CHAPTER SIX

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF VAISHNAVISM

A. IN THE SOCIETY

We have now briefly considered the situation of Vaishnavism in the Punjab hills. We have taken into account the faith which prevailed in most of the areas, and the personal faith of many Rajas prior to the introduction of Vaishnavism. The deities that were either most popular or adored from very early times have been noticed. We have also outlined the stages which Vaishnavism entered the hills, first in its Bhagavata form in the early centuries of the era upto about the 12th and then in an organised, systematic way in the form of popular Vaishnavism through the agency of the Raja and the Bairagis. The manner in which Vaishnavism spread, with all the difficulties it had to overcome and the compromises that it had to make, has also been seen. And, finally, we have adduced the evidence of painting, both from portraits and from the main sets of illustrations of Vaishnava or allied texts.

But the situation still does not emerge as clear and well-defined, as we would have it. The hills remain,
in fact, even after all this evidence has been considered in, nearly the same position in which they were before the systematic introduction of Vaishnavism. The situation refuses, in a sense, to become crystallised either in favour of Vaishnavism or against it. Very rarely, if at all, do we come upon an emphatic statement that such and such a person— it may be a Raja, a Rani, an artist, a purohit, or a commoner— was a devout Vaishnava and nothing else. There was some adherence to Vaishnavism quite clearly, certainly on the part of the Rajas who introduced it or on the part of the Pandits who came from the plains. But the faith does not appear to be so exclusively or sharply Vaishnava as to leave out adherence to other sects which were popular, or were professed by Rajas or by the other persons concerned.

It is important, here, to take into account some sections of the society and see what their attitude towards religion was. One naturally begins with the Rajas, because the Raja was, in many ways, the pivot of the society in the hills. Not only was he a complete master of the State, he also was a person who

1. For a general discussion of the position of the Rajas, see, the chapter on "The State and the Raja" in Goswamy, Social Background of Kangra Valley Painting.
sometimes gave direction to the development of religion. Apart from the general fact that the Rajas were usually religious minded, sometimes very devout, they occupied a central position in the religion of the State because nearly everyone looked up to them. But, even in the case of the Rajas, we do not get any sharply defined position as far as their personal faith is concerned.

The example of Kripal Pal of Basohli with whose reign the beginnings of Basohli paintings, are usually associated, should be instructive from this point of view. We have seen a reference to the Vaishnava faith of Kripal Pal in the colophon of a book written for him, even though no Vaishnava idol or temple is associated with his name at Basohli. Dr. Archer has drawn conclusions about Kripal Pal's personal faith, or inclination, from the situation of painting under him. He believes him to have been responsible for the introduction of painting, from some source outside, possibly Udaipur, into his own state. He suggests that Kripal Pal was urged by his faith to express his feelings for Krishna "in a novel and personal manner". As a result, not only a new style but a special choice of subject matter was introduced. The isolated pictures from Basohli apart, the principal

set of illustrations which was produced under or for him was that of Bhanudatta's *Rasamanjari*. In this, Dr. Archer sees directly the hand of Raja Kripal Pal because "he had directed his artists to do for Sanskrit what Keshavdas had done for Hindi poetry to celebrate Krishna as the most varied and skilled of lovers and, as a corollary, show him in a whole variety of romantic and poetic situations." One would thus expect Kripal Pal to have been a fervid Vaishnava in his personal faith. And yet, quite clearly, the portrait of Kripal Pal that we have in the Chandigarh Museum shows him as wearing a prominent Shaiva *tilak* mark on his forehead. It may be argued that Kripal Pal wore that *tilak* for a special occasion, possibly the Shivratri day or some other festival connected with Shiva, but the *tilak* must have been sufficiently strongly associated with him for the artist to paint the Raja wearing it. In Kripal Pal's mind, there seems to have been, at any rate, no great ardour for Vaishnavism. He had, quite clearly, brought the two faiths, perhaps three of them, together in his own person. To call Kripal Pal, therefore, as *simply* a Vaishnava would not perhaps be accurate.

The rulers who come after Kripal Pal at Basohli including Dhiraj Pal are seen once again wearing prominent Shaiva tilaka. It appears, on the face of it, that adherence to Shaivism among the Basohli Rajas even after "popular Vaishnavism" had come to the hills was strong. The Nilakantha Mahadev who might be said to be the presiding deity of Basohli, appears to have commanded powerful allegiance. The artists seem to have been well aware of this and show the Rajas wearing the tripundra tilaka, Shaiva, tilaka accurately.

Another interesting case that could be considered is that of Sansar Chand of Kangra. A great deal has been said about his personal inclination towards religion. We have the evidence of Moorcroft who says that Sansar Chand was very fond of spending a part of the day watching performances in which singing and 'nautching' continued and there was a recitation of Brijbhakha songs. Moorcroft also mentions paintings in the collection of Sansar Chand which dealt with the themes of the Mahabharata, and so on. We can


2. The temple is in the Chaugan at Basohli, at the point from where the ascent to the palace of the Raja begins. Belief in the Nilakantha Mahadev in Basohli is still implicit.

infer from what he says about the Brijbhakha songs, most of which are usually devoted to Krishna's love and exploits, that Sansar Chand took a reasonable interest in Vaishnavism. The great sets of Kangra paintings which are usually ascribed to his court and to his period, are explained in terms of his ardent Vaishnava leanings. In the loves of Radha and Krishna he is said to have sought a justification, perhaps sublimation, of some of his own romantic experiences. His love for the gaddan, Nokhu, whom he later married is said to have been some kind of an echo of the love of Krishna for Radha. Mr. Eastman, discussing the possible ascription of the Nala Damayanti drawings set to the court of Sansar Chand, points to this very firmly and says that in the character of Nala Sansar Chand might have seen himself reflected, and thus might have directed his artists to produce this symbolic work. Dr. Archer says quite clearly: "...for all this painting, the adhesion by Raja Sansar Chand to the cult of Krishna provides the main motivating force. Indeed without this cult and the ruler's devotion towards it, the concentration of these

artists on the feminine form and their constant investment of it with delicate poetry would be unintelligible. It is because Krishna, the divine lover, had constantly to be depicted that romantic themes engrossed their minds". Dr. Archer says again that "not only was he successful in politics and war but from his early manhood was devout to Krishna as lover God. And it is this all-absorbing interest which explains the vast expansion of painting which now occurs. Under Sansar Chand's stimulus artists began to portray every situation involving Krishna the cowherd."

In the face of this, one would expect the faith at least of Sansar Chand to have been ardently Vaishnava, in particular directed to the worship of Krishna. And yet the evidence that we have from other sources does not indicate this so clearly. At Tira, where Sansar Chand lived most of his time after he had lost power to the Sikhs, the temple inside the fort is that of Gauri Shankar, devoted to Shiva and Parvati. There is a popular tradition at Sujanpur that the Maharaja had taken deep personal interest in this temple; it is in fact even said that the standing

2. The Gauri Shankar temple has a standing, anthropomorphic image of Shiva. It is said to have been founded by Sansar Chand himself who is said to have paid personal homage to the deities. The present priest of the temple is descended from the first purohlt who was appointed by Sansar Chand.
The ashtadhatu image of Shiva in the temple was cast in under the Raja's own mould. In any case Sansar Chand is said to have especially adored Shiva here. This temple had frescoes on its walls even though these have now been covered with the coat of whitewashing. The only other temple inside the fort is the temple of the Devi. At Tira, apart from these two, there is a tiny little shrine devoted to Rama, but this is outside the fort and is said to have been built to commemorate a Brahmin who committed suicide at this particular spot. At Sujanpur, below Tira, the principal temple is that of Narbadeshwar, once again dedicated to Shiva. There are many temples at Sujanpur but this is the only one which has frescoes on its walls. The construction of this temple is ascribed to "the Suketi Rani" of Sansar Chand, but the Maharaja himself seems to have been actively associated with it.

