In addition to the above discussed eight State level Fairs there are hundreds of fairs which have regional importance. These fairs are the only source of recreation to the simple hill folk who live in the far flung areas of the Pradesh. Most attraction to them is their village gods who come and dance with them in the fair ground. A brief account of some of the important fairs held in the interior valleys are given below.

**CHAMBA DISTRICT**

**Mani Mahesh Fair:** Mani Mahesh is situated about 35 Kms. from Brahmaur. Lord Shiva is believed to reside there. Shiva had granted a boon to Brahmini Devi that every pilgrim must worship her before proceeding to Mani Mahesh. The oracles of keling and Mani Mahesh are consulted as to whether their pilgrimage would be successful and accepted by Shiva. Pilgrims collect at Brahmaur and start for the yatra. They reach Mani Mahesh lake after covering the distance in two stages. The pilgrims have to be at the lake on the morning of Radha Ashtami which falls 15 days after Krishna Janam Ashtami in the month of August-September. Every devout pilgrim must take a dip in the early hours of the morning which is considered as sacred. A dip in the lake is taken only after taking a dip first in the Gauri Kund which is situated about a km. before Mani Mahesh lake. In the past
only women used to take a dip in this kund but now all avail of this. Besides this two dips in the spring at Hudasar and Dhanchhch are also essential. The pilgrimage to Mani Mahesh is considered as sacred. Some of the pilgrims go bare feet. The pilgrims go on shouting Mani-Mahesh-ki-Jai. People return to Brahmaur on the 5th or 6th day. On their way back, people bring two plants growing in the area. These are called Ghugi and Banand.

Nag Fair: This fair is held in Banikhet village in the month of Asadha (June) for two days. It is held in honour of Nag Deota whose temple is situated in the village. On 22nd, people come and make offerings to the Nag Deota. On 23rd, wrestling matches are held.

Khajiar Jatar: Khajiar village is about 24 Kms. from Chamba. A Jatar is held here on the fourth night of Jaistha (May) and continues until the next morning. The fair is managed by Temple Committee of Lakshmi Narain temple, Chamba. The fair starts at 10 P.M. with the Kirtan of Khasi Nag and continues till 3 AM. The people make offerings of ghee, wheat flour, coconuts etc. to the Nag.

Salooni Jatar: This Jatar is held on 1st Jaishtha (May) every year at Salooni. On this day Nag Deota is worshipped with incense and wheat bread is offered to him. A goat or ram is sacrificed. After offering the bread to the Nag Deota it is distributed.
**Phool Jatar:** This Jatar begins in the month of Asvina (October) each year for four days at Kupha. This is the most popular fair of Pangin area. Men and women mix freely and there are great rejoicings. This Jatar is the last fair of the year and after this the region has heavy snowfall.

**Bhanjvaru Chhinj:** The fair is held on 14th Asadha (June) at Bhanjraru for a day. It is held in the name of Lakhdata. His worship is done by the people in their homes. The people believe that by worshipping the Lakhdata, cows and buffalo give more milk and ghee. Ghee is hoarded in his name. Wrestling matches are held and prizes are distributed.

**Baar:** This festival is held on the last Tuesday of Pausa (January). Kali Maie is worshipped. Local dishes are eaten in the evening.

**Sheel:** This festival is observed in Pangi on the day of Amavash of Phalguna or Chaitra. With this festival starts the spring and fear of snow is vanished. The people take ghee and chapatis in the morning. In the evening various dishes are prepared and as customary these dishes are taken on the next festival i.e. Parood. Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped.
**BILASPUR DISTRICT**

Gugga fairs are held at several places in Bilaspur on Gugga Naumi in the month of Bhadon (August-September). This is connected with the cult of Gugga which is prevalent in the lower hills and eastern Punjab.

**SOLAN DISTRICT**

**Sharad Purnima Fair:** This fair is held at Unchagaon (Kunihar) in a ground surrounding the tank for two days in the month of Magh (January-February). It starts from Purnmasi and lasts until the next day. It is held in the honour of Sharad Purnima and deota Danu Dev, whose temple is on the bank of the tank. Worship is done on Purnmasi and Sankranti days by a Brahman.

**Dev Bara Fair:** It is held at Mangal Kandar for three days from 21st March to 23rd March. This place is about 18 Kms. from Shimla on Bilaspur motor road. The fair is held in honour of deota Bars. The deity is brought to Mangal Kandar on the 20th March, and on the last day of the fair the deota is taken back to the temple at Baru.

