PREFACE

This study is primarily aimed at documenting the surviving remains of mural paintings from the Punjab of the 19th century, and is born of the sense of frustration at seeing these works decaying and disappearing, year after year. Much has already been claimed by time and the forces of nature; I feel therefore that there is a sense of urgency about this kind of work not only here but elsewhere in the country.

The remains studied and documented here are of an art which was at one time apparently very popular. Mural paintings in 19th century Punjab were indeed very widespread, and gradually developed their own aesthetic and range of themes and styles allied to but also different from the miniatures to which many studies have been devoted. Very little work on this subject, apart from Prof. B.N. Goswamy's pioneering studies, has so far been done for the Punjab plains, even though we come upon several references to these paintings in literary records and travellers' accounts. Even detailed studies of Sikh painting undertaken by scholars, have paid scant attention to this aspect of the art of the plains. An attempt has therefore been made in this study to put the art of wall
painting in 19th century Punjab in its context, while the emphasis stays on documenting the extant remains of murals, the analysis of their themes and a study of their technique and style.

The study is based on extensive field work and as thorough a study of written records as was possible. While it was not possible for me to have access to that part of the Punjab which is now in Pakistan, I travelled extensively in the 'Indian Punjab', including present-day Haryana. My work in the field — and I have travelled from village to village in search of murals —, convinces me that what I was able to record forms a very small proportion of what must have once existed. One wishes so much that work of this kind had been done some fifty years ago, when much else than now survives must have been around.

This dissertation embodies the result of my own research and observation over a period of more than five years but I am keenly aware of its shortcomings and the sole responsibility for whatever lapses there are in it, is my own. More could have been done, but that is perhaps true of all studies. I only hope that a modestly clear picture of the art of mural painting in 19th century Punjab emerges from the following pages.

In the completion of this study I have received generous help which I wish to acknowledge here. The foremost
of my debts is to Prof. B.N. Goswamy under whose supervision this dissertation has been completed. Not only was the subject and the lines of enquiry suggested by him; he has been extremely kind and watchful as a guide, giving generously of his material and affording constant help and encouragement. I have been greatly helped by discussions with Dr. Malik Raj Anand, Dr. M.S. Sandhawa, Dr. Ganda Singh and Dr. Attar Singh. Sandar Nimai Singh Sandhu gave of himself unstintedly throughout. I have also to gratefully acknowledge the generous help I have received in various forms from S. Jagjit Singh Kang, Smt. Vidvant Kaur, Smt. Diljit Kaur and a large number of other persons whose name appear in a section of the bibliography, and several kind friends.

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Karwarjit Singh Kang