1. The Devi temple occupies the highest point of eminence into the Tira Fort and palace.

2. This temple is outside the Fort at Tira. There is a little pond around it. It is said to have been built by a descendant of the Brahmin who committed suicide here in protest of the breaking of a promise by Raja Sansar Chand. In addition to the images, there is a stone tablet with Vishnu's feet carved on it outside the shrine.

3. The priest of the temple, interviewed. The Suketi Rani who built the temple was probably the daughter of Mian Kishen Singh of Suket. For the temple, see, Sarbdial, 97.
There is, in one of the panels of frescoes inside the temple, the figure of Sansar Chand himself.

Sansar Chand's adhesion to the worship of the Devi also does not seem to have diminished at all. Like all Katoches before him who revere the Devi as their *Kulaj* or family deity, he continued to worship and pay homage to her. But it is in an incident in which there is no reference directly made to Sansar Chand's personal faith that we get a sure indication of whom he implicitly believed in. On the testimony of Vigne, in one of the engagements with the Gurkhas, Sansar Chand was required by them to take an oath, at the shrine of the Devi at Malkara as a proof of his sincerity. It is to be understood that a solemn oath is taken of a deity whom one holds in highest esteem, because the breaking of the oath becomes then a matter of extreme gravity. On an occasion like this, then, when solemnity of the deepest kind was required, the Gurkhas insisted on Sansar Chand taking an oath by the deity and not by Krishna or any other Vaishnava. When there was a pact to be sealed between Sansar Chand and Ranjit Singh, it was over the sacred fire at *Jwalamukhi* that the parties swore. It becomes clear,

thus that about the personal faith of Sansar Chand we cannot be emphatic or absolutely certain. He brings, within his ambit, faith, alike in the Devi, Shiva and Krishna. There is no exclusion in his personal system of belief. What is being argued here is not that Sansar Chand did not take Krishna into account. Some grants of land by him are described in the documents as "Krishna Arpan," dedicated to Krishna. We have the construction of the Murlimanohar temple at Sujanpur by one of the Ranas of Sansar Chand again. There are paintings which show him celebrating the birthday festival of Krishna, the Janmashtmi. But then we have also the evidence that we have just cited. And it is not without significance.

The son and successor of Sansar Chand, Anirudh Chand, is also seen in paintings as celebrating a Vaishnava festival. And, at the same time, we have an account in some detail which refers to the last years that he spent at Kankhal, near Hardwar, on the bank of the Ganga before he died. In this, it is narrated that he died in the midst of the chanting of Vedic

1. One of these documents is in the possession of Shri Bhu Dev Shastri.
2. Sarabdial, 97; Vansavali of Kotoch Rajas (in the possession of Pt. Harain Dutt), 22.
4. This account is by Kanwar Mohan Singh, a descendant of the Raja of Baghal, and is in a file of correspondence in the Panjab government record office.
hymns and Shiva recitations and wearing his robe all over which were tucked the rudraksha beads that are associated with the worship of Shiva. The Shaiva bhajanas and the rudraksha leave no doubt about the Shaiva leanings of Anirudh Chand.

The situation that we have seen regarding the faith of the Rajas of Kangra is quite typical of the situation in other states and in the faith of the Rajas of other principalities. The belief in the temple of Lakshmi Narayana at Chamba was considerable. "Such is the reverence in which the idol is held", wrote Vigne, "that I have been present when the Raja and every person in his court ceased their conversation, arose from their seats, and muttered a prayer, whilst the bell was ringing at the shrine..." We have other evidence also that the idol of Lakshmi Narayana was held in high esteem. But, as from early reigns like those of Sahilavarman, and Yagakarvarman, Somavarman and Asata, even from the 16th century we have evidence, like in the Chamba plate of Partap Singh, of a co-existence of different faiths. This plate records a gift of land and mentions the Raja as being

1. Vigne, Travels, I, 159.
2. We have already examined the evidence from this point in Chapter III above.
equal in prowess to "Rama, Parashurama and Balarama" and in the same breath mentions him as one "who has his heart entirely devoted to worshipping Shiva". The situation becomes even more confused because the grant of land is made "out of devotion to the illustrious Ramachandra". This is wholly typical of several grants which date from the 16th century onwards. The Hadsar plate of Balbhadra, for instance, is very similar in indicating the personal faith of the Raja. What is of special significance is the faith of Prithvi Singh of Chamba who is said to have introduced popular Vaishnavism at this stage of Chamba history by having brought the idol of Raghuvira from Delhi. From his reign itself there is a plate from Minhal with an inscription which belongs to the temple of Chambod. There is again the temple of Mulasan Devi with its quaint wood carvings which bear an inscription of Raja Prithvi Singh of the year 1661. Quite clearly, while Prithvi Singh was paying public homage to the idol of Raghuvira, he was also endowing Devi temples all over the kingdom which he presided. The faith of Raj Singh of Chamba

2. Ibid., 149.
3. Vogel, Antiquities, 16.
is reflected in the treaty which he signed between himself and Sansar Chand in the year 1788; this begins with an invocation to Rama. And yet, when Raj Singh was killed, in his memory was raised at Nerti a temple in which is installed a Shiva Linga. But Raj Singh's personal faith receives statement in the treaty between him and Sansar Chand again, in which it is said that "whosoever violates this agreement will be answerable to the holy Lakshmi Narayana, Manimahesh, the holy Goddesses Chamunda and Champavati". Here, once again, we have the bringing in of all the three major deities who were receiving worship in the hills: Vishnu, Shiva and the Devi.

In Mandi, the position is again somewhat similar, even though here the balance is tilted more or less against Vaishnavism despite its introduction by Raja Suraj Sen in the middle of the 17th century. The portrait of Suraj Sen, already cited, contrary to expectations, shows him as wearing a Shakti tilak mark on his forehead. It is also significant that the name of Suraj Sen is associated with the foundation of the Naina Devi temple. But the most

2. A great mela is held here to commemorate the death of Raj Singh who died fighting like a hero.
4. Chandigarh Museum, Nos. 2745. See, Chapter IV above.
5. This Naina Devi is different from the better known Naina Devi temple in Bilaspur.
interesting evidence comes from the reign of Raja Shyam Sen who succeeded him. Shyam Sen is supposed to have been a devout Vaishnava, having undertaken pilgrimages to Jagannath and Banaras. And yet, when he was proceeding for a battle, he vowed to the Goddess Kali that if he triumphed, he will build a magnificent temple and dedicate it to her. The Raja was successful and the temple which is now called the temple of Shyama Kali on the Tarna hill above Mandi town bears testimony to his gratitude to the Goddess for having conferred upon him the boon of victory.

From Mandi we have some other interesting evidence also. The fact that one Raja adopts Vaishnavism, or tries to promote it, was no guarantee that his successor would take similar interest in the Vaishnava faith. This results in a quick shifting of allegiance between Vaishnavism and non-Vaishnavism in the family. Suraj Sen, "the Vaishnava" is followed by Shyam Sen who is only partially a Vaishnava devotee and raises a temple to the Devi. He is followed by Gaur Sen who is a Vaishnava; one of his Vaishnava portraits has

been referred to earlier. And then follows that great tantrik devotee, Sidh Sen. Sidh Sen is a resolute Tantrik because there are a large number of paintings of him and virtually each one of them shows him as wearing a prominent tantrik tilak mark. There are indications, occasionally, of his having taken interest in other faiths also. The temples of Sidh Ganesha and Sidh Bhadra which he founded show his adherence to the worship of Shiva. Sidh Bhairava is yet another temple that is connected with his name but no Vaishnava shrine is ascribed to him. In a fanciful legend, it is said that when Raja Sidh Sen was victorious in a great battle, he brought the heads of 380 men and made a necklace for the idol of Bhutnath Mahadeva out of these. Sidh Sen was so convinced that whenever he raised a new temple a great victory followed him. What with the secret of flying through the air which his magical autka conferred upon him, according to legend, Sidh Sen seems to have quite heavily leaned upon his Tantrik faith and powers in ruling his State.