**Bari Fair** is held in the middle of June on the top of a hill about 2 Kms. away from Sarianj village and is near Arki, the tehsil headquarter of the tehsil of same name.
Koti fair is held at Village Koti of Solan Tehsil in the month of Jeth (May-June) for a day and night. The fair is held in honour of Mira Devi whose temple is situated here.

Solan Mela: Solan Mela is the oldest and most popular fair of the Solan region. It is held in the last week of June and continues for three days.

It is held in honour of Goddess Shoolini whose temple is located in a nearby village Solan Gaon. Perhaps Solan town is named after it. This fair is used to be celebrated here before the founding of present Solan town and the capitals of Bhagat state were at Jaunaji at Koti and then at Bohach.

Initially this fair was of ruralities in which majority of villages from Bhaghat and Sirmaur states used to participate. With the passing of time this fair became so famous that people from all the adjoining states and Punjab started to come to this fair.

The fair starts with the procession of Shoolini Goddess from its temple at Solan Gaon to Durga Temple in the heart of Solan town. In the olden days the processionists used to carry lighted wood splinter torches locally called Bhalalthi in their hands, but now they bring out different tableaus, sing songs in praise of goddess and show physical feats.
In old times the people from remote villages used to travel even 40 to 50 Kms. to take part in the fair and to make purchases for whole of the year. This attracted many traders, sweetsellers, general merchants and shopkeepers to come to Solan fair and make brisk business centre for the locals.

Previously the main highlights of the fair were singing, dancing and wrestling. Wrestling was very popular in which famous wrestlers from all over India used to take part. Wrestlers like King Kong, Harbans Singh, Gama, Gunga etc. had taken part in the Dangals. The other attraction, especially for women and children was the see-saw Chandol.

Now with the passage of time and the establishment of district headquarter at Solan, characteristic changes have come to the mode of celebration of the fair. With the construction of roads to all the remote areas business activities in this fair dwindled and only little purchases are made now. Wrestling matches are still held where as Chandols has lost its ground completely. Cultural programmes, governmental exhibitions and other sophisticated luck-trying devices have replaced all what used to be in the past.

Even the crowd is slimming year by year with the impact of means of entertainment for ruralities available in villages and that old enthusiasm such as
The Seri fair of Arki is famous for bull-fights and the fair is held on 1st Shrawana (16th July). Buffalo fairs are also held in Kasumpti Tehsil in September at Kufri Koti near Mashobra, Junga and Basal in Solan Tehsil. On the second day wrestling matches are held. Animal exhibition is held and prizes are awarded to the best breed. These animals are not sold.

SHIMLA DISTRICT

One of the largest fairs of Shimla neighbourhood is that of Sipi held on a spur below Mashobra whereas a clump of magnificent deodars surround a temple of Sip deota. Offices at Shimla are closed on account of this fair. For two days from early till late at night there is a rush of spectators in buses, cars, jeeps or on foot along the Mashobra road. There is a long row of shops selling fairings in the shape of sweets and trinkets, while other traders attempt to dispose of curios as menotos of the fair. This is famous for dance, music and rural sports, likes archery.

1. Buck, Edward J. _Simla Past and Present_ Bombay, 1925, p.244.
It is a very old fair. Rana Koti used to be the chief guest during states time. This god accompanied the first Rana of Koti when he emigrated to these hills from Rajasthan centuries ago and has since remained as the deity of the house of Koti.

One of the most peculiar fair of Shimla is the fair of Father-ka-khel, held at Halog about 30 Kms. from Shimla on the 2nd day of Diwali in the month of Kartik (November). This fair is held in a place called Khel-Ka-Chaunra. There are two parties. One party comes from Dhamed and other opposite directions. They get to the temple and bow before goddess. Then take their position on the two opposing hillocks. After this a person makes a signal and the opposing parties start throwing stones at each other and this goes on for about half an hour or till some one is hurt. Then two or three married scheduled caste women come running and waving their Dupatta as white flags to stop affray. The injured man goes to the temple and drips his blood there. The parties get together and a procession starts with the beats of drums an go to the ground to sing and dance. The fair used to be held on a big scale during the princely days but because of the changed circumstances it is not held no-w on such a grandeur.

Rohru Jatar is one of the important fair of Pabar Valley. This is held on the 9th and 10th Baisakh (3rd week of April). Rohru is situated on the bank of
River Pabar a tributary of Tons and Jamuna. This is connected by a bus service with Shimla. The fair is connected with the local deity known as Shikro. Before the actual date of the fair the deity tours his deitydom and returns to his temple at Rohru on the morning of 9th Baisakh and then the fair is considered open. His followers pay him homage. He too dances with his devotees and worshippers. The dances and songs go on day and night.

