CHAPTER ONE

THE EARLY FAITHS

Society in the hills is easily described as Hindu. Even though there are indications of early pockets of Buddhism in the hills in some areas, and there were even faint traces of Jainism, by and large, the faith of the people was Hindu all over the hills from the very early times. But nearly all writers are agreed on the subject that it is an unorthodox kind of Hinduism which prevailed in the hills. We frequently hear the unusual expression, "Hinduism of the Himalayas", which leads us to believe that it is a special kind of Hinduism which obtained in the region of the Punjab hills. It may not be

1. There are references in Hiuen-Tsang to Buddhist stupas and monasteries at many places in the hills. The inscriptions at Chari and Kanhiara afford clear evidence of the existence of Buddhism at an early date. There are even the remains of a stupa at Chetru near Kangra. But by that time we speak of, nearly every vestige of Buddhism had vanished from this area except where it survived in a vestigial form.

2. The existence of many Jain images from the hills points to this. Even as late as the 15th century a party of Jainas undertook a pilgrimage to Kangra. See, Mul Raj Jain, "A Jaina Pilgrimage to Nagarkot in S.1484", Procs. of the 13th A.I. Oriental Conf., 1946, 399.

3. In the Kangra district, e.g., the Muslims formed not more than five percent of the population in 1883-84. Kangra D.G., I, 1.

4. H.A. Rose wrote several articles under this title in the Indian Antiquary between 1903 and 1907.
wholly true of all parts of the hills - it is especially perhaps not true of the foot hills, but as one advances into the hills and gets into the inner part of the Himalayas even though one is still inside the area of the Punjab Hills, the faith of the people starts getting more and more unrecognisable. It becomes more and more permeated with practices which are not any longer encountered in the plains of the Punjab, and the description that: "the religion of the people of Kulu is a species of Demon worship, upon which a certain form of Hinduism has been grafted" is accurate. "They hold in honour the greater names of the Hindu mythology and reverence the temples that contain statues of the noticeable God but their affections are more particularly concentrated on their own local deities (devatas), whose help they invoke in trouble, and by whom they swear when taking an oath. The temples erected to these local deities are to be found in every village and hamlet of the valley and are supported by grants of land assigned for the purpose in former days by the native Rajas". Again and again one encounters opinions to this effect and well-informed writers describe

   Cf. "Throughout Kulu ... the faith is Hinduism, but it is not the religion of the orthodox ...." A.F.P. "Jarcourt, The Himalayan districts of Kooloo, Lahoul and Spiti", 192.
the faith of this region in general as one which is
especially "syncretic": one in which an animistic
religion has been merged with the Brahmanical faith which
arrived from the plains. Even though this gives it a strange
character, this kind of Hinduism can be called in a sense,*
truer kind of Hinduism, for it is more ancient and
probably preserves practices which were followed at an
earlier time rather than those which came to be evolved
at a later period of Indian History. True or not, orthodox
or "sadly un-orthodox" it is a form of faith which is not
without interest and which for the present study is
exceedingly important.

Among the people of the hills, the most popular
deities from the very early period appear to have been the
Goddess under her several names and Shiva, also under
diverse names. When Dr. Vogel makes a statement like
"Devi is indeed the deity most widely worshipped by the
rural population of the Punjab Himalayas", he is stating
the bare truth arrived at by a long stay and observation

1. C.F. Oldham, has, in a penetrating note in the Panjab
Notes and Queries, II, Sept. 1885, 199-200, described
the process of the absorption of non-Brahmanic Hinduism
in the Hills.

"...though Hindus in name, and honouring the name
of the Hindu divinities, they are practically
demon-worshippers whose religious zeal is in
proportion to their superstition."

3. H. Geetz, Early Wooden Temples of Chamba, VII. The
words are of Dr. Vogel who has written the foreword
to this volume.
in this region. The "malignant and terrible Kali Devi" as H.A. Rose put it, was widely worshipped in Kangra. In Chamba also the two deities most widely worshipped were Shiva and Devi, and the reason advanced by at least one historian for this situation is that Shiva is stated to have resided in this area for a considerably long period. The Shivabhumi, Kailash, is said to have been in the region of Chamba. The popularity of the Naga and Devi Cults also is not only commented upon by several writers but they are described as being "the oldest in the hills" and as worthy of "being regarded as in part at least, of aboriginal origin". Repeatedly, thus, we find that Shiva, Devi and Naga are mentioned in the context of the hills. They are deities who are identified with the people of the region and who have been worshipped for the longest period of time according to the records available.

In his Early Wooden Temples of Chamba, Dr. Goetz refers to the religious situation in Chamba as "abnormal".

He refers to a host of curious godlings such as Sindhu Bir, Mundlikha, Mahasu, Jamlu, Narsingh, Sidhas whose antecedents he finds difficult to trace. To an outsider the situation would indeed appear to be slightly confusing because many of these names are entirely unknown outside the areas of the Punjab hills and do not form a part of the orthodox Brahmanical pantheon.

EARLY EVIDENCE FROM THE STATES

For this enquiry, however, it is not enough to make a general statement of this sort. And it would be useful to go into the religion of the various states, at least some of the principal ones, to ascertain which of the gods and goddesses were either the most ancient or the most popular in those regions. One could not do better than begin with Kangra, the principality which is perhaps the most ancient in this region, at least in the eastern group of States and from which many offshoots emerged. A folk song relating to Kangra and praising Kangra begins by saying: "O mother, this Kangra made by you is a Vāikuntha". The address to the mother is not without


2. Of the antiquity of the ruling dynasty of Kangra, D. Ibbetson wrote (Punjab Castes, 160): "There (Kangra Hills) a peaceful race with no ambition ... may have quietly lived for thousands of years, and their royal dynasties may have been already ancient when Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt and the Greeks were steering their swift ships to Troy".

significance because she is the deity whose name occurs first of all to a person living in this region. This is not without reason. The Devi or the Mother Goddess is the tutelary deity of the dynasty which ruled Kangra for countless centuries, the Katoches. The founder of this family, the first Raja "sprang to life in full proportion, like Minerva from the brow of Jove, created from the perspiration of the brow of the Goddess" enshrined at Kangra. The Katoches even to this day consider themselves as the "santan" or the children of the Devi and when a Rajput of Kangra is believed to be especially favoured by the Goddess, or especially lucky, it is said of him that "the Goddess always walks by his side". The fact that the Katoches do not consider themselves to be of human origin but born of the Goddess herself is preferred to again and again in the history of the Kangra Dynasty and one gets material evidence of this. The temple of the Devi, referred to as Ambika, inside the fort of Kangra is believed to have been established by Raja Susharma Chand, who is said to have lived in the days of the Mahabharata. In the days of Raja Dharam Chand, a contemporary of Akbar,

