Chapter III

ANALYSIS OF THEMES

Murals in 19th century Punjab covered a considerable range of themes. As is often the case, the subject matter and the form of art alike were derived by the artists from "selection out of the raw materials of myths and metaphysics as well as the contemporary environment." The themes on the walls of the Punjab in the 19th century are all 'concrete' and can for the most part be termed as 'narrative'. Since the murals were closer to the masses than, say miniatures, an effort seems to have been made by the painter to paint what was readily intelligible. For, as Ananda Coomaraswamy said, "the plain man has no use for art

unless he knows what it is about, or what it is for.

Most of the themes came somewhat naturally from the stock repertoire of the artists; it is only occasionally that they ventured on subjects which were new and contemporary. But perhaps a fuller idea of the range of subjects treated by mural painters can be gained by considering, in detail, and as examples, murals from one or two representative places.

One such typical building for mural work could be the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatuli in Noshipur district. Here there were, originally, no less than about 300 painted panels. Most of the panels in the shrine proper are now in a damaged state, but those on the three upper apartments, comprising a portion of the temple complex, are relatively intact.

The most profusely painted apartment, measuring 24 feet by 10 feet, consists of ninety-four surviving panels. Of these as many as eighteen paintings depict themes relating to Krishna, from his birth to his assuming of the Visvata Dama as revealed to Arjuna. There are eight panels pertaining to Vishnu. Five of these represent him in the form of Vamana, Varasurana, Narasimha, Varaha and Matsya avatara; a panel depicts the Gajendra moksha scene; in one he is seen in the.

female form of Mohini saving nectar from demons, while another represents him resting on the Shesh Serpent. Fourteen panels portray scenes from the two great epics — ten from the Ramayana and four from the Mahabharata. Four paintings relate to Shiva and Parvati, including their son Ganesha, and the Devi theme occupies two panels. Jagannatha, Balabhadrā and Subhadra, the Sabha of Indra and 'Churning of the Ocean' have been shown in three other panels. A painting represents Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh — the three principal divinities of Hindu pantheon — in a single panel. One panel depicts scene from Yama's court in the nether world.

Eight miniature panels represent eight different grahas or presiding planets in a series, including Sahu and Ketu, a theme not often seen painted elsewhere in the Punjab. Two other panels show heavenly bodies including Surya and Chandrana riding on their respective chariots.

In this very Vaishnava temple, there are twelve paintings which deal with Sikh themes. Out of these two depict Guru Nanak, one Guru Gobind Singh and two Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Five panels representing Maharaja Sher Singh, Dhian Singh, Suchet Singh, Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and Rani Jindan constitute a series

1. See coloured plate No. II.
2. See coloured plate No. I.
3. See plate No. 45.
4. See plate No. 46.
of striking portraits. Scenes of the Anglo-Sikh war 1
and surrender of the Sikh armies occupy two more panels.

There is a series of seven portraits depicting, in chronologi-
cal sequence, the mahants of the gaddi of Ram Tatwali temple. Two paintings relate to the legend of Gopi Chand and Puran Bhagat. At one place, a British 2
official is shown receiving petitions from natives. Six dharkanis, really much like sentries on duty, one each on
the sides of the three doors forming the entrance to the 3
apartment, have been painted. Racini themes have also been treated twice in small-sized panels.

A mural illustrating a Muslim theme, Shahs Tabris roasting fish in the sun, is of exceptional interest.
There are two more panels which seem to represent Muslim themes, although they are hard to identify with accuracy.

To the south of this apartment with the themes just listed there is another chamber, also beautifully
embellished. Thirty-four panels survive in it. Thirteen paintings depict themes of religious nature, many of
these repetitive of themes painted in the adjacent apartment. However, there are new themes as well. These illustrate, thus, the birth of Sita, Rama killing Bali,
Shravana Kumar carrying his blind parents, Kali Devi and Bhairen. Twelve panels cover miscellaneous genre themes

1. See plate No. 64.
2. See plate No. 68.
3. See plate No. 94.
including a lady feeding a parrot, a British army officer inspecting an infantry unit, a railway train, a lady writing a love letter, Gaddi people, wrestlers, acrobats, a hunting scene, a lady with a buck, an angel playing a musical instrument, and opium eaters.

Eight panels bear portraits of different personalities including Maharaja Sher Singh, Raja Gulab Singh and four mahants of the temple, the latter being shown on horsebacks. A dwarapala occupies one more panel.

On the western side is another apartment, smaller compared to both the chambers described in the preceding paragraphs. Although floral motifs mingle with figure paintings all over the temple elsewhere, the walls of this apartment are almost entirely covered with floral designs and creepers. The only exceptions are seven panels depicting the usual religious themes; two of these show past mahants of the temple paying homage to the image of "Thakur Ji" with great respect.

In the shrine proper at Ram Tatwali, the entire space on the walls constituting the circumambulatory path was originally embellished with murals. Now, however, there is very little to be seen, most of the paintings having become greatly damaged. Most of the

1. See plate No. 55.
2. See plate No. 84.
3. See plate No. 83.
4. See plate No. 85.
subjects found in the circumambulatory path are close to those noticed in the three apartments, but there is also the addition of some new themes, both religious and secular.

Among new additions in themes can be seen Krishna stealing butter, moving a temple, pointing out the moon to Radha, and in Hare-Lila: a form of love-play in which Krishna and Radha exchange their attires. An interesting rendering of Radha's elopement with Krishna also appears. Themes illustrating Hanuman's adventures as in the Ramayana, along with other themes from the epic, cover a number of panels. A scene illustrating the 'unveiling of Draupadi' is the only theme here taken from the Mahabharata. The Kalki svaratara, Gaja Lakshmi and Durga are other Hindu themes not found in the murals in the apartments. From among the Sikh Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh appears here again, holding a falcon in his hand. A painting representing Akali Paula Singh occupies one more panel.

