugate the hill states. Thus Nagarkot, once again, was captured by the foreigners and they carried along with them stone image of the goddess in addition to the booty they had looted from the fort. It is said that Sher Shah Suri ordered the commander to give the stone to the butcher for weighing purpose and the copper umbrella covering the idol was melted to design copper pots for the use in mosques and the royal palace.<sup>21</sup> However the fort remained in the control of its natives. When great Mughal emperor, Akbar, came to Nurpur vicinity chasing Sikander Shah, Raja Dharam Chand of Nagarkot came there to make his submission before the emperor. The next reference of the fort comes on the surface during the reign of Raja Jai Chand (A.D. 1570) when the lord of Nagarkot incurred Akbar's suspicion, and an order was issued for his arrest which was effected by Raja Ram Chand of Guler; and he was put in confinement, probably in Delhi and his minor son, thinking him dead took the reins in his hands and revolted against the Mughals. An army under Khan Jahan Husain Quili Khan, Viceroy of Punjab, was sent to subdue the country, which had been bestowed by the emperor in Jagir upon Raja Birbal. The Mughals reached Kotla court via Pathankot and Nurpur. The Mughal army took it easy to capture Kotla but they had to struggle hard as the Quiledar, who was loyal to Jai Chand would not yield easily. Mughals had to ascend a hillock opposite and ordered to bring guns which were brought with much labour and fired to shatter the walls of the fort. The garrison braved the guns but were not capable of holding a huge army hence they left the fort in the dark of the



night<sup>22</sup> but it was really a tremendous job for the Kangra garrison to hold the Mughals despite shattering of the walls of the fort.

On reaching Kangra, the Mughal army attacked on the suburb of Bhavan, here Bhavan is the temple of Brajreshwari Devi, about two kms from Kangra fort. Having ransacked the temple, Kangra court was seized. The seize was in progress when the Mughal garrison received the reports of invasion of Punjab by Ibrahim Husain Mirza and Masud Mirza, the relatives of emperor Akbar. Commanders had a meeting and negotiations were pursued on four conditions—That the Raja shall send a daughter into the harem of the emperor; that he will furnish a satisfactory tribute; that he will send with them, for their satisfaction, a man of trust and character, so that in case the Emperor disapproves of the terms, the man may remain until the fort is evacuated; and the fourth condition was to pay a large sum.<sup>23</sup> Having agreed to the conditions of peace the Raja payed a large tribute, five maunds of gold, Akbar Shahi weight and various kinds of stuffs for his majesty.<sup>24</sup>

After this expedition the Emperor deputed his finance minister, Todar Mal to confiscate the territory from the hill states. After accomplishing the job he reported in metaphorical language, “had taken the meat and left the bones,” that he had annexed the fertile tracts leaving bare hills to the hill chiefs. The portion of the demesne taken from Kangra seems to have included sixty six villages in the valley and the whole of Rihlu was annexed from Chamba.<sup>25</sup> When Jahangir occupied the throne, after the death of Akbar, his one of the priorities was to capture the fort of Kangra, the wish he was rearing from his teenage. It is said that he was very fond of a parrot which was in possession of Trilok Chand, a Kangra prince. Jahangir asked for the same which was refused causing a grudge cherished by Salim against Trilok Chand. As such on A.D. 1615 Mughal army under the trusted command of Sheikh Farid Murtaza Khan associated by Raja Suraj Mal of Nurpur seized the fort. The seize went on for an year and the fort was at the verge of fall that Raja Suraj Mal, who was not internally in favour of annexing it, hindered the operation. He was called back. Shortly afterwards Murtaza Khan died and the seize “fell into the knot of abeyance.”<sup>26</sup> In A.D. 1617 on the request of Raja Suraj Mal, seize of the fort was ordered and Mughal command was entrusted upon the Bakshi of prince Khurram, Shah Quli Khan Muhammad Taqi. Suraj Mal had another design in his mind. He complained the incompetence of the Bakshi to the prince resulting in his recall. Slowly and gradually with calculated plan he reduced the strength of Mughal force with a pretext that local soldiers were more acclimatized with the hard and tough

situation of the rugged hills. Not only he slashed the Mughals but killed an imperial officer who objected to his designs. Instead of seizure of the fort Raja Suraj Mal plundered the Jagir of Nur Jahan's father. On hearing of the revolt, a strong force at once was despatched by the Emperor, under Sunder Das, Rai Raiyan. Suraj Mal took refuge in the Mau fort and retreated to Nurpur and finally to Chamba, where he died.<sup>27</sup> The fort was seized which went on for one year and two months. Finally when nothing was left in the fort, even the occupants depending upon the bark of the trees, were helpless; there was no other way than to surrender. Jahangir, when heard of its capture, was overjoyed. In the spring of A.D. 1622 Jahangir visited Kangra accompanied by Nur Jahan Begum, so fascinated was he with the beauty of the valley that he ordered a palace to be erected for his residence, and the foundations were actually laid in Mauza Ghurkari, but the building was never completed.<sup>28</sup>

Jahangir was so glad to capture the fort that he erected a doorway on the frame of which a marble slab with inscription of the date of its capture was fixed. It was named as Jahangiri Darwaza. This fort remained in the possession of the Mughals till A.D. 1783 when it fell into the hands of Sikhs. The first Quiledar was Nawab Ali Khan who was succeeded by his son Hurmat Khan. During the reign of Shahjahan, the fort was held by Nawab Assad Ullah Khan and Koch Quli Khan, the latter retaining the charge for 17 years till his death. He is buried on the bank of the Mununi river, a branch of the Banganga, which flows under Kangra fort.<sup>29</sup> The fort was under the charge of Sayid Husain Khan Hasan, Abdulla Khan, Pathan and Nawab Sayid Khalil Khan successively during Aurangzeb's reign.

The last Mughal Quiledar was Nawab Saif Ali Khan who was appointed in the year A.D. 1743. During all this tenure the Katoch Rajas were contended on the petty Jagirs—Nadaun, Palam, Mahal Sarai, Jaisukh and Malhar. They thought it futile to fight against more powerful enemy, however, an undercurrent of revolt was running from one generation to another. They channelised their energies to construct new palaces, to establish new towns and to erect the forts. Thus Vijay Ram Chand (A.D. 1660) founded the town of Vijaypur on the right bank of the Beas, which continued to be the residence of the Rajas till the reign of Ghamand Chand. Bhim Chand the nephew of Vijay Ram Chand built a temple at Vijaypur and his younger brother Kirpal Chand, constructed the Bhawarnawali Kulh, a canal which was the longest in Kangra. Alam Chand (A.D. 1697) founded Alampur on the right bank of the Beas opposite Tira Sujanpur. His son, Hamir Chand had a long reign of 47 years. He built a small fort

near Hamirpur after which that place is named. His nephew Ghamand Chand was a powerful Katoch Raja who extended his territory on all directions. He was appointed Nazim or Governor of the Jalandhar Doab under the Afghans, thus he was declared a supreme force in Jalandhar circle. Even he seized Kangra fort but could not succeed in capturing it. He built the fort of Tira Sujanpur at the left bank of the Beas. It was Raja Sansar Chand, the grandson of Ghamand Chand, when came to power (A.D. 1775), directed his energies towards the recovery of the fort. He with the forceful assistance of Jai Singh Kanheya, a Sikh commander, seized the fort. The old Quiledar, Saifula was dying and his son Zulfikar, finding no help from the crumbling Mughal empire, surrendered before the combined forces of Sikhs and Rajputs but shrewdly Jai Singh Kanheya managed to capture<sup>30</sup> the fort in the year A.D. 1783 Three years afterwards, in A.D., 1786 Jai Singh surrendered the fort to Sansar Chand in lieu of Sansar Chand's territory in the plains. Thus after long struggle Sansar Chand could acquire the old seat of his ancestors and was unchallenged lord of the hill principalities of Jalandhara circle.

Raja Sansar Chand had a peaceful time for twenty years when he was acclaimed as undisputed monarch of the hills but he was not contented with the hills and wanted to extend his kingdom to the extent of plains upto Lahore. It was a common blessing in the Darbar of Raja Sansar Chand, *Lahore Prapat*, i.e. may you acquire Lahore.<sup>31</sup> He tried hard to capture plains in the direction of Hoshiarpur but was defeated by the forces of Ranjit Singh. He was frustrated to the extent that he attacked Bilaspur and annexed a portion of its territory. It was the greatest mistake he had committed. Raja of Bilaspur invited Amar Singh Thapa of Nepal to invade Kangra and that his forces would assist Gurkha army. Thus in A.D. 1806. Gurkhas, after receiving a secret report that there was a change in the Katoch army invaded Kangra assisted by the forces of Bilaspur and other hill states situated to the east of the Ravi. The first attack was at Mahal Morian and Sansar Chand with his family and courtiers moved into the fort which was seized. The seize continued for four long years but in vain. They started plundering the locality that there was chaos everywhere and the people fled to neighbouring states for protection and for their livelihood. Raja Sansar Chand appealed Ranjit Singh, the Maharaja of Punjab for help but there was no response. Finally he started negotiating with Gurkhas that if he and his family be allowed to leave the fort he was ready to surrender. He left the fort secretly and retired to Sujanpur Tira along with his family. In May 1809 Ranjit Singh, on second request from Sansar Chand, left Lahore for Kangra. At Jwalamukhi both

the leaders met and had a pact that the fort would be handed over to Ranjit Singh and in lieu he would take the responsibility of the safety of Sansar Chand and his family. On the other hand Sansar Chand had a secret pact with Gurkhas that the fort would be surrendered to Gurkhas. In fact Sansar Chand could not comprise with the loss of the fort which was captured after a great struggle. Ranjit Singh, knowing the fact, seized Anurudh Chand, son of Raja Sansar Chand, who was in his camp, and held him as a hostage for the fulfilment of the treaty.<sup>32</sup>

Sansar Chand was alarmed and approached the gate of the fort on an elephant along with Ranjit Singh but Naurang, the commandant of the fort did not allow Ranjit Singh to enter the fort until he was relieved from his duties officially by Sansar Chand. Raja Sansar Chand did accordingly and led him out of the fort by hand followed by the possession of the fort by Maharaja of Punjab, Ranjit Singh. Raja Sansar Chand was granted in writing the rest of the Kangra state except the portion attached to the fort under the Mughals, consisting of 66 villages in the Kangra valley.<sup>33</sup>

The fort remained under the suzerainty of Sikh rule till pre-independent era. In fact with Raja Sansar Chand's death the history of valour of Katoch clan came to an end. History of Kangra rulers was centralised around the events related to the fort of Kangra. The Rajas occupying the fort were always busy in the safeguard of the fort while as the Katoch Rajas thrown out of the fort following its seizure by the enemy, struggled throughout their lives to free it from the clutches of the enemy. In fact the history of Katoch Rajas, from the time immemorial, is the history of Nagarkot or Kot Kangra.

The colossal buildings, once a challenge to monarchs, have been reduced to ruins especially after the earthquake of 1905. Pathans, Mughals, Gurkhas, Sikhs all of them cherished a desire to conquer the fort. Whosoever was the occupant of the fort was considered as undisputed lord of the hills. Feudal lords, Mughal emperors and historians were so fascinated that they have mentioned it, in their memoirs. *Shah Fat'h-i-Kangra*, written in the reign of Shah Jahan, is the perhaps best document, containing the description of the fort so vivid in narration that a complete picture of the fort has been projected: "The fort of Kangra is very lofty and stands on a very high hill. Its buildings are very beautiful. It is so old that no one can tell at what period it was built. This fort is very strong: in so much that no king was ever able to take it; and it is unanimously declared by all persons acquainted with the history of the ancient Rajas, that from the beginning upto this time, it has always remained in possession

of one and the same family. The fact is also confirmed by the histories of Mohammadan kings who had reigned in this country. From A.H. 720 (A.D. 1320), or the commencement of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din's power to the year 936 (A.D. 1556), when the Emperor Akbar became master of the whole country of Hindustan, the fort had been besieged no less than fifty-two times by the most powerful kings and rulers, but no one has been able to take it. Feroz, who was one of the greatest kings of Delhi, once laid siege to this fort, but it baffled all his efforts; for at least he was contended with having an interview with the Raja, and was obliged to return unsuccessful. In the reign of Emperor Akbar, one of his greatest nobles, Hasan Kuli Khan Turkoman entitled '*Khan-i-Jahan*', Governor of Province of Bengal, attacked this fort, at the head of a numerous army, after he was appointed to the government of Punjab; but notwithstanding a long siege, he also failed in taking it. To be successful in such a great and difficult task was beyond all expectations; but providence has destined a time for all works, at which they must be accomplished; and hence it was that the Emperor, notwithstanding all his efforts, could not obtain possession. It was destined to fall into the hands of the mighty army of Emperor Jahangir, under the influence of whose prosperous star all difficulties were overcome, and all obstacles removed.<sup>34</sup> Though, the author has given enough weightage to this seizure but at what cost? It took Mughal army four years two months and a few days, that too, the fort was surrendered only when not even a blade of grass to eat was left in the fort.

Jahangir, after the capture of the fort, also had almost similar observation. He mentions in *Waqiat-i-Jahangiri*, "On this day (5th Muharram, A.H. 1029 i.e. 20th Nov., 1620), the joy enhancing news of the conquest of the fort of Kangra rejoiced our mind. In thankfulness for this great boon and important victory, which was one of the renewed favours of Bestower of Gifts, I bowed the head of humility at the throne of the merciful creator, and beat with loud sounds the drum of gladness and pleasure. Kangra is an ancient fort to the north of Lahore, situated in the midst of the hill country, famous for its strength and the difficulty in conquering it. Who was the founder of this fort God only knows. The belief of the zamindars of the province of the Punjab is that, during this period the said fort has never passed to any other tribe, and no stranger has stretched out to it the hand of dominion. Wisdom is from Allah, but certainly from the time when the voice of Islam and the sound of the established religion of Mohammad reached Hindustan, not one of the Sultans of lofty dignity has obtained the victory over it."<sup>35</sup>

The author of *Ma'asir-ul-Umara* has also given the description of the fort, "That fort (Kangra) is situated on the summit of a high mountain; it is extremely strong and possesses twenty-three bastions and seven gateways. The interior circumference is one Kos and fifty chains; the length, one fourth of a Kos plus two chains; the width, between 15 and 25 chains; its height, 114 cubits. Within the forts are two large tanks."<sup>36</sup>

While giving the topography of the fort Cunningham writes, "The fort of the Kangra occupies a long narrow strip of land in the fort between the Manjhi and the Banganga rivers. Its walls are upwards of two miles in circuit, but its strength does not lie in its works, but in the precipitous cliffs overhanging the two rivers, which on the side of Banganga rise to a height of about 300 feet. The only accessible point is on the land side towards the town, but here the ridge of the rocks which separates the two rivers is narrowed to a mere neck of a few hundred feet, across which a deep ditch has been hewn at the foot of the walls. The only works of any consequence are at this end of the fort, where the high ground appears to be an offshoot from the western end of the Malkara hill, which divides the town of Kangra from the suburb of Bhawan. The highest point is occupied by the palace, below which is a courtyard containing the small stone temples of Lakshmi Narayan and Ambika Devi and a Jain temple with a large figure of Adinath."<sup>37</sup>

The history of Kangra fort after its seizure by the Sikhs is almost blank with the exception of mention of the first Sikh Governor in the name of Desa Singh Majithia who treated Raja Sansar Chand with respect and honour.

An interesting memoir about the Kangra fort and the town has been scribbled in a book entitled *Adventurer in the Punjab. A Legendary Character*, Col. Bellasis was created to add glamour to the story. Col. Bellasis was appointed Governor of the fort with condition that he would not surrender the fort to any person, whosoever be the person, might be a powerful courtier of Sikh Darbar, until there was Parwana from the Maharaja himself. The idea could not be relished by the three Rajas of Jammu, Gulab Singh, Dhiyan Singh and Suchet Singh. They hatched a plan to throw away the Col. Raja Dhiyan Singh, as prime minister, wrote a letter to Col. Bellasis to hand over the fort to Raja Suchet Singh. Col. Bellasis refused the proposal resulting into a skirmish between the men of Suchet Singh and Col. Bellasis. Raja Suchet Singh and his men entered the fort with a palanquin, in a garb of a marriage procession but the plan was disclosed just at the entry and there was a fierce fighting between the two forces and several casualties took place on both sides. Suchet

Singh and his men retreated and settled in a camp almost half a mile from the fort. During the night, when the men of Suchet Singh were sleeping after the eventful day, Col. Bellasis attacked them with all his force and afflicted several serious damages to the enemy. Suchet Singh left Kangra and the problem was discussed seriously in the Sikh court but internally Maharaja Ranjit Singh was happy to get the results in his favour. In fact the designs of Ranjit Singh were difficult to understand. He was a shrewd king, never permitted anyone, may be the closest person, to peep into his darker zones.<sup>38</sup>

Further, the author of the *Adventurer in the Punjab* refers to a combined attack of the hill principalities against Kangra fort force but the plan was disclosed by the personal attendant of the Col. thus it was reverted and the attackers had to retreat with humiliation.<sup>39</sup>

There were seven gates after its capture at the times of Jahangir. These gates were named as Jahangiri Darwaza, Andheri Darwaza, Mahalon ka Darwaza, Darshani Darwaza, Amiri Darwaza, Ahini Darwaza and Bahiri Darwaza. Earlier their names were different but no one is sure for their names. Jahangiri Darwaza was the gate which led to the flight of stairs. Mahalon ka Darwaza, Darshani Darwaza, Amiri Darwaza were in vogue for palaces, temples and courtiers respectively. Ahini Darwaza was an iron gate with plates and bars attached whereas Bahiri Darwaza was meant for commoners etc. This was the gate leading to the outer world hence it used to be guarded well. As according to some old men of the locality there was a secret door also which opened on the river side but only royalty was in the know of it. It used to exit on the ravines of the river Banganga. A boat was always kept ready in the darker cells of the secret path so that during floods in the river there should not be any hazard. On the seige of the fort by the Gurkhas, it is believed that, Raja Sansar Chand along with his family escaped from the fort through this secret path only in the garb of a peasant family.

Just on the right side of the entrance to the fort there is a large *Hamam* still intact. The water was supplied through natural spring with the help of small tubelets. It was heated with the help of fuel and the hot water used to be stored in a tank. It was supplied through taps in the spacious bathrooms. It was built during the reign of the first Quiledar of Jahangir, Nawab Ali Khan but most of the chambers were erected afterwards. The source of natural water in the form of natural spring was alive till a few years back. The author of these lines visited the fort in April 1991 when the spring was bubbling with sweet water. Department of Archaeology of Government of India has established a cell in the courtyard of the fort

and has preserved some of the images, probably, taken from temple complex of the fort.

A recent visit on 28th January, 1996 to the fort had created a mixed impression that was never envisaged within a span of four years much destruction and deterioration was observed. The stone images which were kept in a cell for exhibition, were never displayed despite the fact scores of persons have been employed by Archaeological Survey of India.

Northeast side of the fort contains a cemetery outside of its walls. It presents a deserted look as most of the broken cross stones are scattered around the graves. No attendant is there to look after the cemetery. A few of the graves carry identification stones. The largest grave is of some lieutenant who was killed in 1850 at the age of twenty-five years. On the lower strata, by the side of the cemetery we find a *Hamam* with an open tank and three chambers once meant for taking steam bath as well as to enjoy cozy warmth of water during cold winters. Open tank was once decorated with godly images, the niches in which they were kept are devoid of any such structure now. The tank was fed by a lion mouthed water outlet, centrally placed in the central wall. It is dry now, however, just at a 15 feet distance a natural spring bubbles out sweet water through a lion-mouthed water outlet. Perhaps it was the same spring which fed the tank but in due course of time its direction was changed. From the tank water was syphoned at the height of ceiling of the chambers where it was heated and supplied through taps in bathrooms. The tank was constructed during Hindu period before the seizure of the fort by Jahangir but *Hamam* was constructed during Mohammadan period, by the Nawabs responsible for the fort.

The entrance to the fort is guarded by a large gate of thick wooden planks fixed on the hinges of an arch constructed with sand stones. It is almost 15 feet in height. It is named as Ranjit Singh gate. A moat cut into rocks, connecting Banganga and Manjhi rivers separates the fort from the outside world. Two banks of the moat are bridged with a passage of 30 feet in length and 12 feet in width partially cut into conglomerate bed. Almost 10 feet away there is another arch of the same height on the top of which a marble plate is fixed with some Punjabi characters chiselled on it. Perhaps the stone mentions about the seizure of the fort by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Passing through two more archs almost of the same size, popularly known as Amiri and Ahini Darwazas respectively, built by Nawab Asif Khan, we reach Jahangiri Darwaza built in A.D. 1622 to commemorate the victory of Jahangir over Katoch Rajas and seizure of the formidable fort of Kangra. On the gate, it is said, was inscribed the



date of conquest, on a marble slab.<sup>40</sup> We can reach this gate with the flight of 45 stairs of 6 inches height and four to five feet in width. On the left side of the stairs, in the thick walls of the fort overlooking Banganga, we find gun points, the number of which is equal to the number of the stairs. On the left side of the 25th stair there is a false gate to the wall of the fort wherein three niches are carved with three images set in them. On left side there is an image of pot belly, Ganesha, 2.5 feet in length and 1.5 feet in width, carved out of grey sand stones. On the right side there is an image of eight-armed deity riding on lion, might be of Durga. Its cuts are more acute. Among the weapons trident in her one right hand is more prominently carved. Its size is the same as that of the size of Ganesha. Between the two godly images we find a small, beautifully carved image of a flying horse. On the top of the false gate we find an image of monkey god, Hanuman. While moving up a few steps we find three more images—two of Ganesha on either side of Hanuman sitting on a multipetaloid flower. After a few steps we find an arch popularly known as Ahini Darwaza which had a grilled iron gate once. From this arch to the next arch situated at 31st step, from where the steps make a curvature, we find a well on right side and images in the niches, as mentioned above, on left side. This was the gate named as Amiri Darwaza. After 45th step, almost on the ascent, we find three arches of different sizes, first is the highest, 30 feet; second is about 20 feet in height and the third one is of 15 feet in height. Perhaps the first arch was attributed to Jahangiri Darwaza as mentioned above.

From Jahangiri Darwaza we reach to the first phase of the fort, an open ascent with a narrow pass, once covered by huge walls of a gate known as Andheri Darwaza, owing to darkness due to narrow pass and covered huge walls, the remains of which are but rubble standing in dangerous look on either side of the path. The passage bifurcates ahead making way for two paths, one leading to the remains of a mosque, built by Jahangir after the fort was seized. Further south to the mosque, at lower strata, we find a reservoir of water, popularly known as Kapoor Sagar. From here a path leads to a gate which has its exit on other side of the fort. There was once another water tank, the ruins of which indicate its existence, it was used during emergency but it was tunnelled by the Gurkha forces and the soldiers responsible for its tunnelling were flooded away by the flow of water of the tank as the exit of the tunnel on fort side was cut in the centre of the tank.

The left side path leads to Darshani Darwaza flanked by deteriorated images of river deities, Ganga and Yamuna, carved in the personification

of the goddesses. This Darwaza opens into a courtyard known as temple area wherein small temples of goddess Ambika and Lakshmi Narain besides a large Jain temple existed which were completely destroyed in the earthquake of 1905 but an image of Adinath, the Jain Tirthankar, escaped the wrath of nature miraculously. This man size sculpture chiselled out of grey rock in sitting posture has been established in a small cell with dome-shaped roof. It is a beautiful image, meticulously carved out of monolithic rock. Department of Archaeology has aged this antique only 550 years i.e. its time factor is believed to be A.D. 1446 but the believers of this cult have another story to tell that Raja Susarma, the founder of the Katoch dynasty, had a daughter who believed in this cult, used to worship Adinath. Hence a temple was built with an image of Adinath established in it. To authenticate this theory, they tell that Raja Susarma was contemporary to 22nd Tirthankar, Nemi Nath Ji, who was the cousin of Lord Krishna. It is taken as one of the important pilgrim centres of Jainism. A temple was built up opposite to the entrance to the fort wherein a facsimile image of Adinath was established in 1990. The Sansthan was founded on 25th hundred anniversary of Mahavir i.e. on 1st December 1974. Every year, a congregation is held there in the month of March when a collective Pooja is done in the fort as well as in the Jain temple erected outside of the fort.

The Jain temple situated in the fort must have been a structure of which only back walls are left in standing position. These walls are highly carved with temple motifs and false niches. Nearby are scattered Amalka stones, once decorating the Shikhara of these temples. The sides of the courtyard on left and front portions contain ten cells each in ruins, might be the chambers of the priests. By the side of these temples, the signs of *Vedikas* for *Yagna/Havana* are there which remind the visitors about the mixed culture of religious rituals. Besides these *Vedikas* we find a well nearby which was excavated by some agency, as according to attendant of archaeological Survey of India, rice and *desi ghee* was found in the well which might have in use during religious rituals.

The flight of 31 steps through covered terrace lead to the highest zone of the fort, popularly known as Mahal Gate which lead to palaces, the lavish buildings to live in for the royalty of which only walls, constructed of small bricks, 4.5 feet width and cemented with lime and *Mas ki Dal* and once might be decorated with wall paintings, exist in ruins. At the southwest corner of the palaces we find a polygonal bastion commanding a strategic view of the valley of Kangra.

It was a magnificent fort which for centuries together attracted the

warriors and the adventurers alike and stood fast to the values of a formidable fort.

### FORT OF NURPUR

Paithan was the original place of the country of Nurpuris which was named as Pathankot afterwards, when a fort was built there. The fort does not exist now but the name became popular. It is a big town of Punjab in the district of Gurdaspur. Mohammadan historians referred it Paithan in their works.<sup>41</sup> Earlier it might be named as Pratishtana. Some of them believe that since feudal lords of its state Jagat Singh and his prince Rup Singh conquered Pathans i.e. Kabul and other places of importance in Afghanistan as such they were named as Pathanias but the theory does not click. The ancient name of the state was Audumbara. It was a powerful state and had dominance on other hill states. Some coins bearing a legend: 'Mahadevasarajana Dharaghoshasa Odumarisa', meaning the coin of the Great Lord, King Dharaghosha, Prince of Audumbara, were found and recorded.<sup>42</sup> The capital of this state was Pratishtana which was shifted to Dhameri, i.e. Nurpur of today. No authentic reference is available of its origin but during Mohammadan period it is referred time and again. The first ever reference can be quoted from *Tarikh-i-Alfi* (A.D. 1585).<sup>43</sup>

“After capturing this fort (Jud) Ibrahim directed his attention towards another, called Damal, which was situated on the summit of a high hill on the borders of Hindustan. On one side of this fort there was a large river, reported to be impassable, and on the other a large thorny jungle, into which nothing but the rays of sun could penetrate. The jungle was, moreover, infested with venomous serpents and flies, and abounded with elephants of enormous size. It was inhabited by a race of Hindus of gigantic form, and it was most celebrated of all the places of Hindustan. At the foot of the hill there was no level ground suited for his operations. Ibrahim, nevertheless, with his usual courage, made an attempt to take the fort, and through the aid of God soon captured it. He took possession of an immense quantity of property and jewels, the like of which had never been seen.”

This is an evidence that a fort was there before 11th century, that too a potential one. The vivid description given proves that it was exactly at the place where the fort of Nurpur exists. But according to the popular belief, the existing fort was built by Raja Basu (A.D. 1580-1613) and gradually, his successors added to the structure from time to time. It is probable the same site where the ancient fort was erected. It may be

possible that the old fort was given the new shape. It has been referred in several books—"The Nurpur fort, now partially demolished, was begun by Raja Basu, A.D. 1580-1613, and added to by succeeding Rajas, as is evident from the existing portions of the work; an earlier fort must have stood on the same site. The stronghold is situated on a plateau forming the western end of the ridge on which the town is built, with almost precipitous cliffs of sandstone on three sides, overlooking the Jabhar Khad, a tributary of Chakki. The main gateway and some of the bastions and curtains are still extant, and present an imposing appearance when viewed from the west, on the approach from Pathankot to Nurpur."<sup>44</sup> The structure of Nurpur fort in ruins contains a temple and a Thakurdwara. The remains of the temple were excavated from debris in 1886 by C.J. Rodgers, Archaeological Surveyor to the Punjab Government. Only basement appeared after the excavation. It is profusely decorated with carvings of various floral designs and the portraiture of godly images. The style has been attributed to Hindu-Mughal period. This temple was constructed by Raja Basu (1580-1633). Perhaps it was started at the time of renovation/construction of the fort. It was a prevailing custom to erect a shrine nearby the dwellings. So prior to the completion of the fort, the foundation of the temple might have been ordered. The freshness of the carvings show that the temple was destroyed a few years after its construction. Only basement remained buried in the debris which carries cute carvings. According to Hutchison and Vogel it was probably destroyed after the rebellion of Suraj Mal, in A.D. 1618. There is another temple, popularly known as Thakurdwara constructed by the side of a tank of later period. This temple contains a hall the walls of which are decorated with the paintings of Krishna's frolics with Gopis and Gwalas. In the small chamber, a projection of the hall, is placed an image of Lord Krishna carved out of black marble. There is a legend attached to this image of Lord Krishna that this image was brought from Rajasthan and when it was established on the sanctum with all rituals, during the night, musical tinkles, as if some one is dancing with small bells bound around her ankles, were heard. People were so enchanted that they thought it to be 'Meera Ke Girdhar'. And musical renderings they heard was due to the dancing of Meera, whose soul was there. This legend spread like wild fire and the people from far and wide came there to have the *Darshan* of Meera Ke Girdhar. Thakurdwara, or more popularly it is famous for Krishna temple, is a double-storeyed building lavishly decorated by frescos the subject of which is the life of Krishna. The varandah on the ground floor has profusely been painted but many of them have been whitewashed.

On the left side of the varandah are painted three rows of panels parallel to each other. The theme of these wall paintings is the victory of Lord Krishna over Kansa. Krishna dragging Putana, the demoness, by hair, Darbar of Kansa wherein are shown the courtiers and feudal lords along with other persons of status sitting according to their status; Krishna wrestling with court wrestlers followed by wrestling with Kansa. On the upper panels we find Krishna is painted with celebrities of crowning after victory over Kansa; a myth from *Bhagwat Purana* and frolics of Krishna with Gopis. Among all these wall paintings Kansa Darbar has been painted with remarkable acumen. Divisions of space along with the portraiture of hundreds of figures, architecture of the palaces, the wrestling ground and demon-sized wrestlers all gradually make their mark. On the upper platform 16 courtiers have been painted, fifteen of which are facing Kansa with a small kid sitting by his side while as the sixteenth, alert with sword and shield is looking the other side, perhaps he is guarding the court activities. Almost all of them have been attired in similar way. Mughalia turbans form their headgears and long loose flowing robe form their upper garment. With shields in their hands and swords hanging in their sash, they look more like Mughal courtiers than Darbaris of Kansa. Down below, on the front side are standing in submission almost ten persons attired in the same manner, perhaps these are the men of lower status. On the periphery, an audience of commoners is shown again in the same style of their attire. Two wrestlers of large size are painted standing on the wrestling ground facing Krishna and Balram who are followed by their companions i.e. Gwalas. Distribution of space has meticulously been done in this wall painting. Blue, maroon, red and occasionally yellow shining colours have been used which have diminished their shine in due course of time. Entrance to the chamber is through a wooden door with two planks both of which have been painted in three panels each. The upper and lower panels are painted with flower bases full of blossoms with two birds one on each side while on the middle panel Nayika is painted in transparent Ghagras through which her Jama peeps out. Both lady figures, one on each door, possess acute figures with charming, well balanced visage. The artist of these paintings named Golu was a carpenter by profession. Whether he was a local person or an outsider no one knows. However, his style is peculiar of artists of Mughal courts. Interestingly, most of the artist families were carpenters in profession. Manak and Nainsukh, the two real brothers, sons of Seu, who were responsible for many Pahari schools of miniature paintings were carpenters. Gulabu, the artist who painted images on the upper panels of Brijeshwari temple, Kangra was

also a carpenter by profession. It may be possible that Golu, the artist might have gone to Mughal courts and have practised there for a while but basically he belonged to this region. This temple was constructed by Mandhata, the grandson of great warrior, Jagat Singh Pathania. He reigned Nurpur from A.D. 1661 to 1700 A.D.

Basu Dev (A.D. 1580-1613) shifted the capital of his kingdom from Paithan (Pathankot) to Nurpur, it was known as Dhameri then, perhaps after the completion of the fort mentioned above. Dhameri was renamed as Nurpur by Raja Jagat Singh Pathania in A.D. 1622 in honour of Jahangir's visit to the place on his way back from Kangra where he had gone to celebrate the seizure of Kangra fort.<sup>45</sup>

Cunningham is of the view that the name Nurpur was given to honour Nur Jahan, the beloved Begam of Jahangir, who accompanied the Emperor during this visit to Dhameri. Jagat Singh was a shrewd Raja, he might have assured both of them that the name of Dhameri was changed in their honour so as to make both of them believe that he was their man. In the time to come Raja Jagat Singh used the high offices of Nur Jahan also in his favour.

The next reference to Nurpur has been quoted in the reign of Raja Suraj Mal, the eldest son of Raja Basu. Mughals entrusted upon Suraj Mal the job of annexing Kangra fort but, instead, he shrewdly reduced the Mughal forces and forced them to leave Kangra, thus making himself free from their clutches, ravaged the Jagir of Itimad-ud-Daula, father of Nur Jahan. Jahangir asked Sundar Das, Rai Raiyan, popularly known as Raja Bikramajit, to arrest Suraj Mal and to complete the task of annexing Kangra fort. Suraj Mal attacked the Mughal forces but could not face such a huge army and went to Maukot which was also captured by the Mughal army hence Suraj Mal escaped to Nurpur from there he proceeded to Isral fort and then to Chamba where he died. Raja Jagat Singh Pathania succeeded his brother. Raja Jagat Singh, a great warrior that these hills ever produced, was also a shrewd statesman. During his reign, in the spring of A.D. 1622 when the royal couple, Jahangir and Nur Jahan paid a visit to Nurpur, Nur Jahan was so impressed with the rustic beauty of the locale that she ordered to construct a palace for the royal family. Raja Jagat Singh knew that once palace is built for the royal family at Nurpur it would be difficult for the lords of Nurpur to carry on the administration independently. There would always be interference in local politics but he could not refuse directly. He shrewdly engaged the labourers who were suffering from goitre. When Nur Jahan asked as to why only diseased persons were employed she was told that it was due to

the bad climate of Nurpur that only these labourers were available, thus the project was abandoned. We get references of the episode in *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, that when Jahangir visited Nurpur on his return from Kangra, in A.D. 1622, he was so pleased with the site that he granted a lakh of rupees from the public treasury, "For the construction of lofty mansions worthy of the place."<sup>46</sup>

Raja Jagat Singh knew that in the long run, to rule independently, he had to get prepared against the Mughals, as such he devoted his full attention towards the repairs and construction of new forts. "Jagat Singh had long been preparing for this emergency and had strengthened the three principal forts in his territory, viz. Maukot, Nurpur and Taragarh, and furnished them with all available weapons of war." Hutchison and Vogel during collecting facts about these buildings might have visited Nurpur. They refer Nurpur fort, "The Nurpur fort, of which the massive ruins may still be seen, stands on a plateau (2125 feet) to the south-west of the town and had deep ravines on three sides. The main entrance was to the north."<sup>47</sup>

During the reign of Shah Jahan there was the longest possible siege of these forts separately. On 29th August 1641, Sayyid Khan Jahan, in accordance with orders from the Emperor, started from Raipur, where he had been encamped, towards Nurpur by way of the Balvan hill, but on reaching the foot of the hill he found that Rajrup, the elder son of Jagat Singh, had blocked the way and was lying in ambush. Najbat Khan, the leader of the vanguard, engaged the army and destroyed the barricades which had been erected in the pass. Then the army moved to Machhi Bhawan hill, there too the path was blocked. With the help of some local people, who were forced to tell the short route to the fort, the Mughal army, composed of 35,000 men, reached the summit of a hill, half a *kos* from Nurpur. The houses outside the fort were looted and the next morning (10th October, 1641) the Mughal army advanced to the foot of the fort. Khan Jahan found that the place was strongly fortified and garrisoned with a force of 2000 hill men and fully equipped with the munitions of war. As it could not be taken without a siege, he distributed the sides of the fort among his officers and ordered them to erect batteries for the assault.<sup>48</sup>

On the night of the 22nd November a bastion of the Nurpur fort was blown up. Details are given in *Badashahnama*, "Zulf-i-a'Hunzan and Aqua Hasan Rumi had dug seven mines towards the sides of the fort, but the besieged discovered six of these mines and flooded them. The seventh mine, which started from the trenches of Sayyid Khan Jahan's troops,

had been carried forward towards the base of the tower, only two or three yards remaining to be dug. But Sayyid Khan Jahan's son and his men, fearing that this mine also would be discovered, and thinking it sufficiently near the tower, filled it with powder and sent word to Khan Jahan that the mine was ready for the assault, which was to be made by scaling ladders through the breach, and then directed the mine to be fired. This was done at about 4 p.m. but owing to the mine being incomplete only one side of the bastion was blown up, and the other sunk in ground." "But the besieged had cunningly built a wall behind each tower, joined at each end to the main wall of the fort, with a passage at the top leading into the bastion. This wall was uninjured and so there was no way into the fort. Seeing this, Sayyid Lutf'Ali and Jalal-ud-din Mahmud, who had hurried forward with the assaulting party, called for pioneers to pull down the wall. The besieged, imagining that a breach had been made, retreated to the inner fort, but, soon discovering the true state of matters they returned in force and began to shower down arrows and bullets from the wall on the besiegers. . . . the assailants' all efforts to pull down the wall had failed, they had to retire. In the end of Shaban, Bahadur Khan, acting under the orders of the Emperor, moved from Islampur (a place in Bundelkhand) and joined the prince at Paithan. His army numbered about 3000 horses and as many on foot." That means now total number of army men attacking Mau and Nurpur were 40,000. Now prince, who was camping at Paithan, was ordered by the Emperor to proceed for Mau fort as the progress, despite such a huge army was too slow to be considered. Prince Murad along with his contingent left Paithan to siege Mau fort. Now the enemy had almost 50,000 of soldiers surrounding the two forts. It would frighten any hill chieftain but Raja Jagat Singh was a man of another steel, it infuriated the warrior and he reacted sharply.