**Sarahan Fair**: This fair is held in village Sarahan of Tehsil Chaupal for three days in the month of Baisakha (April). The venue of the fair is the courtyard of Devta Bijat temple. Attendance of visitors is 3 to 4 thousand. People from the adjoining areas as even from far off areas of tehsil Pachhad and Pargana Tiyari and Balson area of tehsil Theog come to as the people find time to meet their relatives and friends before their busy time in the fields in the later days.

**Chunehar Fair**: This fair is held at Chunehar near Jot in Tehsil Theog every third year for two days in the month of Ashada (June-July) in honour of Devta Chitra. It is said that the Devta once fulfilled the workers of one of the ancestors of the people of Jot, Pargoya and Paluwa. 'Natti' dances with the beat of musical instruments and folk songs are enjoyed by huge gatherings to all castes and creeds.

**Deothidhar Fair**: This fair is held from 26th
Sharawana (August) for 5 days till Bhadra Sankranti in village Deothidhar in tehsil The-og. The fair is held in the honour of Devta Chikhar. Initially the fair was held for recreation after four or five years but it has now acquired a regular feature and it is held every year. 'Natti' dances with the beating of musical instruments and singing of folk songs are performed. Sometimes dramas are also staged. Ride on the merry-go-rounds is also enjoyed by the people.

**KANGRA District**

**Naoni Fair:** This fair is held in the month of Shrawanna for one day at village Balkhor Kular in Tehsil Nurpur. The fair is altogether religious and offerings are made by the devotees to goddess Nagni. As per legend an ailing priest one day dreamt that if he worship goddess Nagni he would be relieved of distress. He acted accordigly and miraculously recovered from illness. Since then the fair is held regularly.

**Mela Shah Abdul Rehman:** This fair is held on 10th and 11th Chait (March-April) in which people of all castes and creed participate. Wrestling boats is the main attraction. It is said that one Swami Srdhanand used to live in the vicinity of a graveyard at Nurpur. He is main attraction of the fair. The fair is organised by the temple committee and the local Gram Panchayat. Hindola rides are enjoyed and sweetments and articles of general merchandise are purchased by the people.
During the day and at night 'Natti' dances are performed. Cinematographic films are also shown by the Field Publicity unit of the State Government. Dramas are staged and games of Volley-ball and Kabaddi are also played. The gathering in the fair is huge. Performances by the Jugglers, magicians and acrobats add to the recreational activities.

**Dudhbahali Fair:** The fair is held near village Jaodin in tehsil Rampur on the 12th and 13th Asadha (June) every year in honour of three deities i.e. Devta Jishar, Devta Dethu of Kharan and Devta Chaturmukh of Melon in Kumarsain tehsil. The fair is organised by the Gram Panchayat of Khuni-Peanoli. 'Natti' dances are performed and dramas are staged. Cinematographic shows are arranged by the Public Relations Department. People also enjoy the ride on marry-go-rounds. The congregation in the fair is fairly large.

**Bhoj Fair:** This fair is held in village Guman in Rohru Tehsil in the month of Mangar (November) for three days in honour of Devta Bansor, Parshu Ram and Kilbaru. Devta Bansar is the presiding deity. Besides paying homage to the deities 'Natti' dances are performed by the people. Healing prophesies made by the oracles in trace and their soothing advices and blessings of prosperity to the sufferers are the main attractions. The fair attracts package crowd.
Rihali Fair: This fair is held in village Mandhor in tehsil Sooni on the 1st Shravana (July) every year since ancient times. The fair is organised to pay homage to Devta Kurgan. At this time the standing agricultural crops of the farmers are green and the people overwhelmed with the joy of greenery celebrate this fair. The fair is altogether social one gathering by performing 'Natti' dances and folk songs. At night a goat is sacrificed by the villagers in the honour of Devta Banar.

Vishnu Fair-Purag: This fair is held in village Purag of Tehsil Kotkhai on the 9th day of Baisakha (April) for three days. The fair is held in honour of Mahadev Devta. 'Natti' dances with beating of drums and tune of musical instruments and folk songs are performed. The devotees their homage to the devta. It is a social and cultural fair.

Mahasu Jatar: This fair is celebrated about 6 Kms. from Shimla-Kotkhai road near Mahasu village on the 3rd Tuesday in the month of Baisakha (May) for two days. The fair is a very old one and is held in front of the Durga Devi temple by a large gathering who throng from the neighbouring areas. It is believed that a Rana of Badoli lived in Chakroth near Mahasu. He had built Durga temple there. After the abolition of his Jagir the Rana left the village and the villagers of Mahasu constructed a temple of Durga in their own village and
to commemorate the occasion they started the fair. 'Natti' dances and folk songs are performed. Archery game is the main attraction of entertainment. At the end of the fair a goat is sacrificed.

**Barara Fair:** This fair is held in village Barara near Kumarsain and people of all castes and creed participate. The fair is held on the 1st of Jaistha (May). It is being celebrated from ancient times. Devta Koteshwar is brought in the fair and goats are sacrificed in its honour as a mark of respect. The fair is cultural and recreational and 'Natti' dances are performed. People also enjoy 'Hindola' ride. Sweetmeat sellers and other shopkeepers have a brisk business.

**Shancha Fair:** This fair is held in village Baragaon of Tehsil Kumarsain for two days every year on the 15th and 16th of Shravana (July-August). It is said that the fair was started in the year 1874 on the coronation of Rai Hira Singh of the erstwhile Sangri State. Deity of devta Bharmeshwar Mahadev mounted on a wooden palanquin (rath) is also there. Wooden columns of these two temples have ancient carvings and coins of silver, brass and copper are nailed on the front by the devotees. On the top of the roofs there are many brass "Kalash".
On the fair day people gather in front of the temple at night with burning "Mashals" in their hands and sing folk songs particular to the occasion. They have a round of the temple thrice. Villagers of the surroundings of Chopal participate in the fair and stay with their relatives. The fair is studied with social and cultural activities. As "Chiras". The aim of celebrating the fair with burning "Mashals" is to pray for the protection of the standing crops from the pests. 'Natti' dances and folk songs are the main attraction. Sometimes dramas are also staged and cinematographic films are shown by the State Publicity Department.

Rampari-Ki-Jatar: This fair is held in village Rampari of tehsil Jubbal on Theog-Hatkoti road. The fair is being celebrated since ancient times and last for 3 days. Men, women and children attired in their best participate in the fair. 'Natti' dances are performed and sweetmeats and articles of general merchandise are generally sold. Young men, women and children enjoy 'hindola' ride. Jugglers afford additional recreation to the visitors. Main attraction of the fair is deota Shari, the presiding deity of the village.

Jagra Shari: This fair is held in village Shari of Tehsil Jubbal and it is believed that in ancient times it was a big village inhabited by Kanaits, Kolis, and Lohars. It is said that two brothers of the ruling family of Jubbal settled in the village. The Jagra is celebrated on the 5th day of Bhadra (September) every
5th year. It is a common festival of villages of Chamaru, Daker, Kiari Jubbal and Shari. The temples of Devta Banar and Devta Mahasu are in the village. The fair is enjoyed by the witness and participate in the fair. Shopkeepers from Fagu and Shimla also sell sweetmeats and the articles of general merchandise. Archery is the main attraction of the fair. Parties of Archers come from the various places. During the night 'Natti' dances are enjoyed with folk songs and to the beat of drums and tuning of musical instruments. People also enjoy in the marry-go-round.

**Showani Fair, Jali:** This fair is held in village Jali in honour of Nag Devta whose idol of Ashtdhatu (eight metals) was, as per legend, established by the Pandvas. The fair is held on the day of Saravana Purnima (July-August) when the deity gives appearance (darshan) to the people who offer their "Sukhna". Some years back there was a custom to dance on the occasion with special typical dresses. The fair lasts for two days and on the 3rd day the people perform 'Dev Dance' around the temple building. It is said that in the ancient times the area of Punder was transferred from the Jubbal State to Keonthal State. But, unfortunately on the day of Saravan Purnima the ruler of Jubbal passed away and there was mourning throughout the State. The people of Pundar in order to show their resentment against the transfer of their area to Keonthal State
celebrated the fair in spite of the State mourning. The new ruler of Jubbal in order to teach a lesson to the people of Punder attacked their area, but, was defeated by the defending people who had risen in revolt. The area was ultimately handed over by the ruler of Jubbal to Keonthal State. Sweetmeats and articles of general merchandise are sold.

Charyoli Fair Bodna: The fair is held in village Bodna of tehsil Chaupal on the 2nd and 3rd of Bhadra (August) in honour of Devta Shirgul also known as Vijit Raj. The deity is worshipped by the Brahmins of Majhoti. Along with the temple of Shirgul, another temple of 'Peer' made no distinction between Hindu and Muslims and was venerated by both communities alike, one regarding him as Hindu and the other as Muslim. One day he left his mortal frame while in deep meditation and his white mare were raised and managed by the Brahmins initially. When the Muslims gained power and took control they termed the Samadhi of the Swami as Mazar (tomb) of Shah Abdul Rehman.

Baba Davalgir Fair: This fair is held at village Daulatpur in Kangra Tehsil on Jeth 22nd (May-June) for two days. The fair is a religious one and is held in memory of one Saint Dayalgir who got built a Shiva temple here and gave up his mortal frame while in meditation. It is believed that the celebration of the fair provides guarantee against the occurrence of
epidemics. A large number of participants pay their respects and offer grains in the temple. As an entertainment the wrestling bouts are held. Earlier pots, sweets, fruits and articles of general merchandise are sold.

**Dhamu Shah Fair:** This fair is held in village Bari in Tehsil Kangra on 27th Chet (March-April) for two days. The fair is held in memory of Dhamu Shah who belonged to a Hindu-Khatri family engaged in the profession of money lending. Dhamu's grandfather, it is said, had lent some money to a person belonging to low caste. The borrower could not pay the debt during his lifetime and instructed his son to repay the same, but, he also died without final settlement. Before his death he in turn asked his son to clear the debt. When the grand son of the debter approached Dhamu Shah the grandson of the lender to receive the payment of the debt as per the instruction of his grandfather, Dhamu Shah refused to receive the amount on the pretext that his grandfather had issued no instruction to receive the amount. The loanees grand son who was bent upon to pay back the debt spent the money due to the money lender on the construction of a *Bauali*, a raised platform and a temple. Since then the fair is being held in which people of all castes and creed participate. Cattle marketing is done and wrestling bouts are held.
Mela Sujan Bharti: This religious fair is held at village Panapari on Jeth 12th (May-June) in memory of Baba Sujan Bharti at the site of his Samadhi. The legend has it that one Baba Sujan Bharti used to live in a small hut in the village. One day as a devastating hail storm was advancing toward the village which would have damaged the standing ripe wheat crop, the villagers approached the Saint for his help. The Baba shouted at the storm and warned not to advance further. The storm miraculously stopped and wethered away and the crop was saved from destruction. Offerings of wheat grains are made at the Samadhi and apart from recreational activities sweetmeats and articles of general merchandise are sold.

Chamba Fair: The fair is held at village Dagoh in Tehsil Palampur for three days in the month of June. The fair is recreational one. There is a big old Champa tree here after which the fair is named. A large gathering of people enjoy after becoming free from the busy harvesting operations of the Rabi Crops.

Mela Pir Mahu: This is a religious fair and is held at village Barla in Tehsil Dehra/Gopipur for five days in the month of Jeth(May-June). This is held in honour of Pir Mahu whose shrine is located here. It is believed that the Pir protects the cattle from disease. Offerings are made by the devotees at the shrine of the Pir. Wrestling bouts are witnessed by a large congregation.
Nagani Mata Fair is held at village Tika Kohri on Bhadwar near Nurpur. It is an important fair. People go there to make their offering every Saturday and Tuesday, but the days of the fair are the four Saturdays of the month of Shrawana (July-August). The priests of the place who receive the offerings are the Thakurs of the Tika. It is commonly believed that if a person is bitten by a snake and he goes there he is cured. The fair is accordingly Nagani Mata Fair. It is said a woman gave birth to a serpent here and a leper was cured of his leprosy. This Tika is, therefore called Kohri.

Shiboo Sthan Fair is held at Bharamaur at a distance of about 20 Kms from Nurpur. Its days are the four Sundays of the month of Shrawan although in Ashar also visitors come from the neighbouring areas of Dasuya and Dehra. A visit to this place is also said to have the power to cure the person bitten by snakes.

The fair of Sitla near Damtal is held on every Tuesday of Chet and attracts a large number of persons. The visitors seek shelter for the night in the temple at Damtal whose Mahant receives offerings. The fair held at Pirsaluhi village, in Dehra tehsil is also well known.

3. Ibid., p.223.
It takes place on the 7th Magh (February), the visitors spend the night in the open and fire is lighted in numerous places as the nights are cold. Many men do not use the milk and ghee of their buffaloes and cows till an offering thereof has been made to the shrine and the offerings thus collected are distributed amongst Rajputs, fakirs and bharais there. The shares of those who receive these offerings are often sold and mortgaged by the person concerned.

The Narihana Fair in Dehra tehsil is held in the month of Jeth (June) six or seven days before the Nirjala Ekadashi and a big crowd assemble there. Goats are sacrificed and other offerings are made to the Shiva and a wrestling match adds to the attraction of the fair.

Bhikhe Shah Fair is an important fair and is held at Bhawarna. Bhikher Shah was a Rajput and he was the Chela of a Muslim fakir called Shah Mustali. One day, so runs the legend, they were going together and a dead body was being carried there. The Muslim Saint said they were carrying a dead body but the disciple said that it was a living person. The saint asked how could he say that the man was alive. Thereupon he took off the winding sheet of the corpse and sprinkled water over the face. Life was restored, Shah Mustali left ashamed, Bhikha ran away in fear of the guru and it is said he vanished at this spot. A tomb and a mosque were raised there since he was the disciple of a Muslim saint and a fair is held there every year in June. Cattle are also
brought here and are sold.

The Balakrupi fair in Palampur is held in the months of Jeth and Ashar (May and June). There is a temple of Shiva here and offerings of grains and other things are made here. Some people bring the first hair of their children to this place, present it to the god; and night vigils are kept by many to earn religious merit.

At Baijnath two fairs are held one in March and the other in January.

The Saloh fair takes place in August, some giving out that they are possessed go on shaking their head for hours and the people think it is due to the influence of the goddess. The Kardars of this temple are Ghirths who receive the offerings.

At Ranital 20 Kms. from Kangra there is the tomb of a Hindu Fakir named Bawa Fattu. It is said he possessed the power of granting the wish of all those that approached him. A fair is held there on the Baisakhi day. It is curious that some people still come and express their desires before the managers who hail from Dera Baba Nanak. The applicant gets his application written by them or others and the sum or things to be presented in case the desire is fulfilled is named therein. The manager prays at the tomb of the fakir and

4. Ibid. p.225.
when the wish is filled the person concerned comes and makes the offering fixed. Sometimes some people come with their written application which they throw down at the tomb. They go away after that and when their desires are crowned with fulfillment as a result of the vow taken they come and make their offerings. Thus goes on the ancient rule of superstition and poetry in traits unaffected by the conquest of science.  

An other well-known fair in Kangra tehsil is that held at Nerti about 2 Kms. from the main road to Palampur. This is the place where a fight took place between the Raja of Chamba and the Katoch Raja of the Kangra State. The former was killed treacherously and it is according to the dying wish that a fair is held there. People say and believe that he went on fighting even after his head had been severed from his body. Gaddis of the high hills flock there in large numbers and in addition to cattle woollen blankets are sold here. In the former times the temple at which the fair is held was managed by the Rajas of Chamba. A muafif was also attached to the temple. The fair takes place on the 7th of Ashar (June) every year.

Kangra: The most important fair of Kangra valley is held at Jawalamukhi. People from all over Himachal Pradesh and even parts of other states come here in large numbers.

5. Ibid. p.226.
numbers in April and October during Navaratra days of the Durga goddess. The temple is decorated with season's flowers and the deity is kept for the glimpses of thousands of devotees. With small red silken flags people came there to greet the Mother Goddess and discharge their part of obligation. Similar fairs are held at Vajeshwari temple of Kangra and Chintpurni temple at Chintpurni in Una.

Chintpurni Fair: Locally known as Mata da Mela (fair of the mother goddess) is held in village Chintpurni near Bharwain, a hill station on Hoshiarpur-Kangra road. The fair is held near the temple of the Goddess Chintpurni, where, it is said, the mother goddess appeared in astral from in ancient times. The site is approached by metalled road from Hoshiarpur and Kangra which are situated at a distance of nearly 45 Kms. and 60 Kms. away respectively.

The fair is being held from the time immemorial. It is held twice a year in the months of Chet (March-April), Sawan (July-August) and Asoj (September-October). In Chet and Asoj the fair is held during Navratras and in Sawan it takes place during the first ten days of Shukla Paksh (bright half of the lunar month). The fair lasts for nine days during the Navratras and for ten days in Shrawana. The attendance is the largest on the 8th day of the fair. The fair continues day and night but the attendance falls quite low at night and
only a selected few, who have taken a vow, keep vigil in the campus of the shrine singing devotional songs.

Legend says that one Mai Das, a Brahmin priest of village Rapoh Muchilian was on his way to village Pirthipur to see his parents-in-law. Chintpurni fell in his way and when he reached there, he heard devotional tunes from the peak of the hillock and witnessed a beautiful girl of about twelve or fourteen years sitting with a lion by her side and surrounded by a number of gods humming devotional songs in her praise. He could not face the celestial light radiating from the girl and was horrified. The girl however, came to his rescue and disclosing that she was Goddess Durga and that she was placed with him, asked him to shed his fear. Addressing him further she said that she would like to stay at the site of her appearance permanently in the form of a Pindi (Stone). She asked Mai Das that he and, after him, his progeny should do Puja (worship) of the Pindi twice a day, regarding it as her own image. She also blessed that anyone who visited this place and worshipped the Pindi with sincere devotion would be emancipated from all worldly anxieties and worries and that hence she (the Goddess) would be known as Chintan Purni Devi (Goddess relieving one of all worries).

Mai Das undertook to worship the Goddess and she disappeared only to appear again as Pindi. Mai Das also discovered water under a slab at the spot indicated by
the Goddess. He gave bath to the Pindi and did its puja as he had been directed earlier. He then constructed a small Chhappar (straw hut) there and became the first inhabitant of the place. The habitation grew, as a larger and larger number of devotees were attracted to pay homage to the goddess.

Devotees visit the temple in groups singing devotional songs in praise of the Goddess. Male pilgrims enter the campus of the temple from the northern gate while women and children enter through the eastern door. The pilgrims enter the sanctuary turn by turn, sound the bells and pay their homage by bowing before the Pindi and make offerings. The usual offering consists of seven pieces of betelnut, a piece of coconut, a red flag dhwaja all bound together with home spun multi coloured cotton yarn mauli. On the 8th day of the fair the offerings of Karahi and Chhattar are made.

Persons blessed with sons with the benediction of the Goddess perform the hair cutting Mundan ceremony of their sons beneath the banyan tree. The child is first taken to the sanctuary where he is made to bow before the Pindi holy mother Durga and to discharge their part of the obligations.

Similar congregation are held at Vajreshwari at Kangra proper and Bala Sundri Devi temple at Tilakpur in Sirmur. Goddess Chamunda is the centre of attraction for people who have a faith in Shiva-Shakti cult as it
presents purely a Tantric formation.

The Dal fair at a place in Upper Dharamsala during the month of August or September attracts a large number of men and women throughout the district. The Girths and Gurkhas specially are fond of attending the fair and Girth women sing songs as they go to and from this place.

Mandi Bnangrotu Nalwari fair and Sundernagar Nalwari are the most important cattle fairs of Mandi region. These fairs play a significant role in the economy of the people of the region and offers a very good market where farmers and rural folk of Mandi, Suket and the adjoining areas can acquire better breed cattle.

Another fair of Mandi district is Tseehu fair held at Rewalsar. This is a Buddhist religious fair and is held on the 10th of the first month of Tibetan year which generally falls in February-March. This is in commemoration of the birth-day of their spiritual leader Padmasambhava (8th century A.D.). The Buddhist from every nook and corner of the country come to Rewalsar to celebrate the birthday of Padam Sambhava. Devotees from NEFA, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Ladakh, Kinnaur, Lahaul & Spiti also visit the place. Prayers are held in the monastery by the lamas.
Sheel: This festival is observed in Pangi on the day of Amavash of Phalguna or Chaita. With this festival starts the spring and fear of snow is vanished. The people take ghee and chapatis in the morning. In the evening various dishes are prepared and as customary these dishes are taken on the next festival i.e. Pareed. Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped.

Kullu: Some of the important fairs and festivals held and observed in Kullu district are as under:-

**Saini Fair:** This fair is held in Raila on 21st of Baisakh (April-May) for one day. The significance and legend of the fair is religious and recreational. Idol of Devta Laxminarayan is brought from Raila to Sainj. Thereafter the fair starts with folk dances and songs rythmical with the beat of drums and trumpets.

**Diar Kahika Fair:** This fair is held in village Diar on 24th Ashad (June-July) every 3rd year for a day. The fair is entirely religious and dedicated in the god Trijuginatayan who is considered to be the most propitiate among the gods of Kullu valley and is the only exception not participating in the Dussehra at Kullu. The main attractions of the fair are folk dances and songs.