Genre themes constitute the most interesting part of murals in the circumambulatory path. They bear no relation whatever to the temple and form apparently a part of the general repertoire which the Punjabi artists had by this time developed. Here, thus, are depicted ladies at toilette, writing letters, fondling peacocks, spinning cotton, making skins. We see a nanaah of Lucknow, an European lady standing with an umbrella accompanied by her dog, and a Sahib standing with a
stick in his hand. A few panels relate to the romantic legends of Mirza Sahiban as well as of Shah Bahram and Husan Banu. Akali Shula Singh and a number of Sikh chiefs occupy a few more panels. A Muslim theme with the devout Shams Tabriz appears also in this temple; in addition there is another Muslim theme illustrating crucifixion of Mansur-al-Mallaj. A number of Dwarspalas in different forms appear on all the eight openings into the circumambulatory path of the octagonal-based edifice, the intrados invariably bearing quaint figures and winged fairies.

Another building with mural work which can be seen as typical is the gurudwara of Baba Bir Singh at Rauwangabed in Amritsar district. Here 120 panels were painted and all of these are still extant in a fairly good state of preservation. Out of these, thirty panels portray themes that are both Sikh and Hindu and all the personalities depicted are identified through Gurumukhi inscriptions.

Among the Sikh themes are seen portraits of the ten Gurus and a number of personages and granthis associated with this gurudwara: Baba Bir Singh, Thakur Khuda Singh, Baba Dhaq Singh, Mahant Rama Singh, Baba Maharaj Singh, Baba Suraj Singh, Baba Bikram Singh, Baba Sujan Singh, Baba Khem Singh and Baba Kahn Singh. Other Sikh figures

1. See plate No. 32.
2. See plate Nos. 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11.
3. See plate No. 57.
include those of Baba Budha Ji, Baba Atal Rai, Bhai Salo and two sons of Guru Nanak Dev — Sri Chand and Lakshmi Das.

Among figures from Hindu religion and mythology are to be seen portraits of Krishna, Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Narada, Sukhdeva and Raja Janak. Four panels depict avatars like Matsya, Kurma, Varaha and Narasimha. The Bhaktas Kabir and Dhanna occupy two more panels.

There are ten panels depicting pleasantly illustrated birds: thus, parrots, pigeons, sparrows, sandpipers, partridges, wood-peckers, herons (a paddy-bird) and several elegant forms of peacock. In six more panels are painted trees and bushes on which perch playful monkeys and squirrels. The remaining panels are embellished with floral designs of various descriptions.

There is no apparent or necessary connection, one thus sees, between the scenes painted and the two shrines referred to above. The paintings here form a part of decoration, not of religion; something that is true of nearly every edifice in the Punjab with 19th century murals. An exception can be seen in the frescoes

1. See plate No. 31.
2. See plate No. 67.
in Baba Atal at Anuritesar. Their function is still decorative but more attention is paid to the nature of the shrine and the work done in it.

The frescoes here clearly stick to themes directly 'relevant' to the faith the shrine belongs to. In the 'deepthi', there are large panels bearing murals illustrating scenes from the life of Baba Atal Rai and Guru Nanak; and various episodes from the battle of Muktsar. There are also two series of paintings, one representing the ten Sikh Gurus and another representing members of the lineage of Baba Budha Ji. Sri Chand and Lakshmi Das, sons of Guru Nanak, also appear. On the first floor of the shrine proper, a long sequence of paintings illustrates, step by step, the life story of Guru Nanak. The first painting in this series represents all gods requesting the Almighty to send a holy person to the earth to relieve it of the burden of Kali Yuga, and the last depicts Guru Nanak appointing Angad Dev as his successor to the Guru Gaddi. The sequence moves from left to right, like lines on a written page, in keeping with the physical progress the viewer is supposed to make while moving inside the building. Nowhere else does the life of Guru Nanak find so elaborate a graphic rendering as here. Another series represents Sikh shaheeds or martyrs, including the four

1. See plate No. 30.
sons of Guru Gobind Singh who laid down their lives for their faith.

This quick survey would give one some idea of the range of themes and the way they are treated by such large in the murals from 19th century Punjab. But a closer look at themes is necessary, not from the point of view of where what is shown, but what is shown at all.

**Vaishnava Themes:**

Themes relating to Krishna were apparently so popular with the 19th century muralists of Punjab that, on a rough calculation every eighth mural panel was devoted to Krishna. This popularity arises as much from the popularity enjoyed by Vaishnavism as from the fact that Krishna was the subject of a vast amount of work in miniatures. There is hardly a legend connected with him that does not seem to have been depicted. Although a full sequential representation of the Krishna story is rare, collectively taken, the whole of Krishna Lila is covered. Paintings showing Krishna as a child take us to his birth in the prison; Vasudeva carrying the infant to a place of safety across the Yamuna; the child being handed over to Yasoda; Nanda and Yasoda fleeing to Gokula with infant Krishna; and Krishna crying for the moon; killing the serpent

1. See plate No. 19.
Kaliya, stealing butter, demanding it from the gopis, playing hide and seek in the forest with them. Krishna's childhood is perhaps best represented in the murals of the temple of Kishan Chand Bhandari at Batala.

As a youth we see him, as in the miniatures, portrayed playing with his youthful companions, the gopis, headed by his favourite Radha, ever entranced by the magic of his flute and maddened by his love. The themes commonly known as his līlās, with all their romantic and heroic associations, dominate the panels everywhere. Most of the paintings stem from the Bhagavata Purana in which the love of the gopis is treated as being symbolic of spiritual devotion. In the themes pertaining to the Krishna līla, the painters often found occasion to illustrate erotic poetry by representing Krishna as nayaka and Radha as nayikā; the most representative of this kind of work appears in the Shīrsh Mahal at Patiala in panels that illustrate verses from the Śatāsai of Bihari and the Rasikapriya of Keshavadas. Nowhere in these paintings, however, is there the slightest hint of vulgarity. Krishna and Radha are seen on a swing, sitting on a couch of love, sheltering themselves from rain.

