Chapter Two

THE MAJOR MONASTIC ESTABLISHMENTS

It would be impossible to list all the Hindu Shrines and temples, large and small, which grew up in the Punjab, for each village, almost each wayside, had its own little place of worship. It is difficult even to list the maths or deras, the 'monastic establishments' of this study, in their entirety for, a considerable part of the Punjab is now in Pakistan and work like this is extremely difficult to do without extensive fieldwork and enquiries on the spot: even the careful study of H.A.Rose makes several omissions not withstanding the fact that it remains to this day perhaps the best single source for such information. The maths grew up at several places and played a significant role in the 'organization' of religion in their chosen areas of activity. They themselves organizationally linked with the larger, however loosely ordered, bodies at the all India level, where each made a mahant on a gaddi, generally served as places where committed disciples were 'trained' and lived in the form of a community, even as the laity came and went performing daily worship in the temple situated within the dera. But they were not confined to any one sect. In the Punjab area alone, we hear, thus, of the
great Tilla establishment of the Kanphata Jogis near Jhelum, now in Pakistan, which went back to no less a person than Guru Gorakhnath himself, which was the premier establishment of the Jogis in the whole of India. Other Jogi deras would include those at asthal Bohar in the Rohtak District of Haryana, or Jakhbar near Pathankot in the Gurdaspur District of the Punjab, both being establishments of importance in their own regions and devoted to the worship of Shiva. The Vaishnavas had their maths of Pindori, Baaathal, Dhyanpur, of which much will be seen later and the shaktas such deras as Hansa Devi, Chintpurni or Dharamsal, and Naina Devi, in the Ambala, Hoshiarpur and Bilaspur areas.

However, concerned as this study is only such monastic establishments as showed interest in painting and patronized or encouraged it, the maths that are noticed are relatively few, by no means all the Hindu maths in the Punjab plains. Not all of these maths were large: some of them were in fact much smaller than some of the 'temples' even in this part of the country, and none of them ever grew to the immense proportions that are maths like Nathdwara in Rajasthan had gained. But it is interesting to observe that most of them were Vaishnava and most of them were situated in that part of the Punjab plains which was adjacent to the foot hills.
In the single district of Gurdaspur which lies at the foot of Punjab hills and a part of which extends into the hills, we find many of these Vaishnava maths, some of them connected with each other. They were clearly founded with a view to turning them into bases for further operation into these areas, especially the Hindu states of the hills. Pindori, called reverently a dham, and more popularly known as the 'Dera of Bhagwan Narainji', emerged as the most prominent of these Vaishnava establishments in the Punjab plains. It is located eight miles east of Gurdaspur town, in the small village of Talibpur - Pindori, called later Pindori Mahantan. In important Vaishnava records the saddi of Pindori finds prominent mention; it constitutes

1 The Gurdaspur District Gazetteer, 1883-1884, p. 32.
Also see Pl.1 which is a photograph of an informative Genealogical Chart giving the branches of the Pindori establishment scattered not only in the Gurdaspur district but, even as far as China Pattan in South India. This is in the possession of the Pindori darbar.

2 It is under this name that the village has its hadbust number and occurs in the Village Directory of Gurdaspur District, 1958. There are several other villages in the Gurdaspur District also bearing the name Pindori but with some prefix or suffix.
in fact one of the fifty-two Vaishnava dvāras\(^1\) into which the Bairagi establishments in India were organized.

The location and the architecture of the dera which have been described in some detail before\(^2\), are, alike, impressive. Not far from the bank of the river Beas, and situated at the end of a dense and beautiful forest, the site it occupies is indeed picturesque. There is a massive enclosure-wall around the large complex of buildings with a towering gate (Pl. 2). Enormous single planks of wood strengthened by metallic bosses and strips, make the two halves of the imposing gateway, and on top are beautiful chhatri\(^3\). At a short distance from the main gateway is the second gateway leading to a vast compound from which again three other compounds are approached. In the left compound is the most ancient structure, the samadhi of the founder of this establishment, Bhagwanji (Pl. 3). Tradition has it that this noble structure raised over the remains of Bhagwanji, along with a small Raghumath mandir were built, by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir as an act of homage. The style of architecture of

\(^1\) Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, p.1

\(^2\) Although I have been to Pindori several times, this section relies mainly on the vivid description of the architecture and setting of the place given in Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori.
this tomb-like building, the massive look, and the slightly tapering verticality which one generally associates with mid-sixteenth century structures, do lead one to think of the possibility of its being earlier than the seventeenth century. But no conclusion can be drawn just on the basis of the style of the architecture since the provincial style co-existed with the high Mughal style of architecture for a long time in many parts of India. Close to the samadhi of Bhagwanji, inside the compound, stand the samadhis of the former mahants of Pindori.

The open courtyard in front of the second gateway has, along its sides, a very large number of rooms for housing pilgrims, and a Sanskrit pathshala run by the establishment, but this part; recently built. To the north of this compound is the building complex most frequently in use, built at different levels. The northern entrance to the gaddighar (Pl.4) where on ceremonial occasions the occupant of the gaddi appears before his devotees. The marble throne here in the gaddighar is said to have been presented devotedly to the Pindori establishment by Rani Jindan, wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. A flight of stairs from this verandah leads to a set of rooms where the mahant of the gaddi resides; another flight leads to a compound from the centre of which rises the impressive Raghunath temple (Pl.5), built in the heart of this Vaishnava math, dedicated to Rama, the
seventh incarnations of Vishnu. At a slightly lower level from the temple are approached from the paved compound, is the hallowed cave or subterranean place of worship to which extremely narrow and steep stairs lead and inside the cavernous gloom of which Bhagwajji, the founder, is reputed to have sat in meditation.¹ Outside this establishment is an extensive orchard and close to it is the monument known as the samadhi of Baba Mahesh dasji - a disciple of Bhagwanji. At a short distance from it is also a large paved tank of water at the head of which stands a charming baradari.

It is difficult to give a precise date to this establishment and the documents² which have survived in the Pindori collection do not go back to anything earlier than the last quarter of the 17th century. The Gazetteer of Gurdaspur District³ refers to an original copper plate grant

¹ This cave, where Bhagwanji underwent austerity and meditated, is traditionally said to be linked, by a passage which no longer exists, with similar guptās in Kahanwan and Damthal. See Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of the Pindori, p.62.

² There are as many as 50 documents from Pindori which are reproduced and interpreted in Goswamy and Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori.

³ "The deed it is said is still preserved at the daughter shrine of Damthal, and there is no doubt that the tomb and grant were due to the munificence of the Emperor". The Gurdaspur District Gazetteer, 1891-92, p.22.
from the time of the Emperor Jahangir originally preserved (although now not traceable) at the daughter shrine of Damthali near Pathankot.

The 'history' published by the Pindori gaddi\(^1\) gives a brief account of the former mahants and even though it conveys legend with fact frequently, it contains much useful material. According to it the founder of Pindori establishment, Bhagwanji, was born in the village Kahnuwan,\(^2\) eight miles south of Pindori in the Gurdaspur district.\(^3\) The name of Bhagwanji's father was Totaram who, it is said, was blessed with a son in his old age due to the blessings of a Jogi of the Nathpanthi order; Tara Nath, a fact of unusual interest as we will notice.

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1 Pritam Ziyal, *Pindori Dham ka Itihas*, pp. 6-32.

2 The Gurdaspur District Gazetteer, 1891-92, p. 22, mentions this establishment as Kahnuwan as "considerable Jogi mandir".

3 Munshi Tulsiram, *Bhaktipradipam*, p. 363, gives the place of origin of Bhagwanji as Sonepat but this, according to Goswamy & Grewal, appears to be wrong, because the strong local tradition both at Pindori and Kahnuwan places his birth and native place as Kahnuwan in the Gurdaspur District.
Bhagwanji was converted to Vaishnavism in his very young age and the conversion is said to have been due to a famous Vaishnava ascetic Krishnadas Payahari, who is cited as being the disciple of Anantanand, one of the well-known disciples of celebrated Vaishnava saint, Ramanand. Through these connections Bhagwanji became a Vaishnava of the Ramanandi order, and the gaddi is to this day known as a seat of Ramanandi Bairagis. Krishnadas Payahari was connected with the Vaishnava gaddi at Galta in Rajasthan and Bhagwanji's encounter with him might have occurred during one of his visits. The missionary activity of Vaishnava saints was at that time considerable and with the idea of spreading Vaishnavism in the Punjab Hills, was in his mind, Krishnadas Payahari induced Bhagwanji to establish and make district Gurdaspur the base of his activity. It is said that the Pindori gaddi was established in A.D. 1572.  

1 See Goswamy & Grewal, The Kuchal and Sikh rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, p.5, who draw attention to Krishnadas Payahari, "Subsisting only on milk or water," as one of the most important of the Vaishnava teachers, and himself a disciple of Anantanand. They cite accounts of him in Bhagwanprasad Rupakala's commentary on the Shaktamal, Lucknow, 1951, pp.302-305, and in Munshi Tulsiram, Bhaktipradipam, p.49. He is also said to have entered into a contest with Nathpanthi Jogis before establishing the gaddi of Galta in Jaipur.

Later the gaddi played a historic role by carrying the message of Vaishnavism to these parts, Krishnadas himself having begun the task by converting Raja Jagat Singh of that state to Vaishnavism.¹

Regarding the date of Bhagwanji² nothing can be said with surety but the tradition makes him out to be a contemporary, apart from Akbar, also of the emperor Jahangir, for he is said to have had a long span of life. Bhagwanji, it is of interest to note, appears not only in the legends which connect him with Jahangir, but also in paintings of this theme where he does not figure alone but by the side of

¹ There is an account of Jagat Singh's conversion to Vaishnavism in J. Hatchison and J. H. Vogel, History of the Punjab hill states, Lahore, 1953, Vol. I, pp. 458-462. The local tradition and Bhaktamal give clear reference to Payahariji's presence in Kulu. Goswami & Grewal in The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of the Pindori, p. 64, while referring to the established connection between Payahari and Jagat Singh of Kulu, quote the Urdu history of the hills by Hardayal Singh, Majmua-I-Tawarikh-riyasthai Kohistan-i-Panjab, Delhi, 1805-36.

² Pritam, Ziyai, Pindori Dham Ka Itihas, p. 8, gives the improbably date of Bhagwanji's birth as S. 1550 (= A.D. 1495), as seen before.
his foremost disciple, Narainji. In these paintings he is almost always shown as carrying a veena on his shoulder to indicate his attachment to music, which was for him an instrument for "union with the infinite. The date of Bhagwanji's death is not recorded clearly but before he died he had made an important disciple, Narainji, whom he attached to himself as much as he himself was earlier to Krishnadas Payahari. Bhagwanji and Narainji are so firmly connected that the Pindori gaddi is commonly referred to as the gaddi of Bhagwan-Narain and this inseparability of the two became an important theme for Pahari artist to draw upon in several paintings.  

Like Bhagwanji of whose life many miracles are told, Narainji is also credited with miraculous power. In fact the single most important legend at Pindori is that in which

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1 The numerous miniature paintings and murals done on the walls of the Pindori and Dantthal establishments, representing Bhagwanji with a veena on his shoulder, are discussed later in this study.

2 Pritam, Ziyai, Pindori Dham Ka Itihas, pp.21-23. The Bhaktamal, however, mentions Narainji as being a direct disciple of Krishnadas Payahari, in Rupkala's commentary, p.308.

3 This is evident from several miniatures of this theme in various private and public collections as also in the murals of Pindori and Dantthal,
Narainji is administered seven cups of poison by the orders of the Emperor Jahangir to test his ascetic powers. There is a brief account of the incident also in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, although it varies in matters of detail from that given in the tradition. The matter has been discussed at some length before, and we learn that the incident in the Memoirs is recorded as having taken place in these parts, in the neighbourhood of Nurpur, not at Lahore, and in the XVI year of Jahangir's reign (1621-22) and no earlier. But the legend in general, it is true, receives considerable support from the Emperor's account. The name of the ascetic is given in the Memoirs as "Moti", but this must have been a misreading for "mauni", one under a vow of silence, which Narainji by all accounts was.

1 Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, trans. by A. Rogers and ed. by H. Beveridge, London, 1909-14, Part II, p.227. In this passage the Emperor refers to a test to which he subjected a Hindu ascetic who was under a vow of silence and concludes the incident with admiration for the ascetic's powers, saying: "there was much persistence in his nature."

The tradition at Pindori says that this occurrence led the Emperor Jahangir to confer a substantial land grant upon this establishment, and induced him to build a temple, domed like a mohammadan tomb, which is still in worship at Pindori as the samadhi of Bhagwanji. Relating to this period, there is some vagueness in the tradition regarding the succession. The seniormost disciple of Bhagwanji was Baba Kahesh das whose name is mentioned at Pindori with a great deal of reverence and whose samadhi (pl.6) is situated just outside the precincts of Pindori gaddi. But Mahesh das was apparently reluctant to occupy the gaddi after him. The tradition at Pindori represents him as having almost bodily lifted the equally reluctant Narainji and placed him on the gaddi after Bhagwanji. There is no clear evidence on this.

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1 Rose, H.A. A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Provinces, Lahore, 1919, Vol. I, p.393. The original patta conferring the grant is, unfortunately, not available now.

2 It is curious that the Nathpanthi jogis of Jakhbar claim him to be of their sect whereas he is strongly associated with Bhagwanji and generally credited with having performed many miracles among which was one involving his pet dog which survived consuming copious quantities of opium administered by a skeptical Mughal ruler. See, Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar, p.13.

3 Pratap Ziyal, Pindori Dham Ka Itihas, p.47: The present mahant Ramdasji, Shri Jai Raghunandan Das Shastri and Dr. C.D. Shastri agree with the above-mentioned statement.
point, but Narainji did go on to occupy the gaddi of Pindori. From his period, we have a manuscript preserved at the daughter shrine of Bathu,¹ in the hill State of Guler, which contains the utterings of Narainji, scripted on the spot by one of his farsighted disciples who gives his name as Shyam Gujral.² The dates of the various sections in this Ms. are given as Samvat 1695 (A.D.1938), 1700 (A.D.1643) and 1705 (A.D.1648), among others. Most of the writings contain the teachings of Narainji and his dialogue with some divine personages, through which the essence of his and his preceptor Bhagwanji's teachings is brought out.

The work is not of great literary merit but is an important work and his recently been published.³ Interestingly enough, date of Narainji's death is recorded in this very work.

¹ There is mention of several texts in this Ms. like Sri Ekonkar Satgur Bija Prasad Granth, Sri Tattva Gita, Guhya Prakash, etc.


³ Shastri, Charan das, Shri Bhagwan Narain Vachan Sudha, Pindori.
on a separate leaf, not connected with the rest of the text, as S.1716 (A.D.1659). This date seems to be accurate because this entry mentions several small details which ring authentic and which, as has been pointed out,\(^1\) can only contemporaneously have been recorded.

During his life, Narainji sent out many disciples to establish gaddis at different places and the influence of the establishment spread a great deal. After his death, his chief disciple, Anandghan, succeeded Narainji. His period on the gaddi was short but important. It is during his time that a Raja of Nurpur came to Pindori and was later blessed with a son whose sacred thread ceremony was performed in Pindori only.\(^2\) Another important event of his time, referred to the published history of Pindori,\(^3\) was the establishment of a gaddi at Lehl, a small village near Dhariwal, some nine miles from Pindori. A Jat devotee is said to have come every day from Lehl to pay his homage at the gaddi of Bhagwan Narain and when he grew old and decided to take up residence at Pindori, Anandghanji sent his gurubhai, KeshaDas, to Lehl\(^4\) to found an

\(^1\) The entry regarding the death of Narainji in the Ms. at Bathu and probably in the hand of Shyam Gujrati mentions the presence of other persons at the time of his death. It occurred on the Ekadashi day of the month of Kartik in S.1716 ( = 1659 A.D.)

\(^2\) Ziyai, Pritam, Pindori Dham Ka Itihas, pp.46-47.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 47

\(^4\) There is a brief mention of this gaddi in, Rose, Glossary, pp.393-394.
establishment there. Another disciple of Anandghanji went and founded a branch, still extant, at Roorkee in district Saharanpur. When Anandghanji felt his death approaching, the Pindori history tells us, he called Keshav dasji from Lehl and also requested him to spare one of his disciples, Shyamdas by name, to manage the affairs of the gaddi after him till his chief disciple and successor-designate, Hari Ram, who was away on a pilgrimage to Haridwar, returned. Out of caution, mahant Anandghan handed over all important papers and his will regarding the succession to the gaddi not to Shyam das but to a member of the mahant family of Gurdaspur, Hari Nath. Shyamdas, while managing the affairs, developed an ambition to occupy the gaddi of Pindori. But it was Hari Ram who was acclaimed by the Pindori devotees, on his return, to be the true successor to mahant Anandghan. The succession to gaddi became a matter of dispute between Hari Ram and Shyam das which was settled eventually by the intervention of a Mughal official. Mahant Hari Ram permitted Shyam das to go and occupy the gaddi at Damthal which had been affiliated to the Pindori establishment. Shyam das did accept the Damthal gaddi, even though grudgingly, and continued to bear ill will towards mahant Hari Ram and the Pindori gaddi. The Mughal officer who is said, according to tradition, to have settled the dispute was Nawab Adina Beg Khan, but his date is considerably later than mahant Hari Ram's succession to the Pindori gaddi.
The period of Mahant Hari Ram is full of developments. It is while he was on the gaddi that Vaishnavism gained wide acceptance in the hills. It is said that during his time many Shaiva ascetics including Bhairongir, Launggir and Ilaichigir\(^1\) actually attacked the Pindori establishment although without damage to Pindori. An important episode associated with Mahant Hari Ramji's time is his visit to Damthal. He was well received by Shyam das who, however, became suspicious of the intentions of Mahant Hari Ram about Gaddi Damthal. The tradition at Pindori says that Shyam das instigated some people to assault Mahant Hari Ram on his way back to Pindori: the latter was severely belaboured\(^2\) and left there in a state of unconsciousness to be rescued only by the chief of Jandwal who happened to pass that way. After his recovery Mahant Hari Ram returned to Pindori, but not before having received the allegiance of the chief and his people.

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\(^{1}\) Ziyai, Pritam, Pindori Dham Ka Itihas, p.62. The names of these Giri Sannyasis are commonly known and at Jawalamukhi there is the samadhi of one Ilaichigir who used to live there.

\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 62. It is mentioned that Mahant Hari Ram was belaboured by a member of Giri Sannyasi.
One of the documents in the possession of the Pindori gaddi refers to a similar incident of a violent nature, but the date of that is A.H. 1149 (A.D. 1736-37), which is much later and the mahant involved in the incident was mahant Ram das and not mahant Hari Ram. Whatever the exact facts, we do get here some indication of important documents being taken forcibly, a matter which receives further strength from the fact that till not very long the copper plate recording the grant relating to Pindori was said to have been preserved at Damthal.

Two of the published documents from Pindori point to mahant Hari Ram having cordial relations with the rulers of the hill states of Jammu and Jaswan. The three villages, Gura, Dayawar, and Hamirpur, in Jammu territory, were apparently gifted to mahant Hari Ram by a Jammu prince, and in one document there is a reference to a village presented to mahant Hari Ram by the Raja of Jaswan, Ram Singh.

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1 This document places the violent incident near village Raja Khasa in the Nurpur territory not very far from Damthal, but indicates that some important documents were snatched from the mahant by the members of the "Sannyasi Sect." Dr. Goswamy and Dr. Grewal take the view that the mahant involved in the incident was mahant Ramdas and not mahant Hari Ram, The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, p.15, VI Document.

Mahant Hari Ram had many disciples who went to various places and established new deras there. One disciple Mahanand settled at Sarcha in District Jullundur; another, Baba Jagdish Ram, established himself at Rastatwali in District Hoshiarpur and many others went to Ambala, Chichhrauli etc. Mahant Sukhmidhaji succeeded mahant Hari Ramji when the latter died in 3.1775 (A.D.1718), but his own death in 3.1784 (A.D.1727) brought to an end his short span on the gaddi of Pindori.

Mahant Ram dasji succeeded Sukhmidhaji. A great deal of diffusion of the Vaishnava faith in the hills is recorded to have taken place during his time. During one of his visits to the hill state of Guler a tragic incident is said to have taken place there. A widow, Bodli by name, used to worship Shāligrama, the ammonite stone considered to be the symbol of Vishnu, and mahant Ram das, observing this, told her that women were not entitled to worship Shāligrama. By the order of Raja Bishan Singh of Guler the idol was forcibly removed from her possession. At this, the widow committed suicide. Wanting to expiate for his sin, Raja Bishan Singh got a samadhi built over her remains and to it

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attached an endowment of land and a temple which grew into the Bathu establishment. Mahant Ram das's gurubhai, Vishma das, became the first mahant of Bathu shrine.

There are as many as nine documents in the Pindori collection relating to mahant Ram dasji and in one of them, bearing the seal of Muhammad Hayat, he is described as "the elect among the sect of Bairagis." Among the new establishments founded by his disciples were the one at Majra in Tehsil Thanesar in Haryana, Narot in district Gurdaspur, and two others as distant as Nagpur and the Girnar hills.1

Mahant Ram das's chief disciple mahant Raskrishan das occupied the gaddi in S. 1818 (A.D. 1751). Several other branches of the Pindori gaddi were founded by his disciples. Thus, from among his disciples, Tulsidas settled at Lohari mandi in Lahore, Bhannaram in Pur Hiran in district Hoshiarpur, Revadas in Gangata in District Kangra and Bhagwati das in Chinapattan in Madras.2 The eighth mahant, Keshav das ascended the gaddi of Pindori in S. 1835 (A.D. 1778) and had a fairly long period of twenty nine years on it. By the middle

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1 Goswami & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, Document No X.
2 Ziyai, Pritam, Pindori Dham Ka Itihas, p. 59.
3 Ibid., p. 61.
of the 18th century the Punjab, as we have seen, was in a state of tumult and the Sikh Chiefs began to assert their authority sporadically. Although there is an indication in some documents at Pindori of the Sikhs throwing their weight around, Mahant Keshavdas clearly commanded an unusual measure of respect as evidenced by Jai Singh Kanhaiya's address to him as "the redeemer of the two worlds."¹

Mahant Narotam das succeeded Mahant Keshav das in S. 1854 (A.D. 1807) and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, it would seem, was deeply attached to him, and conferred upon him several fresh grants including many villages for the maintenance of the gaddi.² An especially considerate and reverential tone was adopted towards this establishment by the Sikh officials under the orders of the Maharaja. During Mahant Narotam das's period, a great deal of construction work was done at Pindori, the most important monument which came up being the present Raghunath temple, the circumambulatory path or pradakshina of which was embellished by fine frescoes as we shall see. Maharaja Ranjit Singh is said to have sent a sumptuous offering, including ten thousand gold mohurs and a hundred cows, to Mahant Narotam das on the occasion of the

¹ Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, p. 19, document No. XXIV.
² Ibid., Document Nos. XXXV and XXXVII.
pratishtha of the tank which was enlarged and paved at this time. Tradition also associates Sada Kaur, Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law, with the conferment upon mahant Narotam das of generous gifts in offering.

In S.1900 (A.D. 1843) mahant Ganga das succeeded Narotam dasji. He is described as an extremely simple person in his life and tastes. Historically, his was the period when political power in the Punjab changed hands and went to the British. There is mention of this establishment, albeit casually, in British records but hardly any change came in the attitude of the people towards the gaddi and even the Government allowed it to retain the lands attached to it.\(^1\) Mahant Ganga das was held in high esteem alike in the neighbourhood and the hill states, especially Kangra. The several portraits of Pindori mahants, painted in the Kangra style, now in the collection of Pindori gaddi might well have been the products of this relationship.

Mahant Ganga das's chief disciple Radhika das, succeeded him in S.1918 (A.D. 1861) but nothing much is recorded of his time. The impressive structure rising above the samadhi of Baba Mahesh das is associated with mahant

\(^1\) Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, p. 20.
Brahm das, the successor of Radhika dasji (A.D. 1887). The construction was completed in S. 1945 (A.D. 1888) and was embellished with frescoes. Mahant Brahm das is said to have been fond of going on pilgrimage and is known to have visited Kashmir many a times. His death in S. 1965 (A.D. 1908) led to a serious dispute about the succession to the gaddi of Pindori and the matter was settled by mahant Ram dasji, being recognized as the successor. Dr. Goswamy and Dr. Grewal have this note on him: "Mahant Ram Das is a venerable old man in his seventies, the elect among the sect of Bairagis," like a predecessor of his, and justly referred to as a param-vaiśnava. Everything about him has become identified in the popular mind with piety and, in other manner, with the establishment itself: the saintly appearance, the urdhvapūndra Vaishnava tilak-mark, the slight frame, the long hours at prayer, the chanting of mantras in which he leads the picturesque chorus of young yellow-clad boys from the Sanskrit pāṭhshāla, the scholarly inclination, and, above all, the generous and enlightened sympathies. The share of worldly cares

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1 "The succession case went up to the Punjab High Court, then at Lahore, as Civil First Appeal No. 2794 of 1916. The contestant against Shri Ram das was Shri Vaishno das, with whom, however, the relations of the Pindori gaddi became quite amicable."

See Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori.
which a large establishment like Pindori naturally has, is
left to his "nearest and most trusted disciple, Shri Jai
Raghunandan Das Shastri, a learned scholar himself, who
manages these affairs with zeal and imagination."¹

The monastic establishment that comes to one's
mind directly after Pindori is Dāmthal, to which reference
has been made before. It is beautifully situated on a
slight eminence close to the river Beas. The village, that
lends its name to this prominent Vaishnava gaddi, on the
bank of the turbulent Chakki, is only four miles from
Pathankot. This establishment is clearly associated with both
Bhagwanji and Narainji, and in some of the records finds
mention as Gumtal. The place is approached from the
Jullundur - Pathankot road at a slight remove from which is
visible the imposing gateway (Pl.7) which leads to the
building complex, enclosed within a massive wall (Pl.8), and consisting of the Thākurdwara, the mahant's residence, a
langarkhāna or kitchen, several small temples, rooms for the
pilgrims and disciples, and samādhis of former mahants of
Dāmthal gaddi (Pl.9).

¹ Goswamy and Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh rulers and the
Vaishnavas of Pindori., p. 21.
J.C. French who visited the shrine dated the architecture of the Daulthal ashram to the close of seventeenth century, alike on grounds of style and on historical and geographical consideration. He gave in fact, the date of A.D. 1690 to the oldest portions, for, there are some much more recent additions. "Daulthal ashram is an interesting building. It is said to have been built in the reign of Aurangzeb, and the style of its architecture confirms the assertion. The front is lofty and imposing, in the Rajput style, which flourished in Rajput lands from the end of the seventeenth to the nineteenth century."

The position of the establishment is completely exposed with no natural protection and, according to French, "had Hindus attempted to build an 'idol house' on such a site early in the reign of Aurangzeb, they would have wasted their labours, for that bigoted ruler would have knocked the building down at once, and very likely the builders as well."

1 Himalayan Art, London, 1931, p. 93.

2 Ibid., p. 94. It was during this time or after the death of Aurangzeb in A.D. 1707 that French believes, Rajput art flourished. It is on these grounds that he believes A.D. 1690 to be a reasonable date for the Daulthal gaddi.

3 Ibid., p. 93.

4 The last twenty years of his reign kept Aurangzeb completely occupied by wars with Mahrattas in Southern India and he no more had a firm grip on the North. Ibid., p. 94.
Whatever the exact date of its foundation, in the seventeenth century, it was Damthal, along with Pindori, which constituted a powerful factor in the religious life of this part of the Punjab, especially the hills. From this point at the south western edge of the Kangra range Vaishnava influence fanned out into an area predominately devoted to Shaiva and Shakti worship. Bhagwanji who is said to have left Pindori for Damthal late in his life himself won over the Raja of Nurpur to Vaishnavism and the "converted" Raja built a temple at this place, endowing the establishment with a rent free jagir. It is easy to understand this because the spot where Damthal is located lay formerly in the territory of the Pathania Rajas of Nurpur, and the Rajas of Nurpur becoming the first devotees of Damthal shrine was no accident.

In his Glossary, Rose notices this gaddi briefly and in the contact of Pindori, saying that the daughter shrine at Damthal was founded by Baba Hari Ramji and possessed

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2. Goswamy, Karuna, Vaishnavism in the Punjab Hills and Pahari Painting, p. 89.
3. Rose, Glossary, Vol. I, p.393. Also in the Gurdaspur District Gazetteer, 1914, it is clearly written that one of Bhagwanji's disciples Hari Ram migrated to Damthal and founded a gaddi there. Again, "There is also a square piece of crystal magic properties and dates from the time of Hari Ramji, the fourth Guru."
an inscribed magic crystal which dated back to his time. Unfortunately, nothing like the fairly detailed accounts that we have of the Pindori mahants, is available from Damthal, nor is there much documentary material. The genealogical table of the mahants (see Appendix B) is based on a traditional account, and there is only a stray reference or so to an actual mahant. Mahant Gopal das, thus, figures in the mid-19th century account left by Ganeshi Lal, who visited Damthal in the company of Lord Hardinge and his party on their journey to Kashmir.¹

Alike an oral evidence and Ganeshi Lal's account, the construction of the Ram Gopalji ka Thakurdvara (Pl. 10) at Damthal can be ascribed to mahant Gopaldas in whose time there appears to have been considerable building activity. Several bahis and account books, still preserved at the place, bear testimony to this. Local tradition at Damthal still remembers the construction activity which took place during the time of this mahant. In the 'verandah' of the temple of Ram Gopalji which was once profusely painted, there is a portrait of a Raja wearing a Pathania turban with an imperfect Takri inscription referring to him, probably as Raja Bir Singh of Nurpur, who was forced by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to flee first from Nurpur and then from Chamba².

² Hutchison, J. & Vogel, Ph. The History of the Punjab Hill States. The equestrian portrait of a Raja painted on the wall of Damthal Shrine is probably that of Raja Bir Singh of Nurpur, See p. 264.
and lived most of his life in exile during which he took refuge for many years with the mahant of Dasthal.

The recent history of the Dasthal gaddi is unfortunately marred by some unhappy incidents, including the murder of Mahant Lal das in 1968. The gaddi by no means enjoys the same prestige in Pindori today.

Pindori and Dasthal were, however, not the only important establishments set up in the Punjab by Bairagis, nor were Bhagwanji and Krishnadas Payahari the only missionaries operating in the area. We have another important group called the "Laljis", whom Rose describes as 'a sort of Bairagis'. These were the followers of Shri Lalji of Bhyanpur in Gurdaspur.

The Bhyanpur gaddi is known locally as "Laldvara", much as the Pindori gaddi in the same district, is known as the "Advara of Bhagwan-Narainji". This celebrated dera is said to have been founded by Baba Lal known variously as Baba Lal das or Lal Dayalji. Tradition at Bhyanpur is quite mixed up, but according to one account, the founder, was born in S.1412 (A.D.1553) in Kasur near Lahore. After visiting

1 Rose, Glossary, p. 394.
2 Latif, History of the Panjab, p.10.
Several religious centres; it was in 1291 (A.D. 1394) that Lalji reached Saharanpur, an area with a high proportion of Muslims in the population. He performed here many miraculous acts which made for his popularity in a short span of time. It is said even the Muslim faqir Hazir Shah became his disciple and traditional accounts say that Badshah "Khizar Khan" became a staunch follower of his. A grant of one hundred bighas of land was bestowed on Lalji by Khizar Khan and the area of his activity was named as "Baba Lalji Bara." His stay at Saharanpur was followed by a short stay in Maanpur on the Ravi in the Punjab and it was from there that he finally went and established himself at Dhyampur, a place named after his favourite disciples Dhyau das. This was later to become an important centre, a dham, of Vaishnavism, once on the bank of the Ravi which has shifted its course after the centuries.

1 Latif, History of the Panjab, p. 116, mentions one Khizar Khan of Sayad dynasty, the viceroy of Lahore, during the time of Firoz Tughlak.

2 Bhasin, Krishna, Baba Lalji ki Phulwari, p. 19.
Dhyanpur is now a small village about 15 miles off Batala in the Gurdaspur district in the direction of the Indo-Pakistan border. From this corner, the Dhyanpur establishment acts as the centre of a network of subsidiary establishments throughout northern India.

The entrance to this Vaishnava establishment is through a big gateway (Pl. 11). A flight of steps leads to the Langarkhana or kitchen. A small lane from the side leads to the main establishment which is a complex of a number of not but separate constructions. Among these the samadhi of रेहा लल्ली is situated in the centre, from an unpretentious structure once, it has come to be a fairly elaborate if gaudy cenotaph of recent construction, flanked by a new covered verandah called Satsangghar. To its right is the gaddighar (Pl. 12), which is perhaps the oldest and the most important structure. Architecturally it is in a late Mughal style: there are three arched doorways, the small windows have projecting eaves and there is domical superstructure above the temple at the back. The entire establishment is of interest, for it is embellished with many murals. In the cornices between the arched doorways, on

1 There are as many as twelve establishments connected to the Dhyanpur gaddi. These are at: Rampur, Datarpur, Kalianaur, Panipat, Delhi, Botval (in Nepal), Nostawal, Kasthanganj, Surat, Assjee Ghat in Benaras, Ayodhya and Badri.
the walls of the gaddighar, in the passage leading to the temple at the rear and in the room above the terrace, 'the Shishmahal', traces of murals can be seen.

But to get back to the history of the Dhyangur gaddi, tradition gives to Lal Dayalji an uncommonly long life and he is said to have had the power of transforming himself from an aged to a young person. It is this which is given as an explanation of Lalji being a contemporary of Khazar Khan in the 16th century, and then again of much later rulers. The most widely celebrated of accounts of Lalji's life connects him with Dara Shikoh, son of Shah Jahan in the mid-17th century. With him he is said to have held frequent discussions on the subject of God and monotheism. According to this tradition, Dara Shikoh met Lalji for the first time in 1674 (A.D. 1647) in Lahore and became his devotee. The many sessions of religious discussions they had are celebrated not only in 19th century murals at the place, but also in a Mughal painting of the Shah Jahan period.

1 Bhasin, Krishna Lal, mentions this in Baba Lalji ki Phulwari, p.
2 Rose, Glossary, p. 394.
According to local tradition, it was also Baba Lalji's miraculous deeds which led the emperor Shah Jahan to construct the gaddighar at Dhyanpur.

It is difficult to fathom the reasons why Lalji is given such a long span of life in the stories about him. It is possible that there were two Lalji's, the founder and the second Lalji who was contemporary of 'Bera Shikoh'. But it is also possible that the first Lalji of the 15th century is only an invention to push the antiquity of the place back by two centuries. At any rate the spiritual powers of the Baba Lal who seems to be closed to believable history, are said to have attracted the attention even of the emperor Aurangzeb who sent one of the well-known ascetics of that time, Jagdish dasji to test the powers of Baba Lal Dayalji. Jagdish dasji, it is said, was completely converted and became one of the foremost disciples of Baba Lal. Numerous other followers are mentioned. But it was his favourite and foremost disciple, Gurmukh Lal, who succeeded him and occupied the Dhyanpur gaddi in 3.1712 (A.D.1655). He, too, is credited with spiritual powers like his guru and performed many miracles. It was as a result of these that Aurangzeb is said to have bestowed on mahant Gurmukhji many land grants. The history of the Dhyanpur gaddi remains somewhat bare of fact; for we do not have from it the kind of documentary support we get from Pindori. It is difficult
Gurukhji was followed by Daya Ramji. He is said to have migrated to the village Badli and made Gurjan das, his chief disciple, the mahant of Bhyanpur during his own lifetime only. Mahant Gurjan dasji is said to have come to Bhyanpur with his uncle, Laxmi Chandji, in his young age and became a favourite disciple of Daya Ramji. The fifth mahant in succession on the Bhyanpur gaddi was Ram Sahai, who was succeeded by mahant Lal dasji. About the latter, the tradition at Bhyanpur states that on the night previous to his birth, his mother had a dream in which she was told to name the child Lal das and give him to mahant Ram Sahai of Bhyanpur because he was destined to be the occupant of the gaddi.

One of the few documents we have from Bhyanpur mentions mahant Sital dasji the seventh mahant as occupying the gaddi in the early 19th century. It was during his time that many land grants were given to the gaddi by the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It was also during his time that the temple of 'Shri Ramchander' at Bhyanpur was built.


2 Ibid. In the published documents recording the land grants, mahant Sital das is actually recorded as having died in A.D.1805. His name occurs in a grant (document I) and there is a possibility that actually this grant was issued in his name but the occupant of the gaddi of Bhyanpur at that time was mahant Haribhajandasjji as the date mentioned on the document is S.1886 (A.D.1829).
When mahant Haribhajan dasji occupied the gaddi of Dhyangpur, the financial condition of the gaddi was not sound. But it picked up when the chief patron-devotee of the establishment, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, bestowed on mahant Haribhajan dasji large grants of land. Mahant Balramji succeeded mahant Haribhajan dasji and was in turn succeeded by mahant Raghav dasji, whose spiritual powers, it is said, converted many hill chiefs who became ardent followers of Laldvara. Among these was Raja Moti Singh of Purich, according to the document available from the gaddi.

The next occupant, mahant Harnam dasji, is said to have sat on the gaddi of Dhyangpur for full sixty years and his death in S.1992 (A.D.1932) led to mahant Sudarshan dasji occupying the gaddi. He spent the early years of his life serving the Laldvara at Batala and remained under a vow of silence for many years leading to his being popularly known as Mauniji.

Mahant Dwarka dasji, the present incumbent of the gaddi is thirteenth in the line of succession.

1 Goswamy, G.N. "General Avitable and the Vaishnava Establishment at Dhyangpur," "Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1971. The grants were issued "in the name of his Guru and predecessor" mahant Haribhajan dasji but they were received by mahant Balram dasji because the date on the document relates to his time on the gaddi of Dhyangpur.
With the passage of time, the gaddi of Bhyanpur has not only maintained its early popularity but has expanded considerably. At present it has numerous branches all over northern India, the most active one being at Delhi, and is a prominent Bairagi establishment being counted among the 52 dvārās. One has to visit the place to form an adequate idea of the impressive following the gaddi commands to this day.

Not important for its connection with painting, but important for an understanding of the growth of religious establishments in these areas is the Shaiva gaddi of Nathpanthi Jogis at Jakhbar near Pathankot. But this gaddi also is, curiously, related in some manner for the Vaishnava gaddis of Pindori and Damthal. The antagonism between the Vaishnavas and the Shaivas, as Rose remarks, is very little evidence in the Punjab compared to what it was in the United Provinces and Rajputāna.

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1 The dvārā is an affiliating establishment and a recognized unit of activity in Vaishnava organization.
2 Throughout the year, a constant flow of pilgrims keep visiting the place and the crowd increases on special occasions. The rows of rooms built for pilgrims and the size of the langar are all proof of the prosperity of the establishment.
3 Rose, Glossary, pp.259 and 566.
From its earliest days, Pindori is linked with the Nathpanthis. It is said that the present site of the Pindori establishment was originally occupied by a group of jogis of the Nathpanthi order, who left the place to occupy another site called Dhamrai. Tradition goes further and links the very birth of Bhagwanji, the founder of the Vaishnava gaddi of Pindori, with blessings his parents had from a jogi of the Nathpanthi order. There is still in existence a significant practice at both Pindori and Damthal. Two objects, a seli or black woolen thread, and a topi or cap, are always received from the jogi establishment of Jakhbar, on the ceremonial occasion of the installation of a new mahant at Pindori. This ritual is of great importance and without it the ceremony is considered to be incomplete.

Jakhbar Jogian, "Jakhbar of the Jogis," belongs to the Ganganath order of the jogis. Local tradition explains the first part of the name of the village by referring to the small shrine of a celebrated Jakh (Sanskrit, Yaksha), topped by an enormous bar tree, standing at the eastern edge of the village; the second part refers of course to the Nath, a jogi around whose monastery or dera the village has apparently grown.

1 The Dhamrai establishment of the Nathpanthis, at a short distance from Bhyanpur, is now only a small establishment, though said by tradition to be very old. The Sardaspur District Gazetteer, 1891-92, p.61, gives the name of the Shankha temple there as Dharameshwar.

This remote village is located at a distance of seven miles from Pathankot in the western direction which makes it about twenty miles to the north of Gurdaspur. It is approached with a little difficulty by a small, uneven path and one has to walk a distance of about two miles while approaching it from Sarna on the Pathankot-Gurdaspur road or, alternatively, from the rough link between Pathankot and the border town of Narot Jaimal Singh. The *Jogi dera* is enclosed on its eastern side by an enormous masonry wall. The establishment possesses an air of grandeur because of this masonry enclosure and the huge gateway (Pl. 13) at one end of the wall overlooked by a stucco *dvarapala*. This wall is decorated with quite interesting designs done in brick inlay, depicting elephants, peacocks and chess-players in thin black bricks against the red ones. Above the gateway and the *deorhi* is a set of rooms, from which a balcony projects on the vacant space below. The passage leads into an open space at the left of which is a large masonry platform overgrown with flowers: this is the *samadhi* of Baba Udant Nath (Pl. 14), the founder of this *jogi* establishment, and unlike other *samadhis*, there is no structure above this austere platform. Describing the architecture Dr. Goswamy and Dr. Grewal write:

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further down in this open space is a covered shed which now houses some cattle but did once serve as the 'Chamber' of the wazirs of the establishment." Again: "The samadhi and the wazirs' chamber are features which, among others, proclaim the true character of a Jogi monastic establishment of some magnitude; and what the Jakhbar gaddi has by way of structures in the inner courtyard confirms emphatically the nature of this considerable dera. At one end is the large kitchen, bhandarkhana, with an inscription which dates the present construction to A.D. 1879, in the period of Mahant Madho Nath. The gaddighar or the seat of the ruling Mahant is a spacious but austere double-storeyed structure (Pl.15) and next to it is a part of the building now in a delapidated condition which had a painted ceiling with an inscription dating it back to the period of Mahant Dhaja Nath in the early years of the nineteenth century." This part of the structure also houses small temples of Shiva, Devi and Bhairava, holy deities of the jogis\(^1\) and on the other and are several sets of rooms used by the pilgrims as also by the jogis residing there. The open space to the west of the building complex,has

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\(^1\) There is this note by Goswamy A Grewal in, The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar, p.40 : "The worship of this group of deities by the Gorakhnath or Kanphata jogis points to their being the true descendants of the much older sects called the Pashupatas, the Kapalikas and the Kalmukhas, a fact that emerges from any historical account of the faith."
a number of samadhis of former mahants of Jakhbar (Pl.16) among which is a new domed structure recently raised above the samadhi of Baba Brahma Nath, who died a few years ago. Recent frescoes, as we shall see later, decorate the inner dome of this small structure. The worship of these samadhis is a part of the daily ritual at this dera.

The tradition preserved at the gaddi and whatever historical evidence is available point to the fact that the gaddi was founded by Udant Nath, who is often referred to also as Pir Bhaur Nath. 1 "Pir" being an epithet which inspite of its strongly Muslim association is always used for the heads of jogi monastic establishments. 2 The history of the Jakhbar gaddi suddenly begins with the second half of the sixteenth century. Nothing is known of the guru of Udant Nathji. Though the names of Gorakhnath and Machhandarnath are sacred names at the dera, no names are recorded to bridge the long period of five to six centuries that must have elapsed between Gorakhnath and Udant Nath.

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1 The name Bhaur Nath was given because of his occult powers. The Gurdaspur District Gazetteer, 1901-02, p.62, refers to the Jakhbar gaddi in brief but names the founder as "Shur Nath, the adversary of Farid Godar".

2 Ghurye in Indian Sadhus, p.157, mentioned that the jogi mahants adopted the title of 'Pir' possibly, "to escape utter annihilation at the hands of the Muslims."
The exact dates of mahant Udant Nath are not mentioned anywhere except, as Dr. Goswamy and Dr. Grewal point out, on a nineteenth century 'portrait' in oil of the ascetic where it is A.H.989, possibly following the tradition preserved at Jakhbar. But he is always associated with the name of the emperor Akbar. The stories at Jakhbar tell of the deep reverence in which Udant Nath was held by the Mughal emperor. The contemporaneity of the two at any rate can be proved. One of the first documents preserved at Jakhbar is a grant made in the name of Udant Nath by the emperor Akbar in A.H.979 (A.D.1571). The emperor was generally considerate towards non-Muslims of known sanctity. Apart from the land grant bestowed by him on mahant Udant Nath in A.D. 1571 another Shaiva ascetic, Chandar Nath, was also patronized by him in A.D. 1578. He also extended his patronage to the Sikhs and Shaktas for there is a strong Sikh tradition that he conferred lands on guru Rāmdās; his visit to Jwalāmkhā in the hills is still preserved in Shaktism.


2 Ibid., p.6. Document I states that these bigas of land were granted to the Jogi Udant Nath in A.D.1571 by way of 'Inām'.
The tradition at Jakhbar does not record the date of Udant Nath's death but some of the documents do indicate that he was alive in A.D. 1597 and had been succeeded by A.D. 1606. Udant Nath had many disciples but it is not certain who succeeded him. A genealogical table of the gaddi was compiled, at the time of the preparation of the British record of right in A.D. 1855, by the then mahant, Chanchal Nath, listing a large number of mahants who came after Udant Nath. But the tree of succession according to previous mahant, Brahm Nath, who died recently, differs from it in material respects.

The order of the names in the earlier part of the lists is very uncertain but there is a complete identity between the two lists as far as the last four generations that preceded mahant Chanchal Nath are concerned.

It is quite possible that this confusion arises, as Dr. Goswamy and Dr. Grewal suggest, because of the compilers relying completely on their memories rather than on documents

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1 Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar, p. 42, documents, I and IV.

2 See Appendix No. E.

3 The previous mahant Brahm Nath when interviewed by Dr. Goswamy gave orally a list of mahants who came after Udant Nath. See The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar.
and thus confusing the names of some prominent surubhaís of the mahants with the successors to the gaddi.

Regarding the succession after Udant Nath, the names of as many as ten jogis occur in the appendix of a document which is a grant in the name of Udant Nath, and which lists the names of Tan Nath, Ban Nath, Surat Nath, Chander Nath, Balak Nath and Shairon Nath, who must have been either the surubhaís or the chief disciples of Udant Nath. There is some likelihood that it was Surat Nath, who was his direct successor. His successor, mahant Anand Nath, was associated with Emperor Aurangzeb, and his name occurs in a document issued in the 4th year of Aurangzeb’s reign (A.D.1661), but he appears to have lived not beyond the 16th year of his reign (A.D.1674) when Hira Nath succeeded him. Mahant Hira Nath’s period on the gaddi seems to have been long and he is said to have lived for 101 years. His death in A.D.1740 led to the succession of Subuddha Nath.

1 See, Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar, p.11, Document I

2 Ibid., p.12
The Jakhbar gaddi has truly the air of a gaddi of recluses, of men devoted to God. It has not gone out of its way to claim attention, yet it has succeeded in retaining for itself the affection and the reverence of its large body of followers. The grant held by the gaddi of Jakhbar for four hundred years from Mughal and Sikh rulers alike prove more than its antiquity. One of the documents mentions thousands of people visiting the gaddi and one can still see evidence of this on day like the Shivaratri festival which is celebrated on a considerable scale. The mahants of Jakhbar had almost a controlling power over the local population, and their influence was not limited only to their neighbourhood.

From the Jogi dera of Jakhbar, one can turn, once again, to the Vaishnava group of establishments and speak of Bathu, a gaddi that lay once within the territories of the hill state of Guler but which really is located at the edge of plains.

Bathu today is a small and unpretentious shrine but it obviously saw better days. It lies in a quiet corner by the Sângângâ rivulet, but along with numerous other submontane Vaishnava establishments, its history, in brief, is of importance to the understanding of the spread of

1 Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar, p.15.
Vaishnavism in these regions.\(^1\)

Bathu does not claim an independent status for itself: it is content with regarding itself as a daughter shrine of the important Vaishnava math at Pindori. The tradition preserved both at Pindori and at Bathu mentions that the Bathu gaddi was founded during the time of mahant Ram das of Pindori, sixth in succession from Bhagwanji. He is said to have been invited by Raja Bishan Singh of Guler to Bathu which lay in his territory. There, mahant Ram das met, as noticed before, a Brahmin widow, Bodli by name, who was devoutly worshipping a \(\text{Śhāligrām}\). The mahant bade her discontinue this practice for, in his view, to the worship of \(\text{Śhāligrām}\), "Women and low castes" were not entitled. Bodli readily agreed and took the mahant's advice, shifting her attention to the worship of an idol of Rama. While at Guler, mahant Ram das happened to mention this casually to Raja Bishan Singh who ordered that the \(\text{Śhāligrām}\) be seized from Bodli. The royal command when carried out had tragic results. Bodli hung herself, and the Raja, greatly penitent had a samādhi built for her and ordered that a thākurdwāra be raised at the place.\(^2\)

\(^1\) From the time of Bishan Singh onwards, the following of Vaishnavism by several Guler Rajas received strength from the presence of the Bathu establishment in the state. Goswamy, Karuna, "The Bathu Shrine and the Rajas of Guler: a brief study of the establishment," Journal of Indian History, Vol.XLII, Aug.,1965, p.583.

Whatever the circumstances in which the shrine of Bathu came to be endowed, there is mention of it in the First Regular Settlement record relating to the year 1863, and to Tehsil Debra of the Kangra District in which the village of Bathu fall. The record indicates that the village was first inhabited by a family of Thakkar Barotras, and the land was granted to them by Raja Bishan Singh Guleria. Later, however, a Brahmin lady by the name of Bodli, brought a small idol of 'Thakur Badri Vishala' and built a small temple there. The temple may have been patronized by Raja Bishan Singh also, but the record is silent on this matter, although later we specifically learn that Raja Govardhan Chand of Guler raised an impressive temple to house the idol. This temple possibly had fine frescoes at one time, but only very faint traces of pigments have survived. Everything by way of painting on the walls has disappeared. The entry in the record says that during the reign of Govardhan Chand, mahant Ram das of Pindori came to Guler territory. The Raja bequeathed the entire village of Bathu as a muafi, rent-free jagir, in the name of "Thakur Badri Vishala". He also urged upon mahant Ram das to stay there permanently. But mahant Ram das did go back to Pindori, having installed his disciple, or possibly a
gurubhai, Vishnu das on the gaddi at Bathu. Bodli's contemporaneity with Raja Bishan Singh in the second quarter of the 13th century, is almost certain. The endowment to the shrine was made by Raja Govardhan Chand.

According to tradition, Vishnu das, the first mahant of the Bathu gaddi, took with him, at the time of his leaving Pindori for Bathu, a gudri or over garment which had originally belonged to Bhagwanji. This lovely but faded gudri is still preserved at Bathu and is worshipped there as a relic of Bhagwanji with much ceremony in the navratras of Ashwini. The devotees here show firm belief in Shri Bhagwanji and Narainji. Part of this is seen in the book preserved at Bathu of which brief notice has been taken before. In this are included several paintings showing Bhagwanji and Narainji with their devotees, the Rajas of Guler. A relationship of warmth has in fact subsisted between the Guler chiefs and the Bathu mahants over the years. The late Raja Baldev Singh of Guler is said, to have been a regular visitor to Bathu gaddi and even lent a hand in organizing the affairs of the jagir.

1 Some documents of Pindori refer to Vishnu das as 'Gosain Bishan das' who is also described as the Sajjadanishin, occupant, of the gaddi of Pindori. But his name does not occur in the list of mahants of Pindori who occupied the gaddi. See, Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, pp.17-18.

2 Goswamy & Grewal, The Mughal and Sikh rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori, p.18.

3 The present mahant of Bathu possesses several papers which show the late Raja Baldev Singh's efforts to put together the history of the shrine on which he pressed so much of devotion.
In an appendix (No. D) is given the list of mahants who followed Vishnu dasji on the gaddi of Bathu. This list is based on that prepared by Raja Baldev Singh of Guler for the present mahant of Bathu for he knew more about the history of the gaddi than the mahant himself. In this list he must have taken help from his own papers or from the records in the possession of the Bathu gaddi.

Much richer than Bathu in respect of the evidence of painting which has survived, and also affiliated to the Pindori establishment, is another establishment not far from the foot of the hills, but falling in the Hoshiarpur district of the Punjab. This is the dera of Ramtatwali to which the Hindi history of Pindori makes a reference.

Ramtatwali is located about 45 kms. from Hoshiarpur off the road to Dasuya. One has to walk a distance of about 5 kms on uneven, kachha track before the establishment, which is situated on a slight elevation as seen. The entrance to this dera is through an imposing facade having a gate with a scalloped arch (Pl.17). Above this is a window with a

1 The Pindori mahant Hari Ramji's disciple, Jagdish Ramji, went to Ramtatwali and established a new gaddi there. Pritam Ziyai, Pindori Dharm Ka Itihas, p.57.

2 There are no less than eight Bairagi mahants, whose monasteries are spread from one end of the district to the other, Ramtatwali being one of them, according to The Hoshiarpur District Gazetteer, 1904, Lahore, p.71.
projecting shade, on either side of which are projecting windows. 2 Chhatris—like tops and trifolied arches.
The facade is decorated with two crudely sculpted dvarapalas set in shallow niches. The open courtyard which one reaches by entering the door has structures on all sides. In the centre is seen a temple dedicated to 'Sri Gopalji.'

Architecturally, the shrine has unusual features. It is an octagonal structure (Pl. 18) with entrances from all sides. At each corner of the roof is a minaret, and in the middle, rising above the central part of the shrine on the gaddi is a small replica of the lower structure, also octagonal with minarets but topped by a dome with a smalaka and a finial. Undoubtedly the style of architecture is late provincial 'Indo-Islamic.' The icon enshrined is in a sanctum based again on an octagonal plan. The space between the outer wall and inner shrine serves as the circumambulatory or the pradakshinpath.

A few yards from the temple is the samadhi having the samadhis of all the former mahants of this gaddi. Towards the right of the courtyard is a two-storeyed building used for residential purposes by the pilgrims (Pl. 19). An important part of this complex is a large hall on the second floor with 'partitions.' This hall is profusely painted.

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1 Every year the festival of Jamashatvoi is celebrated with gusto following the ancient tradition. The Koshiarpur District Gazetteer, 1904, p. 78.
The non-availability of any historical documents from the establishment leaves us relying only on the oral accounts of the establishment and the genealogical table which the present priest of the establishment can provide. According to this table, the first mahant of the Rastatwali gaddi was Jagdish Ramji who was a disciple of mahant Hari Ramji of Pindori, as we have seen. The list of successors to the gaddi after the founder does not give any details but tradition recounts that it was in the time of Raghubar dasji, seventh in succession, that the frescoes in the hall were begun, but they were not completed till the time of mahant Ram Saran dasji, the next occupant of the Rastatwali gaddi.

The line of mahants comes down to Laxman dasji who, it is said, went on a pilgrimage to Amar Nath in 1939 never to return. No further information about this episode is available. The gaddi of Rastatwali is at present without a mahant, there being a dispute between two disciples of the last mahant, about the succession to the gaddi.

A relatively smaller establishment, but once again an offshoot of Pindori, is that at Lehl which was founded by mahant Keshav das, gurubhai of mahant Anandghan of Pindori.

1 The names of the former mahants are recited in sequence here in daily prayers.

2 Ziyai, Pritam, Pindori Dham Ka Itihas, p. 47.
Situated at a distance of about two miles from Dhariwal, in district Gurdaspur, the establishment is truly small. The main buildings at the dera consist of a temple (Pl. 20) dedicated to Rama, a samadhighar and a Diwankhana (Pl. 21). It is interesting to notice that in this place the Jagannath images of Krishna, Subhadra and Balram, along with that of Rama, are enshrined in the main sanctuary.

Nothing more of the history of the gaddi is recorded and the one genealogical table we have is that appended to the Hindi history of the Pindori darbar. This is reproduced in Appendix NOH.

Our interest in this gaddi arises from the remains of frescoes in the Diwankhana and on the walls of a small verandah of the main temple.

There are in the Punjab also scattered monastic establishments dedicated to the worship of the Goddess in one of her rupas, but from our point of view the one that has some importance is the Shakta dera of Dharamsal, in the Hoshiarpur District. This also, interesting enough, is located very close to the plains, where the hills barely begin.

1 There is a brief mention of this establishment in Rose's Glossary, p. 393.
2 The Hoshiarpur District Gazetteer, 1904, Lahore, p. 56.
After reaching Chambi, close to Chintpurmi about two miles west of Bharwain, and twenty-five miles from Bashiarpur, a narrow hilly track leads to the establishment proper (Pl.22).

The mahouts of Dharamsal claim allegiance to a small sect called Brahman Sadaj and the aspect of the Goddess to which the temple here is dedicated is the Chhinna-Nasta rupa. This awesome form, with the Devi shown with a cut-off head feeding Tantrik females with her own blood streams has a measure of popularity with the Tantriks in the hills.

The temple at Dharamsal is almost square and is said to have been erected about a hundred and fifty years ago. Much of the original part of this is in ruins, and is recently rebuilt and is decorated with several wall paintings. But there are also traces of older paintings in the gaddighar part of the building which seems to be of a piece with those which R.B. Daya Ram Sahni noticed in 1923-24.  

1 Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1923-24, p.56.

2 Ibid. p. 56.

3 Ibid. p.56. Touring the area in 1923-24, R.B. Daya Ram Sahni, discovered some murals in the temple. He saw the episode of the "Goddess Durga having cut off one of her heads to feed the demoness" painted in detail over the main entrance to the temple and, inside, Hindu mythological scenes painted on the walls.
The gaddi is said to be "of considerable antiquity" but unfortunately the date of the establishment is not recorded. The founder of the establishment is said to have been one Baba Nakodar dasji. Even through this Vaishnava sounding name for a Tantrik mahant strikes one as odd. There are no records at all beyond this fact and the history of the place is singularly poorly documented. The present mahant, Laxmi Dharji recalls only the name of his own grandfather, mahant Thakar dasji whose death occurred in A.D.1900, making mahant Krishna das his successor. Mahant Laxmi Dhar, the present occupant of the gaddi, succeeded his father in A.D. 1921. It is of interest to mention that the mahants of this gaddi are grihastas, marrying and raising families.

A tiny little dera of Shaivas is in Pinjore near Chandigarh at a distance of about fourteen miles from the city on the Kalka road. There is a small group of buildings with the familiar samadhis (Pl.23) of former mahants, and a temple or Shivalaya close to them (Pl.24).

1 The present mahant, Shri Laxmi Dhar, on being interviewed gave this information.
The square structure in the centre with a domed roof is the samadhi of Baba Top Nath, the founder of this establishment. The mahants, about whom singularly little is known, belong to the Kanphata sect and are said by the local priest to have branched off from a larger dera in Jagadhari. The last of the mahants is said to have died fifty years ago and the only running part of the establishment is the temple.

The only thing of interest are some frescoes on the samadhis and the temple, all of the late 19th century.

As has been stated before, there are several large establishments in the Punjab but, being without any traces of paintings or unconnected with them, these are of little interest to this study. In passing, however, we might notice some other establishments which do not fall properly with the strict framework of Hinduism or which are temples without being regular deras with their own mahants. In the former category fall some of the Udasi deras like the one at Bahadurpur in Hoshiarpur district. This dera is said to have been established by Baba Charan Shahji who founded the gaddi in 1733. 1 Baba Charan Shahji, tradition has it, was the disciple of Paul Shahji who was directly a disciple of Sri Chandji, the founder of the Udasi sect. The present

1 Outside the samadhigahar, there is a marble slab stating Charan Shahji to be the founder of this establishment. Also see Appendix No.1.
establishment at Bahadurpur is a massive structure occupying a larger area. The imposing gateway (Pl. 25) leading to the main establishment has rooms on both sides. In the centre of open courtyard inside is the main temple enshrining an image of Sri Chandji. Towards its left at a distance of few yards is the samadhigahar (Pl. 26), the outer walls of which are decorated with murals.

The main shrine and this samadhigahar are locally believed to have been constructed in the time of the emperor Jahangir. On all the four sides of the courtyard are built rooms for pilgrims. The cultivated land around the dera, about 500 shumaons in extent is said to have been conferred upon the dera by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The twelve famous Udasi akharas (Pl. 27) in Amritsar, all around the Sri Harmandar Sahib, seem to have patronized painting at one time. Some of them still have traces of frescoes.

Among the many temples in the Punjab, with frescoes, as distinguished from monastic establishments, is the celebrated temple of Mansa Levi near Mandiagara close to Chandigarh. Raja Gopal Singh of the tiny principality of

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1 Mahant Sawai Ram Das, the chief disciple of the present mahant, Seva dasji, when interviewed mentioned a seal dating back to the time of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, which according to him proves the above statement.

2 In akhara Chhatewala, the samadhigahar is established with frescoes.
Manimajara is said to have been the builder of the present temple, which according to an inscription at the entrance to the temple, (Pl. 23) started being built in V.S. 1868 = (1811 A.D.) and was completed in S. 1972 = (1815 A.D.).

The large, impressive structure of 'Kansa Devi' is a curious amalgam of many styles of architecture in the Panjab. On the one hand we see the temple as having the standard architectural features of a Sikh shrine (Pl. 29), and on the other it has a strong Islamic flavour. The sanctum of the shrine is surrounded by a circumambulatory path having scalloped arches. A great part of the temple was once completely covered with frescoes which though badly damaged are still discernible. Apart from this date and their themes, these frescoes have unusual interest because local tradition connects them with the name of a painter, Angad, who seems to have come from the neighbouring hill state of Sirpur.

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2. Ibid.


4. Ibid., p. 107. The old priest of the temple points to a wall in the courtyard, now whitewashed, where there was a portrait of the artist himself standing, with folded hands, in adoration of the goddess.