CHAPTER 2

HAMIRPUR AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE
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2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

References to Hamirpur and Kangrā are found in old scriptures. After the decline of the Mughal Empire and amidst delicate state of affairs, when Gurkhās, Sikhs and Marāthās were emerging as strong forces, it was the Katoch dynasty that could rule over for years together.

There is distinct mention of the roots of Katoch Dynasty in the sacred Purāṇs and Panini’s Ashtādhyāyī. References to Bhumi Chand as ruler have been found in Padma-Purāṇ. The history of Hamirpur is also closely associated with the Katoch dynasty, which ruled the area between the Ravi and Satluj rivers in the older days. During the Mahābhārata period, Hamirpur was a part of the old Jalandhar-Trigarta Empire. Panini referred to the people of this kingdom as great warriors and fighters. This tradition of those people seems to have continued till today, evident from the large number of people from the region in Indian Defense forces. It is believed that in the ancient period, the rulers of the Gupta Dynasty had set up their sovereignty over this part of land. During the middle ages, presumably the area fell under the control of Mohammad Gazani, Timurlang, Mughal Nawābs and later Sultāns. But with the passage of time, all aforesaid rulers faded away and at the time of Hamir Chand, a Katoch ruler, the area was under the control of Rānās (feudal hill chiefs). Some of the prominent Rānās were Rānās of Mewā, Rānās of Mehalta and Dhatwāl.

These feudal chiefs were always in quarrel against each other. The Katoch Dynasty, established by Bhumi Chand, became predominant during the

period of Hamir Chand, who ruled from 1700 AD to 1740 AD and it was this ruler who built the fort at Hamirpur. The present town of Hamirpur derives its name from this ruler.

Jagdev Singh writes in 'Kāngrā: The Katoch Sāgā' under the title 'Built the fort of Hamirpur':- 'In his long and uneventful reign, Rājā Hamir Chand Built a small fort near the palace, now called Hamirpur, after his name, which has grown into a Tehsil and District Head Quarters'.

'Rājā Ghamand Chand in after years; founded the town of Sujanpur, which became famous by twin name Tirā- Sujanpur.'

Hamir Chand came to much lime light only during the period of Rājā Sansār Chand- II who was 481st King of Katoch Dynasty, who ruled w.e.f. 1775 up to 1823. He was only 10 years of age when he became the ruler after the death of his father (who succeeded to the throne after the death of Ghamand Chand in 1774).

In 1775, when there was total anarchy and unrest, Mahārājā Sansār Chand established control with his courage and intelligence.

Mahārājā Sansār Chand turned Sujānpur Tīhrā into his capital and erected palaces and temples at this place.

According to S.C. Thākur, 'Mahārājā Sansār Chand wrote letters in Persian language to the East India Company at Fort William, Calcutta, through the political Resident, Delhi; which are with the National Archives of India, New Delhi. In these letters Sansār Chand is described as Rājā of Nadaun (probably after the surrender of the Kāngṛa Fort in 1809 A.D.).

The old Jalandhar- Trigarta attracted Sansār Chand and he dreamt of establishing the old empire (which his ancestors had held at one time) and according to some historians, he tried thrice unsuccessfully. The rise of
Maharaja Ranjit Singh proved a great hurdle for his ambitions. Therefore, he diverted his attention towards the local hill chiefs. He attacked Mandi State and made Raja Ishwari Sen, a prisoner for twelve years at Nadaun.

He also obliged the Suket ruler to pay an annual tribute and annexed parts of Bilaspur State on the right bank of the Satluj. Becoming alarmed by the advancement of Sansar Chand, all the hill chiefs joined hands and invited the Gurkhas to stop the uncontrolled might of the Katoch ruler. The combined armies fought against Sansar Chand's army at Mehal Moriān in Hamirpur. Raja Sansar Chand's army forced a crushing defeat on the combined forces and compelled them to retreat on the left banks of the river Satluj. By that time, Raja Sansar Chand, on the advice of his General Ghulām Mohammed tried to affect economy in the army by replacing the existing ones with Rohillas. This proved a self-defeating folly on his part. After crushing defeat in 1806 A.D., Raja Sansar Chand took shelter in the Kangra fort. The Gurkhas sieged the Kangra Fort, looted the area between the Fort of Kangra and Mehal Moriān and destroyed the villages.

Ishwari Sen was liberated by the Gurkhas from the Nadaun jail. Maharaja Ranjit Singh on the request of Raja Sansar Chand waged war against Gurkhas and defeated them in 1809 A.D. But Sansar Chand had to pay heavy price loosing Kangra Fort and sixty six villages to the Sikhs.6

Mr. Moorcraft writes:- "The loss of territory and falling off his dependencies have so much reduced the revenues of Katoch."7

Maharājā retired to Tihra- Sujānpur after the surrender of the fort of Kangra. Once in a year he had to go to Lahore to pay his respect to the Sikh Maharājā.

Maharājā died in December 1823 at the age of fifty seven.

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6 'The Wonderland Himachal Pradesh', Jagmohan Balokhra, P. 295
7 'Moorcraft Travels' Vol.1, P.125-126
According to Jagmohan Balokhara, "The entry of the Sikhs was the end of Rājā Sansār Chand's dream of establishing a strong and stable 'Hindu Kingdom' in Himachal Hills."8

The Sikhs ruled Kangra and Hamirpur till 1846 and then they were defeated by the British army in the first Anglo- Sikh war.

After the death of Mahārājā Sansār Chand, his successor (grandson) Rājā Pramod Chandra in alliance with the Sikhs and other rulers tried vainly to dislodge the British. From the year 1825 to 1939, the incidents of unrest and rebellion had spread almost everywhere. Kings of various provinces broke into revolt against British rulers. Himalayas Hill States Regional Council was also established later.

The British made Kangra, of which Hamirpur formed a part, a District in which Kullu and Lahaul- Spiti were also merged, to form the part of district and after annexation of Kangra; Nadaun was made the Tehsil Headquarters. This settlement was revised and the Tehsil was changed from Nadaun to Hamirpur.

Hence, in thirty one hill provinces the Independence movement caught momentum and at last on 15th of August, 1947, along with the Independence of India, these hill states were merged and on 15th of April, 1948, Himachal Pradesh was established and in 1954, Bilāspur was also merged.

Until 1st of November 1966, Hamirpur remained a part of the Punjab province; thereafter as a result of reconstitution of Punjab all hill areas of Punjab, including Hamirpur, were merged in Himachal.

On 25th January1971, Himachal Pradesh became a full- fledged State with 55,658 Sq. kms. as its area, and a legislative assembly of 68 legislators with 12 Districts for smooth administration viz. Shimla, Bilāspur, Hamirpur, Unā, Kullu, Mandi, Kangrā, Chambā, Solan, Sirmaur, Kinnaur and Lahaul- Spiti and Dr. Yashwant Singh as the first Chief Minister of the State.

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8 'The Wonderland Himachal Pradesh', Jagmohan Balokhra'
Hence, Hamirpur, which had been a part of Kangrā, was carved out from Kangrā in 1972 and Tehsil Hamirpur of District Kangrā became an independent and full- fledged district itself.

This is the reason that the cultural structure of Hamirpur region follows that of Kangrā, because it shares common background with Kangrā District.

### 2.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL CONDITION OF HAMIRPUR

**Relief and Geographical structure:** ‘The altitude of Hamirpur is 786 meters from the sea level. Hamirpur District is situated between 76°18’ to 76°44’, East longitude and 31°52’ 30” North latitudes. The tract is hilly covered by Shivalik range. The elevation varies from 400mtrs to 1100mtrs having the configuration ranging from the almost flat lands that border the portion of river Beas, to the lofty heights of cliffs and precipitous slopes of hill ranges. There are three principal ranges which run in a South- easterly direction. The 'Jakh Dhār' runs in the continuation of the 'Kāli Dhār' range in the Kangrā District. It enters Hamirpur District near Nadaun and traverses in a South- Eastern direction. The town of Hamirpur lies to the East of this range. The hills are bare, rugged and full of deep ravines. The 'Chabutrā hills' have the same dip and strike as in the Jakh Dhār and continue beyond the river Beas as a mass of rugged and broken hills. The 'Solā Singhi Dhār' is the longest range of the tract and is known by various names; such as Chintpurni and Jaswān Dhār in Una and Solā Singhi Dhār in Hamirpur. The District in the North is bounded by the river Beas which separates it from Kangrā. In the West lies the Unā district and in the South Bilāspur district. In the East Seer Khadd separates it from Mandi District. Hamirpur has been divided into five Tehsils. Barsar Tehsil is on the North-West of Hamirpur, Sujānpur- Tirā is in the North, Nadaun is in the South - West and Bhoranj towards Eastern end of the District.9

Soil type and Khadds (tributaries)

The main streams of the District are Bekar Khadd, Pung Khadd, Sundran Khadd, Kuṇāh Khadd, Hathli Khadd and Maan Khadd. All of them drain into the river Beas, but Suket Khadd and Mundkhar Khadd drain into Seer Khadd which ultimately drains into the river Satluj.¹⁰

The middle and upper Shivalik constitute the main geological formations. The Shivalik comprises of conglomerates friable, sandstone, siltstone and clay stone. The recent deposits include alluvial sands and terraces of unescorted sand, silt conglomerates are in general poorly cemented but at places they are very hard, consisting pebbles and cobbles of quartzite.