3. Thakur Shamsher Chand of Bijapur, interviewed.
the Goddess is said to have appeared to him in a dream and asked him to build a temple in her honour inside the Kangra Fort again. In the temple at Tira above Sujanpur, which was the capital of the famous Sansar Chand for several years, the highest point is occupied by the temple of the Devi. Throughout the historical accounts of Kangra we get numerous references to what is one of the most well known places of pilgrimage in the hill areas, the temple of Vajreshwari Devi at Kangra itself which is one of the most celebrated shrines not only in these parts but perhaps in the whole of northern India. The number of pilgrims and the distances from which they travel to this shrine is itself eloquent of this fact, and there are records which speak of this from early times. The Muslim historian Farishta refers to the relation of the Kangra Rajas with the Goddess. Even earlier than that, the idol of the Goddess and the episode in which it was first destroyed or carried away and then was replaced

2. This temple occupies a corner, but is at the highest point in the Tira palace and fort.
4. Many of these references can be found in Hutchison & Vogel. The priests at the temple have also in their possession numerous early documents.
after the invasion of Mahmud og Gharni are described.  
And then there is the account of Abul Fazl on the subject.  
"Nagarkot is a city situated upon a mountain with a 
fort called Kangra. In the vicinity of this city upon a 
lofty mountain is a place, Mahamai, which they consider as 
one of the works of divinity, and in groups pilgrimage to 
it from great distances...."

There are interesting references in William Finch,  
3 in the travels of Edward Tatty, Thevenot, and others, but 
probably the most interesting and the most irreverent is 
the reference in the memoirs of the Emperor Jahangir  
himself: "A world has here wandered in the desert of 
error. Setting aside the infidels whose custom is the 
worship of idols, crowds on crowds of the people of Islam, 
traversing long distances, bring their offerings and pray 
to the black stone (Image)."

There is mention of sacrifices 
in the temple and to "lacs and lacs" or "krers and krors"  
6 of people and one is left in no doubt at all that this

3. Ibid., 294.
5. Fuzuka-i-Jahangiri, II, 224.
is indeed one of the premier religious establishments in the Punjab Hills.

Yet another of the great religious establishments dedicated to the Goddess in the Punjab States is the temple of Jwalamukhi, "the goddess of the flaming mouth". There are numerous references to the temple in histories and in travel accounts, and many princes who came and established themselves in the hills are said to have come originally with a view to pay homage at the temple of Jwalamukhi, so that in a sense this temple becomes central to the faith of the Punjab Hills. There is an elaborate legend which speaks of the Sati, the wife of Shiva, who had immolated herself in the fire of the yagna of her father, and who was then carried by Shiva, who distracted with bleak sorrow, went about with her half-burnt corpse on his shoulder from place to place. It is said that her head fell here and when Shiva saw this he ordered that the fire which sprang from the earth on that spot event should be confined to this mountain till the end of eternity. This legend is th


2. Among the travellers who referred to the temple were George Forster, William Moorcroft, Baron Hugel, Vigée and Honigberger.

3. This story is well known and is repeated by the Bhojaki priests of the temple in all its detail to the visitors.
devoutly believed in by pilgrims and there are numerous
references to visits by people from outside to the temple
of the goddess Jwalamukhi, including to a visit by the
Emperor Feroz Shah Tughlak which is hotly denied by Muslim
historians. The popularity of the Jwalamukhi shrine
continues to this day and even though there are no sacrifices
of any part of the body in the fire which comes out of the
rock inside the shrine, there are large fairs held at
Jwalamukhi twice in a year, during the Navaratras of Chetra
and Asuj. The third major religious establishment in
Kangra which is of many antiquity, but which is not
resorted to as a place of pilgrimage now, is the famous
temple of Vaidyanath, now called Baijnath. A well known
known Prasasti of the early 13th century gives us some
indication of the antiquity of this noble monument. It
appears to have been regarded as one of the twelve Jyotiri-
lingas of great phallic monuments in the country and there

1. See, A.S.R., V, 172-175. General Cunningham believed
despite all contradictions by the Muslim writers, that
the Sultan did visit the temple, perhaps out of curiosity.
Also see, Kangra D.G., 1883-84, I, 254-255, for a general
description of the temple and references to it.

2. The Navaratras, or "nine nights", are sacred to the
Devil, and fairs are held in temples.


4. See, G. Buhler, "An Additional Note on the Baijnath
Prasastis," Epigraphia Indica, Vol. II. Dr. Buhler
had first read the date as A.D. 804 which was
connected later by Dr. Vogel to A.D. 1204 - in his
"Ancient Monuments of Kangra", A.S.I., A.R., 1905-06,
II, 16.
used to be a great fair held here on the occasion of the Shivaratri. There are indications that the rulers of Kangra paid great devotion to Bajnath. The devotion that the people of these parts had for Shiva apparently found a channel in the homage that was paid to the temple of Bajnath and subjects alike.

In that other ancient principality, Chamba, in which we are fortunate in that a great many ancient inscriptions have survived, we have clear evidence that the early faith centred around the cults of Shiva and the Devi. There are some early inscriptions that mention the god Varuna, but these are mainly fountain-slabs inscriptions and probably were brought in because they were appropriate to the location, having been erected over fountains. But other inscriptions or images on rocks do clearly relate themselves to the Goddess or to Shiva. One of the earliest inscriptions in the hills, not only in Chamba, is that which is on the stone image of the Devi at Suan. It was dedicated by Rajanaka Bhogata, the son

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1. The temple is said to have been restored in part, by Maharaja Sansar Chand, in the early years of the 19th century.