1. National Museum, No. 63,1050. Also see, the painting reproduced in Manmohan, opposite p.44.
2. See, e.g., Chandigarh Museum Nos. 2726,2727,2734, 2792.
3. Hutchison & Vogel, II, 394; Manmohan, 57.
There are instructive instances from other States. When we hear of a Raja of Sirmur paying equal homage to the Devi on the one hand and the Jagannath temple on the other, or Jagat Singh of Nurpur being described as a great devotee of Bhiwani, who resides in his steel blade, and also as an ardent Vaishnava, we are reminded quite sharply of the fact that the faith of the Rajas was often composite. It did not favour one sect at the cost of another; it tried to bring these together on the other hand. This could be done either in their own person or in the manner in which they distributed their patronage over various temples or religious establishments.

Another index to the extent of Vaishnavism in the society could perhaps be the faith adopted by the purohits or priests, especially those who were attached to the royal family. This, because the purohits especially those who were attached to the royal family, this, because the purohits had undoubted influence over the royal household, especially over the Ranis in whose contact they daily came because of the generally religious inclination of the Ranis.

1. Ranzer Singh, 157-159.

2. The bard Gambhir Rai draws pointed attention to these two aspects of the Raja’s faith in his Rhapsodies; see, J.A.S.B., XLIV,1,209.
And because of the purohits presided invariably over religious ceremonies, like vajna, pujas, or pratishthas, the faith of the Purohits wherever we can ascertain it, assumes importance for the present study.

Unfortunately it is not so easy to ascertain this faith. But on occasions we get clear statements: "The Purohits of the ruling family (of Mandi) are followers of this Goddess (Baglamukhi)". The Baglamukhi Devi is a Tantrik deity, quite widely worshipped in the hills, and we have here a clear assertion that she was the deity of the Purohits of an important family which is connected with the patronage of paintings in the hills. One can now see the connection between the Tantrik tilak mark on the foreheads of Mandi rulers and the Purohits of the royal family being Tantrik devotees themselves.

From Sirmur we have another indication of the faith of the Rajas Purohits. Kanwar Ranzor Singh who wrote the Vernacular history of the Sirmur State, has quite sharply contested some statements of one Balgobind Kaistha who wrote a history in English of the reign of Raja Shamsher Prakash of Sirmur. The Rajput historian dismisses Balgobind Kaistha as

1. Mandi and Suket Gazetteer, 1904, 37.
being irresponsible and ill-informed, because he is after all, we are told, "a mere clerk". The Kaistha had made a statement that the Rajguru of Sirmur is the Mahant of the Jagannath temple which would make him a Vaishnava. This, Kanwar Ranzer Singh, says quite emphatically, is wrong, because "the Rajas are Shaiva and the Mahant of Jagannath is a Bairagi". On this point one is inclined to believe Ranzer Singh because he, as a member of the royal family himself, would have known about the situation personally.

From Kulu, we have a clear statement that "Gopal or Krishna" was worshipped by the "former" Gurus of the Raja, "though Shaivaism is prevalent in the Kulu valley."

But indications of this sort are rather rare and one has to depend on another method through which to arrive at the faith of the Purohits attached to the royal family. This can be done by looking at the collections of manuscripts, which have been built up over several generations, in these families. From this point of view one of the most interesting collections is with Pandit Bhu Dev Shastri, whose ancestors were the Purohits of Maharaja Sansar Chand and to one of whom the lands attached to the Gauri Shankar

1. Ranzer Singh, 292.
temple were given by the Maharaja. Pandit Bhu Dev has a very large collection of manuscripts, both in Sanskrit and in Hindi, even though he does not possess any manuscript in Persian or Urdu. The collection is extremely varied. In it we have, interestingly enough, an important work which may be its only copy in existence. This is the Bhasha by the poet Bihari of the tenth skanda of the Bhagavata Purana. This work is not known to scholars, and if it is by the same Bihari who wrote the Sat Sai it could be a discovery of some importance. But there are other manuscripts like a tika of the Vishnusmriti in this very collection. There are, besides a manuscript of the Devi Mahatmya from the Markandeyapurana, a gutka which contains a large number of mantras and slokas including a mantra for Krishna Gopal, a Nitya puja, paddhati, Trailokya mangu kavacha, Yugal Kishore Sahasranam stotra from the Narada Purana, and the rudrakshamala sanskar yichi. Clearly in this gutka which must have been put together for daily use by an ancestor of the family, Vaishnava, Shaiva and Tantrik texts have been brought together. There is yet another gutka in the same collection. This has

1. The name of the priest mentioned in the grant is Zorawar Dikshit. The document is in the possession of Bhu Dev.

2. The copy in the possession of Pt. Bhu Dev was written in S. 1891 by the scribe Dogra Sabhapat. All the 64 adhyayas are complete.
a large number of *mantras* in it which include, 
Kalika kavacha, kalidagatmangal, kavacha, stotra, 
Shiva kavach, Bala tripura kavach, Shri Kalika 
chaturleki stotras, Shri Bhairva stotra and an 
extact from the *Mandukya-Upanishad*. In the collection 
of Pt. Bhu Dev are also several manuscripts on 
yotisa and on the science of interpretation of dreams. 
There is a manuscript of the *Vyavahar mayukha* and a 
*Vyashe tattva prakash*. There is a *Medini kosa*, a 
*Vishva kosa* and the *Amarkosha*. All these form part 
of the one and the same collection. Some of the 
manuscripts bear colophons and dates, others not. 
But without any doubt there is a unity in this collec­
tion of manuscripts and in this unity is seen the 
free co-existence of many beliefs.

The Purohit of the Katoch family of Bijapur, to 
which the late Maharani of Kashmir belonged, lives in 
a small village, Alhilal near Palampur. This Purohit, 
Pandit Ayodhya Prasad, has also a collection of manusc­
ripts in which one finds, among others, the text of the 
*Rudravamala tantra*, the *tika* of *Chatkhapa*, written by 
Tara Chand, a Tantrik manuscript with several *mantras* 
for the Devi, the *Tara Sahastraman*, the *Narsingh Kavacha*, 

1. Pt. Ayodhya Prasad had in his possession many 
more manuscripts than he showed but even this 
part of the collection seemed so obviously 
important,
Hanumat kavacha and the Mahakali stotra.

Yet another collection of manuscripts is in the possession of Pt. Sunder Das Shrotri of Nagrota. Here again there are many texts which are not sacred to any particular sect, but represent a miscellaneous collection brought together over a period of more than three hundred years. Interestingly enough, even in the collections of manuscript with the Mahant of Bathu or the Mahant of Damtal, there are texts which are non-Vaishnava. There is, thus, with the Mahant of Bathu, on the one hand a text of the Samasta Purana which ends with the praise of the Jagannath deity, and at the same time a text containing the sayings of Guru Gorakhnath, one of the greatest Shaiva ascetics who ever lived. The Bathu book which contains Narayanji's compositions has on one of the leaves, apparently in a late hand, a hymn in praise of the Sindu Bir.

In the context of paintings, it is not only the faith of the patron which matters, but also the

1. Many of these manuscripts related to the rituals to be performed and pujas. This category is generally referred to as books on karma kanda.

2. Shri Purushottam Das. One of the manuscripts is on palm leaf.

3. This invocation occurs on one of the fly leaves of the book, and is clearly in a late hand. Dante, quoted in Anand, Hindu View of Art, 98.
faith of the artist. For as has been well said, "who paints a figure, if he cannot be it, cannot draw it". One would have expected, in view of the quantum of work on Vaishnava themes in Pahari painting, clear indication about the faith of the artists themselves. And this faith one would have expected to be quite certainly Vaishnava. Strange as it may seem, however, the faith of the artist as given out at least by the present members of the artist families of the hills, consisted of adherence to the Devi.

In a recent study of the family of Pandit Sew and his sons, Manak and Nainsukh, a diagram has been reproduced which shows a Devi bare in the upper part of her body, with her hair flying about, naked but for a loin cloth, standing on one leg, and with numerous arms shooting out into different directions, making a pattern like a spider's web (see fig. 61). The arms are long and skinny and the hands are often open, giving the painting tremendous power. The points at which the hands end, are circles in which are inscribed the names of certain States and some patrons. The immediate meaning of this diagram or figure does not become apparent, but it has been argued that this

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1. See, Goswamy, "Pahari Painting; the family as the basis of Style".