**Shamshi Virshu:** This fair is held on 1st Baisakh (April 13) for one day in village Khokhan. The fair is religious and seasonal. The legend connected with the fair is that Kamindi Devi daughter of Surya the Sun
God moved by the alluring beauties of the hill springs used to dance at this place with her girl friends who were daughters of Rishis and Munis. The local inhabitants also regard themselves as the progeny of the daughters of those Rishis and Munis. The goddess is worshipped outside and then it is taken inside the temple. The people offer young yellow sheets of barley which are specially sown for the occasion to be offered to the Devi along with garlands. Then a goat is sacrificed. Thereafter the women sing and dance around the Rath carrying the Devi. The Devi is also danced about. Men-folk stay on as spectators and onlookers.

**Mela Bhuntar:** The fair is held on 1st Ashad (June-July) for 3 days in village Bhuntar. The fair is seasonal and religious. The fair was started by the Devta of the Ilaqua Suraj Pal. Palaghamiar a Devta from Mardo also attends. From this day the use of food grains from the newly harvested crops starts after cooked food offerings are made to the gods and then the meal is shared by other relatives and friends. This is known as Tahoo-likhana in the local terminology.

**Luhri Lavi:** This fair is held on Kartik 21st and 22nd (October-November) for two days and one night in village Dingidhar at Luhri. The significance of the fair is religious and commercial. The fair is held in honour of Devta Jogeshwar an Khegro Maya. The Devta are worshipped. Natti dances, mimicking, folk dance...
performances at night are resorted to.

Ani Fair: This fair is held on the 27th Vaisakh (April-May) for two days in village Paranali at Ani. In the fair deities of the adjoining villages participate. The main attractions of the fair are folk dances and other cultural programmes.

Dalash Fair: This fair is held in the month of Bhadon for three days and nights in village Soidhar at Dalash. The fair is altogether religious and is held in honour of Devta Jogeshwar Mahadev of Dalash and Bungli Nag. The devtas are worshipped and natti dances, cultural programmes and sports tournaments are performed.

Ganter Fair: This fair is held on Poh 3 for one day. The fair is mainly religious and it is said that Ranas and Thakurs the then rulers of Kullu valley were at logger head and used to be constantly at war with one another. To commemorate the battle a ram used to be sacrificed. The practice of ram sacrifices is still in vogue.

Ghatasani Fair: This fair is held on Chet (March-April) for two days in village Dawra. The legend connected with this fair is that once mother Parvati asked Lord Shiva to forget Rama saying that even Rama could change. To prove this she went to Rama in the guise of Seeta to deceive him. When Lord Rama saw her he could see through the game and addressed Parvati as
mother and enquired as to why she has left his guru i.e. Lord Shiva. The fair starts with the worship of Vishnu Bhagwan and the village Devi. Natti dances, folk songs and other cultural programmes are the main attractions of the fair.

Dhoongri Fair: This fair is held on Jaisth two (May-June) for three days in the memory of Devi Harimba who meditated at Dhoongri and was married to Bheema one of the five Pandvas. She had a son from him who was named Ghatotkach. He fought in the battle of Mahabharta. The fair starts with the worship of goddess Harimba.

Bhadoli Fair: This fair is held once in three years, dates whereof are decided by the Brahmins. The fair is held for four days. The fair is commemorated in the memory of Lord Paras Ram who is stated to have meditated here. On the first day of the fair reception of Devis and Devtas and their attendants takes place. On the second day Devis and Devtas are propitiated through songs and dances. On the 3rd day they are carried in a procession around the village. On the 4th day the fair comes to an end after serving community meal.

Budhi Diwali: This fair is held on Maghar Amawas for three days in village Nirmand. The fair is associated with the battle of Mahabharta which is said to have started on that day. The fair is also held to commemorate the killings of two demons Dano and Asur.
who resided at village Nirmand in the form of snakes. The fair starts with a brief recital of Mahabhatta and story of Raja Bali in folk songs. Two ropes of Munj grass signifying the snake demons are cut into pieces by the Kashtriyas.

**SIRMAUR DISTRICT**

The worth mentioning fairs of Sirmaur hills are Baisakhi of Poanta Sahib, held on 1st Baisakh, Tilokpur fair near Nahan and Bawan Diwadesh fair of Nahan town. The idols from different temples of the town are carried in the palanquins to the temple of Jagan Nath. In the afternoon a procession starts from the Jagan Nath temple carrying the five palanquins to the pucca tank. The principal palanquin of Jagan Nath is floated in the tank where as others are kept on the wall decorated with flowers. The offerings are made to the floating palanquin. Devotional songs are sung. In the back ground of the tank wrestling match is held.