To avoid any risk to his family Raja Jagat Singh sent them to Taragarh. He had a very small force with him in comparison to the huge army of the Mughals. The fact is quoted in *Shahnama*, "For this reason, Raja Jai Singh, Qilij Khan, Allah Viridi Khan and others, being near the fort, and finding the way into it easy, owing to smallness of the force opposed to them, reached the fort before the arrival of Sayyid Khan Jahan and Bahadur Khan."<sup>49</sup> In these circumstances there was no other way then to escape the mishap. Thus on 13th December 1641, Jagat Singh with his force left the fort of Mau for Taragarh. Nurpur was still formidable. Despite several serious efforts the Mughal forces could not take it but when Rup Singh heard the news of the fall of Mau fort to the Mughal forces he



could not carry on the defence and was demoralised. He left the fort at midnight. Nurpur fort was never annexed by the Mughal forces but instead it was vacated voluntarily by the owners as is evident from *Shahnama*, "Two days later, 15th Dec. 1641, Aslat Khan reported to the prince that the defenders of Nurpur fort, on hearing of the fall of Mau, had at midnight evacuated the fort and escaped."<sup>50</sup>

Soon after, Taragarh fort also fell before the ocean of Mughal army which had all the resources at its disposal, and Mughal princes with all the experienced commanders in their command could not boast of their victory against a handful force of Jagat Singh but it was a definite task of overpowering their formidable foe in the person of Jagat Singh Pathania, a dare devil in their observation. On November 23rd, 1642 Prince Dara Shikoh was ordered by the Emperor to visit Nurpur, Taragarh and other forts and to inspect them.<sup>51</sup> Mau fort was completely demolished but despite orders from the Emperor it was rather difficult for Mughal army to destroy Nurpur and Taragarh forts. It proved to be a Herculean task, thus they were abandoned and a garrison was placed at these forts. For almost twelve years both Raja Jagat Singh Pathania and his son Rup Singh were out of their state to an expedition to Kabul, Quandhar and other countries of Minor Asia where they brought several laurels for themselves. Jagat Singh died on the way to his home nearby Peshawar in January 1646.

Rup Singh, his elder son and Tika carried on the expedition till he was called back in A.D. 1656 when he came to Nurpur. He was there merely for an year that in 1657 Shah Jahan was dethroned by Aurangzeb. Dara Shikoh, being crown prince could not muster help from anywhere, believed Rup Singh but the latter did not help him. After his death in 1661-62 no record is available till an English traveller, Forester visited Nurpur in 1783. He states that Nurpur then "enjoyed a state of more internal quiet, was less molested by the Sikhs and governed more equitably than any of the adjacent territories." The state boundary was extended to Ravi and revenue of the state was Rs. four lakhs. Raja Bir Singh's (A.D. 1789-1846) reign was full of hectic activities. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, on different pretexts, had designs of capturing hill states. He "summoned all Sardars and feudatory chiefs to a great military assembly at Sialkot. The Rajas of Nurpur and Jaswan failed to attend, and a fine was deliberately imposed upon each which it was impossible to pay. . . Bir Singh did his utmost to meet the unjust demand, even to the mortgage and sale of his family idol and sacrificial vessels of silver and gold. But even this did not suffice, and he was sent back from Lahore under charge

of a Sikh force and had to make over the state.”<sup>52</sup> He was offered a Jagir of Rs. 25,000 but he refused. Here Barnes points out an interesting anecdote, “Dhian Singh (prime minister of Punjab) had a Sanad or patent in his possession duly signed and sealed under the sign manual of the Maharaja, and before making it over he wished to extort from Bir Singh the coveted salutation of ‘Jaidiya’ accorded to a ruling chief, the offering of which by Bir Singh would have been an acknowledgement of Dhian Singh’s regal status . . . This he refused to do. He was a Raja by hereditary right, while Dhian Singh held the title only by favour of Ranjit Singh.”<sup>53</sup>

Vigne, the traveller, who visited Nurpur twice, once in June 1835, and again in the spring of 1839, on his way back from Chamba and Kangra tells that Bir Singh was summoned to Lahore, “there he was threatened with annihilation from the mouth of a cannon if he did not agree to the Maharaja’s terms. The Sikhs say that Ranjit Singh demanded the evacuation of castle of Nurpur, in order that it might be garrisoned by his own troops.”<sup>54</sup> Bir Singh struggled throughout his life to take back Nurpur fort from the Sikh forces but circumstances and lack of resources did not assist him. An occasion arose when in the autumn of 1845 the Sikh army invaded British territory but their power was broken in four hard fought battles. This event encouraged Bir Singh, “Once more his people rallied to his summons, and he laid siege to the Nurpur fort. But strain was too great for one of his years, with a frame already enfeebled by privation and suffering, and he died before the walls.”<sup>55</sup> Bir Singh had a minor son, Jaswant Singh, when he died. Ram Singh, a reputed revolutionary, was officer designated as Vazir. But, there was no country to rule at. The Britishers, after their victory over the Sikh forces had taken over the principalities falling under Sikh rule. As such Nurpur was retained by the Britishers. Ram Singh would not agree. He gathered a force of Jasrotias and Billowarias and a few soldiers from Bhaddu and attacked Shahpur fort and occupied it where he declared Jaswant Singh as the lord of Nurpur and himself as his Vazir. On arrival of Sikh force Ram Singh struggled hard but he had to vacate the fort and had to retreat to the wooden ranges of Nurpur. Ram Singh went on struggling with a handful men at his disposal against a huge army with many resources until he was captured with the help of his own people at Jasrota and handed over to the Britishers. Ram Singh was ordered life imprisonment and sent to Andaman where he died. With the death of Ram Singh the history of struggle and valour of Pathanias came to an end. With this struggle is linked the history of Nurpur state and Nurpur fort. The ruins of the fort, the citadel of Pathanias, which inspired awe

and respect because of its excellence and strength, stand the glory of past.

### MAU FORT

The fort of Mau, popularly known as Maukot was situated on a summit of Mau range running east to Chakki stream, between Pathankot and Nurpur. History of Pathanias is the history of three forts—Nurpur, Taragarh and Maukot. Maukot has prominently been discussed by the Mohammadan historians until it was completely demolished by the Mughal forces during the reign of Shah Jahan. The fort was constructed by Salim Shah Suri (A.D. 1545-53) during the reign of Bakhat Mal (A.D. 1513-58). Author of *Akbarnama* confirms, "Salim Shah Suri, son of Sher Shah Suri, completed the fort of Rohtas (near Jehlum) and founded Maukot in the Shiwaliks as a refuge for himself."<sup>56</sup>

The first mention of the fort we get in *Akbarnama* with the reference of Mirza Kamran, younger brother of Humayun, who sought an asylum with Salim Shah Suri after being driven out of Kabul. He had a shelter in Maukot in disguise. *Tarikh-i-Daudi* mentions about its construction, "Islam Shah stayed sometime in Gwalior (Guler) and then set about building the fort of Makot (Maukot). He went thither and caused five forts to be erected, one of which he named Shergarh; second Islamgarh; third Rashidgarh; fourth Ferozgarh, the fifth, retained its original name of Mankot (Maukot)."<sup>57</sup> Then we get the information of the fort from Ferishta that Humayun was opposed at Sirhind by Sikandar Shah Suri, who was defeated and fled to Shiwaliks in A.D. 1555 but on the approach of Akbar he took refuge in Maukot. Bakhat Mal supported Sikandar Suri and assisted in the defence of the fort, which was besieged for six months by the Mughals. On the surrender of the fort in July 1557. Sikandar Suri was permitted to retire to Bengal and Bakhat Mal was taken a prisoner to Lahore where he was put to death in 1558. *Ma'asir-ul-Umara* also confirms the incident, "The sudden death of Humayun (A.D. 1556) plunged the world in grief, and sleeping quarrels awoke again and again in every corner and quarter, Sultan Sikandar Suri raised his head to give trouble. Sikandar had taken refuge in the difficult hill country to wait there till fortune was more favourable. . . In the same year of Akbar (A.D. 1557), Sikandar was invested in the fort of Maukot."<sup>58</sup>

The next reference of the fort has been quoted by *Ma'asir-ul-Umara* and *Ain-i-Akbari* that in the 35th year of Akbar (A.D. 1589-90) almost thirteen hill chiefs revolted against the Mughals. Zain Khan Kokah, Akbar's foster brother, was sent to suppress the revolt. A ridiculous

statement is recorded in *Ain-i-Akbari*, "Most of them, as Raja Budi Chand of Nagarkot, Rai Pratap of Mankot, Raja Parasram of mount Jamu, Raja Basu of Mau . . . etc. submitted and accompanied Zain Khan to court, though they had an army of 10,000 horses and a lakh of foot soldiers."<sup>59</sup> This is merely an exaggeration of facts that more than a lakh of army surrendered that too, before a handful of Mughals, in their location only is unbelievable. The same hill chiefs when supervised the battles in Mughal camps were cheered by the same historians. Raja Basu, his son Jagat Singh and grandson Rup Singh are the representatives of three dynasties who claimed the honour by dint of their valour and seldom compromised with the luxuries as well as with their honour.

Raja Basu could not remain in peace. He revolted again in A.D. 1594-95 and was surrounded in the fort of Mau. Raja Basu fought with valour but due to limited resources and having had to face the imperial forces single-handedly for more than two months the Mughal forces were led astray, but there was no choice but to surrender and he did but with his own conviction. The hill bards still sing the song of valour of Raja Basu especially about this incident. Raja Basu revolted against the Mughals several times and most of the occasions prince Salim (Jahangir) came to his rescue. In fact they fancied each other. But the son of Raja Basu, Raja Suraj Mal was of another designs. He was never liked by Jahangir. He doubted the sincerity of the Raja. On his own request he was entrusted with a task to annex the fort of Kangra but he had his own plans which irritated Jahangir with the result he was asked to be arrested by Rai Raiyan. Raja Suraj Mal took refuge in Maukot which was captured by the Mughal forces but historians are mum over the struggle they had to process through in capturing the fort.

Jagat Singh, the second son of Raja Basu was a great warrior. It is interesting to note that as his father, Raja Basu, revolted several times against the Emperor, Akbar, but he was very sincere towards prince Salim; Jagat Singh was not in good terms with Jahangir but was very friendly with prince Khurram. When Khurram, who afterwards became king with the title Shah Jahan, revolted against the Emperor Jahangir, Jagat Singh was entrusted with a task to collect the hill chiefs in his favour. When Jahangir came to know the revolt he sent Sadiq Khan, Subedar of Punjab, assisted by Madho Singh, the younger brother of Raja Jagat Singh, who was given an understanding that he will be declared as the lord of his state Nurpur if he suppressed the revolt. Jagat Singh fortified Maukot and faced the Mughal forces with valour but when nothing was left to eat in the fort he had to surrender.

Raja Jagat Singh was appointed Faujdar of lower and upper Bangash. His elder son Rajrup was in Nurpur. He was appointed as Faujdar of Koh-i-Daman and collector of the yearly Nazrana from chiefs of that district. In the summer of 1640, Shah Jahan learnt about the revolt of Rajrup Singh. Raja Jagat Singh was in secret league with his son. He requested the Emperor that he be appointed as Governor of Koh-i-Daman of Kangra so that he could punish his son. The request was granted. Raja Jagat Singh came to Nurpur and started preparing for war. He had three main forts for his defence—Maukot, Nurpur and Taragarh. He repaired them and furnished them with all the commodities, weapons and ration. Maukot was nearest to the plains, almost half way to Nurpur from Pathankot, situated on a summit of low hills of Shiwalik range running east to the Chakki river. It was an enclosure surrounded by dense forests, a castle of great strength. It was a legend in its times, a saying was in vogue: *Mau Ki Muhim Yaro Mout Ki Nishani Hai*, 'The expedition to Mau, friends, is a call to death.'

"Jagat Singh made a brave resistance to the overwhelming force sent against him."<sup>60</sup> His first stand was at Maukot, which was under his personal command, while Nurpur seems from the account in *Badshahnama*, to have been held by his son, Rajrup. The siege of these forts was begun by separate divisions of the Mughal army in early part of October 1641, and by middle of December the position at Maukot was untenable. Jagat Singh then escaped with his two sons to Taragarh.<sup>61</sup>

A vivid account of the seizure of these forts is given in detail in *Badshahnama*:

"The first army was under the command of Sayyid Khan Jahan Barha, supported by Nazar Bahadur Khesnagi, and his son Shams-ud-Din Zul-Fiqar Khan, Raja Amar Singh of Narwar, Sayyid Lutf-Ali, Jalal-ud-Din Mahmud, Rao Dan Singh Badauriya, Mir Buzurg, Sarmast, son of Itimad Rai, and a number of other officers, and Ahodis of archery and musketry and zamindars. The second army was commanded by Sa'id Khan Bahadur Zafar Jang, with his sons and relations, Raja Rai Singh, Iltifat Khan Safavi, Gokal Das Sisodia, Rai Singh Jhala, Kirpa Ram, Nad Ali and Chait Singh with other Mansabdars and Ahadis of archery and musketry, and Mushki Beg, Bakshi of the king's eldest son, with one thousand horsemen of the prince's contingent. The third army was under Asalat Khan, with his brother, Abdul Kafi; Muhammad Amin and Muhammad Mumin, sons of Shah Quli Khan, other Mansabdars and Ahadis . . . Sa'id Khan had marched along the skirts of the Hara hills, and Raja Jai Singh and Asalat Khan by the way of Chakki river, both met in the vicinity of Mau and

encamped on a level spot near the garden of Raja Basu. The jungle around the fort was so dense that a bird could hardly spread its wings within it, and the paths were all blocked with barricades of wood and stone, on which bastions and fortifications had been erected, defended by musketeers and bowmen. Batteries had therefore to be erected and every means used to destroy the barricades, which were obstinately defended by the enemy.”

On 12th October Qilij Khan and Rustam Khan joined the Prince at Pathankot and as per orders of the Emperor the former was sent to Mau. Sa'id Khan Bahadur Zafar Jang accompanied by other Sardars were also ordered to proceed to Mau via Rupar path. Sa'id Khan started on 9th November, 1642 from the foot of the Nurpur hill, blocked up the Rupar path near Mau and sent his two sons, Sa'dullah and Abdullah, with a number of his own followers, to ascend on the right and Zulfiqar Khan with matchlock men on the left, in order to fix a site for the camp. On reaching the summit, they found that an encampment could be arranged only by cutting down the trees, and . . . . Taking advantage of this opportunity, the enemy, to the number of four or five thousand, came down from a neighbouring hill and attacked them . . . .”<sup>62</sup>

“On 15 November, 1641 Najabat Khan reached an eminence commanding the stockade erected by the rebels near Raja Basu's garden, which was attacked on one side by Zulfiqar Khan and the Imperial artillery, and on the other by Nazar Bahadur Khashagi. Shaikh Farid, Akbar Quli Sultan Gakhar, Sarandaz Khan and Raja Man Singh of Guler, A number of men of Najabat Khan's and Raja Man Singh's forces putting planks on their heads, instead of shields, ran forward and raised a wall of wood and planks opposite to the stockade, and showered bullets on the enemy.”<sup>63</sup> The siege of this fort was so important in the observation of the Emperor that despite of his best available commanders surrounding the fort he had to order the prince camping at Pathankot to proceed for Maukot and personally supervise the siege. Thus he set out for Mau from Pathankot on 24th November. A fresh command inspired the Mughals but the fort was so formidable that it would not give way. Sayyid Khan Jahan and Bahadur Khan with their forces were now sent by way of Gangthal to Mau but reaching the site they became slow. Jagat Singh advanced to oppose them and fought them for five days with his men. “In these five days nearly 700 of Khan Jahan's men and as many belonging to the other commands were killed or wounded.” Such was the fierce attack of Jagat Singh against much powerful force that they had to shelter themselves against the dead bodies of their men. . . . “even used the heaps of the slain as scaling ladders to reach the barricades.” On 13th December, the prince

(Murad Baksh) ordered all his commanders to attack collectively from all directions so as to make the enemy nervous. Till then the force in the fort had reduced considerably. In spite of loss in thousands the Mughals went on adding fresh support which Raja Jagat Singh could not muster owing to his position in the fort. Raja Jagat Singh understood the gravity of the situation, as such he sent his family to more safe place, Taragarh and himself remained in the fort to defend it to the last point. After a few days, analysing the superiority of Mughal forces, he escaped along with his sons to Taragarh. Thus a castle of defence fell to the forces of Shah Jahan. When he came to know seizure of the fort of Mau he was so overwhelmed that *Khilats* were distributed among the commanders responsible for the sieze. The charge of Mau fort was given to Raja Jai Singh. A number of diggers and axemen were employed to clean the forest around Mau fort. Afterwards, after the surrender of Taragarh fort also, the Emperor was so fed up with these forts that he ordered to demolish the three forts lest another Jagat Singh may occupy them and might prove dangerous for the Mughal empire. However, Taragarh was not destroyed, Nurpur was partly dismantled but Maukot became the point of wrath of the Mughals. It was completely demolished and we hardly find any wall of the fort. Only foundation of the fort was visible till a few years back (the author had visited the site in April 1992). With this the magnificent history of Mau fort ends.

### TARAGARH FORT

Among all the forts of Nurpur state Taragarh was situated on a summit that was strategically not only safe but the owner could also watch the activities of the enemy for miles together. The ruins of this fort can be seen almost 19 kms north to Nurpur. The territory on which it was erected by Raja Jagat Singh around A.D. 1626 belonged to Chamba state. It was annexed by Raja Jagat Singh and, taking it safer site for defence, constructed the fort which was unique in architecture. In fact it was built up in three strata and all the three contained the wall enclosures formidable enough to be encroached upon. Hutchison and Vogel refer this fort: "It was a fortified hill of a conical shape, rising to 4230 feet with deep ravines all around it. On it there were three forts one above the other, the highest crowning the summit of the hill which is clearly visible from the cantonment of Bakloh."<sup>64</sup> It was so formidable fort that it took a huge Mughal army twelve years to annex it. The Mughals, during the siege of the fort, had planted mango plants which fruited after twelve

years and the Mughal soldiers enjoyed their fruits. The site where the Mughals had their camps near the fort is still known as Amb ka Bag which proves the theory that it took Mughals more than twelve years to capture the fort of Taragarh since a mango plant generally takes eight to ten years to fruit.

*Badshahnama* has given the vivid account of the seizure of Taragarh, though, most of the details given speak high of Mughals which seems, sometimes, ridiculous but this is the only document with us of the time to know the history.

“On the 5th Shawwal (27th December 1641) the prince, along with Khan Jahan and other officers, reached Nurpur and encamped there. According to orders he sent Sa'id Khan and his sons to Jammu, and Bahadur Khan and Asalat Khan, with nearly 12,000 men to lay siege to Taragarh. He also ordered Raja Man Singh (of Guler), the mortal enemy of Jagat Singh, to join Prithvi Chand with his forces, and both together to take up a position on a hill at the back of Taragarh.”<sup>65</sup> It was so hard to win over the fort that the author of *Badshahnama* had to write, “the difficulty of roads and the impossibility of entry and exit, all of which was such that the wisest would not understand its reduction, yet the royal army, relying on God's help and the Emperor's good fortune, bound up their loins firmly for the enterprise.”

In this siege Mughals lost several of their commanders. Khusru Beg, the Bakshi of Yamin-ud-Daula and Asaf Khan, Khan-i-Khanan was the first victim. He was ordered to proceed ahead to acquaint with the surroundings and to select site for camping. He along with his hundreds of men were killed instantaneously when the men of Jagat Singh, finding an occasion, pounced upon the enemy.<sup>66</sup>

It is a fact that Taragarh fort was never seized or captured. No historian even Mohammadans, who were always praising their lords and assigning titles of traitors to the enemy of their lords, had never accepted the fact that Taragarh was ever captured. However, Jagat Singh Pathania was persuaded to surrender. Shah Jahan knew that Jagat Singh could not be browbeaten and he could use his services elsewhere hence feelers were sent for compromise on some mutually agreed terms. It is a historical fact that he was sent to Minor Asia, and afterwards, to Kabul, Qandhar. “Jagat Singh was in the course of same year (A.D. 1642) again given a military command and was placed under the orders of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of the Emperor, with whom he marched to Qandhar Province. Two years later (A.D. 1644) when Sa'id Khan was made Governor of Qandhar, Jagat Singh was transferred from Qalat, as he and Sa'id Khan



were not on friendly terms.”<sup>67</sup> Generally the historians of Mohammadan period and *Badshahnama* in particular, were of the view that Raja Jagat Singh was humiliated to the extent that he was forced to prostrate before the Emperor and that they were brought to the court of the Mughal Emperor with Foutah round his neck.<sup>68</sup> It is all ridiculous. In the same chapter, the author of *Badshahnama*, mentions, “On 10th April 1642, Jagat Singh and his sons were restored to their former rank and reinstated in all their possessions.”<sup>69</sup> It is really funny statement. If the Pathanias surrendered on the conditions of the Mughals then why they were given back their honour? It is an acknowledged fact that Mughals were very harsh towards the rebels; even their kith and kin were not spared from their wrath, the question of leaving Jagat Singh Pathania and his sons without punishing them is intriguing.

The Emperor was so scared of these forts that he ordered to demolish them. Maukot was immediately destroyed, Nurpur was partly demolished but Taragarh was not easy to give way, hence it was left as it was but a few of the enclosure walls were fell down with great effort as symbolic honour to the order of the Emperor.

In the vernacular history, written by Mian Raghunath Singh, some interesting story is given that Taragarh was constructed by Raja Jagat Singh where he used to spend spring season. When forces of some Lodhi Emperor sieged the fort for twelve long years, the ration was finished but to deceive the enemy his men collected the milk of a bitch and cooked a sweet pudding with rice in it, popularly known as *kheer* and threw it out of the fort nearby the camp of the enemy. When the Emperor came to know the fact he was so shocked to learn that still Jagat Singh and his men were enjoying the pudding that he died on the spot and then the negotiations were processed. Jagat Singh opened the gates of the fort on his own terms.<sup>70</sup> It may be a fact as Raja Jagat Singh was not only a great warrior but a shrewed politician also and he knew how to get his work done especially in precarious conditions. The historian mistook Mughal army a Lodhi force.

Through the rapsodies of the court poet of Raja Jagat Singh, Gambhir Rai, we find some clues about an ambassador who was sent from Mughal court to Taragarh for negotiations. It reads:

*Uthapan Uthapan? Naresh Tun Pathan Pat*  
*Jako Dei Padshahi Panch Saat Pawen*  
*Dandat Udandi Nokhandat Akhandi*  
*Panch Sat Dweep Keerat Jas Gamwe*

*Utal Bital Aur Udhal Uchhal Jaat  
Sangi Gaye Suk Jaat Bhojan Na Khamwe  
Kehat Gambhir Sur Sapat Sok Raja  
Sanjh Lon Slam Karan Khan Yahan Amwe<sup>70</sup>*

Hey Sire, you are the glory of Pathania clan. Only a few are bestowed upon such lordship in this world. Your lordship punishes the defaulters, it is your valour that nine parts of the world were conquered and consolidated to form a single kingdom. Several islands sing the glory of your lordship. In this hectic activities of war battle our forces could not take their food. Gambhir poet narrates that the messenger offered the salutation to Jagat Singh Pathania glorifying him equal to Maharaja Ashok.

Court poets exaggerate the facts in favour of their lord but the basic theme remains the same. Hence we cannot set aside the idea of a messenger sent by the Mughals to negotiate the terms.

#### FORT OF ISRAL

There is a little reference of this fort in the history written by Mohammadan authors that too wrong information was fed to the readers. As history tells us Suraj Mal never wanted that the most important fort, Kot Kangra, of this region could be captured by the Mughal forces as such he had a definite plan in his mind. He delayed the siege on one or the other pretext and finally looted the Jagir of the father of Nur Jahan which irritated Jahangir to the extent that he sent a strong force of valiant commanders under the supervision of Sundar Das, Rai Raiyan to arrest Suraj Mal. On the approach of the Mughal army, Suraj Mal tried to gain the favour of Rai Raiyan but finding the exercise futile he escaped to Maukot and then to Nurpur. "Being unable to make stand there also, he turned 'the face of his wilderment' towards the fort of Isral, which was situated in the low hills to the north of Nurpur and within the Chamba state. This fort has not been definitely located, but it may have been the small fort of Perigarh near Isral ka Bassa in Tundi Pargana, not far from Kotla. In Elliot's history Taragarh is supposed to be the fort referred to."<sup>71</sup> Taragarh was constructed afterwards by Jagat Singh Pathania, who became the lord of Nurpur after the death of Suraj Mal. So fort of Taragarh cannot be taken as fort of Isral. Definitely there was a fort north of Nurpur, in Chamba territory, where Raja Suraj Mal took refuge before he was pushed off to Chamba.

I have come across Shri Shrestha Pathania, who belongs to Sulyali clan of Pathanias and is working on the subject. According to him there was a fort of Isral falling in line with Nurpur and Taragarh forts. It was situated at a distance of 1.5 kms from the village of Sulyali, exactly half way to Taragarh from Nurpur fort. It was founded by Nag Pal, in honour of victory of Sukh Pal his brother. Nag Pal was crowned in this fort about A.D. 1392. It was an ideal fort strategically commanding the splendid view of the surroundings. It was rich in buildings like palaces, Diwankhana, stable for the horses of the royal family. Now nothing is left. Perhaps Mughal forces levelled it to the ground while chasing Suraj Mal. But the site is still known as Diwankhana by the local people. The site is lying in dense forests south to Sulyali. There is a deep ravine near the site popularly known as Isral ki Dabbar i.e. the ravine of Isral which, in due course of time, corrupted into Sral ki Dubbar i.e. ravine of a python. There are several deep caves which can accommodate hundreds of people at a time, an ideal situation for the gorilla warriors. There is a shrine of a Sati near the site of the fort. As according to old men of the locality, a princess was engaged with a Rana of Chitorgarh but before marriage the Rana was killed in a battle. His sword was sent to the princess as a sign as well as an honour of the valiant to his beloved one. She took the sword in her lap and performed the ritual of *Sati*. A small temple of goddess Durga is situated in the centre of the summit. It might be the clan goddess. Generally the people and the warriors used to worship their deity before leaving for an expedition. For Jamwals of Jammu it was Bawe wali Mai, for Katochs it was Ambika Devi of the fort and Brijeshwari Devi, for Jasrotias it was Jasrote wali Mata etc. Almost every fort contained a temple of their Kul Devi besides religious shrines of different deities.

Sulyali Pathanias cremate the dead bodies of their kith and kins nearby a stream flowing by the side of the foundation of the fort. Definitely it was the site of the Isral fort.

#### FORT OF KOTLA

This was a small fort the ruins of which are still lying almost in the half way to Gaggal from Pathankot. This fort was built up by the Guleria Rajas and was considered a part of their territory until it was seized by the Pathanias. During the reign of Suraj Mal, Pathania Raja it was seized by the Pathanias and younger brother of Suraj Mal, Madho Singh, was the Quiledar of the fort. Rai Kaiyan while chasing Suraj Mal seized the fort

after three days' struggle and the Quiledar, Madho Singh, fled to Chamba to join his brother, Suraj Mal, who had already reached there. In later period the fort was again gained by the Gulerias. Dhiyan Singh, Vazir of Guler, who in those unsettled times, had seized the small State of Kotla, between Kangra and Nurpur, and had made himself independent.<sup>72</sup>

### PATHYAR FORT

Pathyar was a small fort situated almost 19 kms from Dharamsala towards Palampur, the path bifurcates nearby a road leaving for Nagrota Bhagwan. The Pargana of Pathyar, though part of Kangra state, was given to Dalel Singh (1735-48) of Chamba by the Governor of Lahore<sup>73</sup> as such it became the part of Chamba. But when the minor son of Umed Singh, Raj Singh, became the king of Chamba Ghamand Chand of Kangra seized the fort of Pathyar and drove the Chamba troops out of Bir Banghal, but the queen regent, who was a Jammu princess, obtained help from Maharaja Ranjit Dev of Jammu, and recovered the territory.<sup>74</sup> History does not tell anything about the fort and the people living in but antiquities scattered in the locality show that it was a flourishing town in distant past. Khrosti and Brahmi inscriptions have also been discovered which have been deciphered and tell about a king of 2nd century B.C. who built tanks for irrigating the surrounding land.

### RIHLU FORT

It was not an important fort, but an incident important enough is related to this fort. Raja Sansar Chand Katoch after winning over his ancestral seat of Kangra fort asked the eleven principalities of Jalandhar group to pay tributes. Since Rihlu Ilaqa was a part of Kangra Kardari under the Mughals Raja Raj Singh, the feudal lord of Chamba was asked to surrender the Ilaqa of Rihlu, which was part of Chamba territory then. Raja Raj Singh refused to obey. Thinking battle inevitable Raj Singh repaired the fort of Rihlu and requested the assistance of Pathanias while on the other hand Sansar Chand asked Vazir Dhian Singh, who had declared himself as the lord of Kotla. Chamba force was engaged in the frontiers. Raj Singh with small force of his own with a few men from Nurpur was ready to face the Katoch army. Sansar Chand knowing the fact secretly attacked Chamba force. Force from Nurpur became panicky and fled. Raj Singh was left with his twenty five men surrounding him. He was requested to escape and to move to Chamba until then they would

prevent the enemy reaching him but Raj Singh refused and fought till he fell dead. The stone on which Raj Singh had taken the support with his blood stained hand is still there in Nerti where the incident took place. A temple was erected there by Jit Singh, son of Raja Raj Singh, who not only maintained his hold on Rihlu but also gained some villages back from surrounding areas.

### HARIPUR FORT

The story of construction of Haripur fort by Hari Chand is interesting one. It was erected by the side of Banganga. Hari Chand succeeded to the throne of Kangra a few years after Timur's invasion in A.D. 1405. A few years after he became king, he desired to hunt in the direction of Harsar, in dense forests to the south of Kangra. During the process of hunting, the Raja, got somehow, separated from the party and fell into a well. Search for his person was made but in vain. Believing him to be dead or being eaten by a wild animal, his death rituals were performed, even his Ranis performed the ritual of *Sati* and his younger brother, Karam Chand, was installed as the successor as there was no direct successor. It is said that Raja Hari Chand was discovered after twenty days by a merchant, accidentally and rescued. Raja Hari Chand learnt what happened in Kangra in his absence so he decided not to visit Kangra and established a kingdom at the junction of three rivers, taking it most auspicious. The three rivers were Banganga, Kurali and Nayagul where he founded a fort after his name, Haripur. When his brother, Karam Chand, came to know the fact he was much ashamed but Hari Chand refused to return to Kangra. As a reward to the merchant for his timely help, Hari Chand remitted all duties on his goods which was respected by all the succeeding Rajas and by the Sikhs and it was abandoned only under British rule.<sup>75</sup>

The original name of the state was Gwalior of which Guler is a derivation, and it is several times referred to under this name in Mohammadan histories. The name derived from word Gopala, meaning a cowboy/cowherd and tradition is that a cowherd pointed out a site to Raja Hari Chand, where a tiger and goat drank water together, as a suitable place for his capital. The cowherd was sacrificed and his head buried in the foundation to ensure the stability of the fort.<sup>76</sup> This is an interesting anecdote. It is said that Jammu was also founded on the same ground, by Raja Jambulochan, when during hunting he saw a goat and a lion drinking water from a pond. It was the place where Rajtilak building was erected afterwards and all the feudal lords, prior to their crowning, would assemble

and a Tilak was painted on their forehead by the Royal Pandit in the building of Rajtilak. This tradition was in vogue until the last king of J&K state, Maharaja Hari Singh. However Maharaja Gulab Singh was bestowed upon the Tilak at Jia Pota, Akhnoor owing to the fact that most of the Jamwal clans of Jammu were against Gulab Singh to be installed as Raja after destabilising the Dev dynasty.

A similar tradition exists in connection with the foundation of Taragarh fort when Tara, a zamindar, is said to have been sacrificed in the same manner.<sup>77</sup>

The fort of Haripur is erected on a ridge overhanging the Banganga river, one of the most striking and picturesque situations in the Kangra district. Much damage was caused during the Sikh regime followed by an earthquake in A.D. 1905.

There is a reference of this fort in *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, "a strong fort belonging to a different Raja, who came out to meet the army and show his loyalty."<sup>78</sup> The next reference is there during the Sikh rule when after surrender of Kangra fort to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, all the States of Jalandhar group came under his control, Guler also came under him. For a time being, Maharaja Ranjit Singh treated Bhup Singh (A.D. 1790) with honour but suddenly changed his stand and seized Guler state. Barnes gives the following account of the way in which this was done: "The plan was skilfully and deliberately laid. The Raja was directed to raise a large force to assist in some operations on the Indus and when the military strength of the population was drained off and the country lay defenceless, the Raja was summoned to Lahore. He was shamelessly arrested, and told that he would not be allowed to go till he surrendered his kingdom and accepted a Jagir. Without waiting for a reply, Desa Singh was sent off with an army of ten thousand Sikhs, and the territory was quietly annexed to the growing rule of the Khalsa." "Bhup Singh died in 1820 and was succeeded by his son, Shamsheer Singh. In the first Sikh war he raised a force from among his retainers and turned the Sikhs out of Haripur Fort."<sup>79</sup> After this possession the fort of Haripur remained with Gulerias. It is a big ruin now. The earthquake of 1905 damaged a lot of this fort.

In addition to Haripur fort, the Gulerias possessed six more forts scattered at the frontiers of the state. They included Mastgarh, Ramgarh, Mangarh, Gandharp, Nehkalanok, and Kotla. Among these forts Kotla was an important fort, which has been discussed in these pages. The importance of this fort was due to its strategical situation. It was situated at a point where boundarylines of three powerful hill states of Kangra,

Nurpur and Chamba met. That is why it was a bone of contention for each of these states.

### SHAHPUR FORT

Bakhat Mal (A.D. 1518-58), the Pathania lord constructed this fort on the bank of Ravi in the honour of Shah Sur family. It was seized during Mughal period and afterwards during Sikh rule. Britishers had tough fight with Ram Singh Pathania, a revolutionary who was in occupation of two forts on either side of the Ravi. Their fort, once an important fort in power under Billawarias, was captured by Jagat Singh Pathania and kept his garrison here. After his death it was recaptured by the lords of Basohli. However, for some time it remained a bone of contention among the Pathanias, Billawarias and, in later period, Lakhanpurias. It is but a rubble of ruined walls left now by the side of the Ravi where a dam of the same name is being constructed. It was here Ram Singh Pathania used to visit to worship an incarnation of goddess image.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Diwan Sarvdyal, *Twareekh Rajgaan*, Zila Kangra, A.D. 1883.
2. Kangra Gazetteer, 1926, p. 52.
3. Archaeological Survey Reports, Vol. V, pp. 145-48.
4. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, pp. 101.
5. Moorcraft, *Travels*, Vol. 1, pp. 140-41.
6. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, pp. 103.
7. Archaeological Survey Reports, Vol. V, Punjab, p. 148.
8. *Ancient Geography of India*, pp. 137, 144, 145.
9. Ferishta, Briggs, 1908, Vol. I, p. 48.
10. Elliot's *History*, Vol. II, p. 34 (reference is of Utbi, the secretary of Mahmud in his work *Tarikh-i-Yamini*).
11. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, p. 108.  
The author of this book, during one of his tours to the locality of Baijnath met a rugged beggar who sang the praises of lords of Nagarkot but alas he could not be recorded. He was requested to see the author but he never appeared again and several efforts to locate him went futile.
12. *Tarikh-i-Yamini*. Elliot's *History*, Vol. II, pp. 33-35. Also referred by Ferishta translation, Vol. I, 1908, pp. 48-49.
13. *Ibid*.
14. J.P. Historical Society, Vol. VII, No. 2, p. 115.
15. *Ibid*, pp. 91, 205.
16. Archaeological Survey Report, Vol. V, pp. 155-56 and vide *Elliot's History*.

Vol. II, Appendix, pp. 409-10.

17. P.H.S., Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 115-29. *Elliot's History*, Vol. III, p. 570.
18. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, p. 126.
19. *Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi. Elliot's History*, Vol. III, pp. 317-19.  
There was a popular couplet in vogue written and sung by a royal poet named Manik Chand around A.D. 1562, it reads:  
रूप चन्द्र बद्धकर चढो दिलेश्वर सुरतान ।  
बहुत हेतकर पग परौ पीठ हथ लई सान ॥
20. *Ma'asir-ul-Umara*, ii, 185, 186.
21. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, p. 141.
22. The same reference can be gathered from District Gazetteer of Kangra, 1924, p. 61.
23. *Tabakat-i-Akbari, Elliot's History*, Vol. V, p. 356.
24. *Ma'asir-ul-Umara*, Vol. I, pp. 647-48.
25. Kangra Settlement Report 1889, p. 8.
26. *Ma'asir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 176-78.
27. *Badshahnama* translation, p. 285.
28. *Waqiat-i-Jahangiri*, Elliot, Vol. VI, pp. 381-82 contains a full account of his visit. Also see *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, p. 18.
29. Kangra Gazetteer, 1924, (reprint), p. 67. Itimad-ud-Daula was the father of Nur Jahan, a most trusted minister of Jahangir who breathed his last near Siba on the journey to Kangra. Both Jahangir and Nur Jahan were present nearby.
30. According to Mr. Barnes, a portion of the Sikh army was near the gate at the time of surrender which entered first and possessed the fort, though the surrender was made to Raja Sansar Chand. Kangra Gazetteer, 1924 (reprint, 1995), p. 69.
31. Kangra Gazetteer, 1924 (reprint, 1995), p. 71.
32. Moorcraft, *Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 127-30. Vigne, *Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 139-40. Carried to the Kangra Gazetteer, p. 73.
33. Kangra Gazetteer of 1824 (reprint, 1995), p. 73.
34. *Elliot's History*, Vol. VI, p. 526.
35. *Elliot's History*, Vol. VI, p. 375. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, trans, Vol. II, pp. 183-86.
36. *Ma'asir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, pp. 184-90.
37. Archaeological Survey Reports, Vol. V, pp. 162-63.
38. An adventurer in the Punjab, Languages Department, Punjab, 1970.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Shortly before the earthquake of 1905, two fragments of a white marble slab, containing an incomplete Persian script, were found in the Ambika Devi temple in Kangra fort and sent to Lahore museum—Kangra Gazetteer, 1924 (reprint, 1995), p. 505, cf. Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of India, 1905-6, p. 13.
41. Both *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Badshahnama* contain Paithan word.
42. Another coin of the Audumbara Rajas is recorded in Vol. I, Indo-Greek coins, Punjab museum, with the legend—Rajna Vamakisa Rudravarmasa Vijayata, Hutchison and Vogel, Vol. I, p. 217.
43. *Tarikh-i-Alfi, Elliot's History*, Vol. V, p. 162. Ibrahim Ghaznavi A.D. 1058-89 attacked India in post-11th century.
44. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, p. 218.



45. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* and *Shah Fateh-i-Kangra* confirm this fact.
46. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, II, p. 226.
47. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. II, p. 287.
48. *Badshahnama*, II, p. 237ff.
49. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, pp. 239-43. References have been taken from *Badshahnama*.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 246. *Badshahnama*, II, p. 463.
52. Kangra Settlement Report, pp. 11-12. Cf. *History of the Punjab*, Muhammad Latif, p. 406.
53. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. II, p. 261.
54. Vigne, *Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 145-6, 157-8.
55. Kangra Settlement Report, p. 145.
56. *Akbarnama*, p. 616 and Ferishata, Briggs' trans, Vol. II, p. 135.
57. *Ma'asir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, p. 157.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ain-i-Akbari*, trans., Vol. I, p. 344.
60. Chamba Gazetteer, pp. 90-92; Kangra Gazetteer, Appendix I, iii.
61. *Ibid.*, also see *Badshahnama*, Vol. II, p. 238ff.
62. *Badshahnama*, Vol. II, p. 237 ff.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, p. 237.
65. *Badshahnama*, Vol. II, p. 237 onwards.
66. Hutchison and Vogel, p. 24.
67. *Badshahnama*, Vol. II, p. 451 onwards.
68. *Ibid.*
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71. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, p. 232. For further reference see *Elliot's History*, Vol. IV, p. 496ff.
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73. V.C. Ohri (ed), *Arts of Himachal*, p. 72.
74. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, p. 314.
75. Kangra Settlement Report, p. 7.
76. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. I, p. 199.
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# 3

## *Forts on the Right Side of the Ravi*

### FORT OF JAMMU

Jammu remained the most powerful erstwhile state among the hill states situated on both the sides of the Ravi. Earlier its citadel was at Bahu when both Bahu and Jammu were ruled from there only but there rose a conflict between two sons of the most powerful king of the state, Kapur Dev (A.D. 1530 to 1571 ) for the crown since both of them were born on the same day and time to two different Ranis. "On their father's demise strife began between them, and, as each seems to have had a large following, the state was divided into two parts, with the river Tawi as the boundary. Bahu fort had probably been the place of residence of the Rajas from ancient times."¹ Since the bifurcation of the kingdom the rivalry between the two principalities reached to a height from where there was no return hence both the erstwhile states fortified their capitals so as to defend from each other against any possible attack. Historical evidences are there which tell us that the fort of Jammu existed from the time immemorial. At that early period, it is said, one Raja Ram Dev Rathore ruled in Kanauj, and among conquests made by him, the outer Himalaya, from Kumaon to the Jehlum, are said to have been invaded and subdued. After conquering Kumaon he advanced westward as far as Nagarkot, which also submitted, and then he went on to the fort of Jammu. The Raja of Jammu, "Confident in the valour of his army, the strength of his fortress, the difficulty of access, the denseness of the jungles and abundance of his supplies, refused to surrender and came out to battle"² S.S. Charak while quoting Ferishta has dated this event to two or three generations after Vikramaditya, the founder of his era, i.e. about the close of the first century A.D.³ Definitely this was the oldest fort of Jammu. No description of this fort is available, we get only a scanty information that the fort was erected in the dense forests and the path route was not

accessible. Then for centuries together there was chaos, intrigues and family feuds and the capital of the state was shifted time and again to Babapura, Babore and around, and it was Maldev who finally shifted the capital to Jammu again in A.D. 1361. He erected several buildings for the royalty in addition to a seat where all the heir apparents, the crown princes, were coronated. Several legends are in vogue about the valour of Maldev. It is said that he brought three large boulders one by one, from the bed of the river, Tawi and placed them in the vicinity of Mandi, popularly known as Purani Mandi. One such stone is still there fixed in the wall of a platform situated at the curve of a narrow lane, popularly known as Kali Jani. The name itself connotes of black stone. It is a big boulder not easy to be carried by even several men but Maldev carried this stone on his shoulders from the bed of the river, almost two kilometres from the spot. The second stone was placed nearby the pond present at the back of Rajtilak building and the third stone was carried on to a small ridge by the side of which he sat and performed the coronation ceremony. A building was constructed there later on, and the spot was revered afterwards by the royalty and the Rajput community as a whole. It is this building, in the heart of Purani Mandi, popularly known as Rajtilak building, where the offices of Rajput Kshatriya Sabha exist. The old palaces of Purani Mandi do not exist now, however, the building carrying the coronation seat is still there. It was renovated time and again.

The capital of this hill state might have been fortified by Maldev but we do not get any information about that. However we are informed that there were two forts on the right side of the river Tawi, one facing the fort of Bahu situated on the left bank of the river, supposed to be of ancient origin among all the forts in the vicinity, it was known as Mastgarh. A *mohalla* by the same name has come up in the heart of old Jammu. The author of this book resided in this *mohalla* for more than forty years and had seen personally ruined foundation of some bastion-like structure made of solid stones on which brickwork was done with small baked red bricks during the construction of circular road in his childhood. It seems that there was a definite fort-like structure opposite to Bahu fort. Since it was erected for the security of the capital of Jammu against any onslaught from the fort of Bahu or more precisely attack from the Bahuwals as such definitely it was erected after the reign of Kapur Dev (A.D. 1530 to 1571) when the kingdom was divided into two parts with the river of Tawi forming the boundary line. We find mention in the history that since the bifurcation of the kingdom the rivalry between

them reached to a height that both the regimes fortified their capitals. It might have happened during the reign of Raja Smail Dev (A.D. 1571 to 1594).

A mosque was erected here in the close domains of the fort of Mastgarh by Raja Gaje Singh (A.D. 1692 to 1707) in honour of an ambassador of Aurangzeb, named Kalel Khan,<sup>4</sup> but S.S. Charak credits the construction of this mosque to a person named Malagar Dev.<sup>5</sup> Who was this person? we do not get any information further. There is no mention of this man in chronology of the royal family. And to erect such a lavish structure by an ordinary person was next to impossible. No occasion was mentioned as to why that mosque was constructed by Malagar Dev. I agree with Kahan Singh Baloria that it was got erected by Raja Gaje Singh in honour of the ambassador of Aurangzeb. The mosque is still there and has been renovated afterwards in seventies. Earlier it was lying deserted. We used to play there in our childhood.

There is a mention of another fort by the name of Ramnagar. This fort was supposed to be erected in the reign of Raja Kapur Dev and his son used to reside in it.<sup>6</sup> Kahan Singh Billowaria named the son of Raja Kapoor Dev as Man Singh alias Danga Man. Man Singh or Danga Man was his younger son. It was a polygonal fort with five round turrets forming the bastions for the fort. It was situated in the north direction of the town by the side of river Tawi. On this location new palace, popularly known as Amar palace, now housing a museum and a library, was constructed during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh by Raja Amar Singh, the grand father of Dr. Karan Singh. The name of the locality as Ramnagar was in vogue for centuries together for the obvious reasons.

Since the town developed within the fortified areas in between these forts and in due course of time, especially during the reign of Raja Gaje Singh and afterwards, when there was a huge influx of people from Punjab and surrounding hills as there was comparatively peace at Jammu, the boundary line of the capital was extended manifold so that starting from Ramnagar in the north, river Tawi in the east, Gumat Dhacci in the south and Ajaibghar in the west was the area covered by the town. There were frequent attacks from Mughals followed by the Sikhs from Lahore side hence there was a great need to fortify the whole town, as such a new city fort came into existence, perhaps during the reign of Raja Dhruv Dev. It had wide walls constructed with solid stones and polygonal bastions on which were constructed the turrets with gun points. The wall of the fort had its east end by the right bank of the river Tawi. On its south direction the wall ended before Ajaibghar, where a park exists

now, opposite to the new secretariat and its north end was joining with the old structure of Ramnagar. There were several gates forming the entrance of which Gumat, Denice and Jogi gates were in vogue a decade ago before the widening of the road leading to Tawi bridge from Lala Hansraj park. However the remains of Gumat Darwaza are still there near the town hall. We find the ruins of an arched entrance of Jogi gate near SPM Rajput School. Even the structures of the masonry work of the great wall of the fort were visible near Hari Singh High School almost a decade ago but with the renovation, widening of the road and construction of the infrastructure by JDA these structures were dismantled.

It was a hill fort surrounded by dense forests from three sides and river-bed on the fourth side. The route to the fort was not easy to access. Since it was situated on a ridge, comparatively at higher altitude than the Gumat area, now popularly known as Chandnagar, it was not possible for the enemy to seize this fort easily. Perhaps that is why maximum battles with the Mughals and Sikhs were fought either at Satwari or near Gumat. There was no moat, the path was already inaccessible due to dense forests.

### BAHU FORT

Bahu fort is an ancient fort situated on the left bank of the river Tawi facing the old town of Jammu. When exactly it was constructed originally is not known, the historians and the researchers claim that the fort came into existence with the formation of new town of Bahu centuries ago. Earlier it was named as Dharanagari which was in existence thousands of years before the town of Jammu came into existence. Definitely new town of Bahu might have come to dwell in the closed domain of the solid walls of the fortified area. It is said that the town of Bahu came into existence by the efforts of a prince named Bahulochan, son of the most powerful king of Sialkot, Agnigarb II. He had 18 sons, most of them established their own kingdoms by defeating the local chieftains and Ranas, Among them the eldest was Bahulochan who defeated the lord of Dharanagari which was a flourishing town of this region and renamed it as Bahukot after his name whereas his younger brother Jambulochan defeated the feudal lord of Madradesha and finding a most congenial site, a health resort, erected a few buildings on a hillock, in the dense forests and invited his kith and kins to come and settle in the new locality who migrated from Sialkot and settled there. Thus a new town came into existence which was named Jambu after the name of Jambulochan. Some

of the historians are of the view that Jambulochan saw a heartening scene while hunting that a goat and a lion were taking water from the same pond, he was so impressed that he decided to build a castle there. It was the vicinity of Purani Mandi and the pond was in vogue almost four decades ago in the backyard of Rajtilak building situated in the centre of the Mandi.

Bahukot means fort of Bahu. Perhaps Bahulochan after defeating the chieftains of Dharanagari had erected a fort in the same vicinity but on higher ridge. Definitely the present fort is not the fort constructed by Bahulochan thousands of years ago. This fort has seen the rise and fall of numerous dynasties. With the fate of the fort ran their fate. Earlier it might have been erected into a crude form of fortification, subsequently, catering to the need of security, the structure was modified. The present fort might have the foundation of earlier fort erected by Bahulochan, however, it was reconstructed by Autar Dev, the cousin of Parasram Dev, who was the grand son of the famous monarch, Kapoor Dev, about A.D. 1585. Till then Bahu was the capital of Jammu Raj but on the death of Parasram Dev's father, Raja Jagdev, Smail Dev, the younger brother of Jagdev and uncle of Parasram Dev was declared the lord of Jammu, followed by a complaint by Parasram Dev that he was the legitimate heir of the crown, the kingdom was divided into two principalities one on either side of the Tawi which was fixed as the boundary line of the two. Bahu Raj was given to Parasram Dev whereas Jammu Raj was bestowed upon Smail Dev, his uncle. According to some historians Jag Dev and Smail Dev were the twin sons who were born on the same day from two different queens of Kapoor Dev hence there was a conflict for the crown between the two on their maturity, as such Kapoor Dev himself divided the kingdom into two—Bahu Raj and Jammu Raj—the Tawi was the dividing line.<sup>7</sup> Since factors responsible for the division were jealousy and hatred both of the chieftains were suspicious against each other. To safeguard their borders they erected forts.

Bahu fort was time and again demolished and reconstructed and what we get today is the final shape of the fort reconstructed by Maharaja Gulab Singh in early 19th century followed by its renovation in the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Prior to the construction of other buildings in the fortified area the chieftains always made it a point to erect a shrine there of their Kul Devi or Devta. On the upper strata of the fort we find a temple attributed to their Kul Devi, Bhawani. In fact the image of the deity was established long ago but the temple was constructed afterwards by Maharaja Gulab Singh. According to the priest of the temple the

image of the temple was transported from Ayodhya, on a palanquin by some courtier of the court of Ayodhya, much earlier than this temple came into existence. There was a Thakurdwara prior to the construction of the temple, it was dedicated to Lord Shiva but in due course of time the image of Mahakali became the centre of belief not only for the Jamwals but also for the common people.

The whole structure has been fortified with thick walls constructed with sandstones mortared with lime and red brick powder. It was a formidable structure that even after the onslaught of the vagaries of the nature for more than one and a half century it stands as it was. Eight octagonal turrets constructed on the solid bastions are joined together with thick walls which are fringed at the apex forming the periphery of the turrets, covering the chambers meant for the guards.

The main gate is a massive structure meant for the elephants to enter the fort. We find a *pucca* water tank on the left lateral side. It is almost 20' × 20' in area with almost 15' depth. A few steps lead to the level of the water. The tank was constructed with a plan to get the rainy water trickling from all sides. Its water was meant for the routine daily use. We find a pyramidal structure just in the central right flank which was meant for the storage of ammunition. Its walls are so thick that ordinary gun attack would not affect it. A few steps lead to a underground chamber linked with narrow covered path. The underground chamber was used as dungeon meant for some special political prisoners of the kingdom. Again this underground chamber is connected to the outer world with a narrow pass. Perhaps this route was used to leave the fort secretly unseen by the public or other officials working in the fort during an emergency.

We can reach the chambers constructed on the first floor with a flight of a few steps. These chambers were lavishly decorated with floral designs painted on the rims of the arches of the entrances constructed in the style of a Baradari. Double row of these arched entrances form the base of these palaces meant for the royalty or for the family of the Quiledar. Generally ladies belonging to the royal houses would come there during summer evenings to enjoy the cool breeze from the river side. We find a *Tulsi* pot nearby another tank-like water reservoir. Its water was used by the ladies only. Perhaps it was the *Zanankhana*. We find a few chambers by the right side of the main temple, the ground floor is large enough to accommodate scores of people at a time. These chambers were meant for the people working in the office of the Quiledar. Incharge of the garrison used to sit in one of these chambers. They have become roofless and if they are not repaired they may crumble down on any day. It was the

camp of the royal forces. Horses and elephants were also kept in this fort till the regime of Maharaja Hari Singh.

The fort was renovated during the reign of Governor Greesh Chander Saxena in his first spell when departments of Floriculture, Archives and Gardens joined hands to maintain its surroundings to create it as a tourist spot. During popular government a garden of Mughal style was constructed which was gifted by Gul Shah, the son-in-law of Shaikh Abdullah to his father-in-law as his own property. On the upper strata an artificial lake has been created with boating facilities and a shortcut path leads to this lake from Bahu fort. A project linking Bahu fort with Peerkho, another much visited shrine situated on other side of the river Tawi, through cable car system was approved for the next Plan by which there is a potentiality to improve the temple tourism as both of the shrines are ancient ones.

The shrine of Mahakali was very popular. During *Navratras* members of the royalty and families of the courtiers used to visit the shrine at Bahu fort. There used to be a festive occasion during *Navratras* when a temporary bridge was constructed to bridge old Jammu with Bawa, the Bahu fort and the commoners used to visit the shrine by paying the toll to the bridge-keeper. When there was no bridge a boat used to ply from old Jammu side to Bahu fort and the boatman used to charge paisa two only during our childhood. The vendors used to decorate their shops and there used to be enough hustle during *Navratras*.

Now *pucca* shops along with a children park has come up with the result there is enough rush of home tourists throughout the year especially for those who cannot visit the Mughal gardens of Kashmir satisfy themselves to find the replica of Mughal gardens in the shape of Bag-e-Bahu.

## RAMGARH FORT

Almost twenty kilometres west to Jammu, nearby Indo-Pak border, is situated the historical town of Ramgarh. This was the parental town of Dogra brothers who became legends in north India by dint of their valour and statesmanship that Mian Dhiyan Singh who was conferred the title of Raja by Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, was raised to the rank of prime minister whereas Mian Gulab Singh who was the elder brother of Raja Dhiyan Singh was not only conferred the title of Raja but also given a state of his elders and was declared as sovereign state, afterwards. Mian Kishore Singh, the father of the trio was settled at Smailpur, his



parental Jagir, but young Gulab Singh, after being annoyed by Mian Mota, the regent of Jammu Raj, settled at Ramgarh and constructed some *Havelis* for the family where both the brothers married Rakwal sisters, the princesses. From Ramgarh they proceeded to Lahore to be employed in Charyari platoon, the most potential and most powerful force segment of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. It was a unit of 4000 cavaliers and supposed to be supreme in assault against the enemy. Earlier Ramgarh was named as Khirdi but when Gulab Singh was declared the Raja of the area he changed the name of the town on behest of his spiritual teacher named Prem Dasa who was a great disciple of Lord Rama hence the new name to the locality was declared as Ramgarh.

The town and the surrounding area, afterwards, was bestowed upon the youngest brother of the trio, Raja Suchet Singh, as Jagir which was inherited by Raja Ram Singh, the younger son of Maharaj Ranbir Singh, the second Dogra Maharaja of Jammu. According to elders of the locality the name of the town was changed during the regime of Raja Ram Singh who constructed a fort here with red baked bricks, small in size. This fort was small in size yet formidable to seize. It was square in design with four turrets designed on the upper portions of the formidable bastions constructed with solid stones. These turrets were joined together with thick walls which also served the purpose of cloisters i.e. during emergency, the soldiers defending the fort could reach from one turret to another without actually coming down to the ground. The turrets were polygonal in structure and had gun points to counter the attack of the invaders. This is a fact that this fort was never attacked and it was dismantled during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh. Only ruins of turrets tell the story of the fort.

This fort contained a water reservoir, a stable for the horses and a large residential *Haveli* with eight doors. An inn was also constructed there for the lodging of the visitors. In due course of time, the attack of natural calamities and human vandalism assisted in complete destruction of the massive building. The only sign left is the ruined turret which is also giving way.

The water reservoir in the fort was exploited by revenue department through a well dug in the fort for irrigation purpose in Dec. 1955. It has a radius of 3.5 feet and is still wet. Earlier the water from this well was irrigating the fields around. After independence some offices were shifted to the vicinity including a police station but continuous deteriorating condition of the fort forced these departments to shift from this vicinity. Since it is very close to border as such the locality is being looked after

by the para-military forces and the civilians are not generally allowed to visit the place, only those who possess the fields and farms in the area are allowed to move, that too with a proper identity.

Ramgarh was famous for its residents of valour who were respected for their strategical fights and command over the soldierierity. Almost all the erstwhile hill states required their services. Raja Raj Singh of Chamba required their services against Raja Amrit Pal of Basohli and seized the territory of Chamba state occupied by him. Fourteen Ramgarhias led by one Mia Harha were responsible for the death of Mian Nath who was attacked by them collectively. The services of Ramgarhias, however, were required during emergent situations only.

### MAHORGARH FORT

Mahorgarh fort is perched on a hillock situated almost at a distance of 10 kilometres as crow flies from Samba. When we move from Samba to Dhar road towards Nud almost 2 kilometres from main road we find a *kachha* road on left side which leads towards the fort by the side of a nullah. Matador plies upto Chilla Danga which is about 7 kilometres from the main road, a village from where one has to leave for the fort on foot. For two and a half kilometres one has to go on foot till one reaches a mountainous path and after travelling almost a kilometre, one can find the remains of the fort on the top of the hillock. The fort must be having an area of several thousand acres with radius of one and a half kilometre. It goes in a circle so that in every direction there are small gates the ruins of which can be seen till this day. Main gate is exceptionally preserved almost 30 feet in height which forms an arch on the apex. Underneath is a big replica of the same arch which is almost 20 feet in height. It is a masonry work of big sand stones, mortared with lime and other ingredients. On the top of the small arch there is an arched niche 4 feet in length and 2 and a half feet in breadth. It must have served an airy window through which cross ventilation was possible during summer. The massive structure is constructed of big stones which forms the entrance to the main fort. Other gates include a small one towards the direction of Mansar lake almost one kilometre from the main gate. The third one is again a small gate confronting the slope about half a kilometre from the main gate. Fourth gate of the same size is facing the village Morada about one kilometre from main gate. Fifth one is in the direction of Malkot about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  kilometres from the main gate. Nothing is left with the exception of main gate and adjoining cells meant for the soldierierity,

yet the foundation of other chambers can be seen here and there. There is a big tank of water covering almost 15 kanals of the area which is fed by the rain water. The people of the locality have never seen it dry. It is very deep almost 15 feet at the higher side and 20 feet on the lower side. The reservoir is enclosed in a walled structure pentagonal in shape. Its water might have been used for daily use.

The name of the locality Mahargarh came into existence owing to the name of the Rajput community residing in the area. They are popularly known as Mahoria Rajputs. A number of families of this clan have migrated to the lower areas of the nullah where they have made their settlements, comparatively in more fertile lands. The other communities comprising of village population include Goswamis, Gujjars, Thakurs, Siralya Rajputs and some of the Scheduled Caste families.

Several anecdotes are in vogue pertaining to the existence of this fort. Very popular one is about a relative of Akbar, the Mughal king, who possessed a *Parasmani* by which he could convert any iron equipment into solid gold. It is said that Akbar wanted that *Parasmani* and asked him to deposit it into the treasury. But instead he fled from the Mughal capital towards the hills and erected a strong fort here in this area. The Mughal forces followed him and almost captured this formidable fort with the result he fled towards the Chenab river where he threw the *Parasmani*. The Mughal forces followed him and when came to know the fact they dropped elephants with iron chains in the river to locate the precious metal. But instead, to their amazement, they found that iron chains were converted into solid gold. However, they could not get the *Parasmani*. They returned back to the capital and told the whole story to the King.

There is a historical fact that during the reign of Akbar several hill states revolted against the Mughals. Nurpur, Lakhanpur, Jasrota and Samba were the main hill kingdoms. Akbar sent a strong force to seize them. Most of the soldiers of these states surrendered before the Mughal forces, but Bhivu Dev, the feudal lord of Jasrota, did not surrender. A fierce battle took place for days together. Jasrotias harmed the Mughal forces to the extent that they had to withdraw. On the next day, Mughal forces jointly attacked the fort of Jasrota in the evening and they filled in the moat making a passage towards the main gate of the fort and after a strong resistance they succeeded to get into the fort. But Bhivu Dev did not surrender and fled towards Samba, he was seized again and finally making his way he fled towards the hills. Since the hill states revolted against the Mughal forces time and again the emperor ordered to build a

strong fort so as to keep the garrison of Mughal soldiers regularly there. In this way the fort was built. Since we find the carving of Allah and Mohammad on the two walls of the entrance which proves the theory that the fort was built by some Mohammadan emperor. Hutchison and Vogel state, "In the 35th year of Akbar, A.D. 1588-89 a revolt took place in which almost all the states from Jammu to Jaswan were involved. . . . A strong force under Zain Khan Khoka, Akbar's foster brother, was sent to suppress the revolt. Most of the rebels surrendered but the subjection was not complete." "In the 41st year of Akbar another revolt of a still more formidable character took place, led by Raja Bhabu of Jasrota. On this occasion also many states, both east and west of the Ravi, seem to have involved. A Mughal army under Mirza Rustam Qandhari was first sent to operate against the eastern states, especially Nurpur, then ruled by Raja Basu, who had been implicated in the previous rebellion."

We find enough information through *Akbarnama* and *Ma'asur-Hamara* that most of these hill chieftains surrendered but a few were at large who could not be subjugated. Hence, it was decided to erect a formidable fort in these hills where a garrison of Mughal forces may be kept to suppress any possible revolt in the days to come.

"Two kos from Samba a fort was built and Mohammad Khan Turkman was sent forward to take charge of Lakhanpur." But alas this fort was not used afterwards. It took almost an year to complete the fort but hardly for a few months it was used by the Mughal army. Either it was seized by the hill chieftains or the Mughals themselves deserted it.

## KAPURGARH

The ruins of this fort are scattered on a ridge by the side of a path to Bhairh Devta, near Nagrota. This fort was erected around A.D. 1535 by Raja Kapur Dev for the security of the border. It seems it was the boundary line of his kingdom in northeast direction or it was constructed for the safeguard and observation of the surroundings since it is situated at the highest spot of the vicinity wherefrom one can see for miles together with naked eyes. Definitely it was a strategic spot. The site is almost nineteen kilometres from Jammu and almost six kilometres from Nagrota, the road offshoots from the National Highway after crossing a bridge on a nullah, and it leads to the sacred shrine of Bhairh Devta. It was a polygonal in structure with five turrets constructed on solid bastions erected with the help of solid stones mortared with a mixture of lime and red brick powder. The peripheral wall joining the turrets was perforated

at the top and had slanting gun points. The exact dimension is not available due to the completely damaged structure, however, we find the foundations of different chambers which might be there for the Quiledar and other people working there. According to Kahan Singh Billowaria, it was a store-house for the arms and ammunition, a sort of a depot. A garrison was placed there which was always ready to face any eventuality.<sup>8</sup> It was left deserted during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh and the junk of old arms and ammunition was buried in the earth and the guns etc. were thrown into the nullah. Consequently vagaries of nature and human vandalism reduced it to rubble what we find now. Gujjars living in the vicinity have constructed their huts nearby with supporting walls of the remains of the fort.

### SAMBA FORT AND PALACES

Fort of Samba is situated on a higher ridge now occupying the centre of the town of Samba. Ancient fort was erected by the Samyal clan of Rajputs and nothing is available about this ancient fort but during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, like other erstwhile hill states, the erstwhile small principality was subjugated by the Sikh forces and with the title of Raja Suchet Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh, Jagirs of Bandralta, Mankot and Samba were given to him in lieu of service rendered by him in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He constructed new forts and palaces in almost all the three erstwhile states of Bandralta (Ramnagar at present), Mankot (Ramkot at present) and Samba.

Raja Suchet Singh constructed wide chambers, double-storeyed building as palaces for himself and his queens. It was a close domain of a fort already existing there, the ruined walls with arched false niches and gun points are the only remains of that ancient fort we see now. It might have been renovated by Raja Suchet Singh for the security of the palaces he built there. He constructed a huge water reservoir, a tank in which the rain water was stored for the possible use of the inmates during emergent situations. It has been converted into a volleyball ground for the students of the Higher Secondary School which occupy the building now. Huge entrance guarded by two bastions with polygonal turrets is still intact otherwise the surrounding walls are crumbling down rapidly.

Raja Suchet Singh resided here in these palaces along with his Ranis. When he was murdered in 1944 at Lahore three of his queens performed the ritual of Sati along with a few maids near Basantar stream. Their memorials still exist there under a canopy of trees.

### NANGA FORT

It was a small fortress erected on the boundary line of the erstwhile state of Jammu almost three kilometres south to the Ramgarh fort. The fort was erected with the help of solid stones the heap of which is still lying as rubble of the fort. It contained a cell of garrison and a pyramidal structure with lavish walls meant for the storage of the ammunition. Since there was no population and due to the non-presence of foliage nearby it was named Nanga (exposed) fort. The locality around also came to be known with the same name afterwards.

### DEVIGARH

Ruins of this fort are lying there at the borderline towards Ranbir Singh Pura. It was a semi-constructed and semi-mud thatched fort and carried garrison. Sikh forces during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign and afterwards attacked this fort time and again and ruined it. It was abandoned during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh

### SAYADGARH

It was a mud-thatched old fort situated nine kilometres west to Ramgarh which has been reduced to a small mount.<sup>9</sup>

### BHADDU FORT

In fact it was the close domain of the Bhadwal Rajputs fortified after the bifurcation of erstwhile Bilawar state into Bilawar and Bhaddu. The chieftains of this erstwhile state were known as Bhadwals. Now, with the exception of some ruins of the old peripheral walls nothing of the fort is available. It was situated on a ridge in Ujh valley where the town of Bhaddu exists at present. In fact this was the kingdom comprised of thirty six villages.<sup>10</sup> The capital was sustained in this fortified area only. We find its mention as Kot Bharta in *Akbarnama*.<sup>11</sup>

### KOHG FORT

It was another fort erected at the borderline of Bhaddu with Basohli. In fact it was a checkpoint with a few sentries posted here to check the incoming people and note their antecedents.

## BILAWAR FORT

Like that of Bhaddu, Bilawar fort was a fortified area where the new state of Bilawar came into existence. Prior to its shifting to Basohli, Bilawar was the capital of this state. It was a huge fort wherein the town of Bilawar developed. It had tall stony walls almost three feet in width and twenty two feet in height joining five bastions again polygonal in shape culminating into turrets with fractured fringes and slanting gun points. All but one of these turrets crumbled to rubble. The only turret left behind is also crumbling rapidly. The upper portion of this fort contained palaces of early Bilawaria Rajas. Drew has mentioned about these palaces, "though substantially built, was not large, and was built by the Bilawaria Rajas."<sup>12</sup>

There is a large water reservoir in the form of a tank with a number of lavishly decorated panels with half reliefs chiselled on various subjects ranging from classical gods and goddesses to local deities, foliage, animal life and local anecdotes prevailing in the surroundings. This reservoir was fed by a natural spring and water was supplied to the palaces from this spring only. It is left deserted now after the system of water supply came into vogue. This reservoir was a part of the palaces and existed in the fortified area of Bilawar.

## KOT DHAR, MAHNPUR

There exists a beautiful vale of Dhar Mahnpur twenty five kilometres northwest to Basohli, almost at a height of five thousand feet above the sea level. It is a vale decorated with scenic landscapes that the regime found a new spot, after laying out metalled road, from Basohli to Dhar, for incoming tourists. The village was once a fort with round turrets having strong bastions. There are three such towers still in existence on the three corners of the village. In fact these watch-towers form the boundary line of the village. From these watch-towers Basohli, Bhaddu, Samarta and even places of far-flung distances are visible. This structure might have been erected by Bilawaria Rajas to keep watch on the activities of the surrounding erstwhile states. When these states were subjugated by Maharaja Gulab Singh he got these watch-towers repaired and used them as observation posts till the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, then, afterwards it was abandoned. It contained a large tank on the higher ridge which stored rain water of the surroundings. It was meant for the use of inmates during emergent situations which never emerged during its existence.

## SUNDRIKOT

It was built on a higher ridge by the Bhadwals to watch the activities of the Bilawarias and Lakhanpurias. The surroundings and the locality with a shrine is named after the kot.

## SAMARTA FORT

This fort was the Jagir of Sumbria Rajputs and it was annexed by Maharaja Gulab Singh. Kahan Singh Bilawaria has given a description of its seize. The whole army was divided into four segments near Ramkot. One of the segment was in the collective command of Gulab Singh and Mian Bishna. Both of them applied a strategy by which the inmates and the chief of the fort was much worried despite of the fact that it was the most formidable fort in this region. Though the fort was in siege but despite several efforts it could not be captured. There was a gunfire whole night. Gulab Singh and their comrades could not take any decision despite the fact that several soldiers were wounded and a few of them died. They were not able to cross the moat due to its depth as well as it was enough wide to cross. Mian Bishna, with the assistance of a few soldiers brought a large tree so as to bridge the moat in the dawn. The fort was seized and Mian Bishna was given the charge of the fort. However, Major K. Brahma Singh in his treatise on *History of J&K Rifles* gives another detail of the seige of Samarta fort: "On Raja Gulab Singh's orders for the reduction of the fort a few Dalpatia and Birpuria Mians (Rajputs) and about two hundred war-like youngmen advanced in that direction and halted at the first stage of Saruinsar. From there these troops moved to Mansar where about 1000 warriors were collected from the adjacent villages on receiving orders from Raja Gulab Singh through runners and beat of drums. All the soldiers then closed on the Samarta fort.

After reaching the fort, the army split into three parts and set to work on the breast work. Raja Gulab Singh who had also reached the place by now, placed himself in the centre, close to the fort. The left flank of the breast work was entrusted to Mian Labh Singh Kumedan and Mian Diwan Singh. On the right flank were Sajadah Rai and Saon Singh Samial. At night Raja Gulab Singh put on a black dress as a measure of camouflage . . . Meanwhile Mian Gulab Singh Dalpatia took three to four hundred men and hurriedly fell some trees, collecting the twigs for use in filling the moat of the fort. After all the preparations for the assault had been completed the besiegers asked the garrison, through yells and loud calls,



to surrender and avoid slaughter . . .”

The fort was used till the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh when a garrison of some soldiers was posted here but afterwards it was deserted.

### MANKOT, RAMKOT

It was a popular state of the same name and was ruled by a clan, an offshoot of Jamwals of Jammu. Ruling class Mankotias claim their descent from Raja Bhuj Dev of Jammu who ruled Jammu in A.D. 1150. Bhuj Dev had four sons, the eldest Bharurak Dev considered unfit for rule was set aside in favour of his younger brother, Autar Dev, whereas Bharurak Dev settled down in the Dansal Dun. His descendant in the fifth generation, named Manak Dev, conquered some villages near the present town of Ramkot . . . . and built a fort which he named after himself and made it the capital of the state.<sup>13</sup>

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab it was gifted to Raja Suchet Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh in lieu of his services rendered in Punjab. The Mankotias, the original chieftains were thrown out. The name of the state was also renamed as Ramkot like that of Bandralta which was also renamed as Ramnagar owing to the fact that Raja Ram Singh, the younger son of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, was declared as the heir apparent of the twin states.

It is a typical hill fort perched on a ridge. It was constructed considering the strategical position of the location. It contained the palatial buildings and chambers to accommodate enough people, soldiers and ammunition. Ramkot was given as Jagir to Jaswals after the death of Raja Ram Singh.

### BARHIGARH

Barhigarh is another fort built by the Mankotias on the border of their state with Ramnagar. It is situated on a ridge almost 16 kilometres west to Ramkot. It contained garrison and enough ammunition to face the eventuality during feudalism but was abandoned during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh. After independence it was used as police chowki but due to rapid deterioration it was deserted once again.

### THIAL FORT

It was also built by the Mankotias at Ramkot-Ramnagar border. Only the foundation of the fort was visible till a decade ago.

### THALORHA FORT

There was a tremendous fort erected near Manwal on the border of Jammu and Ramnagar, erstwhile hill states. Nothing is known about the history of its construction. According to an old genealogy there was an ancient fort by the name of Birgarh<sup>14</sup> in which was enclosed the ancient state which was subjugated by Babruvahan, the celebrated son of the celebrated father, Arjuna. He destroyed the fort as well as the town of Birgarh and established his kingdom by the name of Babapur, which finds its mention in *Rajtarangini* and other chronicles. In due course of time it became the capital of ancient state of Jammu and forts were erected to protect the public from external invasions. For some time it was a part of Mankot state. Perhaps this fort came into existence during that period and that too on the old foundations. It has been reduced to rubble and what we find now is a small mount with crumbling walls.

### CHINEHNI FORT

It was situated on the left bank of river Tawi, exactly on the place where the ruins of palaces of Chinehni exist at present. Earlier a simple fort was erected here by the Himtal lords which was converted into a capital of the kingdom and palaces were constructed in the fortified area which ultimately became the boundary wall of the palaces. This fort had water reservoirs and underground chambers also which were linked to the ravines of the river through narrow covered passages.

### MARMAT GALIAN

It was a small hill principality in the hills of Ramban where a small fortress was erected for the security of the Jagir. We do not find even the ruins of this fortress at present.