2. See—quoted in Radha Rani, Hindu View of Art, 42.
cannot be anything else than the *dhvana* of the Devi adored by the artist who drew this figure. This diagram has come out of the family of Nikka, son of Nainsukh at Rajaui in Kangra. Here, if anywhere, is a representation and embodiment of the Devi who in the artist's mind was identified with the practice of his own art of painting.

Quite often the personal faith or the *ishta* of an artist is too personal a matter for him to talk about at any great length. But there are plentiful indications that the Pahari artist was, not, as far as his intense personal belief was concerned, a Vaishnava. Krishna Das states that "the Pahari artist is a worshipper of Shiva". There are certain manuscripts in the possession of some families of artists which give some indication of the beliefs of the artists themselves. These mostly contain *sutras* in praise of the Devi or of Shiva although the *Bhagavad Gita* is also included in many *outkas* with these families. When a story is told of an artist in which his excellence is to be pointed out, it is always said that the Devi was so used to play shawar or backgammon

1. The drawing is in the possession of Shri Bhupender Prakash Ra, one of the descendants of the artist Nikka.

with him. Thus is indication of the Devi being very pleased with him. In the Golu Mohalla at Nurpur is a little shrine dedicated to Jalpa Devi. The Mohalla was inhabited at one time - it is now deserted - by families of artists who had been assigned lands in Lahribasi here; the fact that the temple of Jalpa Devi stands in the midst of that area is thus significant. Stories are often told by the living members of the artist families of how the Devi was pleased or offended with an artist leading to his work being good or poor. The present writer was told a story of an artist of Kangra who was in grave financial distress on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter. He was entirely without means, but when the day of the wedding arrived, all the needs of the artist's family as far as what had to be given to the daughter in dowry arrived "miraculously". The artist's face was thus saved. Quite clearly, according to the story, it was the Devi who had come to the aid of her bhakta.

1. The Lahri-Basi grants consisted mostly only of homesteads to which a small patch of land was attached. The bard Banka Rai still points to the various spots at which the houses of the specific artists whom he names once stood.

2. Shri Kesri Lal Vaidya, interviewed at Nagrota.

3. A story often repeated in the hills is about a mole having been formed by a black dot on the thigh of a Rani whose portrait an artist was making. This had come about magically by the intervention of the Devi, but led to grave consequences for the artist who was, however, later cleared of the suspicion of having actually seen the mole on the Rani's thigh.
We have some very clear indications of the faith of the Pahari artist in two portraits that have come down, one of Nainsukh and the other of Manak, his elder brother. In both these, the artists appear wearing, quite prominently, Shiva tilak marks on their foreheads. Had they not been devoutly Shiva in their personal faith, the necessity of these tilak marks being shown would not have arisen, for it was not expected of an artist, unlike a Raja or a Purohit, to have a clearly marked personal faith. It is also not without significance that when Nainsukh drew the figure in the Bahi of the Haridwar Purohit whom he visited in the year A.D. 1763, he made a small sketch of Shiva and Parvati on Mount Kailash, with Bhagirath standing before them begging for the boon of the descent of the Ganges.

The artist Tara Singh of Chamba, who is said to have lived in the 2nd quarter of the 19th century, is said to have been "a great student of the tantrik cult and painted several tantrik subjects." There is

3. Bahi of Sardar Ham Rakha, Rep. in Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: the family as the basis of Style".
a painting of Mola Ram of Garhwal seen worshipping
the goddess Bhuvaneshwari. If the description of the
painting is accurate, this is of importance, because
the artist is seen here quite clearly in immediate
relationship with the deity whom he adored. One of
the descendants of Mola Ram, Swala Ram by name, is
said to have been a Shaiva by belief, and a follower
of Gorakhnath.

And yet, quite clearly, the artist of the hills
must not only have had thorough familiarity with
Vaishnava themes, but also a feeling for them. But for
this, neither the great output nor their superb
quality could have been achieved.

The common people of the hills seem to have had
a genius for reconciling different faiths in their
personal belief. Apart from the fact that the Hindu
mind is generally eclectic, in the Punjab hills, a
working arrangement, an easy balance, seems to have
been struck which left room for all faiths and all
sects, and made it possible for people to bring in more

1. Re., in Rupn, No. 8, October 1921, 27.
2. Mukandi Lal, "The Garhwal School of Painting",
Roopalekha, XXII, II, 40.
and more deities into their belief without pushing any one of them out. The situation continued to be very much the same to this day. In the Village Survey Reports which have been brought out at the time of the Census of India of 1961, there are profuse details about the religion of the people. And as far as the hills are concerned, throughout these surveys is reflected a faith which is all-absorbing. Again and again one comes upon the names of Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Shiva and the Devi, the Naga, the Bir, and the Siddhas as objects of veneration. And it is not as if a certain section of the society resorted to some gods and another to other deities. All people visit all temples and pay equal homage. The ishta of the family is personal but in their public faith, in the religion that they outwardly and generally profess, there is virtually no exclusion of deities.

The arrangement worked out by the people is reflected very neatly in the religious practices of the Ghirths, for instance. These were recorded by Mr. O’Brien nearly a hundred years ago. From evidence which was then collected it could clearly be seen that the Ghirths did not have any “special” faith as such.

1. A large number of these reports have been consulted. These contain very valuable information on the social, religious, and economic conditions prevalent at the time of the preparation of these.

2. O’Brien, The Kanora Ghirths, 7; Rose, Glossary, II, 205.
although all of them worshipped Ganesh and the Devi. But, among other deities worshipped by them were the Thakur which is another name for Krishna, Shiva Hanuman, Bhairon, Naga, Gugga, Sidh, Ajaipal and even the Musalmam pir. Even more interesting than the practices of the Ghirths are those of the people of Churah in Chamba. They have quite specifically divided their worship over the week, days being set apart for a particular deity. Shiva, for example, is worshipped on Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays; the Naga is worshipped on Thursdays and Saturdays; Kailu on Thursdays and Tuesdays, and chon on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. The Gaddis of Chamba are generally great Shiva worshippers but on Sundays and Thursdays they worshipped the Naga, the Devis are worshipped on Tuesdays, the Sidh on Thursdays, and so on. Not of least interest to the present study, which leads us to the general catholicity of the people in matters of faith, is the widespread worship at the tomb of the Musalmam Pirs, long after the Muslims have left this part of the country. The maars of the Pirs are widely resorted to, and there are a number of these all over the hills. In Jammu, for example, there are a large number of Muslim shrines

which are freely resorted to by the Hindus. At Murpur one of the principal melas is at the tomb of Shah-Rahman, a Muslim saint who lived in an earlier period.

The situation, in a sense, thus is very similar to the one that we find in those early coins which have been found from the Punjab hills and to which we drew attention earlier. The Kuninda coins from the Jwalamukhi area some of which mention the name of King Amoghabhuti and others which are anonymous and only mention the titles of Shiva, indicate the faiths of the people through the motifs which are carved on these. Among these are a deer, Lakshmi holding a lotus in her hand, the symbol of Naga or cobra, the Nandpad symbol, the symbol of the river, and swastika on the obverse, Shiva with a trident in his hand and the legend: "Bhagavata Chatreswara Mahatmanah". After hundreds of years, it seems, the situation in the hills had not materially altered.

1. See, Kahn Singh, Tarikh-i Jammu wa Kashmir, 338-339. Among the Muslim saints are mentioned Roshan Shah Wall, Imam Mehdi, Bukhari Shah, Pira Shah and others.

2. In local dialect, "Shah Rahman" has become changed into "Sadh Rahman".


The Rajas seem to have been aware of this, and with this knowledge instituted State festivals in which one can see reflected this catholicity of faith of the people. At Sirmur, for example, there are many festivals and fairs which are celebrated, but the most important is the Dussehra festival which consists of celebrations throughout the Navratras of Asuj, culminating on the tenth day in Dussehra. On this day all the castes worship their own tools or trade or instruments. Many people, according to an account of about fifty years ago, go out of the town on horse or elephant back to see the garuda bird and when they spot one they reward their grooms. On the first Navratra, in the appropriate mahurat, the Raja goes to the Kali temple called Kali Sthan and worships there. This is followed by several ceremonies. A yagna continues for many days to the accompaniment of the worship of the Devi. On the ninth day, the Raja again goes with his entire entourage and family to the temple. Great celebrations are held there and a musical performance is organised in which the Nath Mahant of the Kali Sthan participates. Afterwards the Nath Jogi gives a nad (small whistle), to the Raja and all those present as symbols of their being devotees

1. Ranzor Singh, 157-159.
of Shiva. The Raja and the other people then offer nazars or offerings to the Rajguru. This is followed by sacrifice of buffaloes and goats. In the evening there are sports and on the tenth day, Dussehra is celebrated. On that evening the Raja goes to the temple of Jagannath with his family, on elephant back. Afterwards the Mahant of Jagannath accompanies the Raja on the Raja's elephant and the procession goes to Ramkandi where there are samadhis of the former Bairagi Mahants of this temple. The garuda bird is seen there. And in this manner the celebrations, which last for ten days, come to a close.

There is little doubt that this series of festivals is organised in a calculated manner so that the principal faiths of the populace are paid homage to by the Raja.

From Keonthal in the Simla hills, we have somewhat similar evidence as from Sirmur. The family deity of the Raja is the goddess Tara. There is a fair at Tarab in her honour which has the status of a State fair. The Raja attends this and on this occasion there is much merriment. But on the 3rd day after Dussehra, after the worship of the Devi, the Raja holds a darbar and then visits the temple of Thakur Lakshmi.
Narayana. The image of Lakshmi Narayana is taken out in procession, the Raja walking behind it, attended by his officials. At Kulu, the idols of the village deotas come from far distance to Sultanpur to pay homage to Ramdhamathji. But it is the presence of the Raja who personally worships all the deotas and to Raghunathji I which gives the celebration sanctity and significance. At Mandi, even though the presiding deity, Madho Rai, is Vaishnava, the occasion on which all the deotas of the Mandi state assemble is not a day sacred to Vishnu, but Shivratri, the greatest festival held in honour of Shiva. And thus, in practices of this sort which have been carefully, deliberately worked out, we see quite clearly an attempt to strike an equilibrium between the various faiths.

R. IN PAINTING

As in life, so in painting. Vaishnavism does not claim the exclusive attention of the artist. And there are clear indications that the artists did devote a great

1. In spite of the general decline in religious feeling the ceremony is still performed with much festivity. The Raja of Kulu attends the ceremony, as before. Also see, Harcourt, 315-316.

2. Manmohan, 33. In Mandi, Vaishnavism is described as "clearly an innovation to which only conventional adherence is given". Mandi S.G., 1920, 110.
deal of their time and talent to painting themes which were non-Vaishnava in character also. Even though Rajput painting has been chiefly described as lyrical, Dr. Coomaraswamy, as early as 1912, said that this was not always so. The fiercer aspect of the Devi, thus, representing "a sense of the conflict of titanic forces in the universe" are also treated of by the Pahari artist in particular. Rajput painting, Dr. Coomaraswamy said, was not "merely concerned with Vaishnava theology; it is also Shiva and Shakta". It is not without significance that most in Rajput painting, most of the scenes which can be described as Shaiva, and Shakta, come from the Pahari area. And this, apparently, as a result of the religious situation prevalent in the hills in which a great deal of the attention of the people is concentrated on the worship of Shiva or the Devi in their various manifestations. From the Pahari area comes a leather bound volume of 81 leaves, now in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, each leaf having an illustration from a scene of Indian mythology. The illustrations in


2. The Catalogue of the Boston Museum would indicate this quite clearly, because in it the paintings are arranged themewise, and it is possible to see, even though in a limited manner, that the Shaiva and Shakta themes come almost exclusively from the Pahari region.

3. No. 20,165. See, Coomaraswamy, Catalogue, 121-123.
that little book are fair indication of the subjects which claim the attention of the Pahari artist most often. All these paintings do not represent scenes or occurrences, they are more or less iconic in character the visual counterpart of the sutka of mantras for daily prayer.

In a sense, when the artist divides his attention between the illustration of the Krishna legend or other Vaishnava themes, and scenes of Shiva and Parvati in their rugged, snow-clad home in the Himalayas, he is showing awareness to the polarity that is inherent in the Hindu religion. There are these two contrasted archetypes: of austerity and the action. Krishna and Shiva, or Kama and the Devi stand at the opposite ends of this pole.

The evidence of paintings on the faith of the Rajas is interesting and important. We have already considered this evidence on the Vaishnava leanings of some of the princes, but there are numerous portraits of Rajas clearly indicating their Shaiva or Shakta inclination. The situation at Basohli, to which

1. R. Mukerjee, The Social Function of Art, 279-280,
Dr. Archer pointed when he said, after Kripal Pal the artists shifted to painting other themes than the Krishna legend, quite clearly reflected in the religion of Dhiraj Pal as we have noticed before. The large-as-life Shaiva tilak on his forehead is strong indication of his personality following the cult of Shiva. The portraits from Chamba are very eloquent. From an early period, from the reign of Raja Chattar Singh, we have a series of them in which the Rajas are seen wearing either Shaiva or Shakta tilak marks. The faith of Raja Chattar Singh of whose face cannot be very clearly discerned in that group scene which Mr. Khandalavala has reproduced, becomes clear from another portrait which Mr. Khandalavala reproduced, in which, this even if the portrait is late, the Raja wears quite distinctly a Shaiva tilak. Not only was the Raja himself a Shaiva devotee, his two brothers, Jai Singh and Shakat Singh who appear in another painting, obviously done from life wearing the Shaiva tilaks. There are other paintings like those of

1. "Devotion to Krishna does not seem to have bucked quite so largely in the minds of later Basohli rulers - although the cult itself may well have continued to exert a strong emotional appeal", Archer, *Loves of Krishna*, 107.

2. Rep. in Khandalavala, *P.M.P.*, fig. 63. The identification of this Raja as Chhatar Singh of Chamba is made in Goswamy, "Re-reading of some Takri inscriptions etc.", *Roomalekha*, XXXV, 72. Mr. Khandalavala believed the Raja to be "Sandial Raja Chand Singh", basing this on an inaccurate reading of the inscription.


Udai Singh, Prithvi Singh and Umed Singh, all of Chamba, which again show them wearing Shaiva or Shakta tilaks.

There are numerous portraits of unidentified princes which show them as of Shaktta or Shaiva beliefs. But it is the situation in Mandi which, from this point of view, is the most fascinating. A vast amount of material from Mandi is available and in this we get portrait after portrait in which the Tantrik belief of the Rajas can be seen. Most fascinating of them all are the portraits of Siddh Sen who, as we have seen earlier, had strong Tantrik inclinations. The amulets, the rudraksha mala, the tilak mark in many of his portraits, are fair individual belief. There are pictures in which the Raja masquerades as Shiva himself, others

1. Rep. in Khandalavala, P.M.P., No. 47.
2. Ibid., No. 63.
3. Ibid., No. 65.
4. See, e.g., Nos. 2097, 2654, 2656, 2683, 2784, 2788, 2790.
5. Some of these have been indicated earlier. Apart from the paintings in the Chandigarh Museum, there are several in the National Museum as of non-Vaishnava inclination.
6. One portrait of this description was in the collection of Shri Kula Nand, shopkeeper of Mandi.
in which he is carrying a large platter in one hand and
a bell in the other going apparently for Shiva puja.  
The portraits of other Raja* like Shivjwala Sen and
Shamsher Sen are again strongly indicative of their
Tantrik faith. There seems to be little doubt that not
only were the Rajas very firmly Tantrik in their beliefs,
but their artists were also anxious to indicate their
faith accurately. In fact, the odd portrait or so of
Gaur Sen wearing a Vaishnava tilak strikes a dissonant
note in the Mandi series. His Vaishnavism appears to
be, at least as far as portraits are concerned, an
exception to the faith of the other Rajas whose Purohits
were, it must be remembered, devout worshippers of the
Tantrik goddess, Baglamukhi Devi.

From Guler there is the portrait of Raja Bishan
Singh son of Dalip Singh wearing a Shakta mark. From
Kangra there are clear indications of both Ghamand Chand
and his son Tegh Chand, father of Sansar Chand, being


2. Ibid., No. 2752.

3. Ibid., No. 3070. Many paintings of Shamsher Sen are
   in the National Museum.


5. Chandigarh Museum, No. 2665. Chandigarh Museum,
   No. 2781, in which Bishan Singh appears as wearing
   a Vaishnava mark.
at least partially Shaiva in their personal inclination.

In one of the portraits Tegh Chand wears a very prominent **rudraksha mala** and Ghamand Chand is seen wearing a **tilak** which is Shaiva. Other portraits like of some unidentified Mankot chiefs, of Sardar Singh of Kishtwar, Nand Dev of Jammu and Mian Rattan Dev all show Shaiva marks.

Apart from the portraits, there are numerous paintings which treat of the Shakta theme. In this category falls that Major set, which was such a great favourite of the Pahari artist, the **Chandi saptasati** popularly called the Durga Path, from the **Markandeya Purana**. A number of these sets have come down. Many of them number 57 leaves, so that apparently a set formula for the illustration of the theme was being used. In the Chandigarh Museum itself there are paintings from more than two different sets of the Chandi theme. A well-

2. See, e.g., Chandigarh Museum, No. 1213.
4. Ibid., No. 1250.
5. Ibid., No. 2696.
6. See, e.g., Chandigarh Museum, Nos. 625 to 687; Nos., 725-773.
known set in the Bharat Kala Bhavan has come from Garhwal, having been painted for Raja Bhawani Shah in the middle of the 19th century. The set is quite clearly in a late Kangra hand. A complete set consisting of the most beautiful drawings of this theme was in the family collection of the artist Lachhmandas of Ustehar. Another set of the Durga Sthth is interestingly enough with the Vaishnava Mahant of Damlal, Shri Lal Das. A large number of pictures which formed apparently part of sets of this theme are now available as single leaves. We find, thus, Durga killing Mahishasura, or a battle between her and Raktabij, ever so often. All this leaves little doubt that in these powerful leaves at least some of the veneration of the Sahari artist for the all-powerful mother Goddess was being poured. It was entirely natural for the exploits of the Devi being celebrated in painting in an area which was so devoted to Shakti.

1. Khandalavala, P.M.P., 42. Here are listed some of the other sets of this theme also. Mr. N.C. Mehta, Studies in Indian Painting, 120-121, speaks of a set of the Basohli style in the collection of Mr. Ajit Gheosh.

2. This set is of a relatively small size but of very fine execution.

3. This set is complete and appears to have been a work of the second quarter of the 19th century.
The Durga Path sets apart, there were a large number of other pictures of the Goddess painted. Some of these were a part of what might be called Tantrik sets. Even in sets which are not either Vaishnava or Shakta, a set like the Rasamanjari for example, we do get occasional indication of the Shakta leanings either of the patron or of the painter.

In one of the leaves of the Rasamanjari, the Boston Museum, there is an interesting sign of the wall of the loggia inside which the Navika is seated. This is an inverted swastika symbol. It is not that the artist did not know how to form the swastika accurately. The inverted swastika is a Tantrik symbol, used in the worship of the Goddess. Entirely unrelated to the theme and brought in almost as if an inner necessity forced the artist to do it. This symbol lends another character to the Rasamanjari picture than we have so far supposed.

The paintings of the Devi in all her manifestations are legion. But of very great interest are paintings which can be called Tantrik paintings proper. Of these, from early times, whole sets appear to have been painted.

1. Coomaraswamy, Catalogue, No. 17,2779, Pl. CXII.
The painting of Bhadrakali, for example, reproduced by S.N. Gupta, is quite clearly of a very early date. And it is by no means an isolated picture, because there are other paintings of the same set, and apparently in the same hand, of Tantrik theme. The painting of Bhadrakali shows her standing large and monumental in the centre with two attendants behind her holding a chhatra over her head, and another attendant, with snakes coiled around both her arms and around her hair-knot, bowing down and pouring flowers on the feet of the goddess who holds in her right hand a cup of wine and in the other a lotus with a long stalk. It is a painting of power, an ascetic work. The intense concentration, and the mystical feelings which one associates with Tantrik worship are luminously reflected in a painting of this sort. The paintings from the set of Tantrik illustration which Dr. Coomaraswamy reproduces in his catalogue, carry elaborate dhyanas at their back. A painting of the Devi in her Bhuwaneshwari form, thus, has the following inscription:

"Make Bhuwaneshwari with a smiling face, with a crown as bright as the risen sun and bearing the moon, with high, firm, breasts, with three eyes, hands in vara and abhiti position and holding an elephant goad, and a noose.

1. The painting is now in the Chandigarh Museum, No. K-41.

2. Coomaraswamy, Catalogue, 134.
"I celebrate the gentle lady Bhuneswari
like a risen sun, lovely, victorious,
destroying defects in prayer, with a
shining crown on her head, three-eyed, and
with swinging ear-rings adorned with various
gems, as a lotus woman (Padmini) abounding
in wealth, her hands in vara and abhyas
mudra. Thus the dhyanam of Bhuvaneswari".

Another painting from the same series represents
the Devi as Dhumavati, and this has the following
inscription at its back:

"Thus the dhyanam of Dhumavati: Discolored,
unsteady, unchaste, tall, with dirty
garments, with her beautiful ear-rings, lost,
a miserable widow mounted on a car, with a
crown banner, (drawn by) two separate birds,
with hanging breasts, the sun in (one) hand
and noisome snake in (the other) hand, a big
swollen nose, frowning, crooked and murderous
suffering from hunger and thirst, every
inspiring fear and instigating quarrels.
Thus the Dhyanam of Dhumavati".

Pictures of this kind satisfied obviously a
deep religious necessity in the hills. And, quite
clearly, many of them were used as icons by worshippers,
and not kept in bastas to be seen occasionally in hours
of leisure for the delectation of the senses or the
pleasure of the mind.

Paintings which are as awe-inspiring and as
fearsome as these, are to be found in numerous collections
in the hills even today. They are not treated however,

as paintings, but essentially as dhyanas of deities to be worshipped and paid personal homage to. A whole series of paintings, in the collection of an old lady who belongs to a priestly family attached to the Vajreshwari Devi temple in Kangra, for example, was entirely inaccessible. The lady would not even permit any photograph of these paintings to be taken. These were framed and hung on the wall. One could see them from a distance, but not approach them, because they were the objects of actual worship. Paintings which show the Devi as standing on the corpse of Shiva, or standing on a copulating man and woman lying naked on the earth, are also numerous. Kali, in this particular manner, appears ever so often. She is there as Chhinnamasta, Chinnashirodhara, Sumukhi, Baglamukhi, and so on. In all these paintings the artist was concentrating on the meaning and the significance of the theme. In the

1. The set of paintings with this lady, who lives very close to the temple of the Devi and belongs to one of the Bhojaki families, is in a late hand but of a good quality.

2. Many paintings of this description were in the collection of Raja Baldev Singh of Ouler. Other paintings were seen with Shri Kamla Prasad Bhojaki at Jwalamukhi, Shri Kulananda at Mandi. The idea here is to show that Shiva, without the Shakti represented in his name by the letter "i" is only a Shava or corpse.

3. Collection of Shri Kamla Prasad Bhojaki, Jwalamukhi. Other paintings of this theme were in the collection of Raja Baldev Singh of Ouler, 197.
collection of the late Lachman Dass of Ustehr, was a whole series of drawings, 24 in number, which represented the female Shakti aspects of the twentyfour avatars of Vishnu. Clearly here the Vaishnava incarnations had been Tantricised and their Shaktis had become the object of worship at the hand apparently either of the artist or of his patron. The Shiva Shakti pictures were popular, especially among those who were actually worshipping them, and they were clearly produced in large numbers in the hills.