3. Frequently these inscriptions are accompanied by roughly carved figures of Varuna also.

4. One of the oldest epigraphs discovered in Chamba is at Gum on the road to Brahmaur and consists of an invocation to Shiva. See, Vogel, Antiquities, I, 32.

of Sommata of Kishkinda. In another inscription we have the clear mention of a Shivalinga and this inscription also mentions that the place where it was found was originally called "Shivapuri". The most significant of these inscriptions, and also perhaps the most interesting, are those which come from the reign of King Meruvarman, of the 7th century A.D. These are related to the famous temple of Brahmour, the ancient capital of Chamba, and the temple of Chatrarhi. At Chatrarhi the Devi is called Lakshana, and hers is one of the most magnificent images found in the Punjab Hills, and one of the images is that of the standing bull, Nandi, which clearly relates itself to the faith of Shiva. The temple in which the Nandi image is found is called Manimahesh, and obviously was dedicated to Shiva from very early times even though the structure which exists at that place is rather recent. The Devi image is in situ and the inscriptions on the Sakti Devi idol and the Nandi image leave little doubt that Meruvarman himself was a devotee of Shiva and the Goddess. The temple at Chatrarhi is even to this day a place of pilgrimage.

The great idol fashioned by the artist Gugga is still resorted to by the people of this region and homage is paid to the Goddess, possibly even to the craftsman, by people who come from long distances. The huge Shivalinga which is set inside a stone yoni, symbol of Parvati, at the Mani-Mahesha temple is also resorted to by the people and this follows an early tradition kept alive almost unbroken over a long period of time. Three centuries after Meru-Varman, Raja Sahila-Varman is said to have been a devotee of Shiva also and there are many legends which are connected with him, the foremost among them being that he had constantly a group of 84 Jogis, worshippers of Shiva, led by Charpat Nath, with him. Sahila-Varman is said to have founded many Shaiva temples and his name is preserved in several inscriptions inside Chamba. The rulers that came after Sahila-Varman, like Soma Varman, or Jasata, have also left behind inscriptions which clearly state that they were worshippers of the same deity whom their ancestors had so clearly and devoutly adored.

From Nurpur we have some very early and very interesting evidence. This is of a numismatic character. Some


2. Hutchison and Vogel, I, 283; Goetz, Early Wooden Temples, 33.

coins which are characterised as "Audumbara" by scholars have been found from this region. The Audumbara people of which "the National god was Mahadeva or Shiva" are said to have inhabited the region of Nurpur. These coins lead one to believe that the early faith of the people of this region, around Nurpur, was Shaiva, even though there is some indication that there was a fusion of Shaivism with Buddhism and possibly even Vaishnavism in this particular period. But there are later indications that the most popular shrines in and around Nurpur were Shaiva. The oldest temple, for example, in the town of Nurpur is said to be that of Dharmeshwar, the temple with a Shivalinga which is on the little path from which one approaches the fort of Nurpur. The Trilokanath temple, about 15 miles from Nurpur, is one of the most popular in this region. Here a huge Nandi Image stands in the stream and is venerated by the people as being the vehicle of Shiva. But the family deity of the Rajas of Nurpur, the Pathanias, is not Shiva,


2. The temple is pretentious but housed till recently a bronze image which has now been stolen.

3. Chas.A, Rodgers, Revised List of Objects of Archaeological Interest in the Panjab, 44.
but Naga, the Serpent, An elaborate legend is here
told about the founder of the Nurpur dynasty, Kailash Pal,
whose Rani gave birth to a child along with whom, a snake was
also born; so the child was named Naga-Pala. This
serpent was put in a bauli at a short distance from the
place where the present town of Nurpur is. This place
came later to be called Nagabari and the serpent was
designated as the Kulai or the family deity of the
Pathanias. To this day the members of the Pathania
family revere the deity and at Nagabari one can still see
lying about strands of hair that have been removed in the
tonsure ceremonies because it is at the place of the
family deity that this ceremony must be performed. Tradition
at Nurpur, at least among the Pathania families, is very
strong.

The association of Kulu, that other ancient principality,
with the Bevi, becomes clear from the fact that Naggar the
ancient capital of the state, was known formally as the
"town of Tripura-Sundari. This seems to have been
reflective of the situation inside Kulu accurately,
because the two most important temples inside Kulu were

1. Hutchison and Vogel, I, 221.
2. Ibid., II, 32.
those at Jagatsukh, 8 miles from Naggar the ancient capital, and Doongri near Manali. The temple at Jagatsukh was dedicated to the goddess Sandhya Devi, "goddess of the Dawn". It is one of the most picturesque temples of the hills and even though it is not very early the present structure is said to have been raised in about the years 1528 A.D. It is believed to be one of the earliest temples in Kulu. The temple at Doongri near Manali, is again not very ancient, but has occupied an undoubted place of eminence in the region. It is dedicated to the Goddess Hirma or Hidimba. As a wooden temple it is one of the best of its kind in the Kulu Valley and is artistically related to the wooden temples of Chamba. Historically it is said to be connected with the prince who founded the Kulu family of rulers because it was the goddess Hidimba who gave this country as a gift to this Rajput cadet. Hidimba Devi is vastly revered in Kulu and an idea of her great power in those parts can be gauged from the fact that she continued to maintain her authority even after the introduction of Vaishnavism in the form of the idol of Raghunathji by Raja Jagat Singh, as will be seen later, in the 17th century. The Goddess Hidimba is sometimes referred to as


being the sister of the Deota Jamlu. This Jamlu of
the village Maljava in Kulu is one of the more peculiar
deities of the hills and there are plentiful records
about him. He seems to have been a curious phenomenon and
there are many stories about him. He is an angry god
essentially and even when he is not angry, he is at least
temperamental. He is different from all other gods of
the Kulu region because he alone among them all does not
visit Sultanpur in Kulu on the occasion of Dussehra,
because he does not pay homage to the idol of Raghunath.
He is sometimes taken to be another form of Jamadagni
Rishi, one of the Pauranic sages, but then this
identification is not certain. He is sometimes even taken
to be, by some, to be a Muslim deity, largely perhaps
because the sacrifices before him are by the halal
method! The people of the village of Maljava obey only
the god Jamlu and his power not only over the people
of this region but over several other villages in Kulu, and
in other areas, suggests that he must have been one of
the most powerful gods or godlings about whose origins
we do not know exactly but whose power and perhaps
antiquity is undeniable.

1. Kangra, D.G., 1917, II, 79-80; Hutchison and Vogel,
   II, 457.

2. This, if believed, would connect Jamlu with Paras Ram
   who was the son of Jamadagni.
The most ancient of temples devoted to an orthodox Brahmanical deity in Kulu is the celebrated temple at Bajaura and this is called Basheshar or Vishveshvar, Mahadeva. It is the finest ancient monument in the Kulu valley, and goes back perhaps to the 11th century. It enshrines a large Lingam, and had within its precincts several minor images, but it was damaged rather badly in the earthquake of 1905. It is interesting that of the four major deities popular in Kulu this is the only deity of whom any one outside Kulu is likely to have heard.