2. See plate Nos. 22 and 23.
3. See plate Nos. 70 and 71.
1. See plate No. 22.
2. See plate No. 20.
holi-lila and the Chirā-harana. In the rasa-lila, gopis bear the call of Krishna on his magic flute and gather around him. Having divinely multiplied himself so as to stand between every two of these damsels, we see him in the circle of gopis dancing his eternal dance. As in their descriptions in the text, we find them here with measured steps, movements of hand, their smiles, their dancing hips, heaving breasts, locks of hair covering their foreheads, knots of hair and garments loosened. A large painting illustrating the rasa-lila, also once embellished a wall of the Lahore Fort. Several murals with the theme of holi are to be seen—the best of these being in the saptadh of Mangal Ram and in the Raghunath temple at Amritsar, in the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali and in the dera of Baba Lal Ji at Dhampur. The cult of Krishna raised the seasonal festival of holi to a religious festival and it became the sacred dole-lila. Chirā-harana or the 'stealing of the clothes' often excited great curiosity as an episode. It. Barr who always pleased with what he saw, was seemingly affected by one of the murals in the Royal Palace at Lahore, where he saw Krishna

1. See plate No. 41.
2. See plate No. 23.
4. See plate No. 41.
5. See plate No. 23.
“perched up in a trees, from the branches of which depend various articles of dress he has stolen from some fair damsels who are refreshing themselves in a limpid stream below, and whose heads and hands, clamped in a supplicatory manner, appear above water beseeching him to return their apparel, but to no purpose...”

In addition to themes referred to above several other themes on Krishna remained popular with the muralists. Among these, thus, he is depicted lifting the mount Govardhana and, accompanied by his brother Balarama, in the act of killing Kansa. Several panels in the Damthal monastery, the Raghunath temple at Pindori and in the temple of Hansa Devi near Manimajra, illustrate the abduction of Radha by Krishna. Paintings depicting him with Sudama, and with his later devotees like Dhanna and Sena, appear in the akhara of Bala Ram at Amritsar. His Virata Juna as revealed to Arjuna is found in the Shish Mahal at Patiala and in the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali, the former being much the superior of the two representations. Among the Krishna themes, it would seem, themes with lyrical or dramatic content, were more popular than those in which his divinity was earnestly hinted at.

1. Journal, p. 70.
Rama's place among the themes relating to Vaishnavism in the murals of 19th century Punjab comes next only to that of Krishna. Rama is always seen as a god, themes about him, based invariably on the Ramayana, being suggestive always of divinity. A complete cycle of important events of his life appears in murals. He is depicted in the act of killing the ogress Taraka, breaking the bow at Sita's swayamvara, going in pursuit of the golden deer and killing it, shooting arrows at Bali, fighting with Ravana and killing him, and assuming his position as king of Ayodhya. A beautiful panel at Ram Tatwali depicts Rama's marriage procession in a way typical of a marriage procession of 19th century royalty. The only panel with the Rama theme among murals in the Shish Mahal at Patiala is worthy of special notice. It elegantly portrays the god seated with Sita on a couch attended by Lakshmana from behind, while Hanuman humbly sits below at his master's feet. Sugriva, the vanara king, with his army of monkeys, stands before the divine couple with his hands joined in supplicatory manner. The theme commemorates Rama's victory over Ravana. In the background is shown the island of Lanka with corpses of Ravana and his associates lying dead here and there, being consumed by vultures. The most

1. See plate Nos. 27 and 28.
2* See plate No. 39.
3. See plate No. 28.
extensively painted theme depicts the divine couple seated together on a couch in different graphic renderings, attended by Lakshana waving a yak's fly-whisk or peacock-feather fan, with Hanuman standing or sitting respectfully before them.

Apart from Vaishnava themes on Krishna and Rama already described, there are other themes relating to this sect of Hinduism. Vishnu, the Supreme Deity, finds his place in several panels. He invariably appears with four arms, reclining on the serpent Sesha floating on the eternal waters. In his four hands, he is seen holding a club, a shell, a discus and a lotus, his familiar ayudhas. From his navel sprouts a lotus bearing upon its petals Brahma. Lakshmi, his spouse, massages the feet of her lord as a symbol of her devotion to Vishnu. This vision is to be seen in extant murals in akbarwala Bala Band and akbarwala Beri Wala at Amritsar, in the ghatwala of Hanishan at Nal at Mehta, and in the amanad of Lala Jamuna Das at Jagadhri. In one of the frescoes at Dasmal, Vishnu is portrayed sitting on a royal couch with attendants around. Murals at several places represent him in his various incarnations or his appearing on earth in several forms, each time as a saviour of mankind or as the destroyer of evil. The usually painted incarnations of 1 avatara are Matsya or fish in which form he appeared.

1. See plate No. 31.
in order to save the seventh Rama and the Vedas from the Deluge, Varuna or tortoise, the form assumed by him during the 'Churning of the Ocean' by the gods and demons to obtain the elixir of immortality; Varaha or boar, the guise assumed during his struggle with the demon Hiranyakasipu; Varana or dwarf who deceived the demon king Bali for the sake of mankind; Parasurama or 'Rama with the Axe' who delivered the Brahmins from the tyranny of the Kshatriyas; Rama; Krishna; Buddha and then Kalki, the last incarnation which is yet to come at the end of the present Kali Yuga when Vishnu will appear riding a white horse. The most striking of these avatars appears in the frescoes of Shish Mahal at Patiala. A mural in the sathang of Banga Ram at Amritsar depicts Vishnu incarnated as half-horse and half-man, as Harya-agya, in the act of destroying a rakshasa. In murals in the temple of Kishan Chand Bhandari at Batala, the thalukwara of Bairagian at Attari, Shri Palkiana Sahib near Jaura and the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali, Vishnu appears in the theme representing Caicandra Raksha. A panel at Ram Tatwali represents him in the form of Mohini denying nectar to the demons.