### SHIVGARH

A small fort was erected at the higher altitude just on the borderline of Chinehni with Krimachi, the erstwhile state of Bhatial Rajputs. We get a reference of this fort in the *History of Punjab Hill States* compiled by Vogel and Hutchison, "Raja Suchet Singh had gone on pilgrimage to Sudh Mahadev, and on his way back he annexed Marothi, a village on the eastern border of Chinehni. Raja Dayal Chand (lord of Chinehni)

becoming alarmed made preparations for defence, and Suchet Singh, on learning this, invaded the state from Ramnagar, with the help of Sikh force to which the Chinehni Raja could offer no resistance. Having transferred his family and valuables, with a large number of women and children of the town, to the strong fort of Shivgarh among mountains, he hurried off to Lahore.”<sup>15</sup>

### CHORGALA FORT

It was a strong fort perched on a hillock of Ladha Dhar constructed in a very strategical location wherefrom the activities of Bhatial state could be watched. It was erected by the Himtals. During a family feud, in post 18th century, between two Himtal princes who fought aggressively with each other for the crown, taking advantage of the situation, “Raja of Bhoti state laid siege of Chorgala fort, on the Ladha Dhar. The fort was garrisoned with only thirty Rajputs and no relief could be sent. They held out as long as possible, but at last had to face the alternative of surrender or death. They finally determined to die rather than surrender, and throwing open the gates they charged into the midst of the enemy and slew many of them. The rest taken by surprise fled from the field. This gave rise to popular saying, ‘One Himtal is worth seven Bhatials.’”<sup>16</sup>

### FORT OF KIRMACHI

It was the capital of Bhoti state of Bhatial Rajputs. Kirmachi is situated almost sixteen kilometres from Udhampur on its southwest side, a hamlet by the side of nullah. The fort, in ruins, is perched on a ridge wherefrom one can watch for miles together. The fort was the masonry work of solid sand stones with a large water reservoir in form of a tank which is dry now. It was fed by rain water. There were some definite chambers, the foundation of which can be seen in the fortified area which has been reduced to rubble now. It had a large arched gate which was in vogue till a few decades ago. It served as the picnic spot decades ago but has crumbled now miserably. Hutchison and Vogel refer the fort, “The present village of Kirmachi stands on the other side of Delok Nala, near the fort, which is on a hillock, but is now in ruins. Inside the fort is a large ‘green’ and the ruins of the ancient palace, which was the residence of the Rajas.”<sup>17</sup>

Drew also refers to the fort and the village of Kirmachi, “Kirmachi and the tract of the country near and around it, used to be under a Raja or Mian of Pathial (Bhatial) tribe of Rajputs, who was tributary to Jammu,

paying to it yearly 2000 rupees and giving services of some ten horsemen . . . . What now remains of the fort is a well-built wall of sandstone and a dry tank. It is on a rocky mound in a commanding position behind the town.”<sup>18</sup>

### FORT OF GARHI

Garhi itself connotes a fortress. While moving to Udhampur from Jammu at 61st milestone on the National Highway No. 1A we find a cantonment area, popularly known as Garhi. Once it was a fortress containing a garrison of several soldiers of Bhalwalta. During Sikh regime, prior to Dogra Raj of Gulab Singh, Garhi contained a cell of ammunition and an army of Sikh soldiers occupied the garrison which was plundered time and again by Arjun Singh Chanasia and during the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh it remained a busy checkpost which was abandoned during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh. Now we do not find even the remains of the fortress there.

### FORT OF CHANAS

Raja Sangram Dev was the lord of Jammu (1594 to 1626) when some area falling in the vicinity of Jammu Raj was encroached upon by the Bhatial Rajputs of Kirmachi that he sent his nephew Shiv Darshan, the son of his younger brother, Shabeel Dev, along with some Jamwal soldiers to teach lesson to the Bhatials. Shiv Darshan not only made them to leave the territory of Jammu but also forced them to pay their homage to the lord of Jammu. In lieu Shiv Darshan was awarded with a Jagir near Tikri by the side of National Highway No. 1A, at present, almost forty kilometres north to Jammu. It comprised of a few villages and a few hillocks with potentiality. In fact it was a difficult area to control from Jammu. That is why the lord of Jammu wanted his assistance to control the tribals of the surroundings who used to create nuisance in the surroundings. He was allowed to keep a garrison of a few soldiers with him and to build a castle on a strategical position. Thus he built a completely mud-thatched fort on a mount almost a kilometre from the road towards north direction and invited his kith and kins to settle there. Most of his close relatives and companions found a new horizon coming there to try their luck and gradually they settled there forming a small hamlet. The mud-thatched fort assisted them from any possible attack since the local people were suspicious and hostile towards them in the

beginning but when Shiv Darshan and his comrades frustrated the evil designs of the nuisance mongers of these hills causing an everlasting peace in these hills, they became friendly and recognised his existence. Raja Sangram Dev was happy that Shiv Darshan had picked up the thread. Since the settlement was situated in the lap of Trikuta hills Shiv Darshan named the locality as Charan Aas i.e. bowing before the feet of the goddess Vaishno Devi for blessings. In due course of time it was named as Chanas. Those Jamwals of Jammu who settled there were known as Chanasias.

It was a mud-thatched fort with foundation of big boulders having a few layers of small red bricks on the surface of which was erected the edifice with doorpans bound on both side of the wall. Vacant space between the doorpans was filled up with mud and stones till the wall was over. Except the foundation nothing is left.

#### FORTS OF LAKHANPUR AND THEIR

Jasrotias were the offshoot of Jamwals in the same way as Lakanpurias were the descendants of Jasrotias. As history tells us Raja Kailash Dev occupied the throne of Jasrota in A.D. 1320. He had two sons named Pratap Dev and Sangram Dev. Both of them tried their best to occupy the throne after the death of Raja Kailash Dev. In fact they were the twins and who was the elder could not be decided. The feudal lords of the neighbouring hill states tried their best to negotiate the peace terms but in vain with the result the state of Jasrota was bifurcated. The land in between the Ravi and the Ujh was separated, with its capital at Lakhanpur, from the hill state of Jasrota thus a new hill state came into existence. It was the year A.D. 1350 that this state was born and with it was constructed the fort of Lakhanpur. Sangram Dev was its founder lord.

The fort is situated on the right side of the Ravi. It is a small fort, an example of masonry work done with solid grey stones of massive strength. It contained the palaces for the royalty to live in besides lavish chambers for the personnel in attendance to the royalty, ammunition chamber and a stable for the horses. There was a small shrine meant for the clan deity. This was renovated by Maharaja Gulab Singh when according to a treaty the area of Lakhanpur was merged with Jammu & Kashmir in lieu of Chamba.

The fort of Lakhanpur was once the capital of a strong hill state but now has been reduced to the offices of toll tax outside the fort. The vehicles from Punjab side stop there to pay the tax as such it has become haven for the vendors.

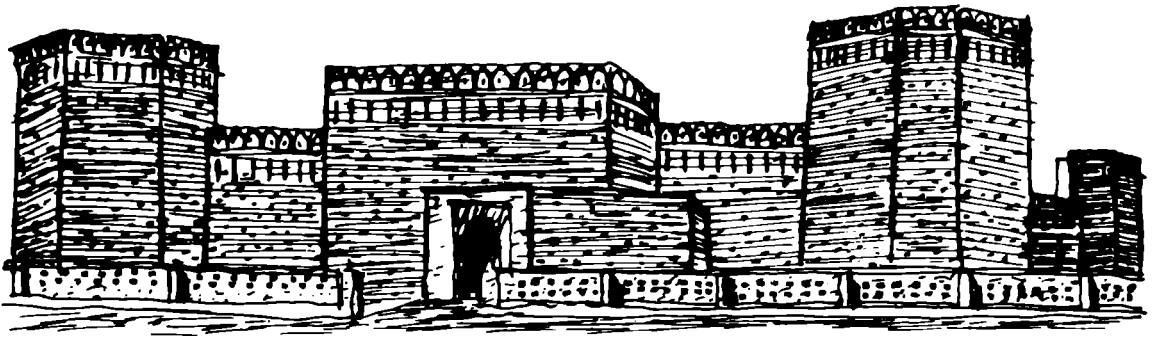
Lakhanpur hill state was also named as Thein. In fact a fort named Thein was erected on top of a hill just on the border of this state. Strategically it was an important fort wherefrom the movement of the erstwhile hill states of Bhaddu, Basohli and Nurpur could be closely observed. Climatically also it was a pleasant site by the side of the river Ravi hence the royal family used to migrate to this fort from Lakhanpur during summer months.

The ruins of the masonry work of this fort tell us the splendour with which it was constructed. This fort was occupied by Raja Prithvi Singh of Nurpur in 18th century thus it became the part of Nurpur state thence onward. Maharaja Ranjit Singh ousted Raja Bir Singh of Nurpur dethroning him and adding the territory of Nurpur to his kingdom in A.D. 1315, the fort became the part of Sikh Raj. Most of the captured territories of Sikh Raj went to British India after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh thus Thein was also captured by the Britishers. Jaswant Singh, the son of Raja Bir Singh was in his teenage when his father died. The Britishers offered him a Jagir of Rs. 20,000 in lieu of his kingdom which he refused to accept on the advice of his minister Ram Singh Pathania. The Britishers became furious and ordered Bir Singh and his minister Ram Singh to leave the state with the result Ram Singh Pathania revolted against the illegal occupation of Nurpur state by the Britishers. He collected his men, trained them in military tactics and gorilla warfare and with their help conquered the twin forts of Thein and Shahpur. He constructed a small temple for his deity and was a staunch disciple of the goddess. He used to worship the deity twice daily and spent hours together in the temple. According to some people Ram Singh was captured from Thein fort while performing Puja of the deity but it is not the fact. As according to the details of the battle that took place between the Britishers and Ram Singh Pathania, after his capture, it is documented that Ram Singh was captured from the fort of Jasrota by the forces of Maharaja Gulab Singh and was handed over to the Britishers.

Thein fort has been reduced to rubble, only some portions of pillars and turrets tell the story of its glamorous past. A dam is being constructed nearby the ruins of fort to divert the water of the Ravi to be used for the working of turbines to get enough electricity as well as to get enough water for irrigation and fish for the villages of the surrounding areas.

### JAGANU FORT

There is very little material available about the history and origin of the



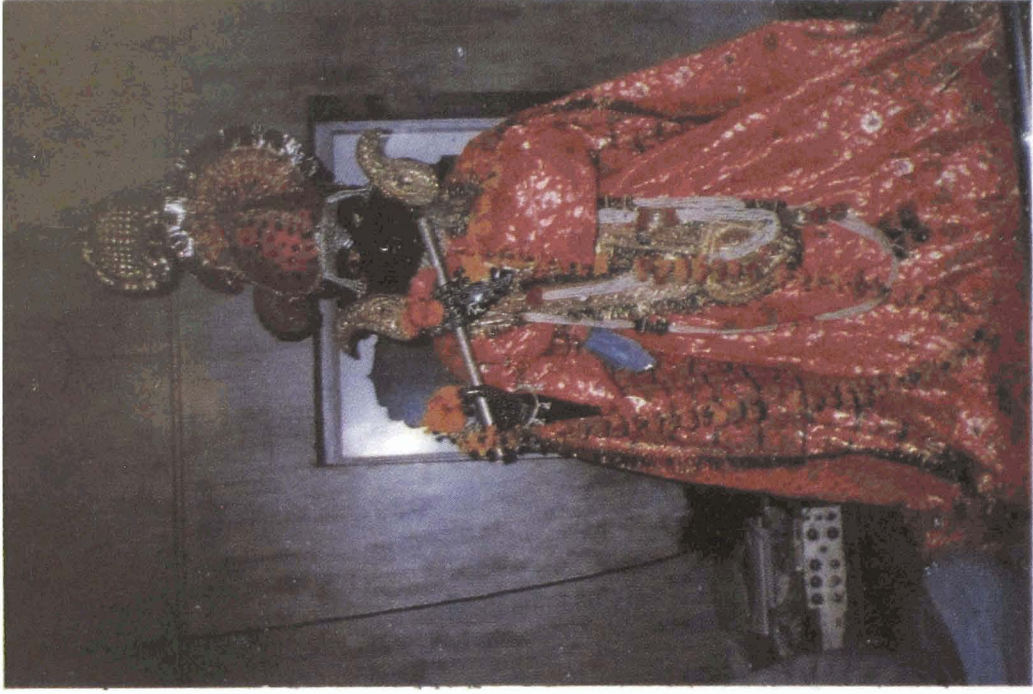
A sketch of fort of Jaganu.

village but the old men of Jaganu had a tradition to pass on their knowledge to the next generation orally. Time period and the subjectivity of the people, the narraters, have always added something new so that what appears now was never there centuries ago. However, reading between the lines and coinciding the fact from one source to another and cross-checking them we may reach near to the factual position.

Our main informer was Pt. Kalidas, popularly known as *Chachu* of the village who was 86 years old when I visited the village in the month of March 1999. Picking up the thread the Chachu told us that it was a dense forest with a few hamlets scattered here and there. A tiger was there on prowl to devour the cattle reared by the settlers who were scattered throughout the territory. It was the part of Bandral territory and the lords were the early Slaria Rajputs of this region prior to the advent of Verma clan of Chamba royalty. It was the year A.D. 613 the feudal lord was approached by the people so that he might protect them from this beast responsible for such disaster. The lord came along with his soldiers, killed the beast and stayed there a while. He was so fascinated with the scenic beauty of the place that he called his close coterie Jagan Dev, who was an astrologer as well as served the royalty as *Purohit*, and asked his opinion to bring into force a town there. Jagan, popularly known as Jagnu got the forests land converted into palatial buildings for the royalty and gradually the commoners followed him. The land was well irrigated by the natural spring water. Jagnu and his kith and kins were the first to settle there as such it were the *Purohits* who settled there first. The name of the village came into vogue by the name of its originator, Jagnupur which was corrupted into Jaganu in due course of time. Though *Purohits* were the first settlers of Jaganu but soon it became the Jagir of Slaria Rajputs. History is blank about its genesis with the exception of a legend of

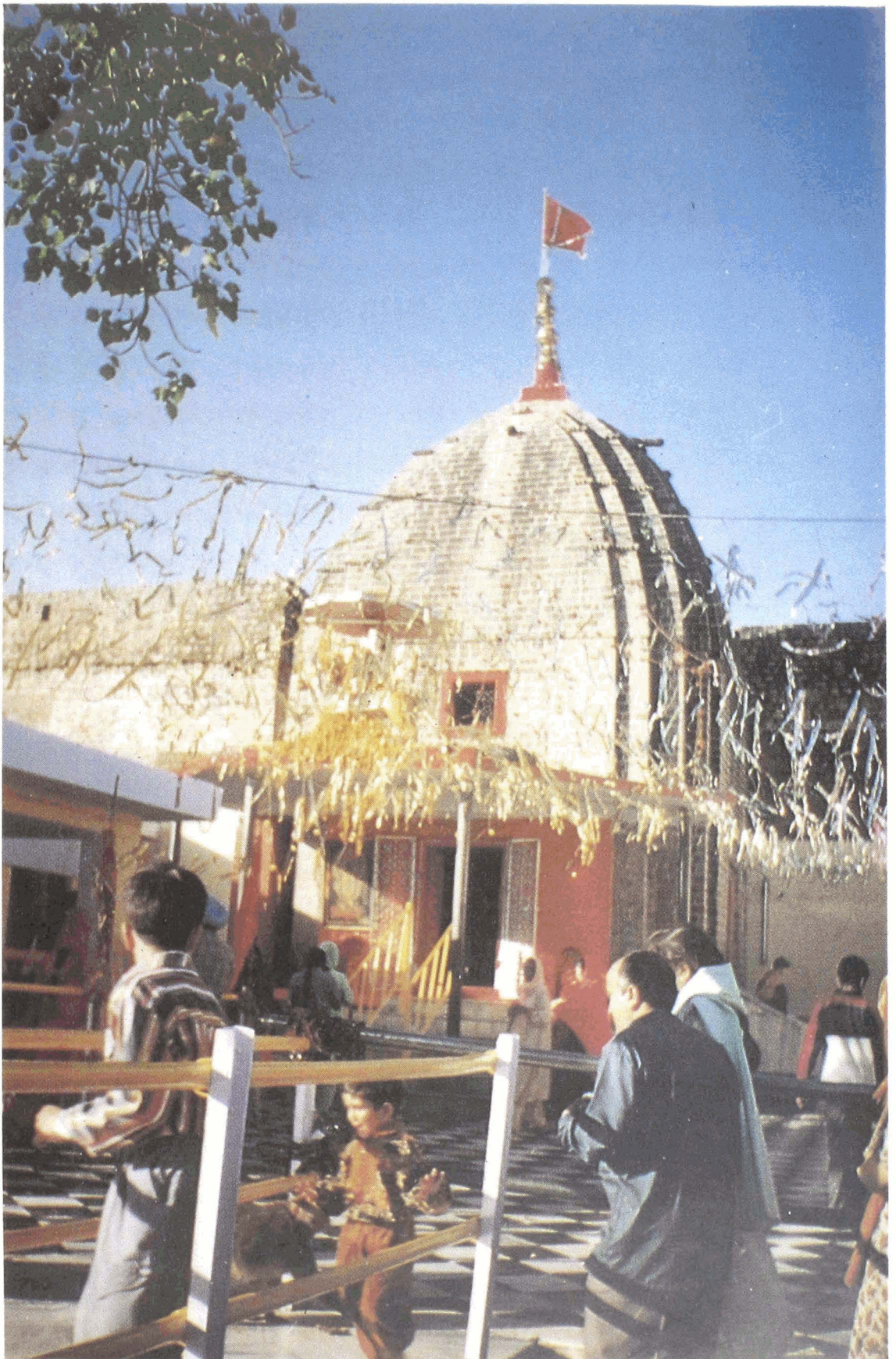


1. Image of Mahakali, Bahu fort, Jammu

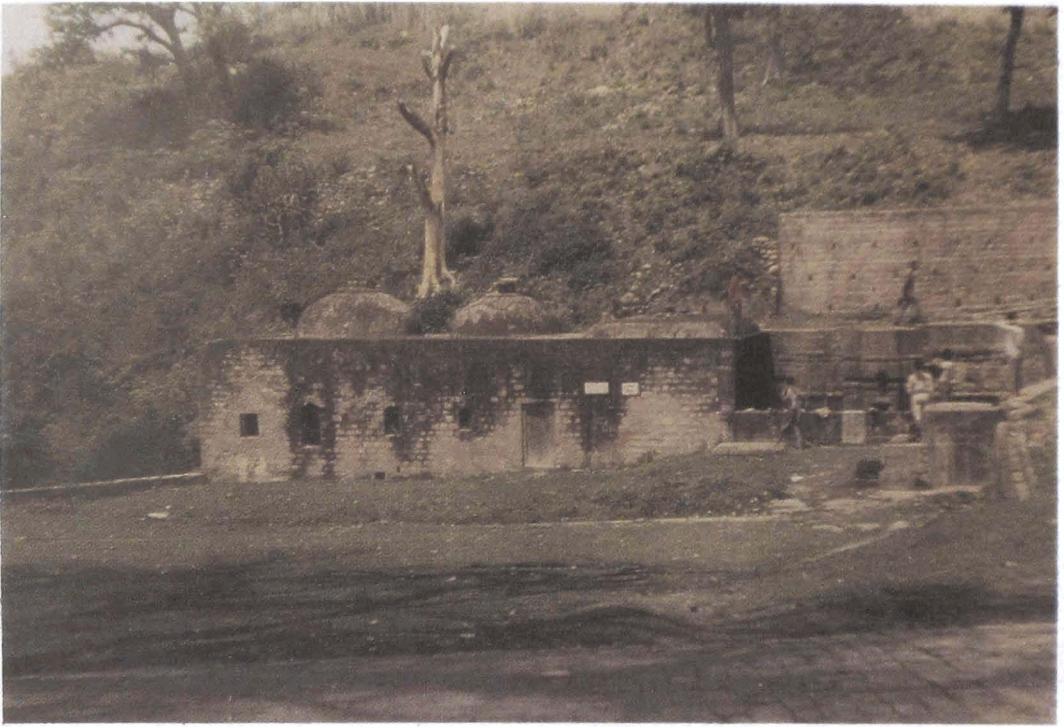


2. Famous image of Girdhar Gopal established by Raja Jagat Singh Pathania in the vicinity of Nurpur fort

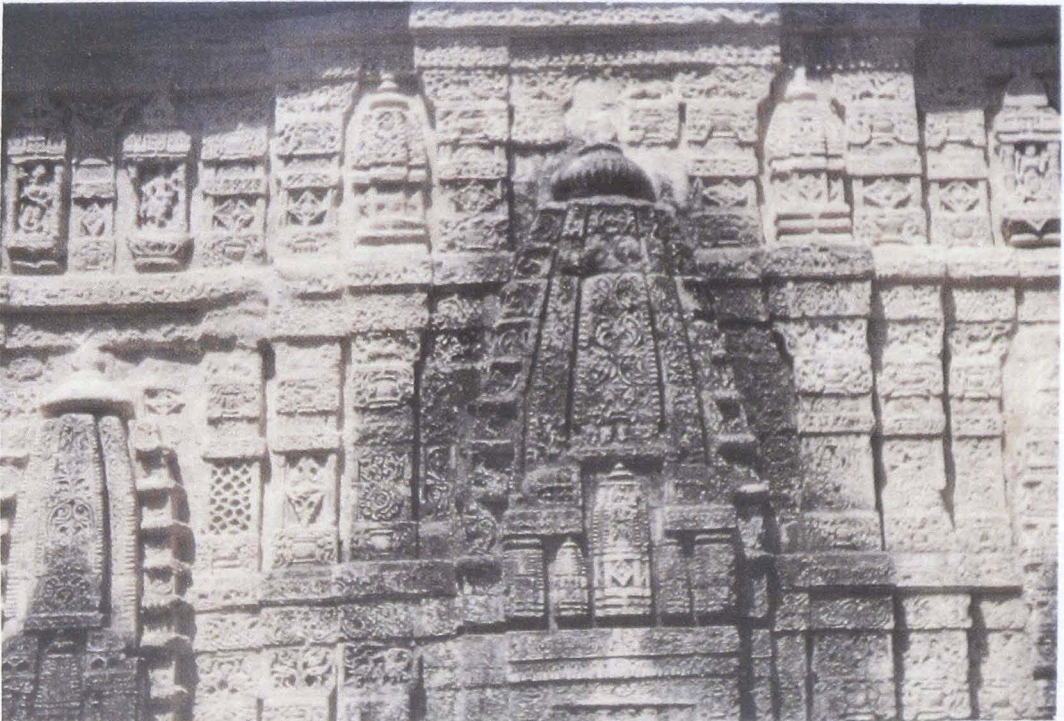




3. Temple of Mahakali built by first Dogra Raja, Gulab Singh, Bahu fort, Jammu



4. Hamam, Kangra fort where natural water was warmed through heated capillaries



5. Facade of Mahamaya temple in Kangra fort



6. Ruins of the palaces in Bahu fort, Jammu



7. Bhimgarh, the fort of Reasi



8. Fort of Ramnagar



9. Fort of Jaganu



10. Ruins of palace in Jasrota fort



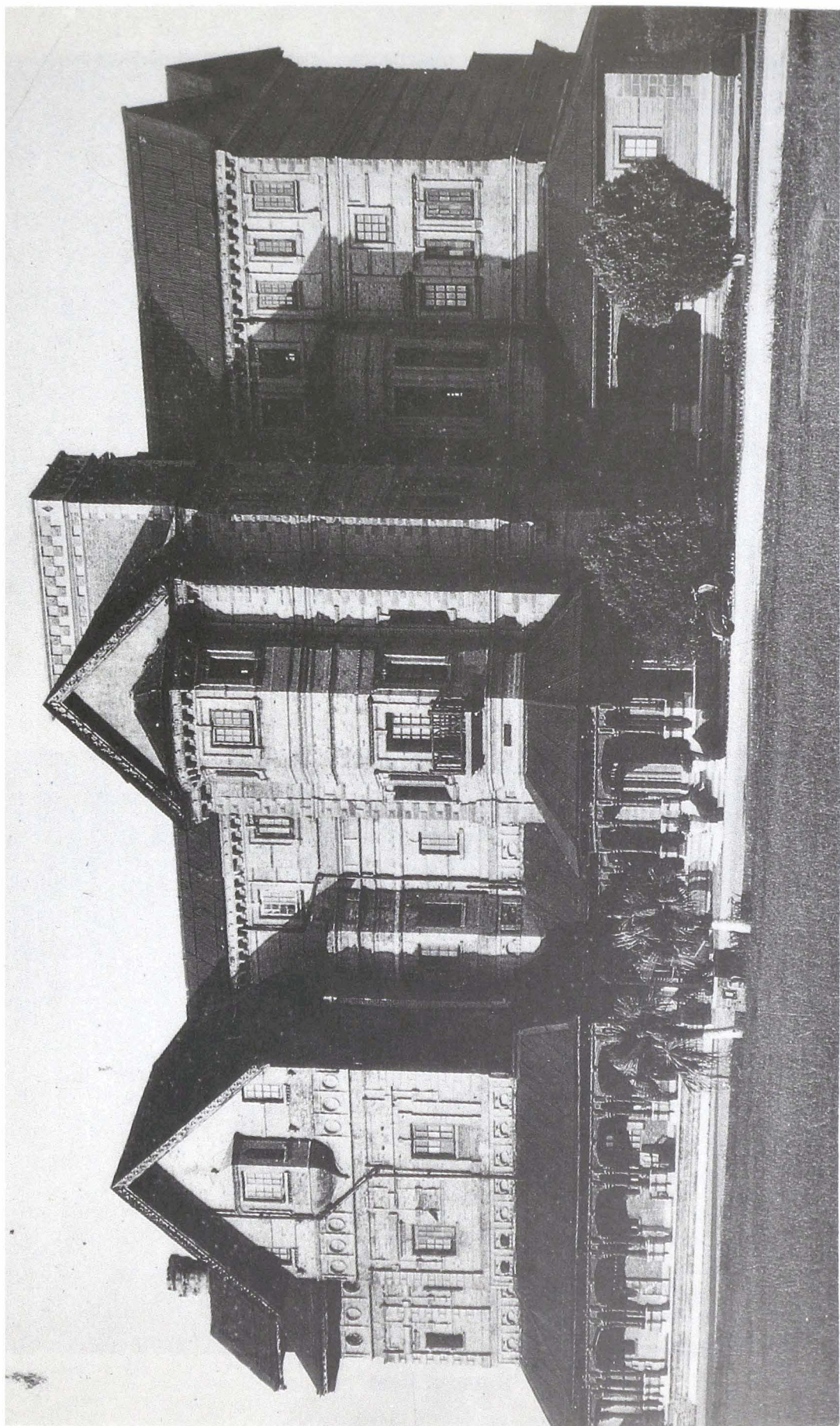
11. Rani Charak palace, Jammu



12. A view of the palace complex, Raje di Mandi, Jammu



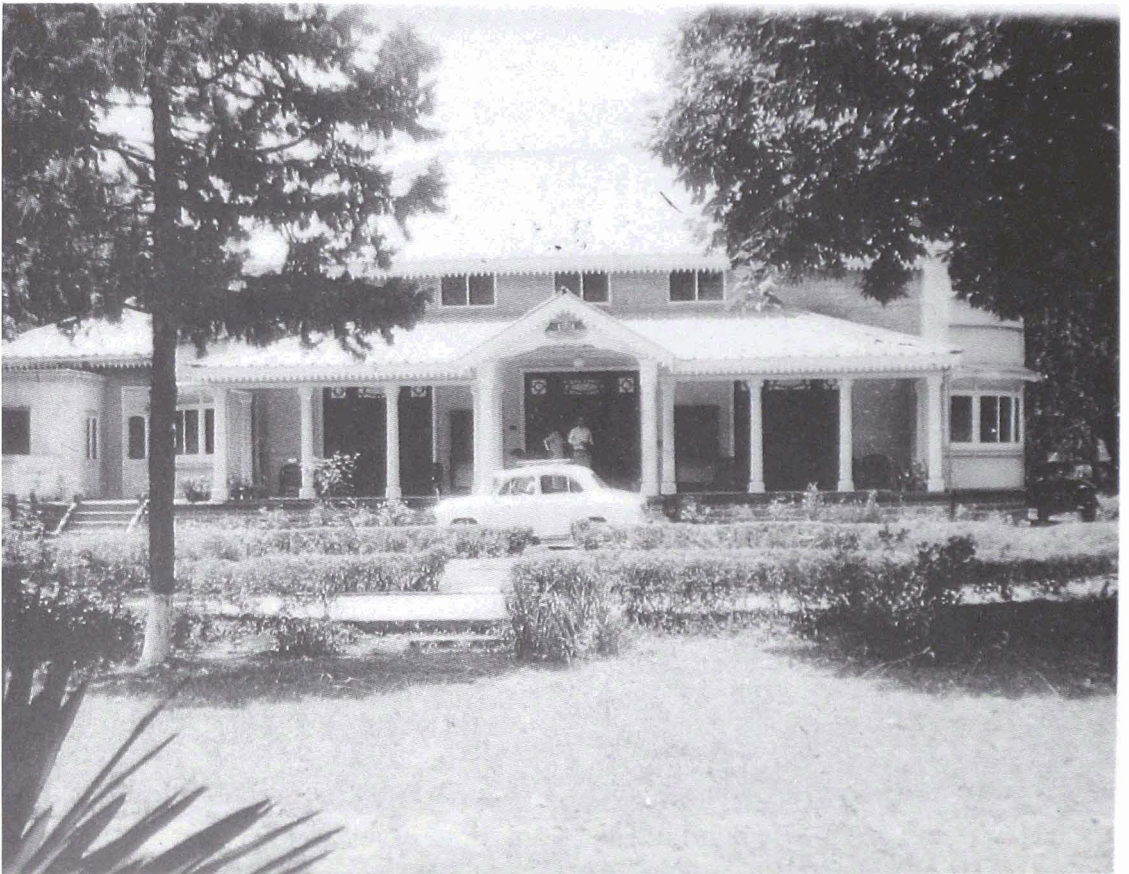
13. Ruins of Reasi palace



14. Amar Mahal, Jammu



15. Ruins of Basohli palace



16. Tara Palace, Al-Hilal

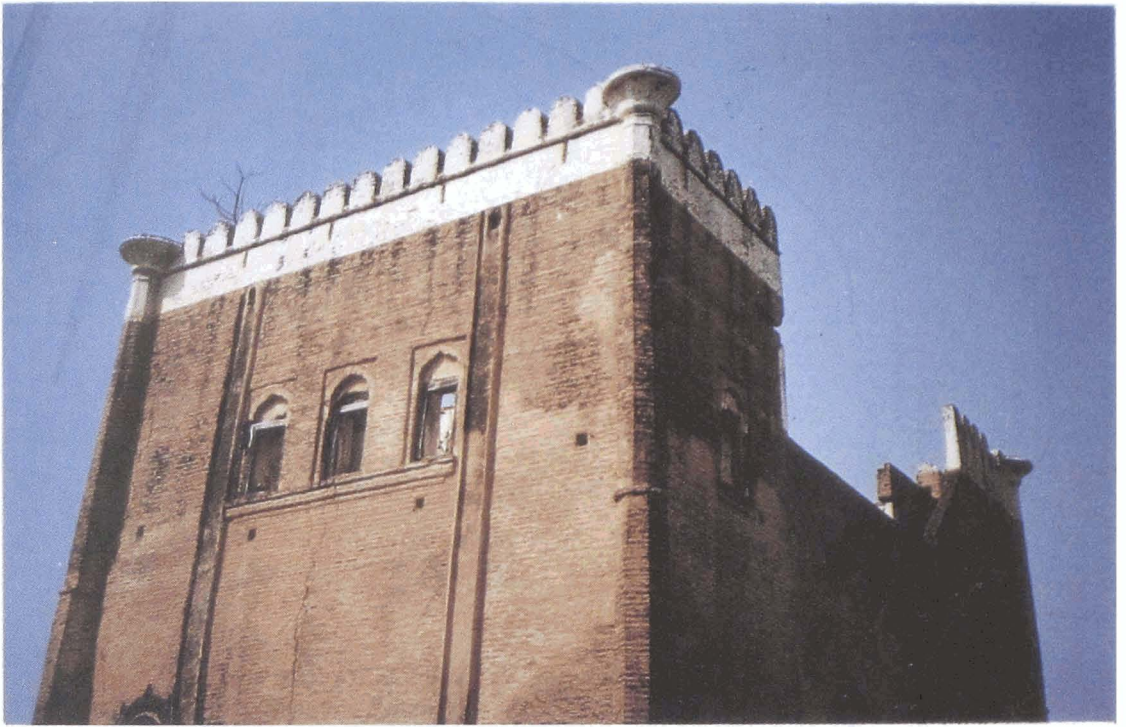




17. Baradari of Raja Sansar Chand, Katoch Mahal, Tira



18. Baradari of Raja Ram Singh, Ramnagar



19. Haveli Wazir Zorawar Singh, Vijaypur, Reasi



20. Shahen Di Haveli, Magaini, Udhampur



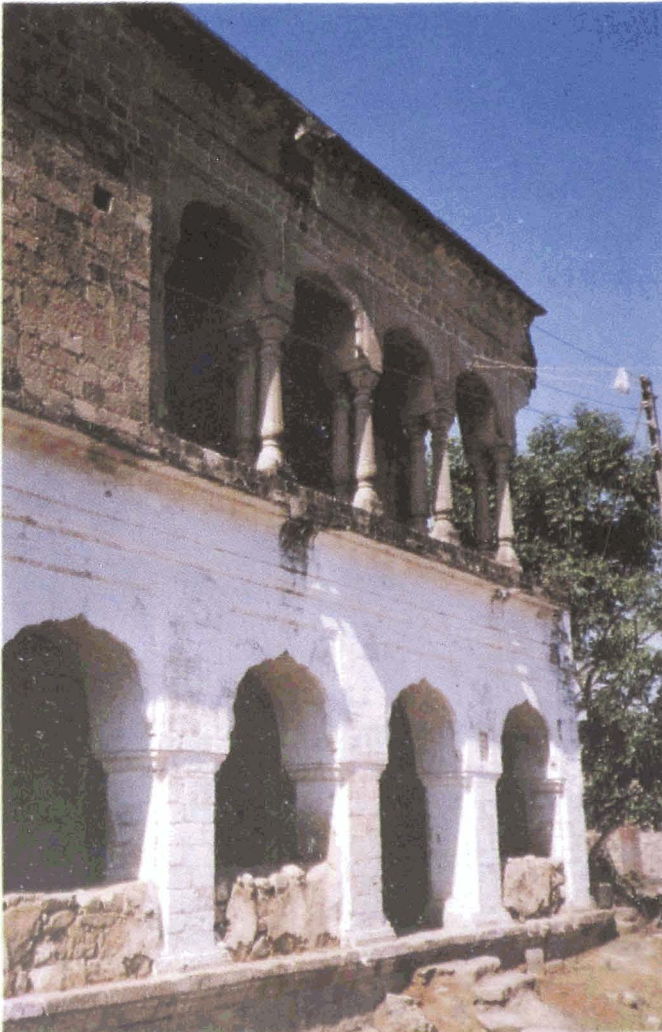
21. Haveli Raja Dhiyan Singh, Purmandal



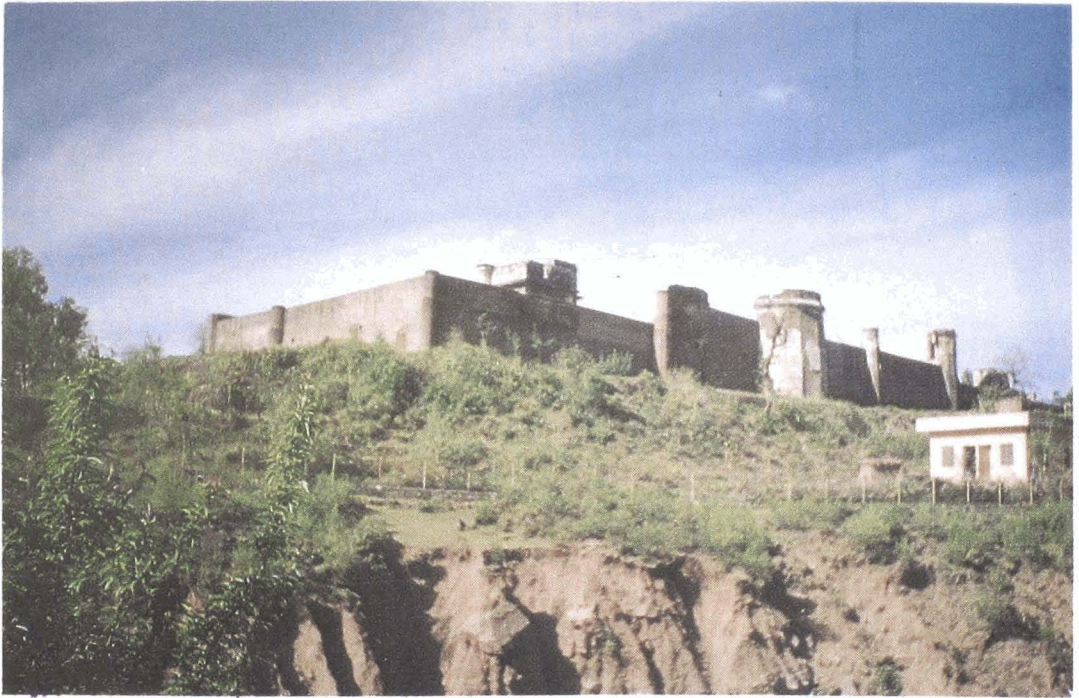
22. Sarai at Purmandal in ruins



23. Remains of the Baradari of Balwant Dev, Saruinsar



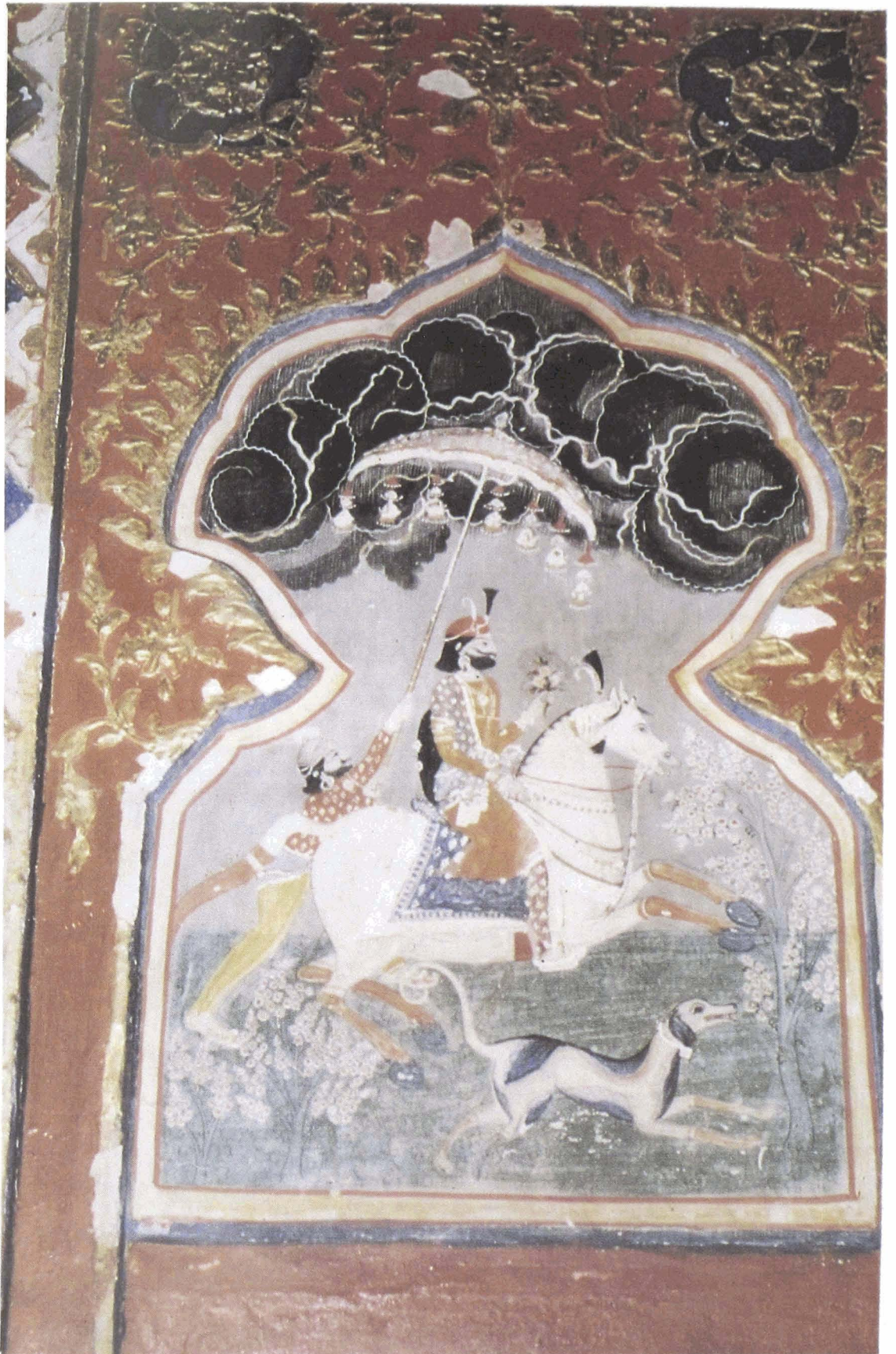
24. Facade of an inn, Uttarbehini



25. Fort and palaces of Ramnagar



26. External view of Ramnagar palace



27. Painting of Raja Suchet Singh, Ramnagar palace



28. An arcade of Goleghar, Raje di Mandi, Jammu



29. Domes of Goleghar, the palaces built by the second Dogra Maharaja Ranbir Singh around A.D. 1850

Rajkumar Ratan Dev and a boatman named Gokul. As according to a story written by D.C. Prashant with the caption 'Kheerli Bal', the prince was much fascinated with the beauty of a Rasyal girl but he knew that both the clans, the Slarias and the Rasyals were hostile to each other as such he could not marry the girl. On some fateful night he eloped with the girl and wanted to cross the river Tawi with his spouse so as to reach his seat, Jaganu safely before the enemy reached there. But the Tawi was in full brim and the boatman, very sincere to the Slarias requested the prince to stay in his cell for the night and instead he sent his newly wedded son and daughter-in-law on a boat to cross the river. The Rasyals who were chasing the prince could not recognise the man and the lady and when disaster took place they thought that both are dead and satisfied with their venture they returned but the prince and his spouse were saved by the sacrifice of boatman's son and daughter-in-law. Ratan Dev though reached Jaganu, the seat of his power, safe but Rasyals came to know the fact soon and they attacked Jaganu but were repulsed. They attempted time and again and finding the life difficult the Slarias with their kith and kin left Jaganu in search of some secure place to settle down. Rasyals when came to know their exist attacked again and dismantled the old fort of Slarias.