In the western group of states of the Punjab Hills, from the State of Basohli we have evidence of the early prevalence of Shaivism. The former capital of Basohli was at Balsur and according to popular tradition when the founder of the dynasty, Raja Bhogapala, reached the place where he founded the town, he found here a temple of Mahadeva or Shiva surrounded by thick forest. He cleared the area, repaired the temple and founded the town. It is this which later came to be the Bilvakeshwar temple which is the most highly revered temple in the region of Balsur even to this day. Nothing is known of the history of this temple. Only the antiquity of it is

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1. Harcourt, 356, 357; Rodgers, Revised List, 45.
2. Kahn Singh, 7; Hutchison & Vogel, II, 591; Vogel, Antiquities, I, 263.
suggested by the common legends that one hears, that it goes back to the days of the Pandavas. On a height at some distance from the present town of Basohli is a temple devoted to the Devi and this is called the temple of Chamunda Bhagawati. The antiquity of this, in turn, is suggested by the tradition often repeated, at Basohli, that it dates from the days of Vishvakarma himself. The temple of Chamunda is indeed greatly celebrated in these parts and a mela is held here on the occasion of the Durga Ashtami. The most popular temple in the town of Basohli is that of Milakantha Mahadeva, and with the idol which is installed inside this temple is connected a long story. This idol is reputed to have been brought by Raja Bhupat Pal who ruled Basohli towards the end of the 16th century after he conquered Kistawar. The idol is said to have been in Kistawar from the days of the Mahabharata and its being brought to Basohli by Raja Bhupat Pal is believed to have been a great feat of the Raja. There are other temples in and around Basohli, including the Trilochan Nath Mahadev and Jatajuta Mahadeva all pointing to the strength of Shaivism in this area. The famous temple of Bhagawati Sukral, 9 miles from ancient capital of Balaur, is dedicated to

1. Narasingh Das Margis, Tarikh-i Dogra Desh, 131.
2. Kahn Singh, 9, 37.
4. Kahn Singh, 73.
the Goddess which gives us, once again, in the region of Basohli, the worship of Shiva and the Devi as not only the original but the most popular form of faith.

In Bhadrakali, also in the Western group of States, the cult that is prevalent more than any other is that of the Naga. The deity that is worshipped extensively throughout the states of Bhadrakali is the Basaka Nag, Vasuki of the Puranas. There is a celebrated athan or place where the Naga is worshipped and a Kund or cistern where the Naga is said to have taken up his abode is pointed out. A long legend is narrated in which the Vasuki Naga is said to have fled from Garuda and is said to have finally saved himself by hiding in the waters of this Kund. Garuda could not affect the Naga here and returned, and then it is that Vasuki came out and settled here after having sought, significantly enough, permission from the local deity, the Devi. The legend clearly points here to a fusion between the Naga and the Devi cult in the State of Bhadrakali, still resort to the Vasuki Kund as their foremost place of pilgrimage.

In Jammu, the connection of the State with the Devi from very early times in the history of the State seems

again to be clear. The worship of Kali under the name of the Bhagawati is extensive in this region and the Rajputs of the Jamwal clan believe in the Devi as their family or tutelary deity. There are temples of Kalika or the Goddess inside all forts in the Jammu region, and fairs are held in the temples of the Devi in the Navaratras of Chetra and Asuj virtually everywhere. The situation in the temple of Bahu inside the fort, which is now more or less a deserted area, is instructive; inspite of the fact that Bahu is no longer the capital of Jammu, the temple attracts a very large number of devotees. It is not only the very large clan of Rajputs, the Jamwals, who worship the goddess, Bhagavati Kalika, but other classes of Rajputs like the Charaks who worship her. The Jammu area has a very large number of temples to Shiva also, which apparently are some of the oldest temples of the region. One of the older temples or places of pilgrimage in the Jammu region is the famous Hindu temple called Parmandal. This is a place which is widely resorted to for "obtaining a moral cleansing by


2. The presence of the Devi temples inside the forts is of special significance because the deity principally worshipped was always close to the residence of the Rajas.

bathing in its waters". This place is not very far from Jammu proper. The temple here has a very fine facade and becomes alive with pilgrims at the times when the fairs are held. According to an opinion, the atoning powers of the waters of Patrimandat, are held by the people of this region, as second only to the Ganges at Haridwar.

The state of Guler being an offshoot from that of Kangra, it is to be expected that the worship of the goddess is extensively practised there. The Devi is here, as the Kangra, the family deity. She is worshipped under the name of Bala Sundari, and there is a story which connects Raja Hari Chand, who founded the state of Guler and the town of Haripur, with her. It is said that it was her curse, and later her blessing, which was responsible first for the Raja's plight and his deliverance from it. He is said to have fallen in the deserted well when he came on a hunt from Kangra and was given up as lost or killed by his followers. It was due to the Devi's blessings afterwards that he was heard by some cowherd and came out alive from the well. Then it was that he founded the town of Haripur and the state of Guler. To this day, the chiefs of Guler

2. Ibid., 37.
worship the goddess and there is a temple dedicated to her at Harsar. Above the town of Haripur is the temple of Dandoksha Mata which is probably the most lofty and in a sense the most remote, but also the most popular, place of worship for the people of the town. The mere fact that it is hard to reach, in a sense, makes it more popular. The goddess there is said to be easily pleased and she is believed in not only by the people but also by the family of the Raina purohits who were the Rajpurohits of the State. According to the tradition preserved at Guler, the purohits of the Guler Rajas were all shaktas and it was the Dandoksha goddess who saved one ancestor of theirs, who was a purohit of Raja Bikrama Singh of Guler, when his wedding party was attacked by a Nurpur Raja.