Saiya Themes:

In comparison with Vaishnava subjects, Saiya themes

1. See plate No. 34.
2. See plate No. 36.
3. See plate No. 33.
4. See plate No. 32, It represents Parasurama avatar. See Karuna Gousamy, loc. cit., pt. 1 and 2, p. 175. Also see plate No. 35.
find considerably less coverage in murals of 19th century Punjab. Their fewer numbers are, however, compensated for sometimes by the conspicuous positions they occupy. Siva is often represented living in the Himalayas along with Parvati, sometimes in the act of trampling on or destroying demons, wearing around his neck a serpent and a necklace of skulls, and seen with white bull, Nandi, on which he rides, carrying a trident, a tiger’s skin, a rattle, a noose etc. Many a time the divine couple is shown accompanied by their sons, Ganesha and Karttikeya. The theme representing Siva and Parvati in the act of preparing intoxicating potions like bhang appears frequently. His marriage illustrated in a series of panels is to be seen in frescoes of the shrine of Mansa Devi near Nanimajra. Four panels in the shivala of Ek Onkar near Nighou in district Karnal, represents Siva bestowing a deadly boon on Bhimasura and then destroying skilfully the demon who turned treacherously upon the bestower to kill him. The theme also occurs in the frescoes of the temple of Mansa Devi near Nanimajra. A fresco in the

gundhra of Kala Bhari at Una portrays him as
antapanisvara, fusing in himself the form of his
spouse Parvati and thus appearing half-male, half-
female. Shiva in his manifestation as Bhairo or the
'terrible one' appears often in murals of Eastern
Punjab. Outside the temple of Shiva at Thanesar, thus,
there was once a rendering of 'Kal Bhairon', represen-
ed as black and holding a decapitated head in one hand.

Shakti Themes:

Representations of Shakti, the supreme power
taking feminine form and incarnated under many names
for the destruction of demons inimical to gods and
men, are also seen among 19th century murals. The
themes are almost invariably based on the Markandeya
guna, devoted to the glorification of Shakti as
mother-goddess. About a dozen paintings in the temple
of Hansa Devi near Hanumajra illustrate her in
3
different forms assumed for the destruction of the
two giants, Sumbha and Nisumbha. A lengthy series in
the murals in the temple of Bihari Mai at Patiala
represents the same theme even more elaborately.

2. See plate No. 35.
depicting her in as many as sixteen fights against the demons. Her deeds in the form of Kali are to be seen painted in the Bhadra-Kali temple at Kurukshetra. The exploits of the goddess against the buffalo-demon, Nahishasura, find impressive treatment in a fresco in the Shish Mahal at Patiala.

Miscellaneous Hindu Themes:

In addition to the themes referred to earlier, several other themes, mostly derived from Hindu mythology, also appear. Among the Vedic deities depicted are to be seen Surya, Indra and Yama or Dharmaraja. The last being the god of departed spirits, judge and punisher of the dead, is invariably depicted in his court, assisted by Chitrarupa. Scenes from Yama's hall, terrible with instruments of torture and fire, were seemingly of considerable interest. In the Shish Mahal at Patiala and in the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali appear the most vivid of such scenes.

Besides themes relating to major deities there are to be seen themes relating to Brahma, Jagannatha, Konadova, Ganesha and Kartikoya. Brahma is often portrayed with four bearded faces and four arms, each hand holding a copy of a Veda. Representation of

1. See plate No. 33.
Jagannatha, with Balabhadrabove and Subhadra, appear at four places in all: in the dera of Baba Lal Ji at 1 Dhyampur, in the gurudwara of Baba Kala Dhari at Una in the temple of Balimgis at Ram Tatwali and in the shrine of Baba Budha Ji at Teja, a village not far from Fategarh Churian in district Gurdaspur. Ganesh was usually depicted accompanied by Riddhi and Siddhi, flanking the god of good luck. Murals representing Karttikeya appear sporadically. The six-headed god, generalissimo of the armies of the gods, is depicted riding on his vahana or vehicle, the peacock, often holding a bow and an arrow.

Representation of Parvata, Sukadeva, Garuda, Gayatri, Sarwana, Vishvvantra, Janaka, Hanuman, Balarama, Usha and Aniruddha, constitute other Hindu themes. An impressive representation of Ravana, in a seated posture, is to be seen among murals of the garadh of Lala Balak Ram at Jagadhri.

Epic Themes:

Themes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two great Indian epics, occur frequently among murals of 19th century Punjab. A number of themes from the Ramayana have already been referred to while describing

1. See plate No. 37.
2. See plate No. 39.
3. See plate Nos. 28, 29 and 39.
themes related to Rama. Themes representing the Kauravas and the Pandavas playing dice, and the 'unveiling of Draupadi' appear to have been the most popular from among Mahabharata themes. A great number of mural panels in the thakurdwara of Lala Churh Mall at Nakodar illustrate themes from the Mahabharata. Themes from the Ramayana as well as the Mahabharata, running into several panels, have found place among the murals in the gurudwara Jothi Mala at Guru Nanakshai.

Saints and Holy Men:

Many murals representing saintly or religious personages have survived. Among these are to be seen bhaktas like Bhanna, Sena, Durana, Kabir and a number of ascetics related to Gokhnatha, including Bhartri Hari and Gopi Chand. A panel in the temple of Shri Kalu Nath at Nathana, in district Bhatinda, interestingly, represents Mira Bai. All the akhara having murals invariably depict Shri Chand, the founder of the Udasi sect, seen almost nude and besmeared with ashes.

1. See plate No. 80.
Sikh Themes:

Representations of the Sikh Gurus constitute the major portion of themes pertaining to the Sikhs and more than half of the murals portray Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, the first and the last of the Sikh Gurus. "Their popularity as national saints of the Sikhs" as has been remarked, "called for worship through pictorial effigies, if not in defined images". From among the extant remains in the Punjab plains, the earliest rendering of Guru Nanak in a mural panel is from the late 18th century, in the temple of Shri Nan Dev at Ghuman in district Gurdaspur. By the end of the first quarter of the 19th century, representations of him became very much more popular, being based on traditional accounts.