We find the mention of one powerful feudal lord of Jaganu named Krishan Dev who ruled the area around the first half of the 15th century. Some of the historians are of the opinion that he was, in fact, the lord of Bandralta who annexed Jaganu to his kingdom but we do not find any such name in the genealogy of Bandrals. Perhaps he might have been the Jagirdar of the surrounding area and being a powerful lord might have added the village of Jaganu and its surrounding to his Jagir. Singh Dev, the son of Kishan Dev was a powerful Jagirdar who built palatial buildings and the old temple attributed to lord Shiva was also built up during his reign by his courtier named Kiran Dev. During his reign several tanks to serve as water resources also came into existence. One Sudhama, an ironsmith and Duryodhan Purohit constructed *pucca* tanks. Third water reservoir was a spring which was constructed into a *pucca baan* by one pious lady named Radha. She belonged to *Purohit* clan. Some people attribute the construction of Shiva temple to a powerful Raja Pawan Dev who also got constructed some palatial buildings near the palaces built by Raja Kishan Dev but it was his descendent Raja Madan Dev who was very popular among the people and was responsible for a complex of palatial buildings, away from the old palaces, on a plateau and invited several courtiers and moneylenders, businessmen to settle



nearby thus a new settlement came into existence known as Madanpuri. Madan Dev was a visionary man. He invited business community from different erstwhile states to settle there and bestowed upon them several comforts, built pony roads linking various important towns of erstwhile states so as to flourish the trade. Jaganu came into vogue as a central business centre linking the valley of Kashmir on one side, Kishtwar and Bhadarwah on the second and Punjab via Samba without touching Jammu was the third route. All were the pony routes. But it could not survive longer than a generation when Mughals, on the direction of Aurangzeb, attacked Kishtwar and preferred the path via Jaganu, which was the shortest route but Jaganu forces resisted them on the other side of the river Tawi and killed several Mughal soldiers. The Mughals destroyed the newly built palaces and other buildings of Madanpuri with gunpowder. The pressure of the Mughal attack was so tremendous that the feudal lord and his courtiers had to leave the newly built town Madanpuri. The buildings were converted into ruins. These ruins in form of rubble are still there, now the site has been taken over by paramilitary forces for their encampment. The dead Mughals were buried, the graves of them still tell the valour of Jaganu soldiers. After this disaster the capital was again shifted to the old Jaganu where the new regime was established and several buildings came into existence.

In early eighteenth century Jaganu was a flourished town, a strong business centre, as such it became the bone of contention among the powermongers. Maharaja Ranjit Dev was the most powerful lord of this region who extended the territory of his kingdom from the Chenab to the Ravi. In fact he commanded respect from the erstwhile states across the Ravi and Chenab also. He annexed almost all the erstwhile states of this region but Jaganu did not buzz with the result Dalel Dev, the younger son of the lord, was sent to conquer Jaganu who not only conquered it but also made the local lord to flee. The prince was given the *Ilaqua* comprising of fourteen villages in gift for his services. Dalel Dev and his mother were busy in an intrigue to capture the regime of Jammu which was exposed with the result they were asked to leave Jammu for Jaganu where they erected several buildings and these buildings were known as *Raje Di Mandi* the ruins of which are still there in form of rubble. Dev dynasty of Jammu ruled Jaganu till Jammu was captured by the Sikhs and it was gifted to Raja Gulab Singh by Maharaja Ranjit Singh while Bandralta, Mankot and Samba were given to Raja Suchet Singh for the services he had rendered in Punjab. Raja Suchet Singh was an ambitious man and wanted to create an empire by annexing the *Ilaquas* in between these

gifted erstwhile states hence while visiting the holy shrine of Sudh Maha Dev on pilgrimage he annexed several villages from Chinehni state to his state of Bandralta in the same way he wanted to add Jaganu to his state because Jaganu, on several occasions remained the part of Bandralta. He made some of the local influential people to revolt against the Dev dynasty of Jammu on the pretext of suppression and attacked Jaganu. Devs were the dying cadre and could not face the vitality of the combined forces of Jamwals and Sikhs as such Jaganu was annexed with very little effort. Raja Suchet Singh was much fascinated with the natural surroundings for the royalty to live in and analysing the importance of town as a business centre he ordered to build a strong fort for the security and the protection of the town from any onslaught of the aliens. Mian Badnu, a close associate and minister of the Raja, was entrusted the job of constructing a formidable fort on some strategical situation nearby the town. Thus a location was selected by the side of a furrow, on a comparatively plain plateau where on an area of about fifteen *kanals* the fort was constructed. As according to the eldermen of the town there were 12 turrets of the fort at the time of construction but at present there are only four bastions, a masonry work of solid stones which culminate at the top into turrets. Intermittently supporting the many metres tall walls we find small bastion-like structures ending at the level of these walls. These walls are thick enough to face the onslaught of gunpowder and are decorated with slanting gun points intermittently. Entrance to the fort is an arched structure hardly 6.5 feet in length. The curvature of the arch is engrailed one. It opens to east direction and is supported by big walls. The second entrance is looking towards north direction and is again an engrailed structure. It is larger than the first entrance. The lateral sides of the entrance contain half reliefs of the goddess Mahakali and monkey god, Hanuman. Inside we find some chambers meant for the retinue of the fort to live in. It also contained an ammunition chamber, larger than others. A two-storeyed building was, perhaps meant for the Quiledar to live in. It contained a water reservoir in the form of a tank wherein the rain water used to be stored for the use of the residents during emergent days. The four bastions erected in four directions culminating into turrets were polygonal in shape and are still intact. They were joined by thick walls serving as cloisters.

The fort was built in five years from 1823 to 1828. One Thanedar, one Munshi, a Kuthiala and twenty guards assisted the Quiledar to run the administration of the fort smoothly. The fort was given an additional twenty acres land for cultivation and the produce was distributed among the cultivators and the administration in equal ratio. Half of the produce

was deposited in the fort while the other half was distributed among the cultivators. The ammunition chamber contained six guns, four big and two small, 250 local guns and an ample of gun powder which was never used as the fort was never attacked. The fort was deserted in 1924, during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh. Considering the ammunition and outdated guns the guns were broken into pieces and thrown into the river. The powder was buried into the ground and the metal extracted from the broken guns was auctioned.

It was a formidable fort surrounded by deep furrows from three sides and a deep moat separated it from the main land which was bridged during the peace days. Since it was never attacked as such the bridge remained there throughout. The fort has been converted into a school and its chambers were repaired to some extent to be used for the students. It was covered by an outer wall separating it from a play ground, spread in several acres. Overlooking the fort is the beautifully built temple with square cella attributed to the goddess Mahakali who is being worshipped by the local as well as the outsiders and, according to the belief of the folk, it is supposed to be very powerful deity. Whosoever demands a boon with faith he is blessed with. However, according to the priest of the temple, it does not bless a person with vengeance in mind.

During the reign of Raja Suchet Singh the town flourished manifolds. Gujrati priests and Hakims were invited from south, potters from Kashmir, thirteen families of weavers from Samba, Faquirs and Darveshas from Ramnagar, washermen and Rangsaaj from Reasi were invited to settle there. According to an old saying 360 families of Brahmins, 52 families of Shilpkars and rest from other clans settled in this town. There were a total of 600 families during the reign of Raja Suchet Singh. General vocation was business. It was a great market of Desi Ghee, dry fruits, and medicinal herbs.

### LADDAN FORT

About nine kilometres from the town of Udhampur, by the side of Laddan power-house a narrow path climbs towards the forest reserve land cordoned by spiked wiring and angle irons. One has to cross the border to enter the lush green plateau covered with wild plants and wide cultivated land on one corner of which we find the ruins of an old fort perched on an adjoining hillock. It seemed to be an old fort erected by the Chand clan of Chinehni lords. When in 1822 the Dogra brothers, Gulab Singh, Dhiyan Singh and Suchet Singh were offered the lordships of various erstwhile

hill states banishing the original feudal lords, the feudal lords left untouched were also scared with the growing power of the Dogra brothers. Raja Dayal Chand was the lord of the erstwhile state of Chinehni in these days. He ordered to erect forts on the border of their state especially towards eastern and southern sectors so as to face the onslaught of the enemy from the army of Bandralta, occupied by Raja Suchet Singh and Jammu which was bestowed upon Raja Gulab Singh in lieu of service he rendered to Punjab Raj especially to Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. Raja Gulab Singh was also gifted with the Jagir of Bhoti but Raja Dayal Chand of Chinehni was satisfied with the fort already there at Ladha Dhar named Chorgala fort. On its eastern sector he erected a formidable fort named Shivgarh. When Chinehni was invaded by Raja Suchet Singh assisted by the Sikh soldiers the forces of Chinehni could not face the onslaught as such the members of royal family, women and children were escorted to more safe place of Shivgarh until Maharaja Ranjit Singh favoured the Raja of Chinehni and his state was returned to him. On its southern sector, on a hillock near Laddan, he erected another fort the ruins of which still tell the story of a fort, comparatively smaller in size with five turrets resting on the solid bastions, a masonry work of chiselled stones. The entrance to the fort is through a tremendous gate with its arched apex constructed of smaller red bricks. The gate to the fort is situated exactly between two turrets on its shorter side covered by a bend in the fort wall so that from a distance it is not easy to detect it. This side of the fort is rhombic in structure, the walls supported by three bastions, two of them were square in construction while the third one, situated on north east direction, is octagonal in structure. The fourth corner might have been supported by the bastion but the people of the surroundings had never seen a turret on it. In fact just in this corner of the fort existed a large water reservoir, a natural spring which was widened and decorated with half reliefs. It was reached from the general surface of the fort by the flight of a number of steps leading almost to its baseline. It is buried under the rubble of the fort now. L-shaped thick walls were supported by two bastions constructed from the baseline, several metres down from the surface of the fort. On these bastions were constructed wide chambers, looking like turrets, one square in structure and the second octagonal, were meant for the guards and served the observation posts. Its wall still contains the slanted gun points. The fort contained a stable, chambers for the Quiledar, his assistants and other people. Outer chambers were larger than the inner ones.

The fort has been built at such a strategical site that its observation

posts covered the three directions and the activities of the enemy could be watched from miles away even with the naked eyes. On these sides the fort was secure and the deep furrows around assisted it to defend against any possible attack. This fort was never attacked but it gave way to the natural calamities and non-maintenance. The tall walls fell down and the chambers ruined, the logs of wood forming their roof were carried away so that it enhanced the process of destabilisation. No one is there to take care of it, hence in the days to come the people will know it from the history books only.

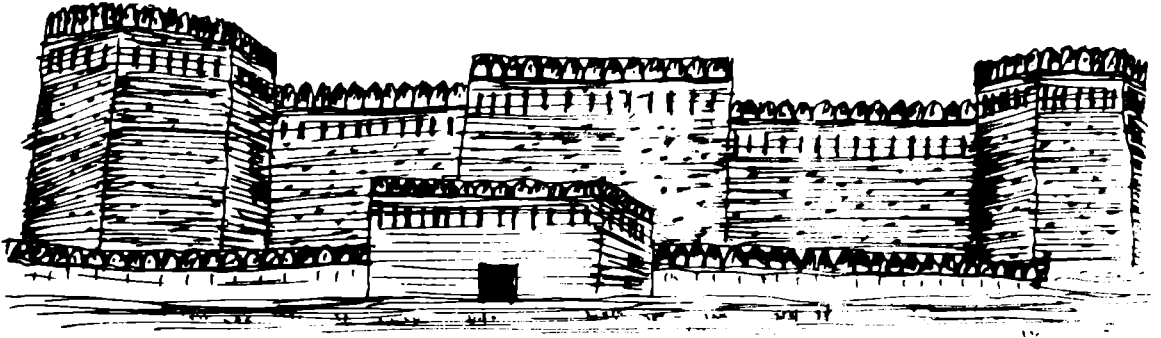
### RAMNAGAR FORT

Ramnagar, the capital of erstwhile state of Bandralta, is situated at about 105 kms from Jammu and 38 kms west to Udhampur, towards Dhar road. It abounds in the natural bowl of the Shivaliks watered by several streams which decorate its surroundings with lush green earth surface, a feast for the eyes. Bandralta was a famous hill state ruled by Bandral Rajputs. It was founded by the royal family of Chamba belonging to Chand dynasty. The first monarch of the state was brother of Raja Vichitra Varman who ruled Chamba in 10th century A.D.

Though this dynasty ruled over Bandralta till Bandrals were overthrown by Sikh forces in A.D. 1821, yet nothing is known about the genesis of late Bandral king named Bhupendra Dev who was forced to leave Ramnagar and to retire in the hills of Ambala in A.D. 1821. The hill state was bestowed upon Raja Suchet Singh the younger brother of Gulab Singh, the first Dogra monarch of Jammu and Kashmir, in lieu of his services rendered in Punjab Darbar. Suchet Singh ruled Bandralta from 1822 to 1844. Ram Singh the second son of Maharaja Ranbir Singh became the feudal lord of Bandralta after the death of Raja Suchet Singh who renamed Bandralta as Ramnagar.

Ramnagar palaces were constructed by the Bandral lords but they were reconstructed and renovated by Raja Suchet Singh. Raja Suchet Singh like Raja Sansar Chand II of Kangra was a connoisseur of Bandral school of Pahari paintings.

In fact the old palace of Ramnagar was the fortified area as secure as a fort, as such no separate fort was built. But during the reign of Raja Suchet Singh the need of erecting a fort came into existence owing to the prevailing circumstances. A site was selected which was a ridge situated almost at a distance of about 800 metres from the old palace. It is a square in structure  $42.65 \times 42.65$  metres in measurement, a masonry work of



A sketch of Ramnagar fort.

huge cut-stones mortared with lime powder and the paste of legumes. Four corners of the fort make the four turrets constructed on solid bastions. These turrets form the observation posts where guards were always there observing the activities of the enemy and they could watch these activities from miles at a distance. The fort is a perfect square in structure, the walls which are 200 feet in length, constitute outer parapets of the fort. They are made of solid stones mortared with the help of lime and legume paste. There is a main gate opening to the east side of the moat which is almost 40 feet in height and 20 feet wide. Entrance of the gate is covered by two heavy wooden gates 20 feet in length and almost 5 feet wide each. The upper arch of the door is artistically carved the apex of which is decorated with an image of Shri Ganesha. On both sides of the gate we find images of monkey god Hanuman and Durga. On the left side of the image of Durga we find another image of Bhairava. Perhaps these images were meant for the security of the fort. There is a well just on one side of the door wherefrom water was used for daily requirement. There is another well at the back of the courtyard serving the same purpose.

Entrance to the fort is through a large *Deodi* with measurement of 10.5 m × 4.4 metres supported by fluted pillars. On the right lateral side of the *Deodi* there is a wide chamber attached with the main *Deodi* through three arched entrances 6' × 5.5' in area supported by fluted pillars. The central entrance is the largest. This chamber was meant for the *Deodi* officer, a security officer of the fort.

The interior of the fort is well maintained with the help of lush green lawns, and towards west direction of the fort we find an ammunition chamber wherein cannon-balls of solid iron are well preserved. Earlier it was a temple with 4.5 × 6 metres dimension. The fort is joined with the green land with the help of wooden bridge bridging the gap of the moat

which is almost 15 feet wide and having the same depth. It is now filled with garbage. Earlier, it is said, it was filled with water and giant crocodiles used to guard the moat so that it was practically impossible to cross the moat by swimming or making a bridge over it. Earlier, the bridge was mobile whenever the authorities wanted they bridged the moat through this bridge otherwise the logs containing planks were drawn back through pullies making a gap so that no unwanted people dared to enter the fort.

By the side of this fort we find a *samadhi* constructed in mausoleum style with a door having pinnacles with four metallic pitchers gradually tapering upto apex. It is a rectangular chamber wherein the remains of the queen of Raja Suchet Singh are buried. It is at this place that she performed the rite of *Sati* on listening the news of death of her husband, Raja Suchet Singh. The interior of the *samadhi* so formed was lavishly decorated with murals which are now in a very bad shape due to the smoke gathered by burning of continuous lamp inside the *samadhi*. It is being looked after by a local priest but the fort has become a part of important monuments taken into custody by the Department of Archeology.

### BHIMGARH

It is a historical fort perched on a hillock situated about 200 metres from the town of Reasi. From a distance of a few kilometres one can view its magnificent towers erected on its four bastions which gradually taper up to form the pointed turrets. Its beauty lies in its strategic position as well as its architecture which is unique among all the forts of the vicinity and makes one believe that it might have been erected by the western architects on the design of a castle.

To reach the fort one has to ascend a few metres to reach its entrance which is framed by two lavish doors chiselled out of huge deodar trunks. The lateral upper portions of the door are decorated with the images of Durga on a lion and Hanuman on either side of the apex of the door. The whole mansion is erected on three tiers, the first storey or the base contain the foundation of bastions which form the four corners of the huge building. Each bastion starts at the base which is a solid tubular structure buried deep in the earth forming the foundation which forms circular chambers of about eight feet radius from the base of the first storey. These hollow bastions run upto the height of about 40 to 50 feet finally tapering at the apex. The bastion is supported by thick walls having masonic work of stones with the width ranging from 2.5 feet to 3.5 feet. At the base the

walls are thicker. These walls contain gun points which tangentially run making 45 degree angles with the walls of the fort. The whole structure forms the first storey or the first tier of the huge structure. With the help of a flight of a few steps one can reach the terraced well maintained second storey or the second tier with lavish galleries meant for the security of the soldiery protecting the fort and deputed to defend the territories of Bhingarh. In fact this strata is important enough as it contained a huge reservoir of water with surface area of 35' × 40' and more than 50 feet depth. On its sides are erected two airy chambers of 15' × 12' area with pyramidal roofs constructed with the help of rows of red bricks overlapping each other halfway. Nearby the base of a chamber narrow stairs go down to the base of the wall bifurcating at a point so that narrower steps segregate nearby the base leading to another small well well covered considering the hygiene of the locale. Galleries are constructed in slanting position synchronising the slanting pyramidal roofs so that all sides with their angles slide down towards the well. In fact the water reservoir does not contain any natural spring instead rain water of the surroundings is collected that was why the whole building was constructed with such a technique that the cascading water from all sides, during rains, finds its way to the well wherein the water is stored for all seasons. This water was used for various purposes during emergency when there was any siege of the fort. The pyramidal roofed rooms on the same strata, perhaps, were used by the officers responsible for the security of the fort. Both the rooms are spacious enough to accommodate a number of persons. Situated almost in the centre of this storey there is a temple dedicated to the twin Pandava brothers, Arjun and Bhim. Two half reliefs carved out of 5 feet long and about 2 feet broad sand slates decorate the sanctum of the temple which otherwise seems to be deserted. It is strange enough that right from Reasi to Sundraini via Aghar Jitto and Katra we do find the shrines attributed to Bhim, the most powerful of Pandava brothers but, perhaps, this is the only shrine where both Arjun and Bhim are worshipped together. However, it seems to be a later addition. Generally temples in the forts contained the clan or family gods or goddesses. Thus temple situated in Bahu fort, Jammu contains an image of Mahakali, the temple in Nurpur court contains the famous image of Girdhar Gopal. Jasrota fort has a temple of Lord Shiva while the famous Kangra fort had a temple attributed to Mahamaya. Sujapur Tira fort and palaces had a temple attributed to the Kul Devi of the Katoch Rajas. Recently this shrine has been renovated. In fact before every ritual or festival the royal family members used to worship their family or clan gods or goddesses. Even before leaving for a battle they



would worship their Kul Devi or Devta. Hence this temple at Reasi fort might had contained some other images which in due course of time had been exchanged for these two images. Since these two images do not seem to be old than a century while the fort came into existence almost three centuries ago but was renovated several times. It was renovated for keeping garrison during the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh by its Quiledar before General Zorawar Singh took over the task of its supervision. General Zorawar Singh was declared Quiledar of the fort around A.D. 1816/17 when he again repaired the fort according to the needs of his garrison.

The third storey can be reached through a flight of several steps culminating into two airy chambers laterally constructed with the area of 15' × 12' each and opening outside to observe the splendid view of the area stretched for miles together. Both the chambers are joined with each other with the help of a common door. The walls of one of these chambers was damaged due to the alternate heating and cooling process. Thanks to the efforts of the shrine Board of Shri Vaishno Devi that not only the walls are repaired but flooring of the four chambers in the fort has also been replaced with concrete materials. The department of horticulture looks after the maintenance of the greenery of and around the fort.

Reasi fort, popularly known as Bhingarh, was responsible for the gradual training place for the potential great warrior, Zorawar Singh, who was attached to this fort as a soldier and in due course of time proved himself as the most sincere, confident and formidable commander-in-chief who conquered Zanskar, Leh, Baltistan and proceeded for Tibet. As such this fort was very important as Mian Dido, the Robinhood of the hills, could not be captured by the Sikh forces despite several efforts, that Gulab Singh with the help of the garrison provided by Zorawar Singh from Reasi not only captured Mian Dido but wiped out his family in favour of him. It was Reasi only where the great commander settled and made his family. He erected a two storeyed building as his *Haveli* and married twice to have his descendants but none of his queens could conceive with the result that he had to look after a maid servant who assisted Zorawar Singh with a son who was named as Indru. Since he was not the legal heir, he was given one-third of the property owned by Zorawar Singh.

## FORTS OF SALAL AND DHYANGARH

The site, where a national hydel project, popularly known as Salal Hydel project has been established, was once a formidable settlement surrounded by the Chenab on three sides while on the fourth direction a narrow pass was always guarded by the men of integrity. It was during the regime of Maharaja Gulab Singh that fortification of this settlement was done to make the site secure from any external attack. In fact Maharaja Gulab Singh had a definite move in his mind. He fortified the area with the active cooperation of his commander Zorawar Singh who meticulously completed the work supporting the hillocks with the masonry work of boulders and large chiselled sand stones instead of erecting the bastions which was rather difficult process. Almost one and half century have passed but the supporting walls are still intact. He also constructed a small formidable fort perched on the top of the hillock. It was named after Raja Dhiyan Singh. As according to great grand son of Vazir Zorawar Singh, Nazar Pryatam Singh, this fort had many bastions culminating into turrets, four of which were quite prominent in very near past. These turrets were linked together with the help of cloisters so that the guards protecting the fort could move freely from one turret to another. This fort was very secure because no invader could cross the fortified area of Salal, the surrounding hillock direction were linked together filling the passes in between with solid masonry work of supporting walls impossible to climb and three other sides of this fortified area were surrounded by gushing water of the river Chenab making it impossible to cross. The only path to the fortified area of the Salal was through a pass popularly known as Watal Ghan which was always guarded by the chivalrous Parmars, first by Thakur Dharam Singh Parmar, who migrated from Himachal Pradesh on the behest of Zorawar Singh who was a close friend of the Parmar family and after his settlement near Reasi he also invited his two brothers, Sardaru and Dalelu and his close associate Thakur Dharam Singh Parmar to live with them, thus they came to live at Vijaypur, about three kms from the town of Reasi just by the side of mighty Chenab where Zorawar Singh had erected a palatial two-storeyed building, popularly known as Zorawar's Haveli, then by his sons named Lakshman Singh and Kamwal Singh with their men of integrity. All the three were also declared Thanedars of the fort of Bhimgarh one after another. Perhaps they commanded the guard of both the forts i.e. Dhyangarh as well as Bhimgarh.

The question is that what was the need of erecting such a formidable fort in such a remote area, difficult to climb even by the masters of the

fort. As already told Raja Gulab Singh had a design in his mind to bring the fortune from Lahore and keep it in such a formidable place secretly that not even the close associates could know the fact. His dream was materialised when under a pact with the Punjab monarch he managed to carry ample treasure along with Rani Chand Kour from Lahore to Jammu safely but he was always apprehensive of the attacks by the Sikhs to snatch the treasure he had taken away from Lahore as such considering the most safe site he got erected the formidable Dhyangarh after fortifying Salal. It is said that the treasure brought from Lahore was dumped in this fort extremely guarded by men of integrity.

This fort had a very small accommodation, a chamber meant for the Quiledar and a few chambers with enough accommodation for guards and a chamber meant to store the ammunition. A small water reservoir, in the form of a tank was there which was fed by the rain water and its water was used during emergent situations only. But like that of Jaganu fort it was never attacked by any invader and finally its ammunition was destroyed and guns were broken in pieces and thrown into the river and metal extracted thereby was auctioned during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh. According to Nazar Prytam Singh the treasure it had stored in secret underground chambers was carried on ponies, heavily guarded, to Jammu. He was not sure whether it was the whole treasure dumped by Maharaja Gulab Singh there or a part of it. It was the treasure used for several expeditions of Nagar, Haveli, Hunza, Ladakh and Tibet. The royalty used to stay at Reasi palaces.

### JASMERGARH

Two formidable forts were erected in the erstwhile hill state of Jasrota. The fort with the same name as of the state was of ancient origin and its foundation can be traced to the date of the origin of its state where as Jasmergarh came into existence in early 19th century.

The state of Jasrota was facing continuous attacks from Sikhs. Somehow chieftains of Jasrota tried their best to repulse their attacks but could not stop them forever. Most of their energy was wasted to face these attacks as such in an emergency meeting with courtiers of importance around the last decade of 18th century, in the reign of Ajab or Ajib Dev (A.D. 1790 to 1800). It was decided to erect another fort nearby the border of the state so that the invaders could be pushed back before they reach Jasrota. Moreover during these attacks Jasrota was not caught unaware as it used to happen due to the sudden attacks. A site was decided, a ridge

situated by the side of the path to an ancient religious shrine of Jandi. Thus the construction started but it could not be completed during the reign of Ajab Dev. However his descendant Lal Dev completed the fort. Again the fort was named after Raja Jas Dev like that of Jasrota. A garrison was stationed there with enough ammunition so as to face any eventuality anytime. A well was excavated, towards the northeast side, which sufficed the need of the inmates of the fort. It was a deep well and several legends about it being the store of mysterious elements were in vogue. The people of the locality were of the opinion that jewellery and articles of precious metals were buried in it during Sikh attack of January 1845.

It is a square structure with four bastions made of solid masonry work of stones followed by brickwork to form the turrets with open chambers meant for the guards as watch towers, as such the ramparts surrounding the turrets had slanting gun points. A few cells were constructed for the garrison and Quiledar. A shrine has come up in the centre of the edifice. The entrance to the fort is a huge *Deodi* wherefrom the loaded mules and elephants could easily pass in. Hira Singh, the nephew of Maharaja Gulab Singh, repaired it and a new town by his name came into existence almost one and half a kilometres from this fort. It occupied now the jail meant for the surrendered militants.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. *Ibid*, p. 515.
3. S.S. Charak, *History and Culture of Himalayan States*, Vol. IV part I, p. 131.
4. Kahan Singh Billowaria, *Tarikh Rajgaan Jammu & Kashmir*.
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6. Kahan Singh Billowaria, *Tarikh Rajgaan Jammu & Kashmir*, Vol. I, p. 21.
7. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. II, p. 538.
8. *Tarikh-e-Rajgan Dogra*, Vol. I, p. 21.
9. Kahan Singh Billowaria, *Tarikh Rajgan Jammu & Kashmir*, p. 22.
10. S.S. Charak quoting Kahan Singh Billowaria and *Akbarnama*.
11. *History and Culture of Himalayan States*, Vol. 6, part iii, p. 166.
12. *Jammoo and Kashmir Territories*, p. 84.
13. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. II, p. 565.
14. Kahan Singh Billowaria, *Tarikh Rajgan Jammu & Kashmir*, Vol. I, p. 24.
15. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, Vol. II, p. 583.
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18. *Jammoo and Kashmir Territories*.

# 4

## *Castles of Royalty*

### ROYAL PALACES OF JAMMU

Jammu, an erstwhile kingdom, was one of the most powerful hill states dominating almost all the hill states on the right side of the Ravi. Jammu, situated on the right bank of the Tawi, and Bahu, on the left bank of the Tawi, were the two citadels of this powerful kingdom. History tells us that Bahuwals were more powerful than the Jamwals, though, both the clans were the offshoots of a single tree yet they kept their identity in the days to come. There was a great war between Raja Kirpal Dev of Bahu and Raja Dhruv Dev of Jasrota in which almost all the powerful Dogra chieftains participated favouring either side. The cause of the battle, as according to the ballads, was the precious sword in possession of Mian Nath, the commander of the forces of Bahu Raj.

Raja Kirpal Dev wanted to have that sword for his heir apparent which was not only refused but Mian Nath left the kingdom to stay with Raja Dhruv Dev of Jasrota. This great war was fought in the forest of parrot tree, the flame of the forest, near Hiranagar. In this battle several men of valour were killed including two sons of Raja Kirpal Dev with the result that the Bahuwals not only lost their hold on the Chieftains of the hill states but also the erstwhile state of Jammu became powerful. Jammu was the most powerful kingdom from the early 18th century onwards among all the hill states situated on both the sides of the Ravi. In fact, it started picking the threads of power right from the reign of Raja Hari Dev (A.D. 1656 to A.D. 1692). He annexed Bahu and exterminated the Bahuwals from their ancestral state, perhaps after the great war. Gaje Singh, his heir, ruled both Jammu and Bahu, erstwhile states from A.D. 1692 to A.D. 1707. Raja Hari Dev had eight sons, Gaje Singh, Amar Singh, Jaswant Singh, Jafer Singh, Dilip Singh, Hathi Dev, Prithi Singh and Sujan Singh. Almost all of them, with the exception of Sujan Singh

who died without any offspring, were great warriors and pioneers in different fields of chivalry and originated their clans. Gaje Singh was the father of great warrior, great administrator and above all lord of many erstwhile hill states of Duggar, Raja Dhruv Dev, and grandfather of legendary Maharaja Ranjit Dev, who deserved to be known as the king of the kings as he had annexed almost all the hill states of Dogra belt on the right side of the Ravi. Even his son Brajraj Dev, the great grandson of Gaje Singh, had conquered several hill states situated on other side of the Ravi.

Second son Mian Amar Singh was the originator of Jindraiya clan. Amar Singh was a great warrior who was involved in the great Dogra war which was the deciding factor for the decline of the Bahu Raj and he played a pivotal role in it. Third son Jaswant Singh was popular as Mandiwala who claimed his right for the crown and forced the heir apparent, Gaje Singh to shift his capital from Mandi, Purani Mandi at present, to the north-east side, by the side of river Tawi, where the palaces were constructed. Mian Jaswant Singh had claimed his right for Jammu Raj in addition to the Jagir of Akhnoor bestowed upon him. He had two sons, the great warriors, named Ratan Dev and Chandan Dev who got Ranjit Dev, the Maharaja of Jammu released from the clutches of Punjab Governor with their valour and with their wit and shrewdness. Jafer Singh was the originator of Agorwala clan. Dilip Singh got the Jagir at Jagti which included the illaqua upto Sagoon via Saruinsar where he had erected his palaces. Mian Dido, the gorilla warrior was in fifth generation from Dilip Singh. Hathi Singh and Prithi Singh were also the originators of their clans.

Raja Gaje Singh was a great builder and erected several buildings. In fact, the credit of founding most of the bazars and buildings goes to him. It was he who developed the infrastructure of the town. He laid out the foundation of Urdu bazar and built a mosque which came into existence as Mastgarh and is situated just in the heart of the town around which a thickly populated *mohalla* came into existence by the same name.<sup>1</sup> It is said that there was a conflict between Raja Gaje Singh and Jaswant Singh Mandiwala for the possession of the throne. For every practical reason Gaje Singh was the heir apparent, being the eldest prince but Jaswant Singh who was given Mandi as Jagir, refused to allow him to be given Tilak on the traditional seat situated at Purani Mandi. He shifted his capital to north-east side of the town by the side of river Tawi.<sup>2</sup> Whether he had constructed his palaces there or not nothing is available in this context. However, some of the elder men of the royalty saved the situation by

pursuing Jaswant Singh to decorate the forehead of Gaje Singh at the traditional seat. Thus another tradition came into practice that hence afterwards the Tilak was always given by the descendants of Jaswant Singh to the crowning prince till Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra monarch.<sup>3</sup> However, Tilak to Maharaja Gulab Singh was given by Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Jia Pota, Akhnoor.

Raja Dhruv Dev, the son of Raja Gaje Singh, however, shifted his capital from Purani Mandi to extreme north-east corner of the town, by the side of the Tawi, where he erected several palatial buildings.<sup>4</sup> In fact the site had already been selected by his father, Raja Gaje Singh.

Dhruv Dev after repairing the old temple of Parmeshwari in about A.D. 1714, originally constructed by Raja Chakradhar Dev (about A.D. 1150), built a grand palace on the right bank of the Tawi and south to it he constructed buildings for administration. The whole complex became popular as Darbargarh.<sup>5</sup> However, finishing touch to these buildings in addition to new palaces were credited to his son Maharaja Ranjit Dev.<sup>6</sup> Most of the old palaces towards the river bed belonged to his era. Begam Haveli was also constructed during this period and a *mohalla* came into existence by its name. Brajraj Dev had also constructed some buildings. A narrow entrance just opposite to the central park leads to the chambers of advocates in Darbargarh. It was popularly known as Deodi Bajar Dev. Definitely the old buildings in ruins inside this Deodi, leading to the *Ahata* of Saruinsarwalas, were built up by Brajraj Dev. During Dogra regime, Gulab Singh started constructing palaces at lower strata followed by massive buildings highly decorated and lavishly painted from inside with mosaic and cut-glass work built by his heir apparent, Maharaja Ranbir Singh.

To these palaces Maharaja Pratap Singh, Raja Ram Singh and Raja Amar Singh added more buildings. Apart from the repairs of old palaces and adding the galleries to the existing buildings Maharaja Hari Singh remained almost apathetic to new constructions. During interviews with the grandmen of Jammu, Mr. D.C. Prashant, ex M.P., and Thakur Atma Singh Slathia, the great grandson of legendary Wazir Kahnu Slathia, both are octogenarians and are well informed and familiar with these palaces as both of them were the frequent visitors of these palaces in their childhood, some very interesting anecdotes of these palaces came into existence. However, we will discuss these anecdotes in due course of time. Let us discuss the plan on different strata on which these structures were erected.

These palatial buildings were erected on four strata. In fact, the

foundation of these palaces laid by Raja Gaje Singh, the son of Raja Hari Dev, was followed by some constructions done by his son Dhruv Dev. The name of the complex of these buildings was given as Darbargarh during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev. However, the layout of the outer court was done during the reign of Raja Dhruv Dev. Several buildings were erected for official work so as to shift the capital from Purani Mandi to Darbargarh. These buildings were constructed by the side of a centrally placed park wherein rare floral plants and fruit trees were planted.