In spite of the fact that there are many temples in Haripur proper, it is the Dandoksha temple, at Haripur, which appears to hold the greatest appeal to the people of the town. A most interesting version of the cult of Shiva comes from the area which we call the Simla Hills. There are numerous small principalities in this region, including some reasonably large ones, and among these the two most popular cults are those that might be entirely

1. Rose, Glossary, I, 319.
2. The temple is not easily accessible. But this does not in any way adversely affect the popularity of the shrine.
4. Ibid.
unknown outside these areas, the cults of Shirigul and 1 Mahasu. It seems to be reasonably certain that these names are both derivative from names of Shiva. Shirigul may well be a distortion of Shri-Gaur which is a named of Shiva and Mahasu may well be another form taken by the word Mahashiva. Shiva is worshipped extensively in this region, the, but not directly. It is the cults of Mahasu and Shirigul which attach themselves the faith of the common man. Several years ago Sir Denzil Ibbetson wrote that the Mahasu cult had the potential of becoming one of the most important cults of this region. The temples that have been raised both to Shirigul and 3 Mahasu are a legion. It is curious that the legends which have grown around these two forms of Shiva in this area are not self consistent and there are various versions of these. In fact the stories are covered with a maze of confusion. There are legends which begin at one point and then suddenly stop at a point from which another legend takes over. One does not quite know if


2. Mahasu is a deity "whose cult is making such progress that he is bound soon to take a foremost place in the hill-man's pantheon". Ibbetson quoted in Census of India, Vol. 20, Village Survey Report of Gijari.

it is a continuation of the same legend. It is instructive, for instance, to try and follow the legend of Shirigul. The cult seems to have originated from one Bhakru, a Rajput who is said to have had no offspring and was very desirous of having a son. He journeyed to Kashmir where dwelt Pannu a Pandit who bestowed upon him the boon of incarnation as children but this he was to obtain only if he married a high-caste Brahmin girl. He then got two sons Chandreshwar and Shirigul. Shirigul, on his parents' death, took up residence on the Chur Dhar which incidentally is one of the principal places associated with him even to this day. He halted once there for a brief while and then left for Delhi, where there was a struggle and then a quarrel between him and the Mughal Emperor. On being threatened Shirigul wrote a letter to Gugga Pir in Bikaner. The Pir advanced with his army to help. Chuhru the Kanet who is considered as one of the loyal Bhaktas of Shirigul, and a rounded stone is considered his symbol. Shirigul's absence was taken advantage of and he was attacked by one Attaru, and Shirigul cursed Chuhru for his weakness and defeat and he got help from Indra to kill Asura. In another account


2. Gazetteer of Sirmur State, 1904, 42.
Shirigul is made out to be a bhakta and devotee of Shiva. He is said to have gained great spiritual powers from Shiva. Later a temple was built to him and he was instituted separately as a deity. The temple of Shirigul at Churu is typical of similar temples; it is made of wood, and is square, facing east. Inside it is a smaller temple in which is kept a lingam which is six feet high.

The extraordinary accretion of legend in stories of this sort is obvious but what is interesting and significant is that these are not only widely believed in, but these appear to have been of very considerable antiquity. And in the Simla Hills, at any rate, there seems to be a precedence of the Mahasu and Shirigul cults over virtually everything else, except in very small and negligible pockets. The cult of Shirigul is very popular in Jubbal and other larger states of the Simla group. In Bashahr, however, it is the temple of the goddess Bhima Kali, at Sarahan, which is most popular. There seems to be a strange combination here of an early legend connecting the Rajput family of Bashahr of the Yadava dynasty and the Devi worshipped which seems to point to the faith of this family.

3. The ruling family traces its descent from Pradyumna, grandson of Krishna. This is interesting from the point of view of the later adoption of the family of the worship of Bhima Kali. Ibid., 5-7.
At Chahuholmi, in the Jammu group, the worship of Shiva in the form of Suddha Mahadeva, is of great antiquity. The temple of Suddha Mahadeva is also one of the most popular in this area. A tall trisula or trident, six feet in height, is stuck in the ground, here. There is a legend connected with it - which is devoutly believed in by pilgrims who resort to the place from distances. The popularity of the fair which is held here on the full moon in the month of Asadha on the day of Shivaratri sacred to Shiva is proof again of the popularity of the place. This temple, interestingly enough, is closely linked to another temple which is dedicated to Shiva and his consort Parvati under her name of Gauri. The people of Chahuholmi believe in the Suddha Mahadeva mandir virtually to the exclusion of any other deity.

In Suket the most ancient temple, according to local legend, is that of Mahadeva, which is a mile north of the Nagar town in Balh tehsil. It has a stone Lingam. The priests at the temple are Gaur Brahmins and they maintain that their forefathers came with the ancestors of the rulers of Suket when they migrated from Bengal.

1. Kahn Singh, 375; Narsingh Das Nargis, 250.
2. Gazetteer of the Suket State, 1904, Pt. A, XXIII.
But they say, and this is the interesting part of the local tradition, that when they came to this region the temple and the Shivalings were already there. This is nothing else except a way of suggesting that the temple is of great antiquity. It is significant that the story which is narrated about the Bhut Nath temple at Mandi is also given about this temple of Mahadeva near Nagar.

The Bhut Nath temple at Mandi is the most ancient temple in the town. By standards usually accepted in the hills, it may not be very old, considering that it was founded by Raja Ajbar Sen in the first quarter of the 16th century. But then it is not without significance that the town of Mandi was founded by this very Raja and this temple was the first structure raised by the Raja here. The story connected with the Bhut Nath temple is interesting. It is said that at that time this area was a wilderness and there used to be cowherds who brought their cows for grazing here. Once the Raja saw that the cows came to one particular spot and poured their milk over the rock. Puzzled by this phenomenon, the Raja ordered that the rock should be dug. When this was done, underneath, the rock was found an enormous Shivalinga. This, the Raja considered to be an auspicious circumstance. He ordered that a temple should be built over this. This was the

temple now called Bhut Nath and it became the nucleus of the town now called Mandi. It is not without significance that this story has its parallels in other parts of the country. The legends clearly are attempts at proving the antiquity of the idols. The Shiva idol apart, the ruling family of Mandi believed in the Devi as its family deity under the name of Rajeshwari. There is a temple of Rajeshwari, or Sri Vidya as she is also called, inside the Mandi palace. She is depicted as having four arms and holding the top of a man's skull (pash), an elephant goad (ankusa) a bow (dhanush) and an arrow (kansa). She wears red garments and has a half moon on her forehead. She is supported by give health and happiness. Her bedstead is supposed to Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and Shiva. Inspite of the later leanings of some other rulers towards Vaishnavism, the most popular temple in Mandi remains the temple of Shyama-Kali which is on the hill called Tarna, overlooking the Mandi town. This temple was built by Raja Shyam Sen in the end of the 17th century. The goddess is also worshipped extensively in Bilaspur where the most popular temple is that of Naina Devi.

In Kistawar in the Jammu hills, a tenth century temple of a goddess showing her with 18 arms. This is one of the most popular places of worship and there are notices of this in the accounts of travellers. Kistawar firmly becomes associated with the Atharahbhuji Devi.