Guru Nanak often appears accompanied by Bala and Mardana, the former a chauri bearer and the latter a rebec player to the Guru. Except in one of his portraits in the gurudwara of Satkartarian at Sri Hargobindpur, where he is seen wearing a head-dress resembling a Mughal crown, he is shown with his head covered with a topi. Under a tree on which birds, mostly parrots are shown perching, he sits in characteristic meditative pose, not very different from how

1. O.C. Gangoli, "The Sikh School of Painting", Indian Art Souvenir, p. 9.
2. See plate No. 18.
he is seen in many modern calendar paintings, his back supported by a round pillow, a rosary in his right hand, the left hand resting on the mat beneath. A typical example of this type of representation is seen at Ram Tatwali. Another important theme is the siddha gaathai, Guru Nanak's religious discourse with the siddhas, usually representing Nanak facing the leader of the siddhas backed by a number of siddha ascetics sitting in their hierarchical order. The theme has been best delineated in akhara Bala Sand and in the gaanash of Baba Khuda Singh at Naurangabad. Many a time he appears along with his sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das, sitting respectfully before him.

Apart from many similar themes, there are lengthy series of murals illustrating in a detailed fashion his entire life based on tradition as well as on the large corpus of literature called the Janam Sakhis. The most representative extant series are to be seen in the gurdwara of Baba Kala Dhari at Una and in the shrine of Baba Atal at Anritsar, the former consisting of forty-one painted panels. Beginning with the birth of Guru Nanak, the first part of the series illustrates themes from the Guru's childhood consisting of scenes of the Guru attending school, disagreeing with his teacher's lessons on worldly knowledge, grazing his

1. See coloured plate No. II.
father's buffaloes and cows, feeding the poor and holy people and the like. As he grows up, he is seen as a keeper of the government stores at Sultanpur settling accounts with the Faujdar at Sultanpur getting betrothed and married, and renouncing the world. Then he appears as a preacher meeting Malik Bhago and demonstrating the difference between the earning of the oppressor and those of an honest man. Further he is seen with the cannibal Kanda, with Kaliyuga and Wali Kandhari, all of whom are made by him to relinquish their vileness. He is also depicted preaching to a legendary Islamic character named Karun and sleeping, while at Mecca, with his feet pointing towards the Ka'aba. The series in Baba Atal ends with the Guru's appointing Angad as his successor to Guru Gaddi. The series in the gurudwara of Baba Kala Dharli at Una also consists of a number of scenes illustrating Nanak's religious discourses with contemporary theologists. The old building of gurudwara Panja Sahib at Hasan Abdal, too, once had murals relating to the Guru's life.

Guru Gobind Singh often appears on horseback

1. See plate No. 3.
2. Guru is said to have come across near Jagannath Puri, a vicious religious broker (panda) named Kaliyuga.
holding a falcon and accompanied by a hound and a few attendants. The best extant murals of this motif, which is repeated over and over again, is to be seen in the samadh of Baba Dyal Das at Barnala and in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Guru Gobind Singh baptizing the ‘Five Beloved Ones’ is another popular theme and one of its representative examples still survives amongst the murals of the Akal Takhat. Paintings depicting him in a sitting posture with an attendant behind are also seen painted but not often. In one of the murals of gurukhara Guru sar at Bhangi in district Faridkot, he is portrayed playing dice with Rai Jagga, the chief of Kotkapura. A mural in the samadh of Baba Mohar Singh at Tanda represents Guru Gobind Singh along with his four sons.

Murals depicting other Sikh Gurus are not too many and when they are seen, they show the Guru sitting with an attendant behind, waving a yak’s tail fly-whisk or peacock-feather fan. Well-executed murals on these Gurus are extant in the gurukhara of Baba Kala Bhari at Una, the gurukhara of Baba Bir Singh at Naurangabad and Raja Sansi, the Akal Takhat at Amritsar.

1. See plate No. 12.
3. See plate No. 15.
5. See plate Nos. 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11.
6. See plate Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 10.
Darbar Sahib and Bunga of village Sathiala at Tarn Taran, gurudwara Bauli Sahib at Coinxwal, gurudwara Pothi Mala at Guru Har-riat, samadh of Baba Dyal Das at Barnala and samadh of Baba Rama Singh at Naurangabad. Scenes from the lives of Gurus were painted on the 1 walls of a dharam-sala at Lehru, a village in district Ludhiana. Paintings illustrating interesting themes related to Guru Har Gobind also appear. One of the panels in the samadh of Nanak Ram at Amritsar beautifully portrays his religious discourse with Mian Mir. In the Akal Takhat, Bhai Bichhi Chand is 2 shown presenting those horses to the Guru which he skilfully brought back from the Governor of Lahore 3 after he had forcibly made off with them earlier. A panel in gurudwara Pothi Mala depicts Guru Har Gobind 4 blessing Nan Sulakhami with a son.

Murals representing Guru Nanak flanked by the rest of the Gurus were painted several times, but the theme portraying all the Gurus in a single panel seems to have come into vogue not earlier than the second half of the 19th century. Typical examples are to 5 be seen in the samadh of mahant Nanak Ram and akhara

2. See plate No. 8.
3. See Kahn Singh Nabha, Encyclopædia of Sikh Literature, p. 728.
4. See plate No. 7.
5. See plate No. 1.
Bala Sand at Maritsar, in the _shiva
d at Matewal and in the _sangh_ of Baba Sahar Singh at Tanda. Among the paintings that embellished the walls of a palace at Wazirabad built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, were life-size portraits of the Gurus from Nanak, the first, to Gobind, the last, according to Baron Rugel who saw them there personally.

After the Gurus came, in terms of popularity, themes that depict Sikh martyrs who became victims of Muslim bigotry. The most prominent among them are Ajit Singh, Joghar Singh, Fateh Singh and Jorawar Singh, the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh. They have usually been illustrated in action in the battle field, and are best represented in a panel in _gurudwara_ Pothi Mala at Guru Har Sahai. A number of other martyrs — Dip Singh, Nara Singh, Gurbaksh Singh, Karag Singh — to name only a few, adorn the walls of the shrine of Baba Atal. Banda Bahadur, one of the most prominent leaders and martyrs of the Sikhs, has been depicted but once in the Darbar Sahib at Tarn Taran.