On second strata palatial buildings were constructed by the founder of Dogra regime, Maharaja Gulab Singh. The original palaces constructed by Maharaja Gulab Singh find their place by the right side of the Tawi. They were not so lavish but care was taken to construct secret chambers which could lead to the river during emergency. These buildings paved the way for lavish palaces on the foundation of these structures constructed afterwards. Maharaja Ranbir Singh erected tremendous structures on the foundation laid down by Maharaja Gulab Singh. These structures, afterwards, were known as Gole Ghar, owing to its shape and style. It was the third strata. At the fourth strata buildings were constructed to suit the whims of various queens and other members of the royalty serving the feudal lords.

Old palaces have four courtyards, popularly known as *Ahata*s or the open space, around which palaces were erected. The oldest and the largest *Ahata* was known as Darbargarh, popularly known as Mandi Mubarik. It was somewhat rhomboid in structure with its large arms on its south, west and east directions but smallest or shortest arm on its north side. It is supposed to be the oldest courtyard containing offices scattered on its periphery. There were three main gates to get into the Darbargarh, one on the side of Chowk Chabutra or most popularly Darbar bazar, the other from Panjlirithi side while the third gate was from Pacci Dhacki. However, there was another gate leading to Gadhadhar temple but it was used by the ladies of royal clan only. Three entrances were there which lead to the interior of these palaces. These included the Toten Wali Deodi or Nicki Deodi wherefrom the visitors entered to have a glimpse of Maharaja Pratap Singh, the third Dogra Raja of the clan. The Maharaja used to sit in the roofed gallery above the doorway, leading to the interior of the palaces, during festive days so that the visitors could easily have the glimpse of the monarch. Doorway leading to the interior of the palaces were lavishly decorated with floral designs painted on its ceiling, the ruins of which still spellbound the visitors. It lead to a courtyard in the centre of which there was a beautifully chiselled marble fountain in form



of a fully bloomed flower. It is still there but in deserted form. The four sides had chambers for the offices whereas towards river side there were complex of palaces, a multi-storeyed building with lavish chambers and halls meant for the male members of the royalty. An open path decorated with living creepers and floral trailers, lead to these palaces. A lavish chamber, in front, was devoted for variety of birds among them there were a few parrots who use to mimic the utterances of the visitors creating a peel of laughter every now and then. On the upper storey of the complex there was a roofed gallery in which the Maharaja used to sit to enjoy Hukah during evening and anyone could visit him without any restriction. At the time of dusk an elephant used to visit the courtyard to salute the Raja and the flag on the tune of a bugle. This courtyard was linked to two interior sets of palaces situated on two lateral sides of it. There was a wonder of architecture, lavish stylised structures constructed in Mughal style, multi-storeyed buildings culminating into dome like that of mosques at the apex on south direction of the courtyard linked with a roofed narrow path. Since this five-storeyed building was built in perfect symmetry and in round sequence it was named as Gole Ghar. It is said that it contained underground cells leading to the river bed which were secretly connected with underground narrow paths and were known to the members of the royalty only. The uppermost storey consisted of eight arched entrances on either side of edifice erected in east direction, that is, towards the river bed whereas opposite to it the facing wall contained seven arched entrances with almost eight feet length and three feet breadth. Gole Ghar could be entered from other side also.

While entering the courtyard of the Gole Ghar from the main entrance we find on left side a perfectly five-storeyed round building which ascends to the top culminating into a dome like that of a mosque. We find a large, covered, water reservoir supposed to be a natural spring which even centuries after is still there. It is an octagonal structure with five feet shortest arm and its longest arm almost nine feet. The roof covering the whole reservoir has been tiled with red baked tiles of 9" × 9" size. We find some steps leading to water level. The spring has been deserted alongwith the building which was gutted in fire a few years ago and no care has been taken to preserve such a piece of architecture. In fact, it seems it is consigned to the vagaries of nature. I happened to visit the inner chambers of this palace when it was not consigned to fire, and found several niches with arched tops supported by fluted columns. The rims of the arches were decorated with floral designs which were supposed to be *Ranibasa* during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Perhaps these

are the oldest palaces constructed by almost three generations. Gole Ghar was started by Raja Gaje Singh and Dhruv Dev at the base followed by one or two storeys constructed by Maharaja Gulab Singh but was finished by his illustrious son, Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Maharaja Gulab Singh was away at Srinagar when the Gole Ghar was completed and on his return to Jammu he was so fascinated with the splendour of the architecture, the style and height of the Gole Ghar that he asked his son in wonder, “You are reaching at the height of the sky. It is a perfect round building (*Eh Te Poora Gole Ghar Hai*)” to which the son replied that to keep dignity up they needed a building like this to match the palatial buildings of monarchs elsewhere. Alas! only skeleton is left after the devastating fire and if no care is taken it will crumble down and may not survive for the days to come.

On the north side to the central courtyard we find lavish buildings comparatively newly built. While moving towards this portion of the palaces from the central courtyard through a covered and dark path we find ruins of several buildings of which only foundations are visible. However multi-storeyed underground chambers towards the river bed have been exposed due to the dismantling of the buildings constructed above the surface of the land. We find a small garden at lower strata with centrally placed platform of ocimum, popularly known as *Tulsi*. On the right side, just by the side of the ruins of these chambers, we find a towering building, a marvel of architecture, the outer walls of which have been decorated with pebble work. It is a four-storeyed building constructed for the most powerful queen, Rani Charhak, in the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh. Its lavish chambers were beautifully decorated with mosaic work and floral designs but pathetic attitude of the regime and vagaries of nature have finished all which was aesthetic and should have been preserved for the generations to come. Maharaja Pratap Singh, during his old age, could not ascend the stairs as such special arrangement for lift was done. Perhaps, in old palaces, this is the only palace which contained the lift facility. Now this palace is housing the excise department of the state of J&K in addition to some other offices.

We find a large platform in front of Rani Charhak palace in the centre of which a structure meant for *Tulsi* is still existing. Its brims are beautifully painted with floral designs which have been faded away due to alternate heating and cooling process. The royal ladies, after taking bath, would come there to worship *Tulsi* to have its blessings. They would assemble there, on the platform to gossip and enjoy the sun during winters.

Just opposite to this building we find a tremendous building but without

any symmetry at the backside, though, frontal portion is quite symmetrical and beautifully planned. It is known as Navan Mahal, i.e. the new palace. It was constructed by Raja Ram Singh, the younger brother of Maharaj Pratap Singh, for his beloved queen, the Katharwali. Ram Singh had six queens in addition to several beautiful attendants to his queens. One of the maids popularly known as Padam Dasi was his favourite. It is said that she became pregnant and his beloved queen Katharwali could not relish the idea since she could not conceive. As such, on a fine evening she had some heated discussion with Padam Dasi and some personal attacks infuriated the queen that she grabbed the lady from her hair and dragged her for some distance until other royal ladies mediated and saved the situation to aggravate further. When Raja Ram Singh came to know the episode he demarcated the whole path through which Padam Dasi was dragged and ordered to erect a palace for her at that place with that zigzag sketch making the foundation. Thus new palace came into existence. But others refute this saying that the palace was built up for Katharwali queen of the Raja. Other queens including the most pious lady, Rani Pathani and two Katoch Ranis had their palaces by the side of the new palace but they have been dismantled, only their foundations are visible. Navan palace has a peculiar style of architecture. It seems to be a four-storeyed building from the frontal side but from the back side we can count eight storeys. Round chambers from one corner of the palace ascend towards the apex like those of the chambers erected by the side of the Deodi of Gole Ghar as explained earlier. It was a closed domain. No male members, even from the royalty were allowed to enter this courtyard with palaces attributed to the queens of the Maharaja and the Raja. As such Maharaja Pratap Singh and Raja Ram Singh had the only privilege to visit this portion of the palaces.

A narrow path leads to another courtyard with a temple in the centre and a number of buildings surrounding the courtyard. Buildings constructed in this portion of the complex are having mixed styles of architecture ranging from Rajputana style to Mughal and Sikh style. It is somewhat rhomboid in shape with its east and north sides longer than the other two sides with the result buildings erected on these panels are accordingly lesser or more in number but the sequence in which these buildings have been built is the same as of the other courtyards, that is, constructing the buildings in the peripheral sides and leaving enough space in the centre for a court. In fact, it was the real complex of the Zenana. This *Ahata*, the enclosure, contains the various chambers of the queens which were constructed from time to time. That is why their style

and architecture differs from one another. While entering through the main gate of the enclosure, popularly known as Deodi Mubarik. we have to cross three more gates, the Deodis to reach the enclosure of the Zenana. The Deodi officer used to sit in one of the double-storeyed chambers constructed by the side of the main gate. He was, in fact, a custodian as well as the guard of the palaces. None could go in without the permission of the Deodi officer, but they were not allowed to enter the second Deodi. Any important message was to be conveyed to the Deodi officer who would communicate to Bhaiyas, old persons of more than sixty years who were aliens to the whole surroundings. In fact, they were the outsiders and could cross the limit upto the second Deodi where generally the women guards were there who in their turn would communicate to the concerned maids, the *Dasis*, of a particular queen to whom the message was to be conveyed. The communication was screened first by the Deodi officer, followed by the Bhaiyas, and if found suitable for delivery were allowed otherwise the messenger was asked to leave the Deodi. The Deodi chambers of upper storey were meticulously decorated with cut glasses and paintings done on various subjects in addition to the portraits of the Maharaja and the Rajas fixed in the frames executed in the walls with floral designs bordering these portraits. I have seen such lavishly decorated chambers, almost two decades ago when offices of Animal Husbandry Department of J&K were shifted to these chambers.

It seems that some of this portion of the palaces came into existence long before the Dogra dynasty came into power. It is here a conspiracy was hatched by the Bandrali Rani of Maharaja Jeet Singh, who was an ambitious lady and wanted to get rid of the suzerainty of Mian Mota, to kill him. The Rani called him in the interiors of the palaces in pretext of some political consultations. As soon as he reached the Deodi, Mian Sathru and Trirhu Narainian, who were already there purposely, pounced upon him with their swords and killed him instantaneously.<sup>7</sup> S.S. Charak while quoting Rajdarshani by Ganesh Das writes, "A conspiracy was, therefore, set afoot to assassinate Mian Mota in which the Rani (Bandral queen of Raja Jeet Singh), Mian Diwan Singh and Diwan Jit Singh Kalal became accomplices. On 9th of Har, V.S. 1868 (11th May, 1813) Charnu and Sheru Narainia took ambush on a balcony of the Deodi of the palace, as directed by Mian Diwan Singh, and the Mian concealed himself nearby along with two others, Trirhu and Jagtu . . . . As soon as Mian entered the office they told him that the meeting had been postponed for the next day . . . . no sooner he turned his back two musketeers were discharged on him from the hole . . . . at once Mian Diwan Singh and Trirhu leaped out

of their hiding place and hacked him with their swords.”<sup>8</sup>

One thing is common in these statements that Rani Bandrali played the main role and on her behest Mian Mota was called in the palaces and was killed. Where he did fell, a memorial was erected afterwards which is situated on an edifice, in the space between second and third Deodi of the Zenankhana or Ranibasa. It indicates that most of the interior palaces were constructed by the monarchs of Dev dynasty before Maharaja Gulab Singh and other members of Dogra dynasty came into power. We find a cell by the side of the third Deodi which was a path leading to a temple situated on the other side of the space left between second and third Deodi. This path has been converted into a cell where as the path leading to the temple exists between the first and second Deodi. It is a flat-roofed temple supposed to be erected by Raja Gaje Singh. Definitely this temple is older than the Dogra dynasty, the panels of which contain several Tantrik Yantras and Choukis of the gods and goddesses worshipped by members of the royalty. It is said after the death of a royal member of the clan his/her *chouki* carrying his/her deity was shifted to this temple so that there are a number of these Chowkis decorating the panels of the sanctum. In addition to these Chowkis and Tantrik Yantras we find a seal of Maharaja Gulab Singh preserved on these panels. The main deity Sh. Shiv Nabh ji, in form of an amulet finds its place, along with a number of images gilded in silver frames which included miniature paintings of 2" × 2.2" to 3" × 3.5" sizes of Radha Krishna and incarnation of Durga. There is another image of Durga on lion with 2" × 2" of size. The decorated image of OUM meticulously chiselled on wood and gilded with silver is the attraction for the visitors and research scholars.

The golden niche and the central sanctum was made available by Maharaja Ranbir Singh and the date of presentation of this golden throne to the temple has been embossed which reads Samvat 1942 Shravan, which comes to be around A.D. 1886, but the Maharaja died in September 1885. Either the date is wrong or it might have been established after the death of the Maharaja.

According to Sh. D.C. Prashant, Ex. MP there was a trunk preserved in the temple wherein some historical documents were kept pertaining to different expeditions of Maharaja Gulab Singh and his descendant, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, but it was carried to Srinagar during the regime of the prime ministership of Sheikh Abdullah and none knew the fate of the same afterwards.

The temple was popularly known as the temple of Shiv Nabh ji and it was purely a family temple of the royalties. Mostly royal ladies visited

this temple and during Janamashtami and Shivratri there used to be a get-together to ceremonise these festive days with fervour.

Crossing the fourth Deodi we reach the Zenana, already mentioned. These buildings are occupied now by Food and Supply, Office of the Electoral Officer, Dist. Employment Office, Toshakhana and other departments of J & K State. On the eastern side of this complex we find mixed fabric of architecture. In fact, buildings have come up at intervals during various sets of time. The oldest building is popularly known as Rani Bandrali Mahals. People, even elders miss it for Rani Bandrali of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. In fact, it is the complex of palaces attributed to Rani Bandrali but definitely it was not the famous queen of Ranbir Singh responsible for the construction of several shrines, Baolis and inns. It was the queen of Raja Jeet Singh, the grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Dev, who was very ambitious lady of the royalty and always yearned for the power. The conspiracy to kill Mian Mota, the regent was hatched in these palaces under the supervision of Rani Bandrali of Raja Jeet Singh, in which Mian Diwan Singh the chieftain of Reasi and Diwan Jit Singh of Jammu were the accomplices.

Rani Bandrali palace was lavishly decorated with murals and intermittent cut-glass decoration made it more fascinating. There were several portraits of the chieftains and kings fixed in the walls decorated with bordered floral designs. The palaces by the side of Rani Bandrali palace were constructed by Maharaja Pratap Singh, afterwards, for his queens and their retinue. It was constructed in western style with hanging iron bars supporting and decorating the exterior of the building. The originality of the building has been maintained. In fact, these buildings were the extension of Maharani Charak palace. A narrow path leads to several chambers with galleries opening towards the river bed to Tawi. Here, while sitting in these galleries, the lady folk of the royalty and their attendants, Golis, used to enjoy the scenic beauty and landscapes created by the shifting of river bed of the Tawi from time to time. Ladies of Jammu used to ceremonise the festival of *Berhi Patan* on first day of every vernacular month, popularly known as *Sankranti* when they, clad in new clothes, were carried from this side of the river to other side of the river by a boatman, popularly known as *Mallah*. It was symbolic of crossing the *Bhavsagar*, the river of life. The ladies chanting the hymns from Ramayana, especially from Khevat Prasanga (Pertaining to crossing the river Saryu by Sh. Rama), and placing the lighted lamps made of dough on the water surface of the river, while in the boat, made the scene enchanting and heartening for the royal ladies watching with interest while

sitting in these galleries. Rows of these lamps on the surface of the water of the river during Diwali evening added charm to already enchanted surrounding.

The buildings occupied by the Department of Food and Supply at present, that is, in the west of the whole complex, were the palaces for the queens and their attendants belonging to the retinue of Raja Ram Singh, the second son of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. As already told, Raja Ram Singh had six queens among them Rani Pathani was the most pious lady of the court and Rani Katharwali was the most beautiful and favourite of the Raja. Both the Ranis had their palaces opposite to the palace of Maharani Charak, already discussed. These buildings had beautiful wall paintings and the ceiling was lavishly decorated with floral and geometrical designs which are still there in some chambers but are deteriorating very fastly. The chamber on the first floor, once occupied by the District Supply Officer, just by the side of entrance to the complex from main gate, was once lavishly decorated with floral designs and portraits of the members of the royal family.

By the left side of the entrance there was a sequence of double-storeyed buildings which were occupied by Rani Guleri of Raja Moti Singh of PUNCHH. She was a pious lady who had constructed several shrines and water reservoirs for the benefit of the public. Rani Ka Mandir and Rani Ka Tala near the Office of Telecommunication were constructed by this Rani. The temple still exists but the tank had been filled up and a park was laid out during the reign of Governor Jagmohan. An artistic structure meant for basil plant, popularly known as *Tulsi* is still there in front of these palaces which was being worshipped by the ladies of the court including the queens and their retinue. Further ahead, towards north direction, we find a row of buildings meant for the retinue of the queens. The decorated doors of these chambers have been shifted to Dogra Art Gallery and those which are left have been consigned to the white ants in a closed cell due to the apathy of the regime towards these assets. These chambers were also painted with beautiful designs but the parabola of time and apathetic behaviour of the retainers have damaged the whole structure. Most of these painted chambers were whitewashed owing to the ignorance of the retainers.

There were several underground cells in these palaces which were, sometimes, meant for the secret path leading to the river bed. Several chambers still possess the basements. The ceiling of the Rani Bandrali Mahal, at ground floor, still possesses the meticulous paintings done in geometrical and floral designs.

Moving out of the Deodi Mubarik we find a complex of palaces constructed in different styles in different tenures, around a beautifully managed park in the centre of which an edifice in form of a huge platform was constructed after the coronation ceremony of Maharaja Hari Singh in 1925. This platform is having almost eight feet height and can be reached with the flight of a few marble-layered steps. A *chouki* of almost 5' × 4' in area was erected on the platform with a layer of marble slabs for the Maharaja whereupon the gold throne was kept, sitting on which the Maharaja graced the occasion with attendants having a beautifully decorated umbrella in their hand keeping over the Maharaja. Darbar-e-Aam was conducted here only during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh which was attended by the courtiers and the elite of Jammu town. Twice an year *darbars* were arranged during the festive occasions of Baisakhi and Basant. People used to present *nazarana* according to their status and *khilats* were distributed by the Maharaja to the courtiers and other celebrities. Some special programmes of dance and music were also organised here on some special occasions. Malika Pukhraj was the favourite artist of the Maharaja and she gave here her several performances. The tradition was revived by the initiative of Mr. Parvez Diwan, the Commissioner Secretary of Tourism, recently when several performances of Dogra culture were arranged for the inhome tourists on the platform where, once, the commoners were not allowed to visit.

The park was laid out during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh and variety of imported plants were planted. Among the important plants planted in this park were the *Mimusops elengi*, popularly known as Mousari in vernacular; *Michelia Champaca*, popularly known as Champa, Chamba, Sone Champa etc., palm and date trees of various varieties and a number of fruit trees. There are four fountains which are dissimilar to each other. It seems they were commissioned separately. However, their dimension is the same. Encircling this park is a wide road, once, occupied by red pebble is metalloid now. By the side of this metalloid road are erected marvellous buildings on four sides. This whole complex was popularly known as Raje Di Mandi. There were three entrances to the Mandi, one from Chowk Chabutra, another from Panjtirthi and the third one from Pacci Dhacki side. The entrance to the Mandi via Chowk Chabutra was through a huge gate which was almost 25 feet in height and almost ten feet in width. The frame of the gate still exists and its logs, if due care is taken, can survive for centuries together more. This Deodi was erected during the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh, that is, more than one hundred and seventy years back. This Deodi was supervised by the



Deodi officer, who used to be very close to the Maharaja. Here I may point out that Raja Dhiyan Singh was very close to the Maharaja of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who appointed him as his Deodi Officer. Along with the chamber of Deodi officer there were a number of offices in double storeyed building of the Deodi which are now occupied by Pension Cell of the State along with other offices on the first floor. Adjoining to the Deodi was a cell where the instrumentalists, especially the players of Shehnai, used to give their performance daily at the time of dawn and sunset. But on some festive occasions they would give their performance while sitting in a gallery exactly over the main Deodi.

The palaces of Raja Amar Singh and his retinue were constructed on the left side of the main Deodi. Some of them still exist carrying the offices of Archives, Divisional Commissioner, Registrar Cooperatives. The buildings carrying Toshakhans have been dismantled. Toshakhana contained a treasury of the state with gold gilded frames, chairs, articles of antique value, jewellery, ornaments, gold coins, articles made of ivory etc. A narrow covered path from nearby the Amar palaces lead to the steps of Gadhadhar temple and a tank at the base of temple. Though the entrance to the Gadhadhar temple through this covered path, popularly known as Nehri Gali i.e. dark street, has been closed and the tank has been filled with garbage, there stands a park which has been converted into a prayer ground for the students of Diwan Badri Nath Vidya Mandir. Toshakhana and the palaces towards the other gate were demolished. The gate itself was demolished around 1988 due to the deteriorated condition of the gate. Just by the side of the gate, towards north direction, there was a palace complex of Raja Ram Singh, the second son of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. The staircase of these palaces was renovated time and again so as to construct a parallel passage to the upper storey for the smooth trot of the horse of Raja Ram Singh. It was the Mardana palace of Raja Ram Singh. Later on, after independence, it housed Governor's office in ground floor and courts on the upper storeys. It is a three-storeyed building well planned in comparison to other palaces and buildings. At the joining of north and east blocks, a narrow path, earlier it was covered, lead to the Ahata of Saruinsar wala, It was added to Govt. Girls High School at the time of Bakshi Gulam Mohammad. Earlier it was a mint, popularly known as Taxal. This path also lead to a solitary cell known to be of a ghost, named Baba Raghu. A thali with all the dishes prepared in the royal kitchen was daily brought to the cell and according to the elders, D.C. Prashant, Thakur Atma Singh Slathia and Sh. B.P. Sharma, the first ever station director of Radio Kashmir, Jammu,

Ex. Director Information and Field Survey Organisation, this ghost was brought or it came itself along with the Rani Bandrali. Whether it was the Rani Bandrali of Jit Singh, son of Dalel Singh and the grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Dev or the queen of Maharaja Ranbir Singh nobody knows. People stress it was the queen of Maharaja Ranbir Singh since the Thali used to be offered during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh also. It is said that when the Rani (the queen of Maharaja Ranbir Singh), left for Haridwar the ghost left the palaces but the royalty was not sure of it and they did not like to take risk as such they went on supply of the Thali which was offered to a person named Bhato, a tantrik, who could easily digest the food offered to the ghost. It is not an earsay but the reality can be confirmed from the old people of the society.

There were the old palaces constructed by the Dev dynasty, Gajai Dev, Dhruv Dev and his descendants. The chambers occupied by the Department of Information for their use of publicity and papers belong to the old dynasty of Devs. A path leads to the chambers of the advocates popularly known as Vajra Dev's Deodi, that is, the Deodi of Vajra Dev. There was no important man with the name of Vajra Dev in the history. In fact it was Brajraj Dev, the illustrated son of Maharaja Ranjit Dev. Definitely this portion of the palaces were constructed by Maharaja Brajraj Dev which in course of time changed into Vajra Dev. In Dogri language the conversion is from the double sound to single one as such it is definite that Brajraj Dev was converted into Vajra Dev. Some of the elders are of the opinion that Vajra Dev was the descendant of Mian Mota.

We find a hall chamber by the left side of Deodi Mubarik. It is known as pink hall. It was the hall meant for the royalty during ceremonies and festive occasions. Even the hall was used for marriages of the members of the royal families. During marriage processions of the bridegrooms belonging to the royal families, the men folk used to decorate themselves with ornamental dresses and decorated turbans and the royal ladies would enjoy in the upper storey jeering at them for not being trained by their parents. It was really a fascinating scene to watch.

On the south direction there were two hall rooms meant for the royalty. In fact, it was a large hall room, popularly known as green hall divided into two. It was a very popular hall. During royal marriages and get-togethers this hall was used. Even plays and musical performances were arranged in this hall. According to Sh. D.C. Prashant, several performances were performed by the Parsi theatre in this chamber. It was lavishly decorated with the portraits of the Rajas and the Maharajas and paintings of the floral and geometrical designs which are nowhere to

be seen at present. However, the fluted columns, highly stylised with their artistic dots and bases, are still intact. Green hall was also the venue of the meeting place of the M.L.A.s on their first election until assembly building at Ajaibghar was not constructed. By the side of the green hall another gate lead to Pacci Dhacki. Maharaja Hari Singh, after returning from England, found that the palaces constructed are inadequate, they must have the addition of necessary extensions of the toilet and retiring rooms as such from this gate, towards the south direction, the extension of the palaces came into existence so that a street came into vogue. This street separated the palaces from those of the buildings of the commoners towards Pacci Dhacki. It was done in A.D. 1934 when Maharaja Hari Singh returned from England and incorporated the idea he had seen in England. Munshi Sahaudin, an overseer responsible for the civil work and municipality used to sit in this Deodi during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh, with his office by the side of the Deodi. It was the Munshi Sahaudin who erected the barriers at the Chowki of Mundan ceremony, there at Salathia Chougan of the royal family to which the great grandson of Wazir Kahnu, Mian Hukma Singh not only reacted but asked the civic authorities to leave the place free of all restrictions. Afterwards Hukma Singh Slathia got that land registered in his name by mobilising the whole Jamwal community.

By the side of the green palace, on south direction we find another wide chamber meant for the royal army. In fact, it was stationed at Amar Singh palaces where the offices of Divisional Commissioner exist at present. These were the palaces of Raja Amar Singh, which were converted into military cum foreign offices and Raja Amar Singh had shifted to a newly built Amar Palace which houses a museum at present. The royal forces had its centre as military headquarters, afterwards, nearby parade, that is at women college, parade ground, Jammu. The ruins of the building still exist. It is being dismantled soon, as according to the principal of the college, due to its destabilization.

INTACH tried hard to take a project in its hand but what prevented them is still a mystery. While the government had given a project to INTACH to renovate and repair the structure but why the work of conservation was stopped none knows. In the east direction of this complex, by the side of Deodi Mubarik, we find a hall chamber on its left side with pink coloured walls hence the name pink hall came into vogue. It has been converted into Dogra Art Gallery.

On its right side was an old building with open-arched entrances. It was the place where herbal medicines were prepared for the royalty but

if needed commoners could also get them free of cost provided royal doctor, popularly known as Rajvaidya, recommended the dose. It is here that *kushtas* were prepared for the Rajas and none other than these Rajas could enjoy these special tonics prepared from residual powders of precious metals and sometimes from minerals treated chemically with several herbs. Their formulae were always secretly guarded by the Rajvaidyas. Perhaps all these formulae went oblivion along with these Vaidyas. This part of the complex was known as Garhbeyii Khana. It was converted into a complex of government offices after independence.

While following the path, via Pacci Dhacki Gate, leading to Gole Ghar from outside we find a small Deodi, its doors are grilled with iron grills. Entering the Deodi we find chambers on both the lateral sides. These chambers on right side were meant for preparing the food for the royalty as well as for the people who were blessed with a 'Thali'. Sometimes a person very close to the royal family, requested that he too be employed. Till the process of employment was over he was offered free food from the royal kitchen and the process was known as 'Thali Lagna'. No one other than the workers were allowed to enter the kitchen. They too had to prepare the food after taking bath and in scanty clothes under the supervision of chief cook, popularly known as Maharaj. When food was ready, before serving it to the royalty, it was tasted by a person, specially meant for that purpose. These persons were used to be the men of integrity and were popularly known as 'Chakhe'. It was a necessity and served two purposes first to see if the food tasted well and all the ingredients were in proper ratio and secondly it was more important to see if the food was worth eating for the royalty and to see that there was no foul play on the part of the cooks or other related persons serving in the royal kitchen. Once the food was tasted it was handed over to the ladies, especially most faithful maids of the queens while male members took food collectively. Several workers were employed in this kitchen to grind the condiments. The condiments and other ingredients were grinded in a big, somewhat hollow, stones serving as the containers and an oblong stone served the purpose of pestler. Several such stones are lying deserted near the internal Deodi leading to the grand building of Gole Ghar.

Just opposite to it there was a large chamber meant for making sweets and storing them. On several festive occasions special sweets were prepared and distributed among the members of the royalty, courtiers and other persons of high circle. On the occasion of Ram Naumi specially prepared *laddus* of large size were distributed among the commoners also, generally at the venue of Sh. Raghunathji temple.

These buildings now have been occupied by the Offices of Department of Electricity and allied subjects. The buildings are crumbling fastly and if due care is not taken in time they will be reduced to rubble and only written history will be there to tell us their existence once upon a time.

Foreign visitors, scholars and the agents of British India were much fascinated by the architecture and grandeur of these palaces. Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, (first edition published in 1890 and the last in 1974) states about the Jammu of 1775, "The town of Jammu was at the zenith of its prosperity about the year 1775, in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev, the eighty first in the long line of Rajput Princes who trace their descent from Dalip, the younger of Bugju heroes who migrated to Jammu from hereditary estates of the family near Audh, about the year 527 B.C. . . . The town lies upon the right bank of the ravine, at an elevation of about 150 feet above the bed of the river, and the whole building of the palaces and numerous temples, with their gilded domes, are seen glistening in the sun from a great distance in the plains. . . . At the gate are stationed a guard, writers whose business it is to report arrivals, and custom house messengers. After passing the entrance, in doing which we come on to a plateau, we advance on more level ground along a street or bazar."

Walter R. Lawrence states, "Town covers a space of about one square mile, densely packed with single storeyed houses of round stones and mud with flat tops. In the upper portion are superior houses of bricks, and in Mand stand the state offices and palaces of the Maharaja and his brother. General effect of Jammu is striking and from a distance the whitewashed temples, with their gilded pinnacles, suggest a splendour which is dispelled on nearer acquaintance. The most conspicuous of the temples is Raghunath ji but like all other buildings in Jammu it is commonplace."

David Ross visited Jammu around 1880 and had published his observation in 1883, "It occupies a ridge on the outer range of the Himalayas. The Maharaja of Kashmir has several palaces here, and another was specially erected for the Prince of Wales, on his Royal Highness's visit to Jammu in January, 1876. . . . The fort and palace stand about 150 feet above the street, on the right bank, and have a very striking appearance; but an adjacent height commands the fort, which would render it untenable against modern artillery."

Vigne tells us about these palaces, "Maharajah's palace is an irregular pentagonal enclosure, containing in its centre a temple surrounded by a pretty extensive grass plot. His highness's apartments are situated in a

separate enclosure to the southeast, overlooking the deep bed of the Tawi. The palace is now being rebuilt, and is not yet completed; the various officers of state are intended to occupy the ranges of building forming the enclosure.”<sup>9</sup>

All these observations are of the visitors who visited Jammu either at the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh or before that period. It is clear from these observations that most of the palaces of the complex of Mandi Mubarik were completed before the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh with the exception of the palaces situated in Darbar Garh, which were constructed afterwards. They include Amar Singh palaces, Ram Singh palaces, Green and Pink halls etc. Even the edifice in the park meant for assembly of call, Diwan-e-Aam, was erected afterwards. The buildings erected on the south direction of Darbar Garh were burnt to rubble. They were renovated in the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh. Thus Green hall and adjoining building, earlier meant for the army headquarters were renovated rather reconstructed to their present grandeur. Green hall and adjoining building were extended towards south direction and sewerage system was added to already existent structure during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh.

### ENCHANTING CASTLE, AMAR MAHAL

On the plateau of a hillock by the side of river Tawi, there is a splendid building which spells the visitors. The building popularly known as Amar Palace is constructed in the style of a castle by the side of river scene in France. It is three-storeyed building with splendid halls, corridors, lobbies and, of course, with elegantly decorated living rooms. The ground floor consists of two big halls, three corridors and a lobby. The whole area of this floor has been converted into a museum named after the mother of Dr. Karan Singh, as Maharani Tara Memorial Museum. The first hall possesses the sets of miniature paintings, especially a set of Nal Damyanti in the Pahari style done by Ranja in its superb form. The adjoining hall consists of the royal furniture arranged in a sequence of a meeting, that is why it is called the meeting room, from where we enter a gallery through a narrow pathway. This is a gallery on the panels of which the paintings of the celebrated artists of India have been displayed. Almost all the contemporary artists of the country are represented by their best art pieces. The exit of the corridor leads to a balcony under the huge security where a golden throne has been kept in an enclosure, covered with iron bars. Viewers, however, can peep through the glass cupboard

from the lateral side, so as to have a partial view of the throne. On the other side, there is another gallery having famous paintings of the great artists. In the central panels a popular painting of Sohini Mahiwal painted by the celebrated artist Sardar Sobha Singh is the main attraction. It was first copy acquired by Dr. Karan Singh. Afterwards the artist created another copy of the same. The prints of which, in thousands, find their place in every third Punjabi house. Other paintings include different incarnations of Vishnu painted by the celebrated and well known artist.

The second storey of the building contains the books in different subjects arranged in bookshelves. As according to an earlier curator-cum-librarian of the museum, Prof. S.N. Wakhlu, the library contains almost 18,000 titles of history, art, philosophy, literature, religion and a number of other subjects. Cataloguing of these books has been done properly. There are three big chambers wherein these books have been kept with due layout. The main chamber is beautifully done with royal furniture arranged around a beautifully carved central table. This chamber contains some rare photographs of the royal personalities. Most of the photographs displayed are of Dr. Karan Singh in different capacities. This is the central chamber. Other two chambers are situated on its two lateral sides. The first chamber in the extreme corner, giving the splendid river view, contains the magazines. Some rare magazines have been preserved in this chamber. It also possesses a rare atlas of big size. A narrow path leads to a gallery where the books of Indian languages are arranged in a number of shelves. On the upper storey of the building there are a number of suites constructed for the purpose of staying for the scholars who want to study the books in the library and have come from abroad. In fact, the library is not open for the masses, only research scholars of repute who possess some authenticity are allowed to consult the books in the library. It was a venture of the Ex-Vice Chancellor of Jammu University, Prof. Dubey, that the research scholars of the University might be allowed and the suggestion was agreed upon but only a few came to attend the library. Of late, this practice was stopped but still the foreign scholars are permitted to consult the books in the library. Of course, they have to bring with them the identity papers as well as the request from their departmental heads. The local authors and the research scholars are allowed if sponsored by the University authorities. Dr. Karan Singh also allows certain research scholars on his own.

If this library is declared open to the local and the country scholars it will be a great service to the society as most of the rare books, which are not available in other libraries, are shelved in this library.

## PALACES AND FORT OF JASROTA

Jasrota was one of the most powerful erstwhile hill states and commanded respect among the celebrated twenty two hill states of Duggar circle. The fort, in ruins, still exists in the outer ranges of Shivalik, west to the Ravi and on the north it was surrounded by Bhaddu, Mankot and Basohli while to its east there is another fort belonging to erstwhile Lakhanpur state and west to it exist the fort cum ruins of the palaces constructed by Raja Suchet Singh, the legendary Dogra brother. Due to its fertile land and strategic position this fort was acclaimed one of the most sought after by the Mughals, Sikhs and Dogras respectively. Boundary line of the state was spread far and wide but the capital existed within the closed domains of the fort under the name of Jasrota. Jasrota town was decorated with lavish buildings, water reservoirs, artistic palaces, religious shrines and the masonry work of the fort, the ruins of which still exist and tell the golden period of this town.

Several theories have been propounded about the existence of this town, the kingdom and the fort, but it is definite that the erstwhile state of Jasrota came into existence in the post 12th century A.D. or in the beginning of 13th century. This was an offshoot of the Jamwals. The new hill states appeared on the map of this region during the period of Raja Bhujdev, the feudal lord of Jammu, who had four sons. The eldest son was not found fit to run the regime and he retired to the dansal hills where his descendants raised a kingdom named Mankot. The second, Avtar Dev, became the lord of Jammu and the third, Karn Dev went to the outer hills of Jammu and established the kingdom of Jasrota. He was a great warrior and won over the jagirdars and landlords of the area and gave birth to the kingdom of Jasrota. It was named after Jasdev, the lord of Jammu, who was the nephew of Karn Dev, the originator of the state. Almost twenty six feudal lords of Dev dynasty ruled over this hill state after its originator, Karn Dev. Ranbir Singh, the last feudal lord belonging to Dev dynasty, passed away issueless with the result his younger brother named Bhuri Singh controlled the administration of the kingdom for some time but finally it was taken into the folds of Punjab kingdom by Maharaja Ranjit Singh who gifted it away to Hira Singh, the nephew of Raja Gulab Singh, the temporal lord of Jammu then.

Though the foundation of the fort was laid down in the thirteenth century only but the present structure came into existence during the reign of Raja Hira Singh. He wanted to construct a beautiful town on the line of Jammu which was supposed to be most sought after among all the hill



towns of this region especially among the hill states belonging to Duggar circle. Hira Singh was so fond of Jammu that he named the bazars, *mohallas* and other important installations of the new found town on the line of the names of bazars and *mohallas* of Jammu. Thus the first gate from where the entrance to the fort starts ascending was named as Gumat Darwaja, the path leading to Ujh river joining with paths leading to *ghats* and shrines was named as Panjtirthi and the courtyard in front of the palaces was popularly known as Raje Di Mandi on the same line as that of Jammu.

Royal palaces are built artistically as two storeyed-building, the arch doors of which are open from the two sides for the free movement of the air. The walls of these palaces, once, were decorated with paintings done in shining colours, the remains of which are still there in the form of fading floral twiners bordering these paintings. Jasrota was a centre of Dogra school of paintings, popularly known as Jammu school of paintings. The architecture of these palaces is superb. As according to a legend, Hira Singh brought the masons from Punjab to complete the masonry work alongwith a caravan of the artists to decorate the interior as well as the exterior of these places, however, the local artists from Jammu assisted the master painters. The stairs bridging the two storeys are still there. These palaces are joined by a lavish chamber of large dimensions. Perhaps it was in vogue for the persons in attendance of the royalty.