A GENERAL SURVEY

What has been outlined above has been the survey of the earliest or the most popular cult in some of the most prominent states of the Punjab Hills. But it is also useful to attempt here a brief analysis of the general situation of religion in the hills. And in this situation Vaishnavism does not occupy any prominent place. Not that Vaishnavism is entirely unimportant but in this section reference is being made to that period of time in which Vaishnavism had not made any substantial impact upon the religion of the people of these regions.

A Bengali prayer to the goddess Kali runs:

"Because thou lovest the burning ground,
I have made a burning ground of my heart -
That thou, dark one, haunter of the burning ground
Mayest dance the eternal dance,
Nought else is within my heart, O Mother;
Day and night blazes the funeral pyre."

In the hills, this may not accurately be the sentiment with which the common man worshipped the goddess.

2. Coomaraswamy, The Dance of Shiva, 90.
the Devi. But songs to the goddess are most numerous and sung on all occasions by the people. The "Bhents" which are sung while people proceed on pilgrimages in large parties to the centres sacred to the Goddess, or community songs sung on occasions like marriages and births and so on - reflect quite correctly the devout faith that people felt in the goddess in these parts. What is interesting about the faith of the goddess in the hills is that she is generally worshipped here in her fierce or Tamasic aspect. It is to be emphasised that boons are asked of her on all occasions. She is to be propitiated and worshipped so that she confers prosperity upon her devotees. She is resorted to in hours of distress and of need. But the aspect that presents itself to her devotees is her terrible aspect, and numerous representations of her in temples show her as a powerful goddess, supreme and without peer. Even the names that she takes in the hills in her various temples are such as would be suggestive of the role of fierceness or destruction that she plays in the scheme of things. In numerous temples, she is celebrated as Durga, Mahisa-suramardini. Thus, for example, in the famous Chamba temple at Chatrarhi. There she appears with the trident.


2. Goetz, Early Wooden Temples of Chamba, 75-89.
in her hand about to strike the demon Mahâshasura dead.
She appears as Kali or Bhadrakali, as Chandi or Chandika, as Jawalamukhi or Jalpa, as Shakti or Bagulamukhi, as Shyama or as Chamunda. Repeatedly one sees her as a goddess who is possessed alike of power and the capacity to inflict harm upon her enemy. The association in the hill regions of the Devi with this aspect of her being has very few exceptions, the most notable among them being the temple of Vaishno Devi in Jammu region, but that, as we shall see later, is perhaps a later development and is possibly the result of the impact of Vaishnavism upon the local cults. In her normal aspect in the hills, if she does not appear only as a small pāndi or stone emblem, and if she takes on an anthropomorphic form, she is often four-armed, three-eyed, aged and terrible, wearing a necklace of skulls around her neck, carrying a khadaga in her hand, leaving no doubt at all about the character that she assumes in these regions. In view of this, it is not a matter of surprise that the cult of the Devi had become associated with sacrifices in the hills. This association is also valid in the plains. See, for example, the regular sacrifices before the Goddess in Bengal. In the hills an explanation of sacrifices which the goddess not only passively accepts, but actually "demands" is that she sacrificed her own body in the yajña ceremony of her father out of.
annoyance with the ill-treatment meted out to her husband, Shiva. The sacrifices in the temples of Vajreshwari or Jawalamukhi about which we hear a great deal in the records, are quite characteristic. There are ceremonies which are reminiscent even of human sacrifices in earlier days, even though there is none such at the present moment. Even now the occasion or the rituals of sacrifices have a terrible gruesome aspect and the ashtabali yajna or the eight sacrifices ceremony held once in 20 years in the temple at Kothi is, even today, a chilling spectacle. The full details of the ceremony have to be observed for one to gain a complete idea of its sanguine and fierce nature.

The temples of the Devi, as has been said above are innumerable and it is virtually impossible to fully describe the strength and the extent of belief in her, in hills. It is commonly believed that the forms that she took in this region were those of sisters and were thus closely linked. The seven sisters as believed in some villages of Chamba or the 360 forms assumed by the Devi at the time of installation of the temple inside the

1. This story is often repeated to justify sacrifices. The goddess herself, the priests tell the devotees, became sati and thus sanctified sacrifice.


Kangra fort are only some of the ways in which the numerous manifestations of the goddess are referred.

An interesting aspect of the Devi cult, that is relevant to the present study, because it has its counterpart is that there was a great deal of Tantrik worship in the Hills. All collections of manuscripts in the possession of the Pandits or the families of purohits in the hills that have been examined by the present writer, contained, almost invariably, manuscripts of the Tantras. And traditions recorded with some difficulty - difficulty because Tantric worshippers are reticent and do not easily speak about their personal belief - suggest that the worship of the goddess was intimately associated with Tantrism in this area. The cult of Shakti through Tantrik worship conferred the power of controlling spirits and demons, and the mystic force gained through the siddhas by the Tantriks, are all devoutly believed in, and were very much a part of the belief of the devotees of the goddess. Closely linked with Tantrik worship was the considerably wide prevalence of the Vama-Marg, "the left Handed ways of worship". This curious,

2. Among the principal collections of manuscripts seen were those of Shri Bhu Dev of Sujanpur, Pt. Mohan Lal of Samloti, Pt. Ayodhya Prasad of Al-hilal, and Pt. Agya Ram of Bani Lodi.
3. William Crooke, Religion and Folklore of Northern India, 423; J.C. French, Art of the Pala Empire, 1-2.
according to some "debased", development in the religious beliefs of the country, gave virtually every license to the devotee, in the matter of eating and drinking and promiscuity of every conceivable description, was not only intimately known in the hills but was clearly practised. The Yagnas that are in the possession of many families are indications of this and at Haripur in Guler, the temple of Dandoksha Mata to which reference has been made above, was at one time a strong centre of Vama-Margi worship. The forms of the goddess as Matangi or Dhumavati or Baglamukhi or Bala Sundari are all associated with "indulgence", in mean, drinks and debauchery. They are intimately known in the hills and the Vama Margis, esoteric and secretive as their organisation is, seemed at an earlier date to have really flourished in these region. The nature of Vama Marga being what it is, it is not possible to know the precise extent of its spread but if any deductions can be made, one is reasonably sure that there were strong centres of this worship in the hills, centres at which chakras and yantras were

4. Among these should be counted the Dandoksha temple at Haripur. Shri Mata Prasad Awasthy of Haripur had numerous Tantrik texts and mantras, in his personal possession.
freely employed and where bottles of wine to be freely drunk by the worshippers were referred to as Padma vati.