The themes portraying Baba Buddha Ji are confined to murals seen in the edifices in the Majha tract. The whole of his lineage consisting of Bhai Sarwan, Jhanda,

1. See plate No. 2.
4. See plate No. 17.
Guriitta, Gurbaksh, Mohar Singh, Shyam Singh, Kahan Singh and Sujan Singh also appear even if rarely. Two such series are extant in the Akal Takhat and Baba Atal. Similarly, in gurudwara Pothi Mala at Guru Harmsahai, a series represents the lineage of the Sochi Gurus. Many other personages related to the Sikh religion also appear in murals, including, for instance, Dhai Gurdas in Baba Atal, Dhai Salo in the gurudwara of Baba Bir Singh at Naurangabad, Dhai Nani Singh in the hennes of village Sathiala at Tarn Taran and Akali Phula Singh in the temple of the Bairagis at Ram Tatwali.

Nihang Singh form one of the most interesting themes in the murals of 19th century Punjab. Their way of life is elaborately represented in the paintings. 2 They appear as gurmukhals or guards with drawn swords, beating drums, riding horses and elephants, hunting, fencing, grinding leaves of cannabis indica to make an intoxicating potion, and the like. Many murals relating to them are extant in the gurudwara at Bargahi, in the samadh of Rani Jind at Hoshiarpur and in the samadh of Baba Mohar Singh at Tanda. In gurudwara Lohgarh at Dina are to be seen two most prominent leaders of the Nihangs: Akali Phula Singh mounted on an elephant and

1. See Kamwarjit Kang and Nirman Sandhu, Punjab Murals, plate entitled 'Sri Maharban, son of Dhai Pirthi Chand'.
3. See plate No. 78.
Nana Singh riding a horse, their names being indicated in Gurmukhi characters above their heads.

Two paintings, one each in the samadhi of Baba Khuda Singh at Naurangabad in district Amritsar and the samadhi of the daughter of Mai Hiran at Bhunga in district Hoshiarpur, depict Sikh sangats paying reverence to the holy Guru Granth Sahib.

Sikh themes are also to be seen in a considerable number of paintings connected, one way or the other, with 19th century royalty and nobility. In two paintings, one in the samadhi of Baba Non Singh at Sodhiwala near Zira and the other in the thekhshidhara at Bagarian in district Sangrur, appears Maharaja Ranjit Singh followed by the royal retinue. The demolished hulkae of the Golden Temple at Amritsar once had splendid paintings depicting important events of Sikh history.

In the Lahore Palace, a mural is recorded as showing the meeting of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with Lord William Bentinck at Roopar. A mural in the house of Generals Ventura and Allard at Lahore recorded their reception at the Sikh Court. There were also pictures of battles in which the two generals were engaged. The tradition of getting walls painted with themes illustrating

battles was apparently quite popular among the Sikhs. Houses of the Sikh nobility in district Lahore were embellished with fighting scenes relating chiefly to conflicts with the Afghans of the north-west frontier. A painting representing the battle of Jamrood is mentioned as among those in the fort of Hari Singh 2 Nalwa at Gujranwala. The ceiling of Allard’s bungalow at Lahore was painted with the emblem of Francose Compo or the Paul Jahan consisting of the Gallic eagle and the tri-coloured flag with large with the name of Guru Gobind Singh. In a mural in akhara Bala Rand at Amritsar appears Hari Singh Nalwa inspecting a long row of soldiers. Two adjacent panels in akhara Beri Wala at Amritsar represent Ranjit Singh and the 5 'Jangi-lat' on horsebacks, facing each other and followed by the Sikh and the British armies respectively. The Sikh and the British armies engaged in fierce battle consisting of many hundred soldiers appear in a mural in the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali. Another painting in this temple depicts the surrender of the Sikh armies before the British.

1. Lahore D.G. 1916, p. 29.
4. See plate No. 61.
5. See plate No. 60.
6. See plate No. 64.
Portraits

A considerable number of 'portraits', some based on life and others on imagination, mostly depicting 19th century Sikh royalty and aristocracy, are met with among the extant murals all over the Punjab. In addition, there are references to portraits in written records which describe works no longer surviving.

Among the portraits, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's remains the dominating figure. In one of the frescoes in the Royal Palace at Lahore, Ranjit Singh was portrayed in the presence of Baba Nanak with his hands joined in supplicatory manner. In the scene that represented Ranjit's interview with the Governor-General at Roopar in one of the murals of the Lahore Palace, the two potentates were portrayed facing each other. The frescoes in the mansion of Avitabile had among other themes, a portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, we learn. A painting that at Peshawar portrayed Maharaja Ranjit Singh seated cross-legged with Raja Dhian Singh on his right hand while the effeminate and youthful, Hira Singh lolled in a careless attitude beside his master. The description also mentions a crew of whiskered, turbaned figures, portraying Allard,

2. Ibid., p. 100.
4. Ibid., pp. 544-46.
Ventura, Court and Avitabile, the four prominent European officers in the employ of the Maharaja, standing behind the arbiter of their destinies. Not very long ago, murals representing life-size portraits of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the princes were to be seen on the walls of the Ramgarhia bunga, especially on the pillars facing the Dukh Bhanjani shrine in the premises of the Golden Temple at Amritsar.

At Ramatawali, a remarkable painting portrays the Maharaja seated in a chair while Bhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh, the Doakra brothers, stand with folded hands before their master. A painting with a similar composition survives in the gomadh of Baba Mohar Singh at Tanda. In another painting in akhara Bala Rand at Amritsar, he is portrayed with his sons: Kharak Singh, Sher Singh and Rau Nihal Singh. Other interesting murals delineating the Maharaja in different situations are to be seen at Shri Pakidan Sahib near Jaura, a village in district Amritsar, in the haveli of Seth Panna Lal Phul Chand Shanda at Ferozepur, in the house of Shri Anant Ram at Tanda, in the Shiv temple at Bhunga in district Noshianpur and in the temple of Baba Har Har at Nur Mahal.