In front of these palaces we find large tank-like two reservoirs, the larger of the two was in vogue for the royalty to take a dip during the hot season. Steps leading to the level of water were decorated with the help of two flower base like structures on both sides forming a multi-petaloid lotus. In fact the water reservoir was built with a technique that rain water trickled down in the form of small streams and gather in the tank. Nearby there is another water tank, smaller in size, its water was used for drinking purpose. Both the reservoirs are dried up and are not in use.

There are two temples in the vicinity of the fort. One of them belonged to the family god of the clan but during the attacks of 1845 by the Sikh army not only the royal palaces were destroyed but the invaders took away the images also with them. One of the temples now has been decorated with the Lingam. We can see several niches in the *Parikrama* lying deserted which might have been decorated with godly images earlier.

Once, very popular and strong hill state was reduced to ruins by the Sikh forces in A.D. 1845 and thereafter it never came into life though in the next year it was taken into the fold of Jammu Raj by Maharaja Gulab Singh but its residents never returned to give him the required hustle

and life.

Jasrótias, the descendants of the royal family were shifted to Khanpur near Nagrota and settled there. Of late, they are trying to facelift their ancestral fort and palaces. They consecrated the main temple with due rituals and started performing Pooja.

Jasrota became very strong during the reign of Raja Dhrub Dev that it became independent and established its superiority under the commandship of Mian Nath Dalpatia who was annoyed by Raja Kirpal Dev of Bahu around A.D. 1720 and a bloody battle was fought between the two hill states in which great soldiers and lords of different Dogra kingdoms participated and a number of them were killed. Thus great Dogra warriors belonging to Ramgarh, Jindrah, Jammu, Bahu and Jasrota were involved. Earlier around A.D. 1588 to 1594 during the reign of Bhibhu or Bhabhu Dev a furious battle was fought with Mughal forces. It finds its mention in *Akbarnama*.

Jasrota fort was a small fort perched on a small hill but subsequent regimes went on adding more structures here and there changing the whole scenario as well as the physical structure of the fort so that during the reign of Hira Singh in early 19th century it was converted into a city unparallel among the hill states. In fact, Hira Singh wanted to compete with Jammu, the most fascinating city among the 22 erstwhile hill states. *Akbarnama* refers to above facts that in those days i.e. from A.D. 1587 to 1597 when Akbar the great was forty-one year old in A.D. 1597, the fort was attacked by a Mughal Commander named Farid Hussain and it was seized by crossing the moat of the fort which was almost 15 feet wide and of the same depth. The author of *Akbarnama* states that it was a very small fort situated on the top of the hill comparatively more high than that of the surrounding plateaux. It is also mentioned in *Akbarnama* that Jasrotias fought with valour, their lord Bhaba Dev or Shri Bhivhu Dev was a great warrior and did not surrender before the Mughal forces and instead attacked in the night with guerrilla war technique and rendered much loss to the enemy. But when pressure increased from the Mughals, he alongwith his few soldiers fled towards Samba, thereafter to the surrounding forests and finally surrendered before the Mughals. To check further activities of the Jasrotias who rendered enough damage to the Mughal army a fort was erected about 7 kms away from Samba where a consignment of Mughal army was kept. This fort was a formidable structure and was named, afterwards, as Mahorgarh. The old palaces were perhaps built by the Dev dynasty of Jasrota finding a place on the top of the plateau in the Jasrota fort. Ruins of several chambers are scattered in

this portion which tell the story of destruction done by Sikh army in A.D. 1845. This portion can be reached by a flight of 20 steps enough wide leading to a large arch-shaped gate lavishly decorated with plastered carvings. This gate leads to the ruins of several chambers which might have been used by the personnel in attendance to the royalty. A narrow path leads to a vast chamber of 20' × 20' size with arched gates on its both sides, again this chamber opens into a very wide courtyard on the right side which is surrounded by big walls, made up of baked small bricks, with 2.5 feet width and 20 feet height. This square courtyard is connected to the internal chambers on all the four directions with the help of seven arched chambers on each side having 8 feet height and 5 feet width. The arches of these chambers rest on the fluted pillars. Some of the arches of these open gates, without doors, were once decorated with lavish paintings, the remains of which still fascinate the visitors. These arched gates possess false niches on each lateral side. The chambers surrounding this courtyard might have belonged to ladies belonging to the royalty since they are supposed to be the inner chambers and one of the arched gates contains a godly image painted in shining colours hence they cannot be the official chambers of the persons in attendance to the royalty. Moreover, one of the gates linking the courtyard on the left side to the chamber contain the stamp of blooded palm of a lady. The people narrate a story that when the queen of Hira Singh was informed about the murder of Hira Singh by the Sikh army she was so shocked and had violent impact that before performing the rituals of Sati she stamped her blood-soaked hand on the inner wall of a gate leading to her palace which is still there. On the left side of this little chamber i.e. north side, a path is leading to another courtyard with a deep dungeon of 6' × 6' in area and almost 15 feet in depth. The base of the cell can be reached with the help of 15 steps. This cell might have been used for hanging the important prisoners condemned to death. The courtyard is surrounded by high walls constructed with massive stone work. This complex was constructed prior to the occupation of fort by Hira Singh. We can say it was a first phase of construction of palaces. Just outside of the main gate on its right flank we find an edifice almost 6 feet high and of an area of about 20' × 20' square which was the open Darbar site where feudal lords belonging to Dev dynasty used to conduct day-to-day working of the court. About 100 yards below we find a water reservoir with plinth area of 100' × 20' with a depth of about 15 feet. The bottom of the tank can be reached with the help of 15 steps built with *pucca* bricks on one side. The water of this tank might have been used by the persons serving the royalty. Definitely this tank was also

built by lords of Dev dynasty and it was the part of the construction done in the first phase.

Buildings constructed in the second phase comprise the mixed Dev style of architecture, as detailed above, as well as of the style of palaces built by Dogra lords of Jammu. Buildings built in this phase include a large chamber erected by the side of the new palaces which might have been in vogue for the soldiers or security personnel of the lord. Just opposite to this large chamber, on a bit lower strata there is a temple erected by the descendants of the Dev dynasty before the seizure of the fort by the Sikh army. The surrounding wall of the temple was almost 50 feet high and 2.5 feet in width. Just by the side of the entrance to the temple there were two chambers meant for the priest and other persons in attendance. The old chambers have completely been damaged and a new chamber has been erected in place of the old one while ruin of the second chamber has been reduced to rubble. The temple with circumambulation is also of that period. Internal walls of *Parikrama* contain several niches which are devoid of any images. There might have been images earlier but after the destruction of the fort and the town in the attack of 1945 by Sikh forces these images either were taken by them or damaged. The sanctum of the temple is now occupied by a Lingam established here recently by the descendants of Jasrotia clan. Nearby the main shrine temple is another small temple recently constructed for Kul Devi of Jasrotias, popularly known as Mall Devi. Earlier its image was enshrined in a square chamber situated near the palaces. By the side of this temple we find a big water reservoir in 200' × 200' area and having depth of about 15 feet. Thirteen steps of 1 to 1.5 feet high lead to the bottom of the tank from its brims. The water of the tank was used by the pilgrims and devotees visiting the temple. A path leading to the outer gate of this fort, popularly known as Lahori gate, and Gumat gate afterwards, contains the ruins of several chambers on both sides. It was a market built in the second phase. In between we find dome-shaped two structures on the left side. First one, about a hundred yards from the main gate, is an old structure which might have been lavishly decorated with paintings which have been defaced by the onslaught of the natural calamities and human behaviourism. However, designed twiners under the rims of the dome with shining colours are the evidence of the existence of paintings etc. This octave structure was constructed with red baked bricks of small size mortared with lime, kiln powder and the paste of legumes. Each arm of this structure is almost 6 feet in length. According to the locals it was a temple devoted to Bhairvi.

Ascending a few steps we find an old water tank with measurement of 30' × 30' and 6 feet in depth. It is constructed with the help of small stones, mortared with lime and kiln powder, designed in such a way that the wall of the tank gradually widens on upper end. Here in this tank rain water used to be stored from the surroundings and was in use by the commoners living around. Ascending a few steps we find the remnants of shops erected on both sides of the slopy path. Ascending after almost half a mile we find the ruins of a temple with square plinth made up of the solid stones. However, the dome of the temple is constructed with the help of small baked bricks mortared with lime and kiln powder. It is strange that the perfect dome is created with the help of gradually diminishing the size of the rows of the bricks so that the lower rim gradually tapers up at the apex. The entrance to the shrine was linked by an arched gate without doors. It is almost 6 feet in height and 4 feet in width having two niches on its lateral sides. These two niches are again having two smaller gates on their lateral sides. These niches might have possessed images in past but are empty now. Outer wall is constructed with baked bricks. Inside, in the sanctum, we find four niches in the inner walls without any image in them. It was supposed to be temple devoted to Lord Jagan Nath the image of which has been shifted to a shrine situated in Jasrota village near the base of the fort. On both sides of the sanctum we find a chamber 10' × 10' measurement which might have been meant for the priests etc. Remnants of an inn are also scattered nearby. The pilgrims and devotees from elsewhere might have been visiting the place and used this inn for their night stay.

After ascending a bit we find an old tank already mentioned. A few yards ahead we find a lavish gate leading to a complex of stylised built placid buildings. It is popularly known as Raje Di Mandi. These buildings were constructed on the design of Mandi Mubarik, Jammu by Hira Singh the last monarch of Jasrota. They are the lavish structures constructed by the sides of a large edifice five feet in height and almost 20' × 20' square platform, the exact place of Raje Di Mandi where the open Darbar used to be conducted, can be reached with the flight of seven steps. On its left lateral side we find double-storeyed buildings in two rows which can be reached through beautifully arched doorways. This complex of palaces join with another set of placid buildings, constructed in east direction and designed in the same way, towards river Ujh. This set of palaces are multi-storeyed. However, only two storeys are underneath forming the hidden, secret chambers. Thus the whole structure of these buildings is planned to form "L" shape. These palaces were lavishly decorated with

frescos, the remnants of which are still there on the ruined walls in the form of runners and twiners done in shining colours. One of the arched doors still contain the geometrically designed paintings on its internal arch. One of the arched portion of the main entrance still contains a painting of godly image in fading colours. A stair was there, a few years back, leading to upper storey of the palaces, on one side of these buildings, which linked the two storeys internally. All the palaces are reduced to roofless ruins now. Only chambers with open arched entrances resting on the fluted columns of the thick walls made of small baked red bricks are left. By the side of these placid buildings we find a large square chamber with pointed spire on its top, a shrine which was meant for Kul Devi of the lords. It is said that an image of Mall deity occupied the sanctum which was shifted to a new temple recently built. On the west side of the platform, there is a big tank covering almost 200' × 200' area. The bottom of the tank could be reached with a flight of 15 steps of 1.25 feet height each thus total depth comes to about 20 feet. It was the source of water and created pleasant atmosphere during summer due to continuous process of evaporation which gave the cooling effect. This was the third phase of construction and supposed to be built up during the reign of Hira Singh. So these buildings are more than hundred and sixty years old.

According to revenue records the fort was built in an area of 697 *kanals* but subsequently more area was added to it. The whole site is picturesque surrounded by hillocks and Ujh barrage. If proper maintenance is done it can prove to be an asset for domestic as well as foreign tourists. Archaeological department of the state has taken up the project and as according to some locals social forestry department is also assisting in its upliftment.

In addition to the above structures there are some additional historical buildings erected by the side of the fort. In fact, there was a structure constructed on a hillock parallel to the plateau on which the town of Jasrota was built. This structure was old one perhaps meant for the towers for watch and observation. Foundation of old construction is still intact though a new temple devoted to Mahakali has been erected there. By the side of this temple a narrow path leads to an underground chamber through a flight of eight steps. It is an old chamber square in size 15' × 15' in area. Inside this chamber there is another chamber 8' × 8' in area forming a cell for an image. Either it was a sacred chamber or an old shrine as the outer chamber facing the circumambulation contain several niches, total twenty in number, which might have been there for godly

images but are now empty.

While going towards the main gate of the fort we find a grave-like structure popularly known as “Anne Da Danga.” Here Raja Jaswant Singh, the last Jarotia king was blinded by blue vitriol putting into his eyes through a pretext of treating his eyes with eye balm. People of the clan regard this site with respect. The members of Jasrota clan are trying to repair and maintain the fort and the palaces with their bit of contribution. Raja Jaswant Singh was the descendant of Raja Bhuri Singh.

### FADING BEAUTY OF BASOHLI PALACES

Basohli was declared as the capital of Bilawar hill state around 17th century when it was shifted from Bilawar. Thus the palaces and forts were constructed in those days only. Once the Billovaria feudal lords were connoisseurs of art and architecture that was why they decorated these palaces with frescos of a number of legends, floral runners, twiners and geometrical designs done with shining colours. Those palaces and their architecture so fascinated Vigne, that he matched them with the palaces of Heidelberg, “When viewed at a distance of a few miles from path of Jammu, it rises in relief from dark masses of lower ranges, with a grandeur I thought not inferior to that of Heidelberg.” These palaces were profusely decorated with frescos done on various subjects ranging from love dalliances of Lord Krishna with Gopis to the large portraits of Nayikas. Darbar scenes with the portrait of the Lord centrally placed attended by the courtiers fascinated the art historians for years together, besides, the beautiful miniatures displayed on the walls of inner chambers of these palaces attracted the attention of art critics throughout the globe.

According to Cunningham, in the second half of 17th century, Mankot, a small hill principality in the east of Jammu, developed a school of portraiture which was so popular in the erstwhile hill states that most of the feudal lords followed the suit and started ateliers of their own. Basohli did not fall behind, created its own school which fascinated the art historians and critics alike throughout the world.

Though the foundation of these palaces was kept years before but the upper storeys were given the shape and decorated during the reign of Raja Amrit Pal in 18th century. Raja Amrit Pal was a great patron of artists and intellectuals that they decorated his court as *Nav Ratanas* in the court of Akbar. Thus Manak, the most sought after master painter, was the active member of his court along with a scholar of Vedic literature Pandit Nath who was a great astrologer. He invented a formula of making

almanac within hours and Bilawari Jantri (Bilawari Almanac) was very popular among the hill states.

The palaces were so designed on the hillock that they seem to be perched on the top of the plateau extending from the base of the top with square turrets, open balcony, swelled niche-like windows and a large tank constructed at the base of these palaces making them as if belonging to another world of enchantment. The main gate had arched structure extended upto the second storey and was the entrance to a large chamber where the activities of the court were conducted. Back to the Darbar hall there were three chambers which might be for the office of the personnel in attendance. On the first floor was a famous chamber of the royalty lavishly decorated with fine paintings of the *Nayaks* and *Nayikas*, love lyrics of Shree Bhagwat and of queens and kings. These paintings were again decorated with border lines of floral twiners, tendrils, runners and several geometrical designs. Cut glasses arranged in between these paintings reflected the multi-myriad images of these paintings which fascinated one and all whosoever visited these palaces. It was named as Sheesh Mahal. All these chambers and palaces opened towards the interior courtyard.

Palaces were erected in three phases which can be ascertained from their layout. On the north side there was an open courtyard facing the Chinjloh fort and a number of buildings opened towards the middle courtyard. These buildings and chambers were meant for the people in service of the court, in the right side was situated the Darbar Hall already mentioned and there was a lavishly painted chamber of Rang Mahal in the west direction wherein the royalty used to enjoy the music and dance performed by the celebrated artists of the day. Ruins of several buildings are scattered in the east direction and at the base of the plateau a large water tank, which used to supply water during emergency, is still in existence. Several buildings erected in the north direction, the ruins of which can be seen in the form of rubble scattered all around, were meant for the feudal lords to live in. Underneath these chambers there are some ruined underground cells quite visible. These underground cells were meant for imprisoning the important prisoners. On the western side of these buildings we find the ruins of old palaces. Perhaps these were the residential places of the women belonging to royalty. The walls of these palaces were also decorated with rich paintings. The broken *Hamams* mixed with the rubble tell us the story of the bathing beauties being watched and enjoyed by the royal male members. In front of these palatial buildings there was a beautiful lawn reared by the flower beds and lush



green court. Nearby there was a kitchen attached with these buildings. Back to these buildings and in front of the Rang Mahal there was a placid garden richly decorated with flower beds and some rare plants imported from other states. A covered path used to lead from this garden to a well situated a step below nearby a tank which was fed through a canalet carrying water from the well.

Apart from these palaces fort-like two buildings were erected at hill tops on the two sides of the town of Basohli. These fort like buildings were erected on somewhat round and circular edifice. One of them contained a water reservoir in form of a tank in which rain water was stored to be used during emergency. Perhaps these small forts were meant for keeping a watch on the activities of the surrounding erstwhile hill states and served the purpose of providing security to the palaces.

Basohli style of miniature paintings came into existence in 17th century during the reign of the Bilawaria lords. World famous master painter of this school, Manak, the son of Seu and the elder brother of the celebrated artist of Jammu school of paintings, Nainsukh was one of the courtiers of the court of Raja Amrit Pal in early 18th century. He created some exceptionally acclaimed paintings especially a series of Geet Govinda which fascinated the art critics of the world. Nainsukh, his younger brother, the celebrated and an acclaimed master painter of Jammu school of paintings also joined him at Basohli after the death of his patron Raja Balwant Dev of Saruinsar. Other family members had also joined them to assist them. Perhaps under their guidance the wall paintings of these palaces were done in rich colours especially on the walls of newly constructed palaces.

### SHEESH MAHAL OF RAMNAGAR

Ramnagar, capital of the erstwhile state of Bandralta, 105 km from Jammu, was once a Pahari state ruled by Bandral Rajputs. It was founded by the royal family of Chamba belonging to the Chand dynasty. The first king of the state was a brother of Raja Vachiter Verma of Chamba who ruled Chamba in the 10th century.

The dynasty ruled over Bandralta till it was overthrown by the Sikh forces in 1821. Nothing is known about the last Bandral king named Bhupendra Dev, who was forced to leave Ramnagar and retire in the hills of Ambala in 1821.

This Pahari state was given to Raja Suchet Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh for his services rendered in Punjab Darbar.

Suchet Singh ruled Bandralta from 1822 to 1844. After the death of Raja Suchet Singh, Ram Singh 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 had no issue, so the state was merged with the Jammu kingdom after the death of Raja Ram Singh.

Raja Suchet Singh was an honoured courtier in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, besides being a great General. Like Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra he was a great connoisseur of art and architecture. The Bandralta school of paintings flourished in the reign of Raja Suchet Singh, who 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 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 designs 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 schools of miniature paintings with still background. Nayika is well covered with upper garments ornamented with necklaces, earrings, nose rings and hair clips. 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 cut glasses 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 were 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 battle fields. 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 are but a few along with a number of geometrical designs in the form of multi-angular 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 cut glasses 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 of the 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 filled 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 the 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.

### REASI PALACES

Reasi was a small erstwhile state of which we find very little in the history. History of Reasi, as usual, was the history of its main fort Bhingarh, its construction, demolition, reconstruction and renovation in addition to the history of fortified area of Salal and Dhyangarh fort. Bhingarh was supposed to be built by some Rawal Raja who was contemporary of Raja Hari Dev of Jammu. Gaje Singh the elder son of Raja Hari Dev annexed this state with Jammu and it was gifted to his younger brother named Jaswant Singh. From Raja Jaswant Singh, who was also the Jagirdar of Akhnoor, Akhnooria Jamwal clan came into existence. His two sons Ratan Dev and Chandan Dev were the great warriors and they served Jammu Maharaja Ranjit Dev in 18th century and fought several battles for his master. After the death of Jaswant Singh his Jagir of Akhnoor and Reasi was bifurcated so that Reasi went to the coffer of Ratan Dev while Akhnoor was bestowed upon his younger brother Chandan Dev. Man Singh and Jang Bahadur followed Ratan Dev as Jagirdars of Reasi respectively and the last Jagirdar of this clan was Mian Diwan Singh who restructured the fort and wanted to repair it adding more structures so as to make it formidable that he was stopped by Mian Mota who was acting as the regent of the minor monarch of Jammu, Raja Jit Singh. Mian Diwan

Singh hatched an intrigue against Mian Mota on the instigation of Bandrali Rani and killed Mian Mota. It was the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Punjab and Mian Mota was sincere to the Sikh Raj with the result Maharaja Ranjit Singh became furious. He ordered Raja Gulab Singh to annex the state of Reasi and add it to the territory of Jammu. Raja Gulab Singh ordered his associate Mian Bishna to control the fort and get it repaired. Diwan Amichand was declared as the administrator of Reasi and Zorawar Singh was asked to assist Mian Bishna. Raja Gulab Singh closely watched the talent of Zorawar Singh and bestowed upon him the status of Quiledar of Bhimgarh. Finding the area most secure Gulab Singh erected a formidable fort in the vicinity of Salal and named it Dhyangarh after the name of his younger brother, Dhiyan Singh. The fort was erected with the sole purpose of amassing the wealth brought from Lahore along with Bibi Chand Kour. This was a small fort perched on a hill, not easy to climb, situated in the fortified area of the Salal. These forts were also kept under the command of Vazir Zorawar Singh who used to be on expeditions afterwards thus he entrusted the job of the security of these forts including Bhimgarh upon the shoulders of his close associate, Thakur Dharam Singh Parmar who was specially invited from Himachal Pradesh to assist Zorawar Singh in day-to-day lore. Zorawar Singh and his brothers Sardaru and Dalelu along with Thakur Dharam Singh Parmar settled at Vijaypur, earlier the village was popular with the name of Punana. It was an ideal site so far as the strategical situation is concerned. Their families settled down at Vijaypur but the menfolk remained busy in security zones.

Raja Gulab Singh, then was entitled as Maharaja after bargaining with the Britishers on the most sought land of Kashmir, had several designs of conquering Ladakh and Tibet. Vazir Zorawar Singh remained busy in these expeditions but he got constructed some palatial buildings at the heart of the town of Reasi just at the start of the main bazar near the Chougan. At present ruins of these palaces are in existence where the present government has constructed the courts of the Tehsil.

No care has been taken to preserve the heritage of the Dogras by dint of these palaces with Dogra style of architecture by which we come to know their heritage. These palaces, once were the centre of power and the members of royalty, the monarchs and their kith and kin used to stay here during their visit to this region. These palaces were regarded more secure and safe that even the ladies belonging to the royalty used to stay here during their visit to this region. Maharaja Pratap Singh, third Dogra lord, was born in one of the cells of this palace. The cell is kept intact with a framed portrait of the lord kept in the chamber with stylised border

designs of floral images. In fact it was the second panel of the wide chamber meant for the male members of the royal family and these niches were nothing but doors which opened into a garden dotted with fruit trees of rare variety but in due course of time these doors were closed to form the niches which were decorated with lavish paintings afterwards. There are three niches visible in between the ruins. These niches contain, from left to right, the paintings of:

1. Lord Rama armoured with armoury and crown on his head making to understand a point of action to monkey god, Hanuman in standing posture.
2. Mahalakshmi has been shown in sitting posture on a throne-like cot supported by bolsters and attended by two elephants who have been shown showering water from two pitchers. In the background are shown the architectural structures. The deity has been painted with milky white colour crowned with the same colour.
3. An image of a deity which is not clear. It has been faded in due course of time facing the heating and cooling process in open. The borderlines of twiners and designs of conical bud-type structures painted on the engrailed inner arch are quite prominent. Walls were also lavishly painted along with the niches.
4. Diminished painting of Lord Krishna playing on his flute attended by Gopis. It is a large painting almost 4 feet in length.

Except this single wall other walls have been destroyed which might have contained the paintings. Shri Sudarshan Singh Parmar, the resident of Vijaypur told us that all the two hall chambers, treated as *baitmaks* for the royalty were lavishly decorated with the portraits of the deities and scenes from the court. Shri V.N. Khajuria in his Dogri booklet *Samhal us Kallai Di* also tells us about these paintings done in three panels. They include the paintings of Shiva Parvati, Sarswati sitting on swan, Lord Shiva, Parvati and their son Kartikeya, Lord Vishnu sitting on lotus, Lord Krishna and Radha sitting under a tree, Radha Krishna sitting on the gallery of the palaces etc., but these paintings are no more. All the buildings of old palaces were dismantled and new chambers for the court have come up with a Persian couplet written underneath, on a slab, conveying that here in this chamber Pratap Singh the potential king of Jammu and Kashmir was born.

These palaces have been reduced to rubble but were the source of inspiration for the art historians and architects. Most of the chambers were decorated with the frescos done on the inner walls of the chambers.

A few of the surviving walls contain such paintings done in the niches with engrailed arches.

These palaces were constructed in three phases which are distinct from their ruins. In the first phase the chambers of the attendants were constructed which are still intact in the south direction of these buildings. A wide chamber with the measurement of about 12' × 21' is still there occupied by some workers related to the court. Once this chamber was decorated with paintings but now it is in deteriorated condition. Only outer walls with beautiful niches tell the story of its royal origin otherwise the interior of the building has been reduced to non-existence. There was a courtyard open for the outsiders for direct interaction with the lords enclosed in the fortified area supported by huge walls but, afterwards a large chamber was erected with masonry work of sand stones. It served as treasury for decades together, even in the forties. The chamber constructed with solid stones is still intact but it is not in use as treasury.

The buildings erected in second phase were the palaces attributed to the princes and courtiers very close to the royal family and the Zanana, the palaces meant for the ladies of royal blood to live in. All these buildings were lavishly decorated with murals and frescos. The ruined walls of the main chamber attribute to the feudal lords and their kith and kin still contain the murals done in the niches with engrailed arches. We find three such engrailed niches beautifully designed with small *pucca* red bricks plastered with white or cream coloured layers on which paintings were done. The double engrailed arches contained highly stylised embossed images with shining coloured paintings done on them.

#### TARA PALACE, AL-HILAL

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 big 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 along with 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. Life is the outcome of the union of Purusha and Shakti as believed by Tantriks. During the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra king these paintings along with some statues were shifted from the royal worship place, *Pooja Ghar*, to Ranbir Sanskrit Shodh Pustkalaya. A few of them are still preserved there in one of the chambers.

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

### RANG MAHAL OF CHAMBA

Among the extremely decorated buildings, palaces and the temples erected by the erstwhile princes of the states Rang Mahal and Sheesh Mahal of



Bandralta, Rang Mahal of Archi (Shimla hills) and Rang Mahal of Chamba were superb besides the internally decorated shrines and temples scattered in these hills. They included the temples of Sui Sumbli in Jammu, Thakur Dwara of Nurpur and Damtal, temples of Narbdeswar at Tira Sujampur or Devidwara of Dada Siba which carry the images of the royalty, their courtiers. Nayikas, the symbols of their lust besides the paintings of Lord Krishna prolificing with Gopis, paintings depicting the characters of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the popular epics in addition to the paintings belonging to the characters of *Shiv Purana*. Among the palaces and the buildings belonging to the royalty Rang Mahal and Sheesh Mahal of Ramnagar (Bandralta) in Jammu hills and Rang Mahal of Chamba are superb in its execution and designs. Though to see and enjoy the frescos of Chamba Rang Mahal one has to travel all the way to the capital of the country to the chambers of National Museum but in case of the Rang Mahal and Sheesh Mahal of Bandralta, Ramnagar, we find encouraging signs both by the Department of Archaeology and the state authorities who have preserved them remarkably and their natural structure has been maintained.

Rang Mahal of Chamba was situated on an elevation by the side of the main bazar. It was a fortified area with so many chambers meant for the royalty to reside in. Once these chambers were lavishly painted with beautiful wall paintings which either deteriorated with the passage of time or they have been removed to safer spot, especially in a chamber provided by the National Museum, New Delhi. This chamber is named as Chamba Rang Mahal. The fortified area still exists with masonry work of stony walls, 30 feet high surrounding the fort. On entry we find a spacious courtyard surrounded by the chambers, this area have been given to the Department of Handicrafts. The upper storey of the erstwhile palaces has been provided for the handlooms and leather work whereas the ground floor chambers to the offices of the department and a show room.

In another painting lovelore of child Krishna has been painted with due acumen. Jashoda is shown spellbound while enjoying the love frolics of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna is clad in traditional clothes with peacock feather stuffed crown on his head while his brother Balram has been painted with *Tarhagi* wound around his waist with plough in his hand as his insignia. Balram is also painted as a child. In another painting Lord Krishna is assisting his paramour Radha with an umbrella to protect her from rains. He is supporting Radha by her shoulder with his free hand. Flowering trees, trailers and twiners along with rivulets have been painted

in the background. In another painting Lord Krishna has been painted with Radha under the shadow of a flowering tree looking towards the Gwalas escorting cows. The whole atmosphere gives a fragrance of scenic beauty.

A family painting of Lord Shiva is also an attraction. Lord Shiva has Ganesha in his lap while his second son Sadnanan is sitting close. Parvati sitting opposite to the Lord is offering something to him. All the four are sitting on a lion skin. Nearby three godly carriers, a rat, a lion and Nandi, the bull have also been painted completing the whole family of Lord Shiva.

In another painting a strange structure of Shivlingam has been painted under the roof of a triangle temple. Nearby a tank is shown streaming along with an ewe taking water from it while a lady has been shown taking another ewe towards the tank. Ladies from both directions are coming to perform *pooja* of the Shivlingam. Apart from these paintings Nayikas enjoying *Jhula*, and several paintings are concerned with the royal family. A princess is shown writing a letter to her lover while her friend is guarding the door so that no one may enter and disturb the princess. In another painting two royal ladies have been shown with a child playing on some musical instrument.

These paintings have been decorated with borderlines which look like frames of the paintings. These borders are decorated with flowery twiners and runners which twist at the apex to form niche and it seems that these paintings have been established in these niches. Red, green, yellow and purple colours are generally used.

This is what we found there in the name of Chamba palaces. No new horizons of architecture, nothing sort of paintings which popularised these palaces exist now. But we do find the signs of erosion on the walls. We were told that these walls were decorated lavishly with colourful lyrics done by reputed artists of Chamba school. These paintings were taken to the National Museum for preservation and a chamber was decorated exactly in the same sequence so as to create an atmosphere of the locale.

Rang Mahal was used as *Harem* or ladies, chamber that is why it was decorated accordingly. Krishan Leela i.e. frolics of Lord Krishna with Gopis is the main theme of these wall paintings. Paintings include that of *Chir Haran* of Gopis, love frolics with Gopis, love episodes of Radha and Krishna in addition to the lore of baby Krishna, the Bal Leela etc. are the main attractions of these paintings. These were the emotive aspects which were painted on these walls. Among the incarnation of Vishnu,

Narsigh Avtara is the main deity shown killing Hrinaya Kashyap. In addition to these subjects *Ramayana* has been prominently dealt in colours. In one of the paintings Rama Chandra is shown sitting on the throne along with Sita and three brothers are standing at their back with fans and peacock feathers airing Lord Rama and Sita while Shatrughana is standing with folded hands. Monkey god Hanuman has also been painted facing Lord Rama with folded hands.

In a balanced painting Govardhan Pooja has been depicted in which Lord Krishna is shown balancing the Govardhan hillock on his little finger and a white cow is looking towards the Lord turning her neck. Ladies and Gopis are standing in front with folded hands. Gwalas have been painted with folded hands. Bodies of five cows have been painted in a balanced form. Yellow, red, golden and light blue colours complete the story. The scene of *Chirharan* of Gopis is supposed to be the symbol of the materialistic world in which the Gopis coming out of the water of the stream, covering their bodies with every possible assistance as the clothes have been taken away by Lord Krishna and his companions. It is a beautiful painting with something lurking in the space. The main attraction of these paintings is the scenic beauty. Bodies of the male characters especially of *Nayaks* and princes and of the male gods are more balanced while those of *Nayikas*, princesses and goddesses needed more fine touch which is lacking in these paintings. A bearded man assisting Lord Krishna in supporting Govardhan Parvat has been painted with perfection. Well balanced body and size in ratio with balanced bodies of cattle make it alive. Even cattle like cows, buffaloes and calves have been painted with due acumen.

These palaces were erected by Raja Umed Singh (A.D. 1748-1764) but they were furnished by Raja Jeet Singh followed by Raja Charat Singh (A.D. 1808-1844). In fact during the reign of Raja Charat Singh not only it was furnished but also to some extent it was altered according to the whim of his queen who was very fond of scenic beauty and was an extremely pious lady. Earlier these chambers were called as *Ranbasas* i.e. the chambers of the queens but after their decoration with coloured paintings they were named as Rang Mahals and Sheesh Mahals. Sheesh Mahal as well as Rang Mahal are no more in existence but a replica of Rang Mahal has been designed in one of the chambers of the National Museum, New Delhi.

These marvellous paintings were done by a number of painters that too belonging to different era but no information is available with the exception of one Durga who was the chief painter and designer of these

palaces. Many of the wall paintings of the palaces and the shrines have been credited to Durga.

### KATOCH FORT AND PALACES

Among the several famous forts of the erstwhile kingdom of Kangra Nagarkot, the fort of Kangra and Katoch Baradari, popularly known as fort and palaces of Tira are superb in architecture and topography. Katoch fort was in fact the royal palaces built in three sequences by three powerful lords of Katoch dynasty. Raja Abhey Chand started the construction of old palaces whereas his grandson, Ghamand Chand, a great warrior and powerful Katoch lord settled the town of Sujampur in the lap of the hill where palaces of Tira were started to be constructed. Ghamand Chand also added a few palaces on the second strata which were popularly known as *Raniwas* i.e. the palaces of the royal ladies. Sansar Chand the most popular king and connoisseur of art not only completed these buildings but added to them a splendid Darbar hall, popularly known as Baradari, Naughara, the office complex of the fort, a temple, popularly known as Gouri Shankar temple and a complex of palaces constructed on the upper strata of the fort.

The most fascinating aspect of this complex of buildings was a massive chamber, popularly known as Baradari, a rectangular structure, the peripheral structure is supported by massive walls with intermittently cut arches of the entrances. There are eleven arched entrances on each long side of the periphery thus totalling to twenty-two in number. It is said that Sansar Chand was the lord of twenty-two erstwhile states situated on the left side of the Ravi and these entrances were reserved for the chieftains of these states. During the Darbar days chieftains would come into the hall through the entrance meant for each of them. The other courtiers entered the hall through five arched entrances constructed on short side in the north and the lord of these hill states Sansar Chand and other members of the royalty would enter through the five-arched entrances on the other short side situated on the opposite direction. Interior of the hall is again a rectangular chamber covering total area of 90' × 30' approximately with nine entrances. Each entrance is almost 6 feet wide and 13 feet in length. Arches of these entrances are highly stylised with engrailed structure, resting on almost 3 feet thick walls on a stylised dot separating the walls from the engrailed arches. In fact these are the strong pillars which also support the dome-shaped roof constructed with the help of small baked bricks joined with each other in slanting position and without

any use of iron. Lime and brick powder paste along with legume powder formed the mortar. The walls were plastered with layers of lime to look as if marbled. On these walls were painted floral designs and court scenes but vagaries of nature and regular encroachments of human beings have reduced it into merely a skeleton, masonry work and the brick work completely exposed. A narrow staircase lead to lateral chamber, which might have been there on the first floor for the courtiers to complete the court work, however only signs are left behind.

A splendid lawn with grassy layout is there overlooking the Baradari where courtiers and people of eminence used to assemble to pay their homage to the king. A tank is there, constructed on one side of this lawn, close to the Baradari, which was filled with liquid colours during the festival of colours, the Holi, when the queens, princes, the emperor and other members of the royalty enjoyed the festival of colours. Old and weak used to sit in Darbar hall watching others playing with colours. The hall, due to cross ventilation, was supposed to be heaven in summer when the whole year cool breeze blew across. Raja Sansar Chand spent his time in the Darbar hall in summer. Gradually he withdrew from the public and even from his courtiers after he was humiliated by the Punjab monarch, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He seldom came out of his shell. The courtiers would pay homage before a tree standing in front of the Baradari symbolising the existence of the emperor. He was so fascinated by the charm and beauty of a dancing girl named Jamila that in his last years he spent most of the time with her. For her sake he painted walls of the Gouri Shankar temple, a private shrine of the Raja wherein others, even royalty, were not allowed to enter. These paintings depicted his alliance with Jamila. He went to the extent of creating their sculptures, in metal, in the form of Gouri and Shankar which were established in the sanctum of the temple.

Erected opposite to the Baradari on the other side of the lawn is a complex of buildings, once meant for administrative staff, known as Naughara. In fact the first complex of the buildings is that of Naughara when we enter the Katoch fort through the main gate. The complex is laid on the right side of the gate. It consists of a double-storeyed building with a number of chambers. The narrow chambers constructed at the base contain the gun points in their outer walls. It is said there were some underground narrow chambers which served the purpose of a dungeon meant for the political prisoners of magnitude.

On the upper regions of this close domain we find ruins of some important buildings. As mentioned earlier, they were the Rani Mahals.

The queens appeared occasionally in the galleries opening on both sides to give *Darshan* to the courtiers. These palaces were situated nearby a mango grove. The residential palaces of the royal members of the family of the emperor were the multi-storeyed buildings erected almost a furlong away from the mango grove. A temple attributed to the Kul Devi of the Katoch family was erected at the time of Raja Sansar Chand but it was consecrated afterwards. At lower ridges of the closed domain we find two water tanks enough to suffice the need of the residents of the fort.

The entrance of the fort or the palace complex is a massive structure constructed in the style of a huge arch supported by massive walls. It is said that the Raja, while sitting on the back of his elephant, would enter the palace uninterrupted.

There is a lavish *pucca* tank, still filled with water upto its brims, situated outside of the fortified area. Its water was used during non-emergent days when the attendants to the royalty would freely move out of the fortified area but during emergency the water from the tanks situated inside of the fort was in use. The women folk of the royalty would decorate the noses of the fish with silver or gold nose rings during auspicious days of ceremonies and worshipped them to get the positive boon. The tank was cleaned in nineteen forties and people responsible for this act got a number of silver and gold rings from the mud settled in the bottom of the tank. It is constructed in such a way that the rain water gathers into it from the surroundings uninterrupted by gravity system.

To guard the fortified area of Katoch palaces from possible attacks turrets were constructed on the higher ridges, on other side of the Beas, wherein guards guarded the palaces round the clock. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was so fascinated by the details of the Baradari given to him by his courtiers that he asked Raja Sansar Chand, through a proxy, that he should invite the monarch of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, to visit the Baradari. Raja Sansar Chand knew the designs of the monarch hence he got damaged lateral side of the Baradari and sent a messenger to the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to communicate that the Baradari was crumbling rapidly hence it was dangerous to sit inside it with the result the Maharaja avoided and dropped the idea to visit the Baradari. It was never repaired afterwards with the result the parabola of time carved its designs on this structure and if it is not maintained it may reduce to rubble beyond its recognition.

## SPLENDOUR THAT WAS NOOR MAHAL

Noor Mahal a splendid edifice a complex of buildings of exception, was situated at Delhi-Peshawar road, turrets in east and west direction indicate the fact. It was spread in the area of 68 kanal an 11 marlas. The complex came into existence, according to historians, during the regime of Akbar the Great who wanted to rest in between his journey from Delhi to Peshawar. The Hakims of the time had advised the monarch that the climate of this very place was quite congenial and suitable for the health of Akbar the Great. Some are of the opinion that the great beauty Noor Jahan, the queen of Jahangir, was born here while his father Mirza Giasudin Beg was proceeding towards Delhi from Turkistan. It is said that Jahangir erected the inn here so as to commemorate the memory of his beloved queen Noor Jahan. It was a magnificent inn the ruins of which tells us the splendour created hundreds of years ago in pure Mughal style. The lavishly carved western gate, the entrance of which tell us the beauty of the structure meticulously constructed making an example of superb architecture. It is a very high gate that largest elephant along with patrons would easily pass through. Inside we find several small cells, the roofs of which are supported by arches supplemented by fluted columns which are no more at present. The alternate heating and cooling process has not only deteriorated the whole structure but even the small bricks which are joined together with and without mortar are scattered in the form of heaps indicating the cruelty of the time carved on the visage of splendid building. The archaeologists of Archaeological Survey of India are trying to uplift the face as well as inner cells of the inn with optimum facsimile similarity and we hope it will look like an inn which existed in its epoch during Mughal regime. On the south direction of the inn, there was a big reservoir of water; perhaps the water was stored there for its use during summers. It is said there was a special sitting room for the royal couple which was named as Rang Mahal. It was lavishly decorated with frescos and wall paintings done in shining colours with characters very close to the royal family, court scenes, dancing beauties, hunting scenes as well as the portraits of the courtiers and *Pandits*. It was a feast for the eyes. The members of the royal family especially the Emperor and the Empress were the frequent visitors to the Rang Mahal. The commoners were not allowed to visit Rang Mahal. It is presumed that an underpath in the form of a cave joined the Rang Mahal with the outer world without exiting from the door side. The ruins of inn now house a Govt. High School, a Thana and a Dak Bungalow. It also houses the office of Municipal

Corporation of the town. Nearby the Dak Bungalow there is Shahi Masjid meant for the royalty to pray during their visit to this inn. The inn contains 48 cells and two turrets. The western gate is three-storeyed door-way constructed with the help of small red bricks on which fine mosaic work has been done meticulously. On the two sides of the door we find lavish structures of different figures, dancing beauties, trailers, twiners and runners bordering the figures carved on the red stones. The apex of the door contains the marble slab carved with Arabian syllables. Perhaps it is a key to the information written in Arabic alphabets. The stone tells us that this inn was constructed by great Mughal King Jahangir in 1030 Hizri that means in A.D. 1630 and it was named as Noor Mahal to commemorate the memory of his beautiful queen, Noor Jahan. It was so fascinating that people from far and wide used to visit the inn to have its glimpse from a distance.

It fascinated the people to the extent that an idiom came into vogue among the masses that anything beautiful they find, they compare with this fascinating inn. “*Yeh To Noor Mahal Ki Saran Hogayee Aī*”. Though the complex of the buildings have deteriorated much but the idiom is still popular among the people.

#### NOTES & REFERENCES

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3. *Ibid.*
4. Kahan Singh Billovaria, *Tarikh Rajgan Jammu & Kashmir*.
5. *Raj Darshani*, p. 193.
6. Smyth G.E., p. 34.
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# 5

## *Baradaris*

Baradaris, the summer houses with several open entrances meant for cross ventilation, were in vogue in erstwhile hill states. Chieftains, persons of high magnitude used to build these houses near water sources or on high altitudes to have a sigh of relief during scorching heat of the summers. These Baradaris were constructed in a style of open arched doors supported by fluted columns on which dome-shaped roof, with its concave ceiling, rested. The height of the ceiling from the floor used to be more than twelve feet to facilitate free flow of air. Some Baradaris became so famous that they were included in history as a part of the structures where the politics of the times was discussed. They were the meeting places of the chieftains, statesmen and of course a site where dances and musical performances were organised for the witness of the royalty and courtiers.

### BARADARI OF RAJA BALWANT DEV

A lavish structure was erected by the side of Saruinsar, a natural lake with crystal clear water, situated almost twenty three kilometres from Jammu. It was a beautiful Baradari constructed with small red bricks mortared with the help of lime and brick powder. It has numerous entrances opening on both the sides that is facing the lake as well as on other side opposite to it. These were the engraved stylised arched entrances supported by highly stylised fluted columns with chiselled bases and stylised brackets. Lintel supported by these arches had a beautifully decorated frieze with runners, trailers, tendrils, twiners and floral designs designed on it. The roof was dome-shaped constructed with the help of dot system adding brick by brick in slanting position joined together with a special mortar made by the mixing of lime, legume powder and red brick powder. No iron was used to support these bricks even then the structure so

constructed braved the parabola of time facing natural calamities for centuries together. Structure thus constructed was plastered with lime and to smoothen the surface it was watered regularly for days together and its surface was coated with a layer of white of eggs after it was made smooth with the help of smooth surfaced stones. On its surface were drawn caricatures for the possible murals.

Saruinsar is famous for its natural resort but it became popular with the frolics of Raja Balwant Dev, the younger brother of Maharaja Ranjit Dev of Jammu, in the middle of eighteenth century. Raja Balwant Dev was given the Jagir of Saruinsar where he had erected a Baradari wherein he had sat for hours together to be painted by Nainsukh, the master painter who was responsible for Jammu school of miniature paintings. Several such paintings are available in different art galleries of the world. Nainsukh became legend in the world of miniature paintings. He had drawn a painting of Raja Balwant Dev examining a painting while sitting in his heavily gilded chair enjoying *hukah*.

Double door arched entrances of the Baradari with lush green background is the peculiarity of the painting. Columns of the arched entrances have been prominently designed. Other aspect of this painting is the lavish accommodation of the Baradari distributed in length in the corner of which is sitting the Raja while a group of musicians have been painted attending the Raja.

Baradari in ruins was very much there by the side of the lake in fifties but has been reduced to rubble at present and the progeny of the Raja has dismantled it to construct a new building there.

### BARADARI OF WAZIR KAHNU SLATHIA

There was an island-like structure on the right side of the river Tawi facing the palaces wherein, in the picturesque surroundings of dense forests with gushing waters of the river, a beautiful structure in the form of Baradari was erected by Wazir Kahnu Slathia during the reign of Raja Ranjit Dev, who reigned Jammu during 1730 to 1782. Both the Raja and his Wazir, apart from their official duties of a monarch and a minister, were close friends. The Raja used to visit the Baradari constructed by his minister, Kahnu Wazir. It was a lavish building almost open from all sides with engrailed arched entrances supporting the highly decorated lintel and frieze. Lateral chambers contained the stairs with steps leading to the roof. Several gatherings were arranged there during summers when colourful evenings with a blend of music and dance were enjoyed by the

royalty. There were twelve arched entrances on either side of the building with flat roof of the first storey whereas it was a dome-shaped roof of the second storey again constructed on the formation of dot style without any use of iron. Bricks were joined one by one with strong layer of mortar of lime and legume paste which was in vogue almost a few decades ago, but now have been reduced to rubble. It was a forest checkpost for decades together and was still used as lavish accommodation but the flooded Tawi washed away much of structure. What is left behind is the rubble and the foundation of the structure which is still intact and reminds us the golden days of Wazir Kahnu and his Raja.

Kahan Singh Billowaria in his book *Tarikh Rajgan Jammu*, Vol. II has mentioned in detail about Wazir Kahnu Slathia, the sixth son of Wazir Jiju. Wazir Kahnu was a great warrior and during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev he fought several battles along with Brajraj Dev, the heir apparent and Ratan Dev Mandiwala. He was very close to the Maharaja that he bestowed upon him enough land south to his palaces in addition to enough land by the side of river Tawi where the Wazir constructed his palatial buildings and by the side of the river he laid out two gardens and got excavated two wells. Since the wells were on lower strata they were engulfed by the river during flood while the gardens were quite in existence almost a few decades ago but now in their place buildings of the same clan, the descendants of Kahnu Slathia, have come up. "Wazir Kahnu constructed a beautiful Baradari and named it Chandni Chowk. Its walls were beautifully painted with floral designs. While sitting there the Maharaja Ranjit Dev and Kahnu Wazir exchanged their turbans and pledged an everlasting friendship. Both Wazir Kahnu and the Maharaja used to enjoy the scenic beauty of the landscapes of the river Tawi and forests nearby. The Maharaja performed the ritual of Mundan ceremony of his second son Dalel Dev here at Baradari only. From that day onward the ritual of Mundan ceremony of the princes was performed at this spot only. After the death of the Maharaja the Sikhs not only destroyed the royal palaces but also set fire to the Baradari." (pages 411-12) On the next page he refers to the torched Baradari and the platform nearby on which the Mundan ceremony of the princes of the royal family used to be ceremonised. "The ruins of the Baradari and the platform on which the ceremony was ceremonised are still in existence."

Wazir Kahnu had four sons named—Lal Dev, Avtar Dev, Govind Singh and Bishan Singh. Bishan Singh died without any offspring, whereas Govind Singh got the service with the Sikhs during the regime of

Raja Jeet Singh at Jammu. He got enough land in lieu of his service. On Magh month of vernacular year, Vikrami 1915 that is December month of 1859 some ungrateful persons of this clan (Slathia) intrigued to murder Ranbir Singh, the Maharaja of Kashmir, in which two sons of Ram Dev, the grandson of Kahnu, were involved. They were arrested and their assets were confiscated. They died in the custody and the Maharaja Ranbir Singh distributed their assets to Mian Trirhu, the illegal son of Maharaja Gulab Singh, popularly known as Chhatrorha. Trirhu of his own encroached upon some more land of the Slathias with the result they (Slathias) approached the Maharaja and prayed for the justice which was granted on third week of December 1863 (10 Poh, 1919 Vikrami). Two sons of Ram Dev, grandsons of Kahnu who were involved in the intrigue were Mian Gunjar Dev and Mian Mehlu.

Sunder Singh, the great grandson of Wazir Kahnu, in his fourth generation, was a great warrior who served under Maharaja Gulab Singh in various expeditions followed by his assistance to legendary warrior, Wazir Zorawar Singh in the battle of Mantalai. He was asked to proceed for Chilas and Hunza Nagar when Sheikh Imamu-ud-Din declared himself as the monarch of Kashmir. He successfully dealt with the rebels. His son Hukma Singh was also engaged in military stores during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Hukma Singh purchased some irrigated land also at Andarwah area. Since the rituals of *mundan* ceremony of the royal princes of Dev dynasty, starting from Dalel Dev, followed by the Dogra princes like Pratap Singh, Ram Singh, Amar Singh, the three sons of Maharaja Ranbir Singh and afterwards Hari Singh, the last Dogra Maharaja was performed on the Tharha Mubarik, a platform erected near the Baradari, mentioned above, the government through civil authorities had claimed its right on the Tharha and surrounding area during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh. Mian Hukma Singh Slathia prayed for its inclusion in his assets as being the direct living descendant of Kahnu Slathia, the owner and builder of the area, as such he had his rightful claim over the structures mentioned above. Maharaja Pratap Singh did not buzz but instead he made him to dance on his toes, moving door to door convincing every civil officer in the concerned department but it could not help him. Finally he moved the Rajput Sabha and requested its members to plead his cause before the Maharaja. According to Thakur Atma Singh Slathia, eighty four years old son of Hukma Singh, his father tried his hard to get the structure in question to be registered in his favour but could not. Even the men in power were helpless that one fine morning when Maharaja came in Rajput Sabha to participate in a meeting with the members of his

clan, Hukma Singh grabbed the ankles of the Maharaja before the whole brotherhood and prayed for the justice. The elder persons also requested the Maharaja to bestow upon him his legitimate claim over his ancestral property. The Maharaja had no choice but to order in his favour.

We do not find those lavish buildings now in Chougan Slathia. In fact the whole structure has been reduced to rubble. However, the ruins of the confiscated palaces of Wazir Kahnu are still there with a cell wherein the conspiracy to murder Maharaja Ranbir Singh was hatched which, afterwards, was gifted to Mian Trirhu, the illegal son of Maharaja Gulab Singh, whose descendants sold it to an outsider who again sold it to a third party and the sanctity of the palace has been reduced so that none remembers its historical and cultural importance.

### BARADARI OF RAJA RAM SINGH

Raja Ram Singh was the younger brother of Maharaja Pratap Singh, the third Dogra monarch of Jammu & Kashmir state. Since Raja Suchet Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the first Dogra monarch of the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir, had no issue of his own as such he adopted Ram Singh, who became the heir apparent of Raja Suchet Singh and got the erstwhile states of Bandralta, Mankot, Samba etc. after the death of Raja Suchet Singh. He was fond of lavish buildings, decorated chambers and shrines. The palace cum fort of Ramnagar started by Raja Suchet Singh was completed by Ram Singh. Even the name of the locality was changed from Bandralta to Ramnagar. Nearby these palaces he erected a Baradari by the side of a large water reservoir, popularly known as Patiarhi Baan. It is constructed in traditional style of Havelis with multiple arches resting on the fluted columns with stylised bases and brackets supporting them. Lateral chambers were meant for the keepers and the stairs leading to the second storey on which were constructed dome-shaped *Chhatris* in Rajasthani style of the Havelis. A few steps lead to the platform of the Baradari where the Raja and his courtiers assembled to discuss important matters of politics and administration. Raja Ram Singh and his courtiers used to enjoy music and dances from this platform only but when the public in general was also invited then their place of sitting used to be adjusted on the second floor while the artists performed their activity in the courtyard or on the platform depending upon the nature of the performance. The public used to sit in the remote corners of the courtyard or enjoyed the dramatics and folk music and dance while sitting on the roofs of the buildings adjoining

to the Baradari. Raja Ram Singh was very fond of these parties who performed acrobatics, as such he invited them from different states of the erstwhile kingdoms to give their performances. Especially parties from Jammu and Kangra were invited to give their performance. They were regarded with due honour and bestowed upon awards and prizes. Sometimes competitions between these parties were arranged and the parties of higher merits were rewarded. As such parties from Kangra, Sudh Mahadev, high altitudes from Udhampur, Charyaii were awarded and recognised.

# 6

## *Havelis*

Havelis are the palatial buildings erected by Jagirdars, chieftains, members of royal families and by the businessmen of magnitude. Generally they are the fortified constructions with high walls containing in them spacious courtyards around which massive structures in the form of large chambers, hall rooms, sitting rooms or *baithaks* are constructed. Like those of royal palaces these Havelis also were designed with separate chambers meant for the female inmates. Some of them were constructed in fortified area as such they look like mini forts. *Shahen Di Haveli*, Magaini is glaring example of such buildings.

### HAVELI OF ZORAWAR SINGH

Zorawar Singh settled at Reasi after he was given the responsibility of Quiledar of Bhingarh fort, popularly known as Reasi fort. He erected a huge structure which afterwards was known as Zorawar's Haveli with six hall-type chambers constructed two in each storey. Each chamber has a construction area of 12' × 20' that is almost 240 square feet and each chamber is connected with a small room on both its lateral sides i.e. there are four lateral rooms in each storey. Each room possesses the same constructed area of about 10' × 12' measurements. Lateral rooms or the cells are joined with the hall chambers with the help of doors while they open on both sides of the building with the help of windows having the height of 5 feet. These cells are also joined with their counterparts in adjoining storeys through serpentine narrow stairs. Each hall-room is connected with the other hall-room on the same storey with the help of a common door which exists exactly in the centre flanked by two 5 feet high windows with curvatures at their apex forming a niche.

Masonry work done with the help of mud and stones still speak the engineering magnificence especially in use of space that all the chambers

are interconnected with each other on a single storey and are airy and well lighted. The roof of the building is supported by thick logs of deodar wood which has survived for almost two centuries now but due to lack of maintenance and care masonry work as well as the ceiling are giving way. Once the plastered walls of the Haveli were well decorated with frescos and wall paintings which hitherto had been deteriorated due to the continuous attack of moisture and scorching sun. However, signs of borders in the form of floral runners and twiners are still there on the torn asunder plaster of the walls. The roof of the uppermost storey is giving way which may collapse any time if due attention is not given. The planning of the building has been done with due acumen that on its west side lavish view of the Chenab and its tributaries along with spreaded fields for miles together can be enjoyed. The *Zanana*, the inhabitation of the queens and other royal ladies who were not allowed to have access to outside world, were benefited with such a splendid view of the Chenab and its tributaries. On the east side the lavish greenery spread for miles together soothed their eyes and heart. The space used for the construction of the lavish building itself conveys the idea that the people responsible for the construction of such buildings were connoisseur of art, culture and architecture. If this historical building is not cared for it will evaporate into oblivion. The descendants of Zorawar Singh are not so potent to repair such lavish building as such Deptt. of Archives of the state as well as Central Government must come forward to preserve the historical monument that too of a general who was responsible for making a state which elsewhere was not in existence. Nearby we find other buildings of that era in addition to a tank which was constructed for storage of rain water to be used for various purposes. The whole locality is called Vijaypur now-a-days and is situated about seven kilometres from the main town of Reasi. A foundation of another building nearby suggests that a palatial Haveli might have been there once upon a time the ruins of which are popularly known as *Kararen Di Haveli*. It is said that when Zorawar Singh decided to settle down in this locality several clans migrated from Himachal Pradesh in addition to some Mahajan families from Jammu and nearby besides a class of workers which settled down in this locality so as to give a shape of multilateral society. When General Zorawar Singh had established his supremacy after the insistence of his master, Maharaja Gulab Singh, and had settled at Vijaypur he invited two of his brothers from Himachal Pradesh to settle there and to assist him in various day-to-day lores. Thus tracing the family tree of Zorawar Singh we find that his father Mian Hari Singh belonged to a village named Ansara, Teh. Bilaspur.



He had three sons Sardaru, Zorawaru and Dalelu. Zorawaru, popularly known as Jarnail Zorawar Singh, the second son of Mian Hari Singh, left his ancestral abode due to a family feud in which he had killed one of his close relatives and went to Haridwar in remorse. From Haridwar he came to serve a principality near Ramban in the vicinity of Pir Panjal but he could not compromise. It so happened that Rana Jaswant Singh who was the lord of Galian, a small principality in the Ramban hills, per chance, met Zorawar Singh, and finding him of the same linguistic region, invited him to his land, Mermat Galian. It is here Zorawar Singh chiselled himself and learnt the use of weaponry and became expert in gorilla war. He was adjudged as a perfect gladiator. But due to the visit of Mian Dido in that area Zorawar Singh was blamed for Mian Dido's ventures with the result Zorawar Singh had to leave for Jammu via Chinehni. Here at Jammu he came in contact with Raja Gulab Singh who accommodated him in his forces as a soldier as he had to move the next day to annex Bhimgarh. Thus a new turn in his life took place. From a mere soldier he rose to the rank of Quiledar during his stay at Reasi. Even when he was given an additional responsibility of Governor of Kishtwar, he did not leave Reasi and instead visited Kishtwar as and when required. That is why he erected a Haveli for himself and for his kith and kin. He invited his brothers to settle down at Reasi. Another family of Parmar Rajputs, who were close to the family of Zorawar Singh, was invited to settle down at Reasi. The descendants of these families are still residing at Vijaypur village by the side of river Chenab where the ruins of old Havelis of Mahajans, popularly known as *Kararen Di Haveli*, a tank built by Zorawar Singh and the fort-like Haveli of Zorawar Singh, in dilapidated condition are still in existence.

Zorawar Singh married twice but could not get any male heir. However, he had a son named Inder Singh from a maid of his queen that is why there was a family feud. The descendants of Sardaru, the elder brother of Wazir Zorawar Singh did not allow him any share from the assets following which there was a prolonged legal battle among them which was carried into the royal court finally. Maharaja Pratap Singh decided to offer 1/3rd of the total immovable property of the Wazir to Inder Singh and his descendants. Inder Singh popularly known as Indru had a son named Chhater Singh who was a forester in the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh. He had four sons named Jaswant Singh, Daleep Singh, Jasmeet Singh and Pritam Singh. Mian Jaswant Singh died in younger age while his brother Daleep Singh had again three sons named Babu Singh, Ratan Singh and Badri Singh. Ratan Singh had his progeny as two sons named Narinder Singh and Rakesh Singh. Mian Jasmeet Singh had three sons

named Sukh Dev Singh, Chain Singh and Devinder Singh. Pritam Singh who was a Nazer (an official in revenue department) had three sons named Jagdish Singh, again a Nazer, Jai Dev Singh, serving in Salal Hydro Project and the third Jasbir Singh.

There is another family residing in the village of Vijaypur. It is the family of descendants of the elder brother of Zorawar Singh who was named as Sardaru. Sardaru had a son named Wazir Gaje Singh who was appointed as Zileदार in the regime of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Wazir Gaje Singh had a celebrated son, in the name of Col. Ishri Singh who was attached with Raja Ram Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Pratap Singh, the third Dogra lord. Ishri Singh had three sons named Captain Onkar Singh, serving in 3rd J&K battalion, Thakur Kishan Singh, Major Havalدار and Thakur Baldev Singh who died in young age. Captain Onkar Singh had four sons named Goverdan Singh, an army Havalدار; Ratan Singh, a Lambardar; Padam Singh, a Patwari; This family is nourishing in its progeny named Shiv Dev, Ashok Kumar, Swadesh Kumar and Sanjay.

Wazir Zorawar Singh had invited his close associate and a friend, Thakur Dharam Singh Parmar from Bilaspur to assist him in his day-to-day lore. He had two sons named Lachhman Singh, a Thanedar and Kamwal Singh, again a Thanedar. Lachhman Singh was entrusted the job of Thanedar of the fort of Reasi, who had three sons Thakur Harminder Singh who died in young age. Third son Bhagat Singh, fourth Thakur Raghunath Singh, fifth Havalدار Singh who was the Thanedar of Qila Reasi after his father. Harminder Singh had three sons named Anirudh Singh, Pardhuman Singh, a range officer, and Arjun Singh while Havalدار Singh had three sons Madho Singh, Purshootam Singh and Prakash Singh. Madho Singh, a retired Tehsildar narrated us the whole family tree of Wazir Zorawar Singh, his brother and of his companion.

### BEGAM KI HAVELI

The building in which different sections of All India Radio, Jammu are housed belonged to erstwhile feudal lords of the erstwhile state and it was meant for their horses, it was a royal stable. Definitely, this beautiful round building was not built for horses to live in and on enquiry I came to know that the name of the building was Begam Ki Haveli. It was a circular building and had 24 chambers of almost same measurement with round barrack-like ceiling so that from the top it gradually tapers up from two sides forming a concave structure at the roof. It was built up

with baked bricks, of double size, mortared with lime and kiln powder. No iron was used while cementing the roof portion instead by adding bricks inch by inch one over the other, the dome was structured which survived the parabola of time and natural calamities for more than a century. In fact it was renovated subsequently replacing the small brick structure with double sized bricks but design remained the same.

This Haveli was constructed during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh for the accommodation of his retinue but afterwards it was converted into a royal stable. As per revenue records "Building known as Begum Haveli and the land underneath and appurtenant thereto measuring 64 *kanals* 4 *marlas* situated at Jammu shown in revenue records in Khasra Nos. 95 Min and 92 Min (Khewat No. 102 Min Khata No. 390 Min) fully described in the schedule hereto and for greater clearness delineated on the plan hereto annexed was acquired by the Government on behalf of the Government of India for a consideration of Rs. 1,77,077 paid to the J&K Government by the Government of India;

And whereas by a sale deed dated 18th April, 1959 registered in the office of the Sub Registrar Jammu the said property has been purchased in the name of Government."

The question instigating me to know that who was the Begum? and why the building was named after her. On enquiry it was found that there existed an old building by the side of this round building. It was a double-storeyed building constructed with the help of small red bricks mortared together with the help of lime and brick powder. Ruins of this building in the form of foundation are still there under a *Pipal* tree the roots of which still grip the red bricks of the old wall of the building. This old building was got constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Dev (A.D. 1730 to 1782) for Mughlani Begum to live in. She was very popular in political circles of Punjab in those days. She was the daughter of Abdus Samad Khan, the late Governor of Punjab and was married to Muin-ul-Mulk, popularly known as Meer Munnu son of Qamar-ud-Din, the Mughal Vazir of Mohmad Shah.

Meer Munnu was popular among the lords of hill states especially in Jammu hills. Nain Sukh the celebrated master painter of Jammu school of miniature paintings painted Raja Balwant Singh of Jammu enjoying music performed by a group of musicians in 1748. It is the only painting with signatures of Nain Sukh which tells that it is a portrait of Raja Balwant Singh painted in those days at the behest of a certain nobleman by Nain Sukh in Jasrota, on the occasion when the Mughal viceroy Meer Munnu came to Lahore after his victory over Pathans.

Meer Munnu was very strong governor who not only defeated Pathans but also restrained the Sikhs to some extent with his two chivalrous officers—Adina Beg Khan who defeated the Sikh army at Makwal around A.D. 1749; while Kouramal, another officer, influenced the Sikh Misls to the extent that from the foothills of Shivaliks to Lahore was unanimously agreed upon as the border line of their territory. Kouramal was killed in 1751 fighting against the Pathans and with the death of Meer Munnu in A.D. 1753 there was turmoil in Punjab. The Mughal emperor was fascinated by the beauty of the Mughlani Queen who was merely eighteen years old when her husband died, with the result son of Meer Munnu and Mughlani Begam, who was merely an infant, was bestowed upon the governorship of Punjab under the supervision of her mother, Mughlani Begam. The infant governor died the next year freeing her from her duty and power. The charm of power which she had so meticulously operated in augmenting her existence in the politics of Punjab was no more.

A few men of power loyal to the emperor, were tried but finally the mental of governorship fell upon Adina Beg Khan, who was assisting Meer Munnu till the death of later. Adina Beg was also fascinated by the freshness and beauty of Mughlani Begam, the widow of his erstwhile lord. Earlier on the death of her son the Mughlani Begam was given some financial assistance but she was divested of all political powers. On the other hand Adina Beg played important role in the politics of Punjab and became its governor in 1758. She was offered some allowance of Rs. 30,000 per month in lieu of the powers she was bestowed upon but she refused to accept the allowance and lured Adina Beg and got so many facilities while living in Punjab. But after the death of Adina Beg in September, 1758 she was again a sad woman. Punjab was in turmoil and Jammu was the most peaceful town in those days as such she left Punjab to settle in Jammu. She was settled in Begam Haveli. She stayed here for about two years only. When Ahmad Shah Durani occupied Delhi around A.D. 1760 she left for Delhi and assisted Durani to locate treasures of Mughal nobles and in return she was bestowed upon a *jagir* of thirty thousand at Sialkot but due to insurgency after an year, and because of pressure of Sikh Misls, Mughlani Begam had to leave Punjab with her paramour, her servant, Shah Baz whom she was married afterwards near Jammu. Jammuites could not relish this relation with the result she had to leave Jammu and for a long span of her life her whereabouts were not known. However, she returned to Jammu around about 1780 at her residence, Begam Ki Haveli, she lived here for a few months and died.

Thus the building became popular with the name of Begam Ki Haveli. In fact the whole locality around this building became popular as Begum Haveli that the round building which housed the Radio offices afterwards was also named as Begum Haveli. Radio Kashmir, Jammu was shifted from Shri Ranbir Singh High School in 1952 and started its broadcast from Begam Ki Haveli.

Recently a few chambers were dismantled due to seepage and other problems. New structure will be coming up after dismantling the whole building and historical building will be no more when the new building comes up at its original place but it will live in the pages of history.

### SHAHEN DI HAVELI

Decorating the palaces, courts and religious shrines with wall paintings and frescos highlighting the subjects of Pauranic literature, epics like *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, court scenes and, of course, the portraits of lords, queens and other members of royal family was taken as achievement to the satisfaction of the feudal lords but this urge was not limited to the royal families only, courtiers, Vazirs and richmen of the society, within the reach of their resources, also decorated their buildings, popularly known as Havelis, with myriad images. Such, lavishly decorated buildings with murals and frescos are scattered throughout the length and breadth of sub-Himalayan regions and Rajasthan. Jagirdars, Mahants of religious shrines, business community like Soods of Garli, Mahajans of Jammu, Gusains of Kangra and around, Jains etc. erected lavish structures and decorated them with paintings done on the canvas prepared on the walls of these lavish buildings. Mahantan Di Saran nearby Chintpurni is a glaring example of meticulously decorated building. There existed several such Havelis at Jasrota village situated at the base of the fort of the same name but unfortunately most of them have been white-washed or ruined. *Kararen Di Haveli* was, once, the most popular massive structure situated at Vijaypur, Reasi during the period of Zorawar Singh but alas it is no more. Only its foundation tells the story of its existence. Even two-storeyed building, popularly known as Zorawar Di Haveli situated nearby was lavishly decorated with floral designs, runners, twines, tendrils and spikelets. Zorawar Singh was the great warrior, whom these hills are proud of, constructed this building in the mid 19th century and declared Vijaypur as the capital of Reasi. Here several Havelis came into existence of Mahajans and the kith and kin of Zorawar Singh.

Mahajan families which dealt in business of grocery items, timber,

confectionery and lent money on interest were popularly known as Shah. These families constructed lavish buildings throughout the belt of Jammu and Udhampur. They dealt in the business of ghee, herbs, dry fruits etc. One such family was flourishing at Magaini during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh when the elderman of the clan Madhu Shah had virtually erected an empire of business in the field of import and export of ghee. They collected ghee at Budhal and sold in the plains and supplied the accessories to the people of Budhal and surroundings. He was ably assisted by his son Lajpat Shah who flourished the business and enhanced its dividends into multifold. Madhu Shah was also assisted by one Gopi Pandit who not only shouldered the responsibility of the regular supply of the ingredients but also kept the track of accounts. He was so meticulous in his dealing that Madhu Shah was much impressed and he married his sister with him and declared him as *Ghar Jamai*. Lajpat Shah apart from a good businessman had fondness for buildings meticulously designed Havelis as such when he was bestowed upon the *Gaddi* of his father he earnestly desired to erect a Haveli for him and for his kith and kin. A suitable site was selected with due care so that it must be situated at higher altitude from the general public dwellings. Architectural plan was envisaged with the active assistance of the contemporary architects and engineers responsible for the construction of the royal palaces in Jammu.

Shahen Di Haveli is a fort like structure, situated almost one and half kilometre from Chopra Shop, nearby a hamlet, quite interior from the main road, the National Highway No. 1A. The Haveli can be reached with the flight of a few steps which are guarded by thick walls on their lateral sides. The door to the Haveli is a large one with arched *Deodi* flanked by designed lateral sides decorated with intricate plastering. On either upper sides of the entrance we find a small niche which might be meant for the lamps during wee light time. On the apex of the entrance, on the upper storey, there is a beautiful niche-like structure half covered by designed hexagonal net cells supported by four small pillars on which settled is the slanting roof of the niche. This might have been in vogue for the women folk who would like to sit here basking the sun during winter season. The main roof of the second storey is again decorated, two bastion like structures, octave in shape connected together with the help of designed railing which again is decorated with enamelled blue coloured flower bases.

It is a double-storeyed massive building constructed over a plinth of solid stones, almost six feet high, over which the superstructure was

erected, a unique masonry work of the times done by acumen of the artisans invited from Sialkot. Splendid halls meticulously decorated with wall paintings, galleries, corridors form the structure of the Haveli. The corridors of the first floor were once lavishly painted with shining colours but are fading now due to the onslaught of natural calamities and non-maintenance. Outer walls with engrailed arches are decorated with floral designs and borders of geometrical paintings with human figures alternating the arches. Inside the corridors we find the walls painted with the characters from Indian mythology. A man-size painting of Radha Krishna is an attraction in which lord Krishna is shown playing on the flute while his paramour Radha is standing by the side charmed by the rhythm. The painting can be placed in folk art category owing to the unbalanced bodies, shabby garments and uneven hands without proportions. Lord Krishna has been painted with large visage, almost double of Radha, he has been shown with pot belly. Even the cuts are not fine enough to place them in fine painting category. Orange, blue and red colours have been used. Other characters painted in the corridors include a musician playing on a trumpet, a guard guarding the palaces etc., again there is unnatural division of the space and unbalanced bodies. However, the twiners, trailers and runners including the border designs have been painted with proper sequence which tell us that creators of these paintings were not the artists or painters but simply artisans but when they were asked to paint the scenes from the scriptures and courts they tried their best but they could reach to this extent only. As according to an old man of one locality, Mr. Ram Chand Sharma, 92 years old and also happens to be the grandson of Gopi, the *Ghar Jamai* of the Shahs during their meteoric rise in the field of business, told us that the sister of Madhu Shah, the great grand father of present Shah generation, was married to Gopi and he was declared as *Ghar Jamai* and the land on which they have erected their dwelling was gifted to the family of Gopi Chand by the Shahs. Among the other important members of the family of Shahs were Rikhi Shah (Rishikesh), the son of Lajpat Shah who was a great cavalier and several horse riding feats decorated his cap with the feathers of winning sprees. Once he raced his horse against the running motor of Maharaja Hari Singh and crossed the motor car with the result he was banned to ride a horse. It might have been the symbolic aspect of the story, in fact for the security reasons the vehicle of the state head, i.e. Maharaja in these days might have been well guarded and he, the Shah might have dared to cross the vehicle with his galloping horse in his devil spirit, without knowing the consequences with the result he was barred

from horse riding henceforth. Raghupat, the father of Shri Ram Chand Sharma also served Lajpat Shah and the Haveli was constructed in his supervision as such his son, Ram Chand, now 92 years old knows every bit of it. As according to him, during construction, a labourer was killed after falling from a structure meant for construction. Ali Mohamad and his kith and kin were invited from Sialkot to complete the task of formation of the Haveli. It was Ali Mohamad who designed the Haveli and the wall paintings, their border designs and above all the credit to build such a lavish fort-like building decorated with meticulous paintings goes to Ali Mohamad and his companions despite the fact that he was not an artist but simply an artisan. Perhaps Lajpat Shah, the creator of such lavish building was a man of imagination. It was his vision to create a structure unparalleled in the vicinity. There is no doubt that the massive building comes on surface like *Khul Ja Sim Sim* from nowhere and the visitors are spell bound to find such a splendid and decorated building making a castle in countryside.

#### HAVELI RAJA DHIYAN SINGH

Among the other important inns, Sarais and Havelis situated at Purmandal one constructed by Raja Dhiyan Singh the younger brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh is superb in its layout, design and its execution. It is a huge building which can accommodate almost two hundred people at a time. The whole building has been planned into three tier system. Floor of the building constitutes three huge hall-type big chambers connected with each other with the help of connecting doors. Each hall is having the measurement of 32' × 14' with lavish ceiling supported by large deodar planks which have been changed by the steel girders by the PWD which is taking care of the Haveli and repaired it to live in. Each hall has a lateral room on its both directions i.e. north and south having measurement of 15' × 12', almost half measurement of the hall chamber. So in a way there are three hall chambers and six lateral chambers at the ground level whereas at first storey level we find the same structure that is three hall chambers and six lateral rooms of the same measurements as those of the chambers at ground level, however, there is an addition to these chambers through a side room situated at first floor which can be reached with a flight of a few steps. This chamber is lavishly decorated with the paintings of foliage and floral designs. All the four walls of the chamber have been exclusively decorated with these paintings. Paintings are drawn in three panels with a number of columns in each panel. General



motifs painted include flowers kept in flower pots of broader perspective, trailers, twiners and runners with alternate flowers and leaves decorating the border lines. Intermittently we find the geometrical designs alternately painted to differentiate the natural flowers painted.

Red and crimson colours are widely used in painting the flowers whereas yellow and green colours are used in painting the foliage. Blue and purple colours are used in borderlines and designs done at the border. Who were the artists nothing is known yet. The riddle remained unsolved. Definitely these artists were apart from the artists who had painted the walls of the inn constructed by Raja Suchet Singh. The walls of the inn constructed by Raja Suchet Singh have been decorated with figurative structures, portraits of the characters from Indian mythology and of kings, courtiers and Nayikas along with the architecture of the palatial buildings created in the background whereas the walls of the Haveli of Raja Dhiyan Singh have been painted with floral designs of myriad structures. But it is definite that the artists were invited from Punjab as is the case of the artists who have done similar work in other Havelis.

This is the only room of the Haveli left painted and decorated with old frescoes, other rooms might have been painted with the similar designs but are now defaced, most of the walls of other rooms have been replastered doing away with the paintings which existed there.

This room is almost 15' long and 12' wide with niche-like inlet and outlets for the air forming stylised windows with engrailed arches supported by vertical fluted pillars. These structures are there on both sides of the chamber causing cross ventilation. Three windows opening towards the riverside were constructed with a view to enjoy the scenic beauty of the river bed and landscapes of the surroundings as well as for the passage of free air during summer months. Same type of structures we find on north direction of the chamber. While entrance to the room is in south direction another door leads to inner chambers connecting them with outside chambers.

The whole Haveli has been innovated with newly constructed bathrooms and toilets for the benefit of the pilgrims who would like to stay there. PWD department looks after the repairs and the facilities to be provided to the pilgrims. Lateral chambers adjoining the hall rooms possess the natural roofs-dome constructed without any use of iron. This arch type ceiling suggests the old architectural style of making roofs.

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