It may be unnecessary to list the temples of the Devi throughout the Punjab Hills, in any case it would be difficult, because any survey, however thorough, is bound to be incomplete. But some idea can be gathered from the lists of the Devi temples, contained in Rose's Glossary. Even so brief a survey as is contained in the Gazetteer of the Sirmur State mentions the worship of Shakti under the names of Bhangani Devi, Sai Devi, Devi Narakot, Devi Jwalamukhi, Naina Devi, a new goddess called Shakuria Devi, Doodham Devi, Lagasa Devi, Katasam Devi, Bala Sundari, among others in the Sirmur State alone.

SHIVA WORSHIP

"Whenever there is a deep glen, a natural fountain, or a cascade, the traveller will infallibly discover some traces of the great God of the Hindus, the creator and destroyer of life". So wrote Col. Tod of Rajasthan. The situation is almost accurately descriptive.

of the Punjab Hills also and understandably, because of the association of Shiva with powers of nature. Here we go back to Shiva as Rudra, the Terrible Howler of the Vedas. The manner in which the Goddis of the Hills refer to Shiva as a dweller of their own land, and call their peaks as "Shiva Bhumi" is also suggestive of Shiva's association with the hills in particular. The Goddis treat the deity as especially close to them and refer to him in endearing terms almost as if he were one of their equals. In one of their songs they mention that Mahadeva is angry and demands a kid: "when his anger is vanished, then he will give you a boy."

In the hills, the worship of Shiva, apart from being very ancient, as has been shown above from the survey of early faiths, worship in the various states of the hills, assumed forms at least as numerous as those of the Devi. And his association with forces of nature or manifestations of her is to be seen in the fact that wherever a strange natural phenomenon is to be observed, a temple to him is raised. And this is by no means a recent occurrence. Where there is a stalactite, a phenomenon that people do not understand and can only

wonder at and admire, a temple to Shiva comes into
being and is given the name of Churarhu Mahadeva,
from the constant dripping of water which forms the
stalactite. Deep inside forests or on hill tops which
are inaccessible, wherever there are phenomenon that
bewilder the common mind the presence of Shiva himself
is assumed. The temple of Shiva frequently have names
which end with "Mahadev" thus leaving no doubt about
their nature or association. Thus Kamateshwar Mahadeva
or Kaliswar Mahadeva, Narbadeshwar or Tameshwar or
Vilkeshwar Mahadeva are all temples very clearly dedicated
2
to Shiva. Apart from this there are others which have
names ending very clearly in "Nath", and this again is
indication of their being associated with, or derived
from, a cult of Shiva.

The cults of Mahasu and Shiriguly, apart, there
are others which are derivative from the main religion
of Shiva. Bhairo, a minor deity who derives his fierce
power, or his sanctity, from his association with
Mahadeva himself is widely worshipped and there is

1. This is a shrine that is very close to Nurpur town. A
large fair is held here.

2. Rose, Glossary, I, 264, There are a very large number
of Shiva Temples all over the Hills. Information about
these is to be found in detail in District Gazetteers.
An idea of Shaiva Temples, can be formed from the
fairs and festivals held there even now. See the
tables in Census of India, XIV, vii-b.
reason to believe that his worship is of great antiquity. At the village of Kothi, for example, in the temple of Bhairo, there are as many as eighteen small statues of other gods and goddesses around the principal image, indicating, perhaps, the superiority of Bhairo over them. In Kulu one of the most interesting temples, though not perhaps the most widely worshipped, is that of Bijli Mahadeva, where a swf high pole is stuck into the stone work. It is believed that this pole is struck by lightning every two years and for that reason it has to be renewed by human efforts. There is a lingam here which is also said to be destroyed by the lightning and which requires being put together every two years. The spot becomes thus sacred to Shiva who is ever renewed and remains eternal.

NAGA WORSHIP

The third major cult which can be called a native of the hills, is dedicated to the Nagas. These Nagas are, by definition, local deities, "capricious water sprites" as they have been called. But their worship

is so extensive throughout the hills that Abul Fazl wrote nearly four centuries ago about 700 places in the hills which had "graven images of snakes which they (the people of the hills) worship and regarding which wonderful legends are told". Enquiring into the religion of the hills, Mr. Emerson thought a long time ago that the majority of the gods of Mandi belonged to the serpent group and the conclusions of Dr. Vogel about the extent of Naga worship in the hills were not very different.

The Naga temples are unpretentious, because of their being essentially of local importance, and are usually situated inside the clump of trees, consisting of a square cella on a plinth with a conical roof. This is nearly the same type of temples which are raised to the local Devis. Attached to the temple of the Naga is often a Chela who dances or who is possessed by the Naga. Each Naga has a Mela or an annual fair. Some of the Nagas are worshipped in an anthropomorphic form, images showing a hood behind the head of the deity. The manner in which the worship of the Naga proliferated appears to be referred to in a strange legend which is recorded by Dr. Vogel from

2. Ibid., 261-262.
3. Ibid., 250.
4. Ibid., 258.
Kulu. In this legend it is said that about 5000 years ago - the "date" is worth recording - in the village of Gosala in Kulu, a certain peasant woman of the Kanet class went up the roof in red clothes to look up the corn which she had spread there to dry. In the cool breeze she fell asleep and she was in this posture when she was seen by Basaki Nag who fell in love with her and bore her up in the air. But he told her never to raise the hair of his head with her hand. Once when the Nag had fallen asleep she performed the forbidden act and saw magically the roof of her house, at which tears welled up in her eyes. The tears fell on the face of the sleeping Naga upon which he made her his wife. To her he said, "Whatever shall be born of thy womb thou must worship". Then she found herself back on the roof. After 9 months she gave birth to 18 snakes on the same day. These she put in a large earthen pot of the kind which in Kulu they call bhandal. In that pot she made 18 holes and putting the milk of her breast in a vessel she used to regularly feed and worship them with incense. After four or five months she had occasion to go to her mother's

house. Once, in her absence, her mother-in-law put incense in a large spoon placing fire on it and went near the snakes to pay worship to them. The snakes on hearing her come put their heads out. At that sight the mother-in-law dropped the spoon containing the incense upon which fire had been placed so that the incense with the fire fell into the pot in which the snakes were kept. Consequently the snakes escaped from the pot and fled in all directions. Out of these, and this is significant from the point of view of the legend, two went to Mandi and Suket and two went to Lahul. As in the case of the temples of Devi and Shiva, the temples of the Naga are very numerous and they bear different names. The records from the hills simply term with these lists of Naga temples throughout the area and not all the temples are dedicated to the most important of them all, Vasuki, or Basak, as he is called in the Punjab Hills.

VILLAGE DEOTAS

A special class of godlings who are peculiar to the hills is generally referred to under the generic

1. Most of the temples are listed in the District Gazetteers. Very detailed account of the popular temples is found in Vogel, Indian Serpent Lore, 119. Pt. Sukhchain of Kumaressin has collected a large number of legends about these Deotas. See, his "Legends of the Godlings of the Simla Hills", Indian Antiquary, LIV, June 1925 & July 1925.
name of the "Deotas". There are many accounts of the Deotas in the Hills, and some of them have afforded some amusement to outsiders who could not help noticing that there were deotas who fell ill, whose houses were occupied by their opponents, or who in a fight with their rivals lost an eye or even died. Gore was a little puzzled and then amused at "these stones smeared with vermilion", and so would perhaps anyone else be if he were not familiar with the power held by the deotas in the hills. The names of the Deotas, again, are diverse. Endlessly long lists can be tabulated of the temples of the Deotas. But what is significant is the faith of the people in them. The chelas who are invariably attached to their temples are enormously important individuals in their small communities, and the deotas command almost total obedience. Whether it is Bijat or Junga, Bijju or Dum, the point that is important about the belief in deotas is that while one particular Deota in a village may not be very ancient, the deotas as a class appear to have been worshipped from very remote times. Individual deotas seem to have been

1. Pt. Sukhchain of Kumharsain has collected a large number of legends about these Deotas. See, his "Legends of the Godlings of the Simla Hills", Indian Antiquary, LIV, June 1925 & July 1925.

2. Gore, Lights and Shades, II.

3. This can be done with the aid of the district Gazetteers and the recently conducted Village Survey Reports.
replaced, expelled or introduced, but the faith of the
people seems always to have been centred around the deotas,
especially in the area that we group under the name of
the Simla Hills States, and in some parts of Kulu. There
are deotas like parasram whose worship is extensive,
others like Jamlu who are whimsical and splenetic; still
others like Junga, whose jurisdiction or power cuts across
state boundaries. But whether they are widely worshipped
or not, it is they who are resorted to by the people
of the village at the time of crises. When an epidemic
disease breaks out, or a crop fails, or when draught
strikes, or when a wife craves the boon of a male child,
it is the deota who is approached to grant the boon. 2

What has to be emphasised in the context of the present
study is that the worship of the deotas is no new
phenomenon. Much like the minor goddesses like Maha-mai
or Sitala, the Deotas associated with one or the other
phenomenon, or explained by one or the other legend,
seem to go back a very long time in antiquity.

GUGGA WORSHIP

Allied as it is to the worship of the Naga, the
cult of Gugga, widely popular even in the plains of the

2. Crookes, Religion and Folklore, 27.
Punjab and Rajasthan, has its devotees in the hills. There are folk songs sung in honour of this hero or deity. Worshipped also in his alternative form as Mundalika, Gugga has many temples to himself in the hills. In Mandi, Basohli, Chamba, Guler, Kangra there are prominent shrines to Gugga Pir, as he is called, and there are legends about him which are widely believed in and recited. Some of these legends are not self-consistent and often point to the contradiction or variations in the Gugga story but Gugga as a hero-deity has been venerated apparently for a long time.

SIDDHAS

In saintly men or semi-divine beings, the Punjab Hills are rich and there is wide worship of the Siddhas throughout the area. This belief is probably more extensive in the outer Himalayas than in the inner area of the Hills. The Siddhas are often associated with one major deity or the other, but they are worshipped in their own right also. Baba Balak Rupi is thus closely aligned with Shiva, but the enormous following of Baba


Balak Rupi throughout the Kangra district seems to have grown up independent of Shiva worship. Another Siddha who is greatly believed in is popularly called Deot Siddha. Sprinkled all over the Kangra region are stones called the Siddha stones which are worshipped and on these are carved, rudely, a Chari or stick and two imprints of feet which become the symbols of the Baba or Siddha. These stand in the courtyard of a house or by the roadside and women worship them by pouring water or milk over them. The Siddha is thus honoured at a level of immediacy. In the western group of States there are numerous shrines to holy men, including the temple of Sidh Swankh, the Sthan of Baba Jito, Haripur Guru, Lakh Data and Baba Pattu. As in the case of the Deotas, it is not certain that these specific Siddhas have been worshipped since great antiquity. What is only certain is that belief in some holy men or the other, not necessarily these, seems to have been a part of the faith of these people.

BIRs &c.

The Bird are only in name 'minor deities', because belief in them is strong and extensive. The literal

meaning of the word is "Heroes" though its origin in this context is uncertain. But among the Birs most popular in the Hills is Sindu Bir "the whistling demon". He is a splenetic deity who gets annoyed very soon, and once he is annoyed he tends to take possession of the person who has caused him offence. He plays all kinds of pranks upon his devotees and upon people in general. But when appeased his bounty is endless. Sindu Bir has many songs, dedicated to him, and in these, he is referred to, in an obsequious manner, several epithets of flattering nature being used for him. There are many women who believe that they are possessed by Sindu Bir. The Bir is invoked on many occasions of difficulty and he almost invariably responds, especially when a devout worshipper of his is involved. There are other Birs, like Bana Birs. These are essentially spirits who reside in trees and bushes. There are Jakhs or Yakshas who take up their abodes in fields. Another deity who can be mentioned under the category of Bir or hero is Narsingh. Narsingh, properly speaking, is the name of the fourth avatara of Vishnu, but as will be

seen later, he seems here to have undergone a transformation. There are people who believe in Narsingh purely as some deity akin to a Bir who grants a child. Local tradition says that two-thirds of the women and many men of the Kangra district believe in Narsingh. Incantatory verses are addressed to Narsingh and he is said to be solver of many difficulties.

The worship of many of these deities like the Bir, again, may not precisely go back in point of time to very great antiquity, but it is clearly not of recent origin. Specific deities or specific temples may have sprung up recently, but the faith in them as a class is much older. It goes back without any doubt to a very considerably early period of time, and certainly to the period to which we refer while discussing the early faiths of the people of the Punjab Hills.