Like of Shakti, paintings of Shaiva themes are in large numbers. The sets dealing with the Shaiva legends are not very many, but it is the isolated, single pictures which are found in very large numbers. One of the most important sets of the Shiva theme deals with the birth of Kumara, a theme which Kalidasa had treated in his Kumarsambhava. These Shiva Purana illustrations were quite clearly the subject of a very extensive set which was acquired from the collection of Mian Ram Singh of Bhawarna for the Chandigarh Museum.

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1. These twentyfour sketches were of a very small size and had inscribed names describing each Devi and her corresponding Vaishnava incarnation.

2. See, Chandigarh Museum, Nos. 562-614. The numbers of this set do not run in a series and there are other paintings of the same set bearing different numbers also.
The story is told in great detail and with obvious love, because here at last was a Shaiva story in which the artist had the occasion to delineate, as in the Krishna theme pictures, little incidents and details of human interest that he delighted in. There are in it not many mystically or religious overtones; it is a straight narration of a story which had human interest, unlike many pictures of the Shiva theme which are more or less hieratic in significance. In the National Museum at Delhi are several leaves of another set of pictures of a Shaiva story, but the set is not complete. Shiva is seen, quite often in Pahari paintings, as Bhairava. He appears blue complexioned, four armed, with a skull cap, sword, trisula and damaru, seated on a tiger skin. An inscription in Takri on the reverse of a painting of Shiva as Bhairava says, "If Mahadeva be favourable, there will be continual increase, you will be freed from dharma, but you should still practice dharma." Shiva and Parvati appear in a large number of pictures wandering around in the hills, with a faithful Nandi always with them, and sometimes together with their children.

1. National Museum, No. 63.1158 and others. There are 11 pictures of this set.
2. Coomaraswamy, Catalogue, 85. Reproduced on pl. XVII.
Paintings of the *Shiva-Parivara* or the family of Shiva which show Shiva, Parvati, with Ganesh and Skanda or Karttikeya, are numerous. And one of the most beautiful paintings from the Punjab hills show Shiva on Mount Kailash telling Parvati the secret of the universe while the night is silent and the world is still. Parvati is lying on the ground resting her head on the lap of Shiva who is seated. She has fallen asleep while the secret of Being is conveyed to her by the Lord. We find Shiva again consuming large quantities of bhang, being worshipped by the Rishis, or destroying Kama in the fire of his third eye, because Kama has dared to arouse emotions that he had discarded following the self-immolation of Sati. Paintings of Shiva and Parvati sporting in the water, or Parvati doing penance, of the *panchagni, tapa*, are also found. But of special significance are paintings which are not directly Shaiva in character but in which the Shaiva element comes in almost by instinct, or compulsion. In numerous sets of pictures which do not have anything at all to do with


2. Rep. in Khandalavala, *P.M.P.*, fig. 75. There are many paintings of this theme in different collections.

3. Rep. in Commaraswamy, *Catalogue*, Pl. LVIII. This theme occurs in the Shiva Purana series of the Chandigarh Museum also.

4. In the Bhawarna collection in the Chandigarh Museum, No. 490-593.
the Shalva themes, we find, for instance, Shalva temples which have been painted. In a Nala Damayanti drawing, for example, in the background one can see a Raja moving towards a Shivalaya. When a village portrayed or when a little hamlet is seen, it is the Shiva temple which occupies a prominent position. And, of course, in the paintings of the Ragamalas, it is the Shiva Linga which comes in for a great deal of worship. In Ragas and Raganis like Bhairava and Bhairavi, Bhipalasis and Devgandhari, we find Shiva being worshipped either in his anthropomorphic form or in his phallic emblem. In a painting of unusual interest, we find Raja Ishwarl Sen of Mandi worshipping Shiva seated on a high throne.

The inscription says that the painting was made in the year 1808 by the artist Sajnu. The descent of the Ganges found great favour as a theme with a Pahari artist.


2. Collection of Raja Baldev Singh. Also see, Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue*, Pl.CXII.

3. The iconography of many of the Ragas requires worship before a Shivalinga.


5. The artists Nainsukh and Gursahai both made sketches of this theme in the bahi of their family priest at Haridwar. The Bahi is now with Sardar Ram Rakha,
And at Dharamsal, near Bharwain in the Hoshiarpur
district, Rai Bahadur Baya Ram Sahni, found, in 1933,
paintings, among which was a set illustrating the Shiva
Mahaman stotra. For the purposes of this section the large
set of illustrations of the Kiratarjuniya in the Aundh
Museum must be considered as a Shaiva theme, for the
point of the story is Arjuna receiving the blessings of
Shiva after an arduous contest.

There are, besides sets and illustrations of the
Shiva and Shakti themes, numerous non-Vaishnava themes,
treated by the Pahari artist. These have been described
in fair detail by many scholars, but it is useful to
remind ourselves, at this stage of the discussion, of
their existence. Sets which have nothing at all by
way of religious content were quite clearly very
popular. Among these were romances or Pauranik legends,
which we have considered above. But, apart from the
Usha-Anirudha, or the Rukmini Harana, the Krishna-Sudama,
or the Parijata stories, all of which have some Vaishnava
affiliation, however remote, we have sets which have
nothing whatsoever to do either with Vaishnavism or the
worship of Shiva and Shakti. When the artist Bhagwan

2. See, Moti Chandra, "Kangra Valley Art in the Aundh
produces a version of the Bhagavata Purana for Raja Pritam Singh of Kulu in the end of the 18th century, we also find him painting a set of the Malati-Madhu, a theme that is purely secular and romantic in character. Another theme that drew the attention of the Pahari artist was the story of Madhavanala and Namkandia. Stories which are purely folk and which were popular in the plains of the Punjab were also painted by the Pahari artist. We have, thus, illustrations of the Sohni Mahiwal, the Laila Majnu, and the Sassi Punnu themselves also. And a picture of great loveliness in the Bharat Kala Bhavan shows Sohni swimming across the river to meet her lover on the opposite bank. A painting of the Sassi Punnu legend, possibly in the hand of Nainsukh, is in the National Museum. The Laila Majnu theme is to be seen in an illustrated text in the Bharat Kala Bhavan at Banaras. Other themes which have not been treated of extensively in miniature, but are occasionally seen in frescoes,

1. See, Jagdish Mittal, "An illustrated manuscript of Madhu-Malati and other paintings from Kulu", Lalit Kala, Nos., 3 & 4.
2. See, Khandalavala, P.M.P., fig. 11 and fig. 17.
5. The manuscript is in Persian, but the painting is quite clearly in the Kangra style. Also see, Coomaraswamy, Catalogue, 104, for Rajasthani versions.
represent the story of Raja Gopi Chand and Bhartrihari,
or of Raja Rasalu and Sirkap. The figures of Baz Bahadur
and Roopmati appear ever so often, as do numerous genre
themes. A romance of which clearly many versions were
produced, on the evidence of Dr. Hirananda Shastri, was
the Hamir Hath. The most well-known of these was
painted in the first decade of the 19th century by
the artist Sajnu at Mandi. Illustrations of bordesh
lore and paintings of birds and animals were apparently
quite common also.

Of altogether different and more intimate
interest are paintings which deal with erotic themes.
These, for reasons that one can easily guess at, have
not often been published extensively. But there is very
little doubt that the artists produced extensive sets which
were illustrations of treatises on sex like the Kamasutra.

1. Frescoes of this theme occur on the walls of the
Nalbadeshwar temple at Sujanpur.

2. See, paintings reproduced in the Art of India and
Pakistan, colour plate D; Sherman Lee, Rajput Painting,
Pl. XXI. Also see, Khandalavala, P.M.P., 47-48.

Art and Industry, XVII, No. 132, October 1915. This
theme appears to have been very popular because of its
dramatic content.

4. See, e.g., the paintings reproduced in French,
Himalayan Art, Pls. XVII, XVIII; S.N. Gupta,
Catalogue, 137-141.
the Rati Rahasya or the Kokasamā. In nearly all collections in the families of the Pahari artists we find numerous paintings or drawings of this description. Whole sets of these, with verses from texts, were produced apparently in response to demand by the part of the Rajas whose personal lives were often heavily romantic, and desires libidinous. The erotic scenes in which various postures of sexual congress are graphically shown, were used by the artists as stock themes from which they produced little vignettes in paintings which were not otherwise erotic in content. In pictures of Kamakandala, for example, in Nala Damayanti drawings, or even paintings of the Brāhmaṇa showing the dalliance of the hero and the heroine, the artist brought in these postures quite conveniently. The very frank passages in the Gita-Govinda in which Krishna and Radha are seen in the physical act of love at the slightest pretext; The scene in the

1. In the collection of Chandramohan Das of Ustehr, Chandu Lal of Rajaul, Bhupendra Prakash of Rajaul and Sukh Ram of Nadaun, large sets of these themes were available.

2. See, Khandalavala, P.M.P., fig. 17.

3. See, Coomaraswamy, Catalogue, Pl. XLV.

4. In the paintings showing the winter season, in particular, does the artist avail himself of the opportunity to show the physical closeness of the hero and the heroine.
Ranjha Ramayana, in which Ravana enjoys Rambha on the mountain side, is indicative of this. There is quite clearly no demand of the situation in the text which briefly speaks of Ravana forcing Rambha, but the elaborate details into which the artist goes here are indicative of his instinctive desire to bring in an erotic vignette into his narration. In the same Ramayana set, when Lanka is shown at night, everywhere, in balconies and chambers, couples are portrayed by the artists as making love. Surely the artist had other means of showing that the scene was one of night.

The attempt, in life, at reconciling opposing elements in religion has its counterpart in painting. Several paintings, thus, show composite deities. Typical of these is a painting from the Mankot collection in the Chandigarh Museum. It shows a figure seated on a tiger skin, which is placed on an elephant's skin, which in turn is placed on a lotus flower beneath which is the naked body, clearly of Bhairava. In the very feet description

1. Bharat Kala Bhavan, No. 2616. In the same set, in No. 2227, where the spring season in the forest is shown, Rama and Sita are also depicted as making love inside a cave.

2. Bharat Kala Bhavan, No. 2559.

of the _asana_ or the seat on which the composite deity is seated, we get a combination of the elements which are usually associated with different deities. The naked body of Bhairava represents here the _asana_ of a Tantrik Devi, the lotus flower the _asana_ of Vishnu, the elephant skin the _asana_ of Shiva and the tiger skin again that of Shiva or the Devi. But of even greater interest is the principal figure which has eighteen hands; its heads in three tiers; there are five Shiva heads surmounted by four heads of Brahma, on which is the head of Vishnu. The nimbus round all the heads is, as was demanded by the composition, elongated and oval. The deity wears a necklace of flowers and skulls and _rudraksha_, serpents entwine the body and all the eighteen wrists. In the hands, again, are held objects that represent iconographically the different _avatars_ of Vishnu or the manifestations of Shiva or the Devi. Thus, in the various hands, are held a _gada_, a _shankha_, a _chakra_, a noose, an arrow, a lotus, an _ankusha_, _trisula_, a _khadga_, a spear, a skull, a bowk, a small sword, a hatchet, and a rosary. One of the hands is in the _dhyana mudra_. Without any doubt this is a painting which attempts to bring together the various conflicting faiths. This is also in keeping with the general concept of "Haribhara" which arose throughout India in this period. A deity which combined features of Vishnu and Shiva was worshipped under this name; from the hills
These are visual renderings of this theme.

In one of these paintings, again from the Mankot collection, the left half of the deity consists of Shiva and Parvati; in this half a necklace of human skulls, serpents and the moon on the brow appear; the hair is knotted and there is a rudraksha mala; a trisula, a drum and a bowl of poison in the two left hands completes the left or the Shaiva half of the picture. The right half consists of the Vishnu or Hari aspects; Lakshmi is in the lap; there is a mukuta, a flower, garland, a chakra and a sankha are held in the two right hands. The figure, combined, is seated on a lotus throne.

There are other paintings like 'Panchmukhi Hanuman' showing a body which has ten hands and five heads which belong to Hanuman, a boar, an ass, a garuda and a tiger, all of which represent the same attempt at bringing diverse elements together. In this context a most unusual picture remains to be noticed; this is in the Bharat Kala Bhavan. It shows the bull Nandi, an

2. Chandigarh Museum, No. 1229. Also see, No. 267.
whose back is seated Shiva wrapped in a shawl which has, however, an opening to show the small figure of Parvati placed in a hollow near the heart of Shiva. At the feet of the bull, seated cross-legged, but only partially visible, is a devotee, possibly a Raja. We can only see a part of his head; the face is mostly hidden because in the lap is seated quite firmly Vishnu himself. Vishnu is whispering something into the ears of this devotee. This apparently confusing or inexplicable picture is highly significant, because it refers to a tradition which had grown and was prevalent even in the times of Tulasi Das, and which represents again an attempt at reconciling the two principal faiths, the worship of Shiva and the worship of Vishnu. According to this belief, a devotee of Vishnu, if visited at the time of his death, if his worship is true, by Vishnu himself who whispers into his ears the words "Shiva! Shiva!" so that it is with these words in his ears that the devotee dies. And then, of course, this being the highest boon that he could have asked for, he achieves salvation. In a like manner when a devotee of Shiva is about to die, it is Shiva himself who comes and whispers into his ears the name of Vishnu. By the two deities thus, exalting the name of the 'rival' deity in this manner, the two faiths are brought together.

1. I am grateful to Rai Krishna Das Ji for explaining the significance and the meaning of this tradition.
The devotee also receives in this manner the blessings of both. The painting of this theme holds a strange fascination. It is a work from Mandi considering its drawing and dry colouring. We cannot see the face of the Raja in this painting. But it is not the figure which is important; it is the concept.

In feelings, as in the themes, there is quite clearly no great edge that Vaishnava paintings possess over paintings of non-Vaishnava themes. One does see quite clearly the lyricism and the tenderness which belongs to paintings of the Krishna theme. The mystic undertones of the Krishna Lila, the manner in which the ordinary occurrences like the cows returning at the "hour of cowdust" are idealised and transformed in the hands of the Pahari artist, have all been commented upon. And there is no gainsaying the fact that paintings of the Vaishnava themes contain a marvellous vision, the key to a mystical experience. But in the paintings of the Shiva and the Shakti themes, also, is present tremendous feeling and depth. A painting of the Kangra school which represents Shakti as the power of death or destruction has been well described. "Here the Goddess, jet-black,

2. Cf, Coomaraswamy, Rajput Painting, I, 58.
in skin and bones, fierce and grimling, devouring the flesh of a king whom she has slain in the lonesome night, and whose crown, sword and garments are flying on the rock-bound river bank. At a distance is the white, shining temple of Shiva with the crescent moon overlooking it. The swift current of the river as it flows down the rock symbolises time (kala) that swallows up prince and peasant alike. The peace and serenity of Shiva (enshrined in the form of the white marble lingam) is in profound contrast with the swirl of the river and the destructive fury of Kali that represents the mighty cosmic rhythm of creations. The Tantrik paintings containing the shyanas of the Devi in her multitudinous aspects are, at their best, diagrams of sheer mystical power. If the intention of the artist was here to paint pictures which represent the devotion and the intense concentration that is inherent in the concept, very little else could be superior to these. In terms of tenderness, scenes like Shiva and Parvati sporting in water, or Shiva narrating the secret of the universe to Parvati, come close to the highest point of excellence reached in the sentiment by the Pahari artist in his delineation of the Krishna theme. If there is an accent on power and fierceness, in the pictures of the Shiva or Shakti themes, it is because in those cases it is the subject matter which demands
this treatment. It is not that in these paintings the artist is incapable of tenderness, or is not aware of the mystical content. On the other hand he is only too well aware of the content of faith which centred around the worship of Shiva and Shakti. And in his paintings of these themes, at least in the very best of them, he realises these concepts magnificently in visual terms.