1. See Bhan Singh, loc. cit., p. 46.
2. See coloured plate No. 1.
3. See plate No. 43.
4. See plate No. 44.
5. See Kanwarjit Kang and Himad Sandhu, Punjab Murals, plate entitled 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh'.
Individual portraits of Sher Singh, Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh, Suchet Singh and Pakir Aziz-ud-Din appear at Ram Tatwali. In the Shiv temple at Lasara, a village in district Jullundur, are two interesting portraits identified through Persian inscriptions over their heads. One of these depicts Maharaja Sher Singh with an attendant, Gulam Mubudin, while the other depicts, interestingly enough, Maharaja Dalip Singh playing a sitar.

The mural in the house of Ventura and Allard which represented their reception at the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and which we are told consisted of 'many thousand figures', must have included many portrait studies, at least of those who were directly involved. A painting in the house of Shri Kundan Lal at Basuya portrays General Court and his wife standing with umbrellas held over their heads. The name 'Court Sahib Bahadur' appears in Persian script close to the top of the panel.

In the cis-Sutlej states, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his satraps are replaced as themes by the portraits of local Rajas and Chiefs. Murals in the Diwankhana Kadim at Patiala have life-like portraits of Raja Harindra Singh and other Rajas of the Mukian states, including Sangat Singh, the Raja of Jind. In the Gillas

1. See plate No. 45.
2. See plate No. 46.
3. Baron Charles Hugel, on cit., p. 204.
4. See plate No. 54.
5. See plate No. 47.
Mubarak at Chhachhrauli appear murals portraying local sanctums. In the Diwankhana of Chandar Sain at Dadri in district Bhiwani, there appear portraits representing Raja Bir Bikramjit and Maharaja Dalip Singh.

Portraits of the other historical personages of the bygone days also appear. In the haveli of Mahi Mal at Langiana Nawan, a village not far from Roja, are curious portraits of Akbar and Birbal facing each other, obviously drawn from imagination. Likewise it is interesting to note that among the frescoes embellishing the mansion of Mitabale at Peshawar, we find mention of Napoleon as being portrayed in one of the panels.

A considerable number of murals show Sikh martyrs, portrayed from imagination, the best having been painted on the walls of Baba Atal at Amritsar. It was also common practice to embellish the walls of monasteries and religious establishments with the portraits of their mahants, either painted individually or in a single panel, shown in hierarchic or sequential order. Two such panels in akhara Bala Rand portray all the mahants of the monastery. Eleven panels at Ram Tatwali

2. See Kanwarjit Kang, Punjab Murals, plate entitled 'Martyr Bachitar Singh'.
4. See J.C. Oman, Mystics, Ascetics and Saints of India, p. 259.
5. See plate No. 58.
portray the mahants of the temple, each panel having a single portrait. Several panels in akhara Beri Wala at Amritsar and akhara Ulasian at Jarnesh in district Jullundur, portray the mahants of their respective establishments. A panel in the gurudwara of Baba Bir Singh at Naurangabad portrays Maharaj Singh, Suraj Singh, Bikram Singh and Kahn Singh, said to have been close associates of Baba Bir Singh. In addition, portraits of Thakur Khuda Singh, Baba Bhag Singh and mahant Ram Singh also appear here.

Not infrequently, the person in whose honour an edifice was erected, was portrayed in a mural panel. In the dera of Baba Lal Ji at Dhanpur, thus, were painted 'portraits' of Baba Lal and Dara Shukoh engaged in religious discourse. A portrait of Baba Bikram Singh Bodi is to be seen in his samadh at Amritsar. Portraits of Baba Bir Singh appear in the gurudwaras related to him both at Raja Sansi as well as at Naurangabad. There is a fine portrait believed to have been of Mohar Singh and one of his associates in his samadh at Loon, a village in district Ludhiana. Portraits of Sardar Lal Singh, Bakshi Mehtab Singh.

1. See plate No. 57.
2. Gurdaspur E.G. 1914, p. 31.
3. This portrait has been reproduced on page 7 of the book entitled *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters* by M.L. Ahlawat and Kipal Singh.
4. See plate No. 59.
5. See plate No. 51.
Baba Khuda Singh and Baba Mohar Singh are still extant in their respective samadha located at Kale Chamupur near Amritsar, at Dina in district Faridkot, at Naurangabad near Tarn Taran and at Tanda in district Hoshiarpur, respectively. Portraits of persons who had raised temples as works of supererogation or of others who were somehow associated with the construction of the edifices, were also drawn. In the temple of Raja Sahib Dyal at Kishankot in district Gurdaspur, for instance, there are two panels, one portraying the Raja himself and the other his entire family. An interesting fresco in the temple of Mansa Devi near Nanimajra portrays Raja Copal Singh, the builder of the shrine. Among the frescoes in the Dantial monastery, there is a portrait of the Pathania Raja Bir Singh who had spent sometime there. Sometimes, painters too painted self-portraits on the walls of the edifices that they were engaged to painting. Instances of this are to be seen in the temple of Mansa Devi near Nanimajra and in gurudwara Pothi Mala at Guru Har Sahai.

1. See plate No. 35.
4. The granthi of this gurudwara pointed to a particular spot on a wall where he remembered having seen a portrait of the painter who had been engaged in painting murals in the shrine.
Besides important personages, 'ordinary persons' also sometimes managed to get themselves portrayed, either by virtue of having been in charge of getting murals painted in a particular edifice or being somehow close to the muralists, who possibly drew them as an act of friendship. Instances of such portraits are to be seen in the ganach of Sardar Lal Singh at Kale Ganampur, a village near Amritsar and in the Muhammadan tomb at Andlu, a village in district Ludhiana.