Climate:- Although, situated on hilly area, Hamirpur does not receive snowfall because it is not situated on a very high altitude.

The hottest period of the year occurs during May and June. The annual range of temperature is 27°C to 28°C. Besides the scorching heat, the water shortage becomes another hazard when water becomes a rare commodity.

With the change in weather system and as a result of global warming, the summers have now become too hot, like never before.

Before rains, during the dry period a thick and slippery cover of pine needles cover the ground. During this period, forest fire is a common feature. The resin in the tree is inflammable and causes fire in the pine needles which spreads over extensive area very quickly.

In the month of January, the weather is very cold and the minimum temperature lowers down up to 10°C. During this time, the air becomes dry and cold, during December- January also rainfall is received. Because of the cold wave from the Dhaulādhar weather becomes too cold and the people sit in the sun. Although, days are mostly sunny and clear; nights are chilling.

Monsoons:- Heavy rainfall is experienced from July to September, weather

¹⁰ Ibid P.293-294
gets too humid. During the rainy season, the whole landscape attains a fresh green outlook. The dried springs are again replenished.

Popularly, these three seasons are known as Taundi i.e. the Summers, Barsaat i.e. the rainy season and Syāl i.e. the winters.

**Vegetation:-** Sub-tropical Pine forests or ‘Cheel’ grow in Hamirpur. At some places, to get rich growth of grass and vegetation, villagers put it on fire. Resin is extensively tapped in this area and is sent to the turpentine oil mills. Besides timber, honey, resin, gum, medicinal plants, herbs, oak, bamboo, khair, toot is found.

**Crops:-** 90% of the population lives in villages and is engaged in agricultural practices. In Hamirpur, 37.6% of the total area is arable. Maize is the leading crop, although, wheat and rice are also produced. Pulses, potatoes, sugarcane, ginger, mustard and fruit crops are also grown. The Kharif crop i.e. maize mainly depends upon the rainfall, due to lack of other irrigation facilities. Vegetables are the cash crops grown in some isolated pockets.

**Village Culture:-** A typical village culture has been observed. People in villages believe in joint family system. Grand-parents, parents and children, all living together, sharing responsibilities and solving problems; which is their strength, however, at times, it rises quarrels amongst the members of the family.

However, there are towns like Hamirpur, Sujānpur, Bhoranj, Nadaun and six blocks viz. Tauni Devi, Nadaun, Bijhār, Hamirpur, Sujānpur, Bhoranj. Villages like Jāhu, Lambījoo, Ladraur, Pattā, Pāhlu, Chowki- Kankari, Kārer, Mundkhar, Tarkwaḍi, Chabutrā, Bhaleth, Khuthēṛā, Rih, Rangas, Bhumpāḷ, Jalāṛi, Baṇi, Jangal Bāiri, Chakmoh, Mahāṛāḷ, Saluṇi have their own historical, religious, and commercial importance. Bhotā, Nadaun and Sujānpur- Tihrā fall under notified area committee.
The People:-

a. Houses:- In villages, economically weaker people build their ‘Chhappar’ out of mud-bricks with thatch roofs over it. The houses are generally two storied with slanting slate roofs to allow easy drainage of water. Courtyard known as ‘Āngaṇ’ for social functions is the main characteristic of these houses. The cattle shed i.e. ‘Gođhs’ are away from residential house. Flat roof is also in vogue in the towns these days.

b. Dress:- In Hamirpur, most of the men, especially the village dwellers as well as in town wear ‘Kurtā páyjāmā’ and on special occasions wear ‘Sāfā’ i.e. turban, and half sleeved ‘Kamri’ i.e. jacket over the Kurtā. In the age of modernization, pants, jeans, shirts, suits are also worn. The women- folk wear ‘Salwār- Kameez’ and ‘Chādṛu’ i.e. Chunni.

People of Hamirpur are simple, straight forward, frank and God fearing. Their songs have a simple cadence. They follow superstitions. They are distrustful of the strangers. They are fun-loving, fond of fairs and public assemblies. Generally they are good looking and well-formed. As compared to the city dwellers, they are very simple in habits, food and dress. Mostly, men take ‘Tambākkhu’ (tobacco) and drinks but women do not. People are very social and love to participate in each social ceremony, big or small. People are contented with whatever means they have, they hardly try for betterment and raising their economic condition.

Food:- Maize is the favorite grain of the area. ‘Chhaliyān di Roti’ and ‘Saruān dā Sāg’ is their favorite meal; however, ‘kaṇak’ (wheat) and ‘Chauḷ’ (rice) are also consumed. ‘Kadhi’, ‘Maah’, ‘Raungi’, ‘Chhaah’ ‘Dahi’; to be precise, both vegetables and animal foods are taken.

Costumes and Jewelry:- The custom of ‘jhund’ or the veil is observed in the villages only.
The married women always wear ‘Koka’ (nose ring) or ‘Nath’ (big nose ring) on special occasions, ‘Chak’ (head ornament), ‘Kangan’ (bangles), ‘Jhānjarān’ (anklets), ‘Ghoottiyān’ and ‘Chhāp’ (rings in the fingers of hands and feet respectively). They fill ‘Sindhoor’ (vermillion) in the parting of their hair.

Language and Dialect: Himachali, Pahādi or Kāngri is spoken in Hamirpur and the script is written in Hindi. It is not a branch or a dialect of Punjabi because Punjabi script is written in Lahndā or Gurukhukhi and Pahādi was never written in this script as the old records testify. It differs from Dogri also. It is very near to Kāngri and is a tonal language where ‘Ghās’ (grass) changes into ‘Ghā’, ‘Shwaas’ changes into ‘Saah’ and ‘Ksh’ changes into ‘Chh’ viz. ‘Lakshman’ becomes ‘Lachhman’, and the Nasal sound in the first part of the word disappears such as ‘Phoonekna’ and ‘Ganwaar’ become ‘Phukṇa’ and ‘Gwaar’ respectively. Whereas ‘Y’ changes into ‘J’ e.g. ‘Yagyā’ and ‘Yaatraa’ change into ‘Jag’ and ‘Jātrā’. The sound of ‘Ch’ changes into ‘J’. ‘Paanch’ becomes ‘Punj’.

In Kangrā, Hamirpur, Unā, Bilāspur, Mandi, Pahādi is spoken but the dialects change frequently at few kilometers’ distance, hence there are slight changes in pronunciation vocabulary and grammar; hence like Kāngri, Mandiāli, Bilaspuri and Unnavi; Hamirpuri is also a dialect of Pahādi. The occurrence of | such as for the wife’s brother ‘Sālā’ is pronounced and for neck ‘Gāl’ instead of ‘Gal’ is pronounced. This, however, occurs in many languages like Punjabi. Pahādi language is very rich which is evident from folk literature, folk songs and folk proverbs used in daily life.

Caste system: The typical rural society strictly follows the caste system. There are strict rules and norms which are to be strictly observed in the society. The professional and marital activities of the members of the society are also decided according to their castes. The professions of the families are traditionally handed over to the next generation. Also, there is a social boycott
if at all someone commits socially illegal crime like inter-caste marriage. In most of the villages, people of the same caste live together as a community, apart from the others castes. So many mini societies exist within one village and lower castes live away from the rest. Many of the villages are named according to the caste residing in that area such as Tikkar-Khatrian, Tikkar-Brahmapa, Tikkar-Rajputtan and so on.

As in other parts of India, Brähmin is considered to be the highest amongst all castes. Brahmans have their ‘Gotra’ such as ‘Sārswat’, ‘Bhārdwāj’, ‘Awasthi’ and so on. However, ‘Bujru’ Brahmin sub-caste is considered inferior by the high caste Brahmans, as they receive donations in the name of ‘Rāhu’ and ‘Ketu’. ‘Prohi’ i.e. Pujari wears ‘Dhoti’ as a mark of identity and performs all the sacred religious and social ceremonies, right from the birth of the child, noting of time of childbirth and preparing the ‘Tipda’ i.e. Horoscope, ceremony of ‘Panjāp’ or ‘Guntar’ held eight days after child birth, fixing the day and time of ‘Mundan’ i.e. Tonsure ceremony, all the ceremonies of marriage, performing ‘Mantar’ i.e. mantras/chant as well as at the time of death, performing last rites, and ‘Kirya’ on 10th or 11th day of death, 9days after death ‘Kapde Dhona’ ceremony is performed. The house is considered to be polluted up to the 16th day i.e. ‘Solāh’. Paroht also decides the date and time of ‘Barkhi’ and ‘Chwarkh’ (Barsi and Chaturvārshik). No ritual and ceremony is complete without the traditional services of upper caste Brahmans.

People of Hamirpur organize other religious functions at homes such as ‘Bhāgwat’, ‘Satya Narāyaṇ Kathā’ and so on performed by the Brahmans. Brahmans are purely vegetarian, however along with modernization some non-vegetarians may also be found. Brahmans observe all the 16 Sanskārs mentioned in the Hindu scriptures.

Rājputs, like Brahmans, form the higher strata of the society. Katoch, Rathor, Parmār, Chauhān are the main clans of Rājputs. Rājputs are considered to be the decedents from the ruling families. Owners of lands, who never
cultivated themselves and the ‘Halbăhu’ or the self ploughers, are the two types, however, there is a sea change now and the Rājputs have joined the defense forces and adopted other occupations as well. They are strong and robust frame. The community is non-vegetarian and takes meat of goat, sheep, and chicken and consumes drinks also. Restriction to intake of such food is during the event of death, when meat, spices, turmeric and Hing (asafoetida) is not used. They worship ‘Devī- Durgā’; however, it varies from family to family also.

Brāhmins and Rājputs avoid accepting food from the lower castes.

‘Khatri’ i.e. Kshatriya, Mahājan, Kashyap and Guptā hold the commerce in their hands and are involved in the money lending practices. This is one of the prosperous communities of Hamirpur. Their sons adopt the traditional family business. Some of them consider others inferior to them. This community marries within the caste. Dowry system is prevalent in cash and kind as well as in the form of jewelry.

The lower classes constitute the ‘Lohārs’ (blacksmiths), ‘Sunārs’ (Goldsmiths), ‘Thatherās’ (metal workers), ‘Kumhārs’ (Potters), ‘Chamārs’ (Cobblers), ‘Dumāṣs’, ‘Ghirths’, ‘Julāḥās’, ‘Sanhāi’, and the ‘Harijans’ (Sweepers); who make iron things, gold-ornaments, metal things, pots, do leather-work, bamboo- baskets, do animal- husbandry, weaving, singing and cleaning, respectively.

Economy:- Hamirpur District has District horticulture office since 1972. The District progeny-cum-demonstration orchard at Bhumpal in Nadaun grows Kinnows, Mangoes, sand-peas, Galgal, lime. Similar orchard at Badiānā, in Bhoranj was set up in 1979.

There is milk chilling plant at Jalāri set up in October 1978. Hamirpur District has Zonal Hospital at Hamirpur and other PHCs and Veterinary Hospitals, dispensaries and artificial insemination centers. The district has very little foundation in the field of industries; however, impetus is being
given to industrial development. Some of units and institutes are helping in the industrialization of the area. Polytechnic Institute, Govt. I.T.I. and several tailoring center as well as Shawl-producing center, Carpet weaving, training and production institute, Rural Industrial Training Institute are imparting training in various fields. H.P. Subordinate Services’ Selection Board of Himachal Pradesh, Ex- Servicemen Corporation is also situated at Hamirpur.

**Education:** The town is providing good education through the institutes like N.I.T., Govt. P.G. College and other professional institutes and B.Ed. Colleges. Hamirpur is known for its best institutes and highest literacy rate. There is Sainik School at Sujanpur and also Central School, D.A.V. school as well as various academies which prepare students through crash courses because of which students from all over Himachal Pradesh come to Hamirpur. Girls are provided with free education. Scholarships are given to meritorious students and also to those belonging to the backward and Schedule Castes.

**Transport and Mass-Communication:** Hamirpur is well linked with roads in almost every village. However, it is not connected with railway lines. The nearest railway station is at Una. Roads are of circuitous and winding nature. Old roads are being repaired and new National-By-Passes are being constructed to facilitate people and reduce distances. New bridges are being constructed.

There are all means of communication in Hamirpur including one FM Radio station, which taps the local talent of Hamirpur and adjoining areas and broadcasts Folk music of Hamirpur.

**Socio-Religious-Culture:** The folk culture of Hamirpur is rich in mythology. There is hardly any village where a temple is not found. Temples small and big, old and new are found everywhere. Temples are dedicated to Goddess Ďurgā, Shiva, Krishna and others like Shani Dev, Hanumān, Māhākāli, Bhairon, Santoshi Mā, Satya- Nārāyaṇ, Sāi Bābā as well as Gurudwārās. Some Siddhs and Peers also have their shrines such as Bābā Bālāk Nāth and Guggā peer.
Also, there is a concept and belief of Prakritik- Shakti i.e. the feminine principle of the Universe, infusing divine energies in the life of people. Then there are eternal masculine powers like Dev- Siddh Bābā Bālaknāth. The religion of 90% of the local people is Hindu. Hence, the people have common culture and traditions. The people of all castes believe in Hindu religion and the style of worshipping, Poojā, Jātrās and the socio- religious customs indicate that the most of the people are Hindus, however people of other communities such as Sikhs and Muslims are also there. Because of the Sikh invaders, Gurudwārās are also established at many places, however, Rādhā Swāmi Sect, Nirankāri Sect are also having their followers. Sāi Bābā temple can also be seen.

During Navrātrās, on Sundays and Tuesdays people visit temples of Goddess Durgā for Darshan and Poojan. Rātri- Jāgrāt (Jagratte) are also organized. The entire common folk have the feeling of eternity ecstasy in visiting these holy places, offering flowers of belief and getting Prasād of well-being from them.

In the Shrāvan Mās and on Monday in particular; and in daily routine also ‘Shiv- Poojan’ is performed by offering milk and water on ‘Shivlinga’, offering ‘Bilvapatras’, lightening earthen lamps filled with Ghee. The women folk observe fast on Mondays and Shivrātri. Almost every village has a Shiv-mandir. The ‘Narbadeshwar temple’ of Sujanpur is very ancient. Lord Shiva is also believed to be the God of Nāgs, as in Hindu mythology, there are snakes around the neck of Lord Shiva.

Lord Rāma is the idol of the people, who is known as Maryādā Purushottam. Rāma Temples are found in Hamirpur along with the idols of Mā Seetā, Lakshaṁan and Hanumān. The folk tale of Rāmāyaṇ is also enacted in the form of Rāmleelā in every village of Hamirpur. In folk songs of Hamirpur, the bridegroom is addressed to as Rāma and the bride as Seetā. Similarly, Lord Krishna is associated with the folk life of Hamirpur. In fact, the entire

\[11 \text{ ‘चले जुगाधि देविये राम बनना} \\
\text{राम वोहे समारे दासत्र अंगणे,} \\
\text{सीता साही समारे जननक अंगणे।} \]
Indian life is full of consciousness of Krishṇa. In folk life, Lord Krishṇa is a living legend. People observe fast on Krishṇa Janmāśṭmi.

In folk songs of Hamirpur, Rādhā Krishṇa is referred to wife and husband. At the time of ‘Saptapadi’ (Phere), through the folk songs, the bride is called Shyām Sundari. References to Lord Krishṇa are found in the songs of child birth where the newly born is compared with Bāl Krishṇa.

People of Hamirpur also believe in tree worship in the form of ‘Peepal Poojan’, ‘Jal Poojan’ (Kumbh or Kalash is the symbol), ‘Guggā Navmi’ (Snake Worship), forefather worship (Srādh).

Peepal poojan is prevalent in Hamirpur. Earthen lamps are lighted in the evening beneath the Peepal and it is watered and circumambulation with the ‘Janeu’ is done. In Hawan, Poojan also, wood and leaves of Peepal are believed to be sacred. Same is true of the Mango tree. Garlands of mango leaves are hanged above the doors. ‘Tulsi’ is worshiped in almost all the houses. Tulsi-marriage is also performed with great pomp and show (just as any human marriage). Trees are worshiped with great faith and devotion. After marriage the newly- weds, along with their relatives go for the ‘Peepal Poojan’. There are numerous folk songs of Peepal Poojan.

Water is also considered to be sacred and is worshiped in the form of ‘Kumbh’ (a brass of copper vessel just like a mini- pitcher). Pitcher full of water is believed to be auspicious while going for a journey or any occasion, whereas, an empty vessel is considered a bad omen. Water is one of the five elements of the Universe and is of great importance in the lives and thoughts of Hamirpur folk. The sacred water of ‘Gangā ji’ is used during worships and auspicious occasions.

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12 ‘बाहर आयो नेही भयाम सुन्दरी
कुरण जी तमने जो आयो जी।’
13 ‘कलेम भक्तियों नेहीयों राता।
जननेया कुरण मुहरी जी।’
People worship Sun by offering water (with flowers in it) early morning. Outside the door, a ‘Kalash’ filled with water, with flowers in it, is kept, which is considered ‘Shubh’ (auspicious).

The people of Hamirpur believe in Poojā, Jātrā (the Pilgrimage). After harvesting, the first crop is offered, along with Dhoop, Deep, Jal to the deities in the temples. They organize Jātrās in which they walk bare-footed, with flags, folk musical instruments and carry offerings for the deities. ‘Rot’ (a thick sweet Roti) is prepared and pieces of the same are kept for the cow, the dog and the crow. ‘Kadaah’ (Semolina Halwā) is also offered to the Peepal tree.

People believe in ‘Sukhnā’ (prayer for some benefit or wish) and on getting the desired wish fulfilled, they organize the ‘Jātrā’ or ‘Jāgraṇ’.

‘Kuljā’ (the family deity) which (according to the belief) protects the family at every step, is worshipped before and after every happy occasion called ‘Kāraṇ’.

To each temple, a legend of its origin is associated and the people worship with full devotion and faith. They also believe in Super-human and Supernatural powers. People procure social values.

People believe in superstitions. Sneezing before the commencement of any auspicious occasion is believed to be a bad omen. ‘Shubh Mahurt’ is always sought before starting any work. They believe in ‘Toona’, ‘Dhoonā’ and numerous other superstitions.

**Dhām:** ‘Dhām’ is organized during wedding ceremonies and other social functions; where everybody sits on the floor and the food ‘Dhām’ is served on plates made of ‘taure’ leaves. The ‘bottis’ (cooks) cook various kinds of Dāls (pulses), ‘Khattā’ (prepared with Tamarind and Black grams), ‘Madhrā’ (mostly prepared with the white grams and potatoes, in combination with curd), ‘kaḍhī’ (made of buttermilk and Besan {grinded grams}) and ‘Mitthā’ (sweet orange coloured Badañā put in thick sugar syrup with dry fruits). Women folk bring plates from their houses and carry this ‘Bhat’ with them.
2.3 TRADITIONAL FAIRS AND FESTIVALS OF HAMIRPUR

The fairs and festivals are quite unique, interesting and fascinating in their styles and display. With the exception of some commercial fairs, all other fairs and festivals are held in an environment of gaiety exhibiting traditional urge of the people for a get together in a style unique of the hills. People are generally carefree and merry-go-lucky gay type. The hardships of the area have considerably influenced the social life. There is only one ray of hope in their hard life- the prospects of fun whole heartedly, as and when a fair is held or a festival is observed. Rich in ceremonies and rituals, Hamirpur hums with many festive occasions, which impart freshness to the social life of people of Hamirpur.

The people of Hamirpur love festivals and fairs and participate in every festival and local fair with great enthusiasm. Songs and dances, wrestling and instrument playing are characteristics of such festivals. These festivals enliven the social life, unite people as well as pass on cultural values to the coming generations. Appreciation, participation and celebration in the festivals and fairs have become cultural habit of the masses. Each fair is connected with some historical and sociological background. Even the smallest event becomes big enough for them to celebrate. Children get money from their parents to watch fair, eat ‘jallebis’ and enjoy themselves. Most of the fairs are connected with various seasonal changes. Many folk- lores are connected with these. The fairs and festivals of Hamirpur offer a clear glimpse into the beliefs and popular customs and manners of the life of the common folk.

On festivals, in Hamirpur relatives from far and near are invited, the married daughters are also invited and given money, clothes and gifts; hence, these festival on the one side prove to be a medium of recreation for the people and on the other hand a way to strengthen the community; hence festivals and

\[14\] ‘उत्सव रिया: हि मानवः ‘अर्थात् उत्सव आदि में मनोरंजन करना मानव की सहज प्रूढ्यति है’
- प्रेम पंक्तेल, हिमाचल का अन जीवन एवं आस्थाएँ पु. - 01
fairs keep the folk tradition alive and continued forever.

1. **Chait**: Chait is the first month of the Hindu year. It is celebrated for prosperity and happiness throughout the year. ‘Chait’ and ‘Bārahmāsā’ songs are sung by the singing communities known as ‘Sanhāi’ or ‘Manglāmukhī’ in Hamirpur. They sing ‘Pehlā Naun’ or the first name of the new year of Hindus. Listening to these songs from ‘Sanhāi’ community is believed to be auspicious.

In Kullu it is known as ‘Chatrali’ and in Bharmaur, Chambā and Kangrā, it is known as ‘Dholru’

Hence, the first day of the months as well as the whole month of Chait holds special significance.

2. **Navrātrās**: Navrātrās are celebrated in memory of ‘Bhagwati Chandi’. These are celebrated twice a year, in ‘Chaitra Shukla’ and in ‘Shukla- Parv’ of ‘Assu’ (Ashwin) which is also known as ‘Durgā Ashtami’. People observe fast in Navrātrās, perform ‘Poojā- Pāth’ and go to ‘Shakti Peeths’ for ‘Darshans’. They also grow Jaun (Barely) and install Kalash. On Ashtami small girls (the Kanjaks) are worshiped as a symbol of Goddess Bhagwati.

3. **Rām Naumi**: Rām Naumi is celebrated to mark the occasion of birthday of Lord Rām (on the 9th day of Navrātrās) ‘Akhand Pāth’ of Rāmāyaṇ is held. The glimpse of the various incidents related to Lord Rama’s Life can be seen in the form of procession carried out by the people.

4. **Basoā/ Baisākhi**: It is celebrated on ‘Mesh Sakranti’ i.e. on April, 13th, people take bath in holy water bodies, rivers or streams i.e. running waters. Fairs are also held on Baisākhi (Basoā). Taking purifying dips in ‘Kalesar’ is believed to be equal to five pilgrimages because there is a Panj Tirthi Kund in Kalesar. 'Langars' are also arranged where free meals are served. Charity on this occasion has great importance. Baisākhi bids final farewell to winter.

5. **Nirjālā Ekādashi**: Nirjālā Ekādashi is celebrated on Ekādashi of Jeth or Jyeshtha for the sake of rains. People observe fast and offer sweet water or
cold drinks to everybody by way of “Bharo” or stall. At night people take ‘Phalāhār.

6. **Kāliān Ittān:** For the sake of rain and for agricultural prosperity, people colour bricks into black colour even paint their faces black.

7. **Nāga Panchami and Guggā Navami:** Nāga Panchami and Guggā Navami are celebrated in Hamirpur. Nāga Panchami is celebrated in Shrāvani Mās (On Panchami of Shukla Paksha). There are many myths and folk tales related to Nāgas. On Guggā Navami also people gather and worship Guggā. The soil of these Mārhis is so effective that it can cure the person bitten by snake. The navami date of Bhādrapada month has been fixed for Guggā’s Janamotsava. The soil is distributed as Prasād to the devotees. Songs are sung, ‘Jāgrāṇ’ is held at night. The old flag of the temple is replaced by a new one. The height of the flag is kept 52 feet high.

8. **Cheēṇnu:** Cheēṇnu is celebrated on 1st Sāwan i.e. 16th July. Blood sucking insects, bugs, lice, fleas and ticks of animals are burnt in cow dung balls & people jump over it. It is believed that after this taboo, these insects vanish away (which actually happens).

9. **Krishṇa Janamāśthmi:** Ashtami of Bhādona i.e. Bhādrapada (Indian calendar). Lord Krishṇa was born on this day. The people of Hamirpur District observe fast, sing songs of Lord Krishna Birth and in decorated suspension, give ‘Jhoote’ (swings) to the idols of Lord. Processions relating to Krishṇa’s life incidents are taken out in the market. At mid night the Bālak Krishṇa is born. Folk songs related to this occasion and numerous Bhajans are sung in the temples. Ārti is performed, Prasād is distributed. People take Phalāhār on Janamāśthmi.

10. **Sair:** Sair festival is celebrated in the month of Assu (Ashwin) on Sangrāṇḍ (Sakrānti). Rice crop is also ready to be harvested. Maize plants are also going to reap. Songs are sung for the whole day. Married daughters arrive from their in-laws to their parental house. It is also known as ‘Baddā Din’. Sair
fair of Ladraur (Hamirpur District) is very famous, which is celebrated in the month of September. People enjoy eatables made from rice, potatoes, milk etc.

11. **Dussehra:** Dussehra is the festival of Assu and comes after Navrātrās. Rām Leelā s are organized in every village which commence from the 1st day of Navrātrās, the Akhanda Pāth of Rāmāyaṇ is also observed. The Dussehra fair is also held and the huge idols of Rāvāṇ, Kumbhkarana and others are set on fire with crackers filled in the idols, which marks the victory of good over evil.

12. **Karwā Chouth:** Karwā Chouth fast is observed by all married ladies of Hamirpur for the long life of their husbands. Hamirpur bazaars are full of hustle and bustle many days ahead the Karwā Chouth; ladies buy bangles and other ‘Suhāgiān’ to be distributed amongst relatives (in-laws), neighbors and friends. The ‘Haryāli’ or ‘Haritālikā’ fast is also observed by the women folk. The ‘Mokh’ of these fasts is also held. Haritālikā fast is also known as ‘Chiḍiyān Dā Vrat’; women make Shiv Pārvati idols out of clay, after worship these are submerged in water. On ‘Punj Bhekhi Punyā’ or ‘Panch Bhishmi’, ‘Purannāsī’ ‘Khichḍī’ (mixed rice and pulse cooked together) is taken.

13. **Dyāli or Deepawali:** Dyāli or Deepāwali (a festival of lights) celebrated after twenty days of Dussehra, of the month Katak. It is also a festival of ‘Deepdān’ to ‘Pitras’ or ancestors. In villages, the ‘Angāns’ or the courtyards are coated with cow-dung mixed with colours and ‘Likhṇu’ or Alpanā with the help of powdered rice paste. All the urban and rural dwellers decorate their houses and doors with garlands of ‘Gendā’ flowers. ‘Ainkľoo’ of soaked and grounded rice paste are prepared, sweets are distributed. Gaṅesh Lakshmi and Ancestors are worshipped.

14. **Lohri:** Lohri is celebrated in the month of Poh (Paush) on the last day of the month. The young boys and girls start singing ‘Loohkaḍiyān’ (Lohri songs) in every village and towns also and people give them money or eatables. ‘Fil Chaḍli’ is prepared. Groundnuts, ‘Chiḍwā’, ‘Reoḍiān’ are distributed. At night people gather around ‘Ghyānā’ i.e. bonfire, sing and be merry. First Lohri
of new born child or newly wedded couple is celebrated with great pomp and show.

15. **Māghi:** Māghi is celebrated on ‘Sangrānd’ of the month of ‘Māgh’. It is also called ‘Makar Sakrānti’ and is celebrated in entire India. The people of Hamirpur take bath in sacred river or stream. ‘Khichdi’ is also bounteously distributed after bath and is also taken by the people. It is also known as ‘Khichdiā Dā Tihar’.

16. **Basant Panchami:** In the end of the month ‘Māgh’, ‘Basant Panchami’ is celebrated in Hamirpur to mark the end of winter season. New leaves sprout. It’s the time of germination. Crops turn yellow, people wear yellow clothes and yellow ‘Kdāh’ i.e. Halwā is prepared. The fair of Basant Panchami is also held.

17. **Shivrātri:** Shivrātri is celebrated in the month of February (Māgh-Phāgun) Lord Shiva is worshipped in Temple. Fast is observed. People pay their obeisance to Lord Shiva, singing Bhajans all night long. The festival concludes with Jāgrāṇ which people organize collectively at their homes or in Temples and arrange ‘Bhandārās’ for people.

18. **Holi:** Holi is the most colourful festival of Sujānpur. Sujānpur, 25kms away from Hamirpur, is famous for its ‘Holi Melā’; which has now been declared as State level Festival, organized in the vast ‘Chaugān’ (large ground rarely found in the hills) in the month of March every year. Local musicians as well as artists from far- away places are invited to perform. There is an age old tradition of Holi celebration.

   According to Hari Krishan Mittu, ‘The procession the ‘Jhānki’ of ‘Rādhā Krishan’ was taken out in the town, decorated in a very artistic way. A group of Holi singers led the procession. The dances also marked the occasion.’

   Kāngrā, Nadaun, Paproḷā, Pālampur, Bhawārnā and Nurpur are also famous for Holi, but the celebration of Holi by Mahārājā Sansār Chandra and

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his public as ‘Braj Ki Holi’ marked the origin of the Sujānpur Holi, in which the public held Rājā as Lord Krishaṇ and Rānī as Rādhā. Young and old, men, women and children, all participated in the Holi uproar. A week ahead ‘Holi Parishad’ held its meeting in the palace itself. Respectable men of the town and the employees of the palace took part in the and planned the entire program of Holi, colours such as Abeer, Gulaal, special eatables and about the material required for playing Holi. Holi was played for three days continuously. The entire expenditure was met by ‘Rājakosh’. Drinks were provided to all. On the third day, Maharājā played Holi, with men folk on his side as ‘Gops’ and the women folk with Maharānī as ‘Gopis’.

A small pond, below the Darbār Hall was filled up with various colours. There remained no difference of Rājā and Prajā. The intoxicating environment filled every heart with the colours of love and gaiety. Along with the showers of colours the melodious songs were sung.¹⁶

There are other festivals like Rakhrī (Rākhī), Tikkā (Bhaiyā- dooj) celebrated by sisters for the well-being of their brothers.

National festivals like Independence Day, Republic Day, Guru Nanak’s Birthday are also celebrated in Hamirpur.

The places and fairs of Hamirpur have cultural, historical and religious importance.

¹⁶ ‘ओ रंगीला ढेल खेलने होती
ओ महाराजा रंगीला ढेल खेलने होती।
अपने रे आपने रे वैसे मंडर में निकली
इस माही दूजी गोहरी।
आज रंग में वृङ्ग में सभ रंग में,
ओ रंगीला ढेल खेलने होती।
‘Himachal Ka Janjeevan Evam Āsthāein’, Prem Rakhrolvi, P. 136-137
Yashpal Sāttiya Parishad, Nadaun, Hamirpur 1987
2.4 PLACES OF HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE

1. Sujānpur Tihrā:- Confluence of the three:-

A town of Historical Importance, Patronage for Art, Sculpture & Architecture and the Town of Temples of repute:-

Sujānpur is at 25kms.’ distance from Hamirpur, situated at the bank of river Beas.

‘Tihrā’ in the local dialect is used for palace, whereas, ‘Tihrā’ in Hindi language refers to the bank of river and both reasons are appropriate for the twin- name of the town Sujānpur- Tihrā. Rājā Ghamand Chand founded this town. But the place became famous being the capital of Mahārājā Sansār Chand, the greatest ruler of the Katoch Dynasty (1775 A.D. to 1823 A.D.). Mahārājā, after victory over the famous Kāŋrā Fort, held his Darbār at Sujānpur-Tihrā. There were twenty- two doors leading to the great Darbār Hall at Sujānpur- Tihrā, eleven on each side.

According to Jagdev Singh:- ‘One each is said to have been assigned to each ruling chief, on the occasion of his attendance at the Royal Court of Rājā to the paramount powers over the twenty two states of the hills eleven being to the East and eleven to the west of the river Ravi’. 17

Rājās of Riyāsats offered ‘Nazrānā’ to Mahārājā.18 Mahārājā was ambitious and wished to capture Punjab. He had asked his courtiers and public to wish him ‘Lahore Prāpt’19

Mahārājā, besides being a perfect soldier and administration was a real connoisseur of Arts; whose glory is still reflected while watching the ruins of the Palaces and five temples of repute, in sculpture and wall paintings.

Mahārājā Ranjit Singh too had heard so much about the beauty of the palaces and temples. To avoid Mahārājā Ranjit Singh see and conquer Sujānpur

18 ‘Kangra: The Katoch Saga’, Jagdev Singh P.127
19 Ibid. P.118
Tihra, Maharājā Sansār Chand gave Tihra a dismantled and desolate appearance.\(^{20}\) Sujānpur –Tihra has a fine green plain ground with area more than 514 Kanāls, known as ‘Chaugān’ in the local dialect, which is skirted by ‘Peepal’ and ‘Bāḍ’ trees with ‘Tyāle’ (Masonry platforms) built around them.

The town is divided into different sectors, like Brahmpuri (where Brāhmīns reside), Mahājaṇpurī and Chabātā (of trading class) and other separate sectors of lower castes such as Doli, Choudhari caste and Jheerkaḍī for Jheer caste residents. There are four wells also.

Sainik School at Sujānpur- Tihra marks the importance of this place all the more.

It is an important fishing center also. The serenity and grace of River Beas is worth viewing.

Sujānpur Tihra had a Darbār hall Rang Mahal for the queens. There was an underground tunnel, towards the river Beas, for the queens to take bath and come for playing Holi.

There is another fort visible while going to Bhaleth (near Sujānpur). Its area is so big. These forts were constructed and used as advanced army posts and have historical, strategic and tactical importance.

There is a grave of O’Brien, an Irishman, who was in Mahārājā’s service; situated to the west of the town. Behind his Tomb, there are two picturesquely sculptured stone horses.

Outside the main gate of the Sujānpur Palace, there are two buildings ‘Nughrā’ (the local dialect of Navrah); adjoining these, is a ‘Bārahdari’.

**Patronage for Art, Sculpture and Architecture:**

Mahārājā Sansār Chand was a great patron of Art, Sculpture, Architecture, Music, Dance and Poetry.

\(^{20}\) ‘Kangra: The Katoch Saga’, Jagdev Singh

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According to Prof. S.C. Thakur, ‘The period from 1786-1805 was the glorious one under Sansar Chand. He encouraged craftsmen from outside places to his kingdom to settle at Sujanpur Tihra and Nadaun.’

Ghulaam Mohin-ud-din writes in ‘Tārikh-e-Punjab’:- ‘Crowds of people of skill and talents, professional soldiers and others restored to Kangra and gained happiness from his gifts. He settled goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters and weavers. Learned Brahmin astrologers, musicians, physicians, sculptors, painters and artists were settled by him. The Rājā was regarded as the ‘Hātim’ of that age and in generosity, the ‘Rustam’ of that time.’

The evenings at Sujanpur were devoted to songs related to Lord Krishṇa. Many artists were in his employ. He had a large collection of paintings and portraits. He had a ‘Nagara’ known as ‘Fateh Jeet Nagara’. Before going to the battle field he used to ask the musicians to play that Nagara for wishing him victory. Mahārājā was a great painter himself. In the Murals behind the idols of Gauri Shankar Temple, the art of his brush can be seen.

‘Although, Rājā Gowardhan Chand (1745-1773 A.D.) of Guler is associated with the foundation of Pahāri paintings, yet Pahāri painting or the ‘Kāngrā School of Art’ flourished and gained world fame in the regime of Mahārājā Sansār Chand. His regime is called the ‘Golden Period’.

From Kangra, these paintings came to Tihri- Gaṛhwāl, Lahore and Amritsar to enjoy the patronage of Sikh Rājās. Thus the Rājpūt inspired art of the Kangra valley evolved into the Sikh Art of the Punjab plains.

The full fledged development of the Kangra Painting is said to have taken place at Sujānpur Tihra, where Sansār Chand commissioned the painting from Bhagwat Purāṇ, Geet Gobind, Mahābhārata, Bārāhmāśa, Satsāi (of

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21 Mahārajā Sansār Chand’s Letters (to the East India Company), Prof. S.C. Thakur P-17
22 ‘Tārikh-e-Punjab’, Ghulam Muḥin-ud-din, fourth daftar
23 Ibid.
24 ‘Maharaja Sansar Chand’, Satish Chandra Dixit(1977),P.13-14
25 ‘Maharaja Sansar Chand: The patron of Kangra Paintings’, Dr. M.S. Randhawa. P.27
Bihārī) and the Rasikpriyā (of Keshav Das).²⁶

‘Mahārājā was a devotee of ‘Shri Krishṇa’ and the ‘Bhagwat Purāṇ’ had been his family bible. The main characteristics of the technique of the Kāngrā Paintings are: (a) the delicate lines, (b) charm of colours and ornamentation & (c) the themes of Lord Krishṇa and Rādhā. In the 17th century, Pandit Sen of Pahārī School of Art did a great service to the art of Guler. His two sons Mānku and Nainsukh inherited the art of painting from him. Mānaku is considered one of the great masters of Pahārī miniature paintings; during the reign of Rājā Sansār Chand of Kāngrā, Nainsukh was employ of Rājā Balwant Singh since 1743 A.D. The ‘Sat- Sāi Series’, the ‘Lambāgāon Bārahmāssā’ and the ‘Rangmālā’ are the handmade of Fattu, the eldest son of Mānaku. The Bhagwat Purāṇ is the work of Krishan Lal, the other son of Mānaku. Godhu, a nephew of Mānaku was Sansār Chand’s atelier.’²⁷

All this is not out of reference, as Pahārī School of Art is world famous and is closely associated with Sujānpur, a town of district Hamirpur. Hence, it is a matter of pride and the Patron of Art and architecture Mahārājā Sansār Chand was also a great patron of music, dance and poetry. Hence, while going through the Socio- Cultural life of Hamirpur, the world famous Pahārī School of Painting could not should not be ignored.

Tradition and heritage of art, music, sculpture, painting and architecture must be preserved; however, it’s a very sad affair that the wall paintings in the temples are slowly fading away.

There are few temples built by Mahārājā Sansār Chand- the great, at Sujānpur Tihrā:

1. **Gauri Shankar’s Temple:-** Gauri Shankar’s Temple of Sujānpur Tihrā is known after Mahārājā as ‘Sansār Chandeshwar’ temple built in 1793 A.D. Unusual feature of this temple is the life size image of ‘Shiva and Pārvatī’. The model for the image of Shiva is said to have been provided by Sansār Chand

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himself. Elsewhere, in the hills, Lord Shiva is mostly worshipped in the form of a Lingam.

2. Murli Manohar Temple:- Murli Manohar Temple constructed by Mahārājā Sansār Chand in 1790 AD is a Krishna temple, situated on the fringe of the Chaugān. It is also a magnificent work of art. This temple has been constructed in ‘Shikhar Shaily’ (or style). Image of ‘Lord Krishṇa and Rādha’ are placed in it. The wood work covered with sculpture is unique. There is an open courtyard near the temple, where images of various Gods and Goddesses are placed.

3. Narbadeshwar Temple:- Narbadeshwar Temple was built by the chief queen the Mahārāṇi, Prasanni Devi in 1823 A.D. It was embellished with paintings in 1824. Artists belonging to the court of Mahārājā Sansār Chand have drawn vivid and beautiful paintings and murals pertaining to Rāmāyaṇ, Mahābhārat and Bhagwat Purāṇ as well as of wild animals and birds on walls and ceilings. There are small temples constructed around the main temple of Sun, Durgā, Gaṇesh, Lakshmi- Nārāyaṇ and Mahishāsura Mardini. This old temple is built in ‘Bhitti Shaily (or style) and is an example of flat roofed temples. Narbadeshwar temple is related to the primary God of Hinduism, Lord Shiva.

Other temples of repute are:-

4. Mahādev Temple, Devi and Vyāseswar Temple (dedicated to Rishi Vyās) at Sujānpur Tihrā.

5. Kāli Temple near Chaugān

6. Bābā Swaroop Gir Temple

7. Hanumān Mandir of Bhaleth near Sujanpur situated on the confluence of the river Beas and Punga with Hanumān and Kāl Bhairao Idols in it.

2. Nādaun:- Junction of Historical, Cultural and Religious Importance

Nādaun has a great historical importance attached to it. It has time and again been referred to by Indian and foreign writers and historians like Utbi, secretary to Mehmud Ghazanavi, Moorcroft, the European traveler, who visited
Nadaun in 1820A.D and Jonaraja of Raj Tarangini. ‘Trigarta’ has been referred to in Purāṇas, as the holy Jalandhar peeth, the body of Jalandhar, covering 64 miles which is said to be the route of Pilgrimages. It is added that a glance at the map will show that this version of the legend must have originated in the shape of the country as defined by its two rivers, from Nadaun to the south of Jwālamukhi.28

Also along with the references of Vipāshā, the river Beās, references to Nadaun are also found.29

During Sikh penetration into hills, references to Nadaun are found.

According to Prof. Rattan Chand Sharma- “Tenth Guru of Sikhs Guru Govind Singh in his book ‘Vichitra Natak’ has described ‘Nādvān’ and ‘Nadaun’ has been derived from ‘Nādvān’30

Situated on left side of the river Beas Nadaun is a very ancient town.

Rāj Ghamand Chand established his capital in Nadaun--- Here he built fine buildings and laid out beautiful gardens and parks.31

There are numerous folk songs in which the name of the town Nadaun has been mentioned.

Between 1786 and 1805, Maharajā Sansār Chand attained full control over the “Trigart’ region.

During this period Punjab region suffered from instability. The traders were terrified of crossing the Punjab plains during their journey to Kashmir, Leh & Laddakh. They changed their route to Nāhan, Nālāgarh, Bilāspur and Nadaun. From Nadaun they used to go to Mandi, Kullu, Lahaul- Spiti; From Kangrā, Chambā, Bhadrawāh to Kashmir. Sansār Chand supported the traders to run their business, instead of going anywhere else, all the traders and artisans

28 ‘Kangra: The Katoch Saga’ Jagdev Singh, P.4-5
29 Ibid, P.11.
30 Prof. Rattan Chand Sharma of Nadaun, in an interview.
settled down their business at Nadaun.

Nadaun was famous for beautiful enchantresses who used to spell bound the visitors. Their beauty and dance would not let anyone go; which is why, it is said that who so ever would come to Nadaun could never leave the place, hence, the saying ‘Jaye Nadaun Āye Kaun’ became famous.

According to Jagdev Singh, ‘Nadaun became a gay place and so attractive on account of its salubrious climate, abundance of fruit and hill beauties that it gave origin to the saying in the plains of the Punjab.’

‘Āyegā Nadaun, Jāegā Kaun’ there were two hundred singing and dancing girls at Nadaun.32

It is believed that the revenue collected annually from Nadaun was 27,000 per annum at that time, when the monthly income of a soldier was Rs.4.00.33

The traders came to Nadaun and Maharaja purchased all articles, which could not be sold anywhere else, what so ever the price may be thus making Nadaun a trade centre.

After Maharaja’s defeat by Gurkhas Nadaun was completely ruined and looted by Gurkhas. It lost its glory.

According to Barnes:- ‘For three years this state of anarchy continued. Not a blade of cultivation was to be seen, grass grew in the town and tigresses whelped in the streets of Nadaun.’34

Maharaja had settled artists, painters, musicians, sculptors and court Jesters and gave them cash, allowances and Jāgirs. Many paintings of that time are in extent at Kangrā, Lambāgāon, Guler, Nadaun and other places, also in Lahore Museum.35

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32 ‘Kangra: The Katoch Saga’, Jagdev Singh P119
33 ‘Kangra Darpaing’ Salish Barsi, P15
34 ‘Kangra Settlement- Report’ Barnes. P.10
35 ‘Maharaja Sansar Chand, the patron of Kangra paintings’ M.S Randhawa, P.27
There are references to Nadaun in the history when the Gurkhas advanced and reached Nadaun. They liberated Ishwari Sen-Rājā of Mandi from his confinement after twelve years.36

In Amtar Bāgh, on the corner of the town, by the side of river Beas and about one Kilometer away from Nadaun, some elegant old palaces can be seen. There is a big ground in the front called Amtar Bāgh. This is the place where Rajā Sansār Chand spent the last days of his life.

This is place which resounded with the ringing sounds of ‘Ghunghrus’ of the renowned dancer, Mahārājā Sansār Chand’s beloved Jamālo. The shattered king after enjoying of glorious period lived with the dancer Jamālo. She took care of him danced for him and had she not been there, Mahārājā would have died much earlier37

While going to Nadaun there is a bridge on Kunāh Khadd in Rangas. The old ‘Mehrabdar’ bridge has now been replaced by a new one. The other important places near Nadaun are, Barā, Kāṅgu Dhanetā, Bhumpal, Jalārī. A 25 kms long road joins Nadaun to Sunjānpur- Tihar. Nadaun is the birthplace of freedom fighter Inderpal, who participated in the conspiracy to blast the vehicle of Delhi-Viceroy. He was punished with the death sentence but he got paralyzed and in 1938, on Mahatma Gandhi’s request, he was released. After a long struggle between life and death, he passed away in 1948.

One of the most prominent freedom fighter writer and poet, Yashpal was born in Bhumpal (Nadaun). He was a prominent leader and actively participated in the conspiracy of Bomb Blast along with the leaders like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charṇ Vohra and Chandrashekhar Azad. For attempt of blasting Viceroy Lord Irwin’s special train in 1928, he got arrested in 1932, as one of the prominent accused and after confinement of six years, he was released. He was a great author of several novels and books. He also translated books of other languages.

36 ‘Kangra: The Katoach Saga’, Jagdev Singh, P.123
37 ‘Kangra Darpan’ Satish Bassi, P18
There are many temples and shrines of various sects of people in Nadaun.

a. **Shivalaya Bachhretu:** A medieval architecture Shivalaya Bachhretu enshrines Lord Shiva along with Nandi the Lord Shiva’s bull. The temple is also called ‘Pattanwāḷā mandar’, may be because there was a ‘Pattaṇ’(bridge) of ‘Beṭīes’ (made of boats) over river Beas before the concrete bridge was constructed in Nadaun. The temple is legendary for its exquisite wall murals. Most of the paintings belong to the last quarter of 19th century.

b. **Narbadeshwar Mahādev Temple:** It is a temple of Lord Shiva, situated on the bank of river Beās. The way to it goes through the stairs going down to river Beas near Senior Secondary School for Boys.

c. **Lavaṇeshwar Mahādev temple:** Lavaṇeshwar Mahadev temple is also situated along with the pattaṇ (from river to market side) constructed by Mahārājā.

d. **Shiv Mandir:** There is another Shiv Temple situated on the pattaṇ.

e. **Bil Kaleshwar:** This is three-four kilometers away from Bada in village Batāli. It is an exceptionally sanctified old temple. Its construction was commenced by the Pāṇḍavas and was concluded by the king later.

f. **Smāḍhi of Dhyānu Bhagat:** It is situated on the bank of the river Beas near old bus stand and is of great historical importance.

g. **Mazār of Fazal Shāh:** Mazār of Fazal Shāh is situated in Takiān, Bharmoti on Hoshiārpur road.

h. **Gurudwārā Nadaun:** Gurudwārā Nadaun was built by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Tenth Guru of Sikhs to commemorate a battle valiantly fought by Guru Ji against Mughals. It is a hallowed place of Pilgrimage of both Hindus and Sikhs and a symbol of emotional unity of both the sects.
i. **Rāj Naun, Dhaneta**: It was built by Maharājā Sansār Chand for facilitating the public and the soldiers. There is a short cut to Rāj Naun from Solāsinghi Dhār. It has historical importance. At present, the Govt. has provided funds for its revival.

There is a ‘Sanskriti Sadan’ dedicated to Yashpal’s memory. River rafting and boating is also enjoyed by the visitors. Hence, Nadaun is a junction of historical, cultural and religious monuments.

3. **Siddha Bābā Bālak Nāṭh: Deot Siddh (Hamirpur)**

Millions of people from all states of India gather for Bābā’s Darshans at Deot Siddha, Hamirpur. Siddha Nāṭh tradition has a great impact on the folk life of Hamirpur. Bābā Deotsiddha and Guggā Temples of Hamirpur District and the fairs organized at these places of worship are an inseparable part of the socio-cultural life of Hamirpur. The time period for Nine Nāths and Eighty Four Siddhs has been believed to be 8th to 12th century.

Bābā Bālak Nāṭh is worshipped as a Siddha Devtā, a realized God. It is 40kms away from the District Headquarters Hamirpur. This Dhām (holy place) is a ‘Divya Siddha Peeth’ of Northern India. Since his earliest childhood, Bābā Bālaknāṭh (of Kathiawār, Gujarāt) had divine powers. At the age of twelve he ran away from home and came to Shāh Talāī, where he met an old woman Ratno Māi, who kept him like son. He used to graze her cattle and in return she gave him food (Rotis and butter milk) as wages. Bālak used to meditate while grazing of the herd. One day the cattle destroyed the fields of the villagers, who complained and the old lady scolded him for all the loss. Bābā smiled and led her along with villagers to the fields, where no trace of damage was seen. After this miracle, he took the old lady to the Banyan Tree where he used to meditate and from the hollow of the tree he took out all the food (Rotis and butter milk) and returned to her. The place Shāh Talāī is actually the place where all this happened. Shāh (the word originated from Chhāh i.e. the butter milk) and Talāī (the pond) is a place of great religious and historical significance.
Bābā’s worship relieves of all evils, troubles and misfortunes. This Dhām attracts millions of devotees every year. Many bhajans and devotional songs related to Bābā are sung.

People believe that Siddha Purushas remain alive for years together and roam about in the world in their subtle and minute existence. ‘Loka Vārtā’ relates Bābā to the time of Shukdev, the son of Muni Ved Vyās. Bābā was a disciple of Dattātreya (the son of Rishi Attri). Bābā is also associated with Guru Gorakh Nāth of the famous Nav Nāth tradition. He is worshipped as “Paunāhāri” (taking only air as food) ‘Deot’ refers to the Deepak.

There are several myths related to Bābā Bālaknāth regarding his spiritual powers, regarding spiritual discussions with old man, who was amazed at the range and depth of Bālak’s wisdom ‘You certainly have a lot of knowledge, but do you have spiritual powers?” ‘Try me’ said Bālak. The old man flung his beads into the air and the boy caused them to return. But when the boy flung his stick into the air, the old man was unable to bring it back.

There is also reference to conversation of Bābā with Guru Gorakh Nāth.

There is also a ‘Charaṇ Pāḍukā Temple’ on the top of the hill, where Bābā had landed.

There are also references to many miracles by Bābā.

Banārsī Dāss, a Brahmin of Chakmoh village, on Bābā’s direction, started worship tradition at Deot Siddha by the earthen lamp lighted at the Dhām. Bābā Deot Siddha Temple is an example of cave temple. From architectural point of view it is a rock cut temple. The worship here is done by lighting Dhoop and offering ‘ROT’ (the sweet thick Roti).

Bābā’s worship makes one move swiftly on the path to enlightenment and fulfils all desires relating to Dharma, Artha and Moksha. Bābā is none other than that united whole of the divine child and the great Guru Gorakh Nāth. Bābā Bālaknāth is boy Shiva. Bābā is especially revered in Hamirpur and Bilāspur of Himachal Pradesh as well as in Punjab and other states.
4. Guggā

‘Guggā’ is worshipped as a symbol of ‘Nāgpoojā’ in Hamirpur (Himachal Pradesh). From times immemorial Snake-worship is prevalent in India; the history of it can be traced in old scriptures, inscriptions, sculptures and paintings.

Rāṇā Guggāmal of Guggā sect (cult) is worshipped, who was the son of the ruler of Māru Desh in Rajasthan. Legendary, because of his divine birth, valour and ecstasy, he came to be worshipped upon his Mahāsamādhi in almost the whole Himachal. The story of life is sung in the form of a ballad to accompaniment of Dauru (Damru) and other drums and his image is carried seated on a blue horse holding an iron, brass or silver mace.

The legend goes like this. There lived two sisters Bāchhal and Kāchhal, both of them wives to the ruler of Māru Desh & both were childless. The worships to Lord Vishnu, Brahma, Shiv bore no fruits. Later on Bāchhal got Guru Gorakh Nāth’s ‘Guggal’ fruit to be eaten after worshipping Shiva. He also prophesied that if she did so, a mighty son would be born to her, who would be immuring to Serpent’s bites. He would be the enemy of serpents and grow into a sturdy warrior and attain glory in his life and thereafter. He warned her, however, that she must be an understanding mother to her son.

When Bāchhal ate the fruit, she moved the skin and extracted the seeds. The skin was eaten by a Brahmin and two low caste women and the seeds by a mare.

Bāchhal gave birth on the ninth of August to a divine child, Guggā (named after Guggal); the Brahmin fathered a warrior, Narsingh; the woman gave birth to Bhajnu and Ratnu; the mare delivered a blue colt. All these divine births took place on the same day and all those born became life-long companions.

There goes a very long story which comes to an end, when the mother was displeased with Guggā; and Guggā went away and entered Mahāsamādhi near Guggano Mārhi in Bikāner, but on his wife Surhil’s prayer to Guru
Gorakh Nath, Surhil got the opportunity to be visited by her husband at night only in the form of her husband, but when seen by Gugga’s Mother, the reality came out. The mother requested him to return to the world again. Gugga said that he would emerge from the mother earth on Gugga Navami along with his companions, but it should not be disclosed to anybody. But Gugga’s mother told everybody and thousands of men folk gathered and Gugga, his companions Narsingh- the lion man, Bhajnu and Ratnu became statues of stone.

In the course of time, people built a temple to Gugga and his horse. Every year, on 9th of August, huge congregations gather to worship Gugga, who blesses his worshippers with the power to know their names, to achieve fame and to attain victory over their enemies.

It is said that even the sand that gathers around the temple possesses the power to heal. Even Muslims worship Gugga. Gugga had visited Muslim holy places, Maccā and Madinā. They call him Gugga Zāhar Peer, the saint who cures poison.

Gugga Gāthā is a long ballad which imbibes in it, many historical facts. Gugga Gāthā is sung along with musical instruments, but slightly differently in various towns such as Hamirpur, Unā, Bilāspur, Kāngrā, Mandi, Solan and Chambā. Gugga was a brave fighter. Gugga followers never suffer from snake-bite.

In Rāṇā Gugga Mal, the eternal masculine appears as a hero, a mighty hero, and as animus relating to the anima in this life and the life hereafter.

‘Gugga Maḍhis’ fall in the class of open temples. Devotees take the ‘Chhari’ of Gugga Zāhar Peer, barefooted to the nearby villages and sing the eulogy of Gugga’s greatness by visiting every house. The other ‘Mandali’ picks up the ‘Bols’ (lines) of Gugga- Gāthā, left by the first Mandali (group). ‘Rot’ is offered on ‘Dashmi’ Gugga of Lahrā, Galore is very famous.

**Few ancient and historical Temples of Hamirpur District**

5. **Gasotā Mahādeva Temple and Gasotā Fair:** The origin of Gasotā is from “Gau”, the cow placed admits tranquil surroundings, it is an ancient
temple. Pândavas started bringing up cows over here and for them the source of water was built up. The plan for water supply from the river Beāṣ was made. Afterwards, a Shivlinga was also established here. It is a centre of people’s devotion. It is situated 8kms towards East from Hamirpur. Fair is held on Shivarātrī. The water here does not dry up even in the hottest weather. A cattle fair, too, is held in Gasotā in summers.

6. **Bheem Battā Temple:**- This temple is approximately four kilometers from Tauṇī Devi. According to the recognition, during Pândavas incognito, Bheem planned to bring water of the river Beas to start ‘Gharāt’ and gave it a practical shape also, but due to transitory camp there, they had to leave the place, the ‘Battā’, in its original form, is still there.

7. **Hidimbā Temple:**- This temple is five kilometers towards Utpur. The temple is ancient and related to Pândavas’ incognito and to the union of Bheem with Himdimbā. It is believed to have its link with Hidimbā Temple of Manali, the Shaili (i.e. style) is also similar.

8. **Jyoli Devi Temple:**- this temple is situated 5kms away from on Mehre-Dhanetā Road. Pândavas during their incognito, established a roller for extracting sugarcane juice, the roller can be seen there even now. In Devi temple a fair is held in Navrātras.

9. **Bābā Bālak Nath Sthān, Sāssān:**- There is a Bābā Bālak Nath’s Sthān in Sāssān which has been transferred from Siddha Sthān of Khaggal approximately 150 year back. The cave and the ‘Dhoona’ are still there. The idols of ‘Ashtabhuji Mātā’, ‘Bhairav’ and ‘Hanumān’ have been inscribed on the rocks.

10. **Chāno Siddha, Kuthērā:**- ‘Chāno’ is derived from Mahābhārat’s Chānor Siddha. It is situated in Kuthērā approx eight kms from Hamirpur. It is from ancient Siddha Tradition and a very just (justice loving) Siddha. Local people offer the share of their agricultural crops in the temple. A fair is also held, the devotees get their wishes fulfilled and visit the temple in large numbers with utmost devotion.
11. **Mattan Siddha**:- This temple is four kms from Hamirpur. There were sixteen Siddhs on Solā Singhi Dhār. In 14th century, Rājā Nādaun desecrated thāse by animal sacrifice and all the Siddhs went away except Mattan Siddha and Gwāl Siddh. ‘Chhinja’ i.e. wrestling is held on the occasion of Mattan Siddha fair every year. Children enjoy eatables, purchase toys etc. A new temple with ‘Hanumān’ and ‘Shani Dev’ idols has also been constructed.

12. **Gwāl Siddh of Jhaniāri**:- It is one of the ancient Siddha temple situated on Amroh Chowk, Nadaun road, approximately half km from Amroh Chowk at right side of the hill. It’s a Siddh place and worship is held here.

13. **Rādhā Swāmi Satsang Bhotā**:- Bhotā is located on Dharamshālā road leads Unā and Kullu at a distance of 15km from Hamirpur towards Bilaspur. The place is famous for Rādhā Swāmi Satsang as well as for one of the largest hospitals of the State constructed by the Rādhā Swāmi Trust. Bhotā falls in notified area committee.

14. **Jhaniāri Devi Temple and Naun**:- In ancient times, the Devi was being carried in Palanquin from Mandi to Kāngrā but the Devi became stable at this place i.e. Jhaniāri Devi. Fair is also held during Navrātras. The temple holds massive historical importance. There is a Naun known as ‘Jhaniāri Dā Naun’ built by Mahārājā.

15. **Kulanjhaṇi Devi Temple**:- It is five kms away from Hamirpur. It is Kulja or Patron Goddess of Rāngrā families. It was erected hundred years ago. It is visited by common man and ascetics alike.

16. **Taunī Devi Temple**:- It is 12 kms from Hamirpur at Awāh Devi Road. Lineage, Taunī Devi was the daughter of Chauhān, but due to deafness, came to this place called Taunī Devi now, settled and breathed her last here. It is 200 years old. The patients of leprosy are cured here. Taunī Devi is ‘Kulj’ of Chauhāns and Rāthers. A fair is held during the month of Āshār’ (June-July). People get rid of diseases caused during the rainy season.

17. **Awāh Devi Temple**:- Equipped with legends for its being constructed Awāh Devi got this name due to the air-velocity over here. There was armory
of Mughals at this place. Awāh Devi is Kulj of the people of Sameerpur, Teerā and Cholthrā. A fair is held during the month of Chaitra.

18. **Luddar Mahādev:-** Luddar Mahādev (Rudreshwar Mahādev) is several hundred years old temple. References to this temple are found in Purāṇs also. The ‘Pindi’ (the Shivling) has emerged from within the earth while being dug. The local people built the idol of Nandi (the bullock-Lord Shiva’s carriage). The Fair of Luddar Mahādev is held on 3rd Wednesday in the month of June.

19. **Mārkandya Temple:-** It is located in District Hamirpur 6 kms away from Derā Parol on the bank of Kuṇāh Khadd. It is a place of Mārkandeya Rishi. According to Purāṇs, it is there, that the idol of Rishi Mārkandya was installed. A natural water spring is also located there. The fair of Mārkandya is also famous.

20. **Kaṅkari ki Chhinj:-** There had been a dangerous famine in the year 1852, which lasted for four years i.e. up to 1856. Then the local people died bricks into black colour, painted black colour on their faces with black gram and black griddle; then at last it rained. People danced and sang with joy. Wrestling was held. In continuation with the tradition of 150 years, the Chhinj i.e. wrestling is held every year in Kaṅkari.

Other Annual Chhinjs are held at Matāni, Mattan Siddha and Anu. These are cultural fairs as well as health giving and salubrious. Tamak is played, people gather in large numbers.

21. **Cattle Fair of Jāhu:-** The biggest Cattle fair of Hamirpur District is held at Jāhu, Known as Nalwār, where hundreds of Cattle are brought for selling and purchasing i.e. for marketing purposes. The fair is held in summers. The tradition is being continued for years together.

22. **Rangar Fort:-** This Fort is fifteen kms away from Sujānpur and six kms from Patlāndar. It was built by Katoch dynasty and even now the descendants of Katochs live here. There is a temple near the fort.

23. **Mahal Moriān:-** This place has been referred to by Indian and foreign authors. It is 18kms away from Hamirpur at the border of Katoch Dynasty and
Bilāspur Dynasty. It is an ancient palace fort. Gorkha Amar Singh Thāpā started demolishing and ruining process from this point. It has historical importance.

24. **Dei Đā Nauṇ, Nareli:** Mahārājā Sansār Chand built the Nauṇ at Nareli, where he had solemnized the marriage of his daughter. For providing the facility of water supply, he got the Nauṇ dug, which is known as Dei Đā Nauṇ.

25. **Rājā Hamir Mandir, Bajuri:** Rājā Hamir Temple is four kms (towards South) from Hamirpur in Village Dulehra of Bajuri. Rājā Hamir Chand constructed the temple, Pond and advance Army post there. It is approximately three hundred years old temple. Hamirpur was named after Rājā Hamir Chand.

His Palace known as ‘Sundkhar Đā Reehra’ was located at the same place, where the Police-Line Hamirpur is situated at present.

There had been a Tehshil of Rājā Hamir Chand at Aṇu and Village Ghanāl (the name derived from ‘Ghode Đī Nāl’ or the horse shoe, the U-shaped strip of metal nailed to a horse hoof) might have been used for stabling of horses.

Other places like Chhare Pāpi, Rājā Kā Bāgh and Shastar have their links with the good old days of Katoch dynasty’s king Rājā Hamir Chand, who constructed Nauṇs (for water supply) temples and gradens (Bāgh).

**Shiv Mandir, Hamirpur** is about hundred years old temple, situated in the city heart. It is a centre of devotion for the locals.

Other temples in the town are Satya Nārāyaṇ Mandir, Santoshi Mātā Temple, another Shiv Mandir in Aṇu, a Gurudwārā and so on.

**Nauṇ and Shiva Temple near Hathli:** On the way to Ghanāl, there is a Nauṇ near the present water tanks and a Shiva Temple, where sages and saints used to stay. There is a Santoshi Mātā Mandir of repute at Ladraur (District Hamirpur).