Female portraiture was not unknown but was certainly rare. Lt. Barr mentions Lady William Bentinck, accoutred in white trousers, boots and gold straps, portrayed a few paces behind her husband in the scene that represented Maharaja Ranjit's interview with the Governor-General at Roar in one of the murals of the Lahore Palace. In the frescoes of his mansion at Peshawar, Avitabile had a portrait of an European Lady whose name, however, is not known. European ladies apart — and they form a different category because of their appearing in the public frequently and openly — portraits of Indian women, as in the miniatures were based mostly on 'ideal' types and not on observation. At Raja Sansi, a portrait, said to

3. See plate No. 48.
have been of Rani Jindan, who was so well known to Sikh miniaturists, is still extant. Another female portrait in the frescoes of the Bhandari Bhola temple at Batala is also believed to be of Rani Jindan. She appears again in one of the portraits at Ram Tatwali. In the Diwankhana of Chandar Sain at Dadri appear portraits of Rani Bija Bai and, strangely enough, a portrait identified as that of Lady Lalla. There is a portrait of a low class woman, perhaps based on life, in the house of Shri Kandan Lal at Dasuya with a caption in Persian script, reading 'Narayan Chandu'.

Apart from the portraits referred to above, several representations of men also belonging to the category of 'type portraits' are met with in 19th century murals. Thus, the representation of a 'Nawab of Lucknow' at Ram Tatwali, a painting of a soldier inscribed in Persian with the words 'Tasvin-i-Dogra' in the house of Shri Kandan Lal at Dasuya, a Chohan in Dera Wasiya at Laida, a village in district Sangrur, belong to this order. Several murals depicting European 'Sahibs' and Ladies standing in different postures have also survived. Many brick houses in district Jullundur are recorded as having

1. See plate No. 49.
2. See plate No. 53.
3. See Kanwarjit Kang and Nirmal Sandhu, Punjab Murals, plate entitled 'Royal attendant'.
4. For instance see plate Nos. 54, 65 and 66.
"outrageous caricatures" in the form of mural paintings showing members of H.M.'s Civil and Military services.

**Genre Themes**

Among the more interesting of the paintings, from the point of view of theme, interesting because innovative, are paintings of genre themes. Among the murals from 19th century Punjab, unexpectedly we find, thus, craftsmen such as goldsmiths, ironsmiths, carpenters and cobblers at work. A cotton-printer is to be seen in the *samadh* of Bibi Bhani at Kartarpur. Themes depicting scenes from the routine life of women also appear as they do in the works of 19th century miniaturists like Kehar Singh and Kapur Singh. In the murals of Shri Palkiana Sahib, a temple in district Amritsar, we see women engaged in winnowing grain and then pounding it; in the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali, they appear spinning cotton and making skeins.

A painting in *gurudwara* Gurusar at Bargah near Kot Kapura, depicts a woman carrying food for her man working in the fields. A Gujjar woman carrying milk on her head appears in the *samadh* of Sardar Lal Singh at Kale Chamupur, a village near Amritsar. The theme representing 'mother and child' which has become

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2. See plate No. 52.
popular in Indian painting of the 20th century, was also dealt with in the murals of 19th century Punjab. A fair example of the theme survives in the Rani Mahal at Nabha. An ethnographically interesting picture of Gadis or hills shepherds at Ram Tatwali also falls under this category.

Several murals have themes treating of public entertainments and were obviously painted with the intention of amusing the viewers. In painting these themes, the muralists sometimes wittingly recorded the panorama of recreational and sportive aspects of life in 19th century Punjab. Wrestling was apparently the most popular sport and numerous panels of murals on this subject are still extant all over the Punjab. Sometimes even we have the names of wrestlers. In the Serai at Zira appear life-size figures of two wrestlers, Kikar Singh and Oulamun, engaged in wrestling. Kite-flying was another popular theme. Paintings illustrating sports like fencing, chariot race, acrobatics and pigeon-flying occur frequently. Lt. Barr records that Maharaja Ranjit Singh's shooting-box at Gujarat was embellished with sporting feats such as cock-fighting, hunting and wrestling. There are also to be seen interesting panels showing monkey-trainers and bear-

1. See plate No. 84.
2. See R.E. Parry, op.cit., pp. 44, 50. Also see plate No. 80.
3. See plate No. 86.
4. See plate No. 83.
5. Journal, p. 147. Also see plate Nos. 80 and 81.
masters displaying their skills. A number of miniature panels in the Shiv Puri temple at Patiala record 1 several entertaining feats. Panels illustrating hunting in progress and Shima flinging elephants in the sky are frequently met with. The representation of a railway train had become one of the most popular motifs, apparently because the novelty of railway travel excited many imaginations. At Ram Tatwali, a ten feet long panel depicts a complete railway train. The village rest-house or pana in the eastern districts, now forming a part of the Haryana State, frequently included this motif among the themes painted on their 3 walls. A painting in Shri Palkiana Sahib depicts a man receiving drinks from his beloved, and one is instantly reminded of modern calendar paintings based on Omar Khayyam's works. Murals in the havali of Shri Gokar Nath at Hadisya, a village near Barnala, include interesting pictures of a snake-charmer and a man smoking a hookah.

**Ritualistic Themes:**

Several motifs, purely ritualistic in nature, were painted in 19th century Punjab. Many of these are still

1. See plate No. 06.
in vogue, mostly among the village folk of the eastern districts. Being ceremonial and reverent they were by nature meant to be transitory in character. On the eve of ghath or house-warming ceremony in Amritsar, figures of five or seven gods were drawn together with Masta, the house god. In district Gurgaon, chariots, pea-fowls and many other objects, including a picture of the god "Binaik or BindaiK" (apparently Ganesha), were drawn on the house walls several days before the wedding of a male member in the family. On a number of other occasions and festivals, too, there appears to have remained in this district a popular tradition of drawing ritualistic representations on walls. On the Solon day, a figure called agra was drawn in red on the house wall. On Durga Panchnami, Deep-Uthan and Duryodhana days, were drawn pictures of different descriptions which originally had meanings of their own. On Diwali was drawn a figure having three parts: (a) sain, representing Radhika, (b) representing the goddess Anvashya, (c) and representing Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. The tradition of drawing figures on Gagan

3. Ibid., p. 915.
4. Ibid., p. 915, pt. I, fig. 2.
5. Ibid., pt. I, fig. I and pt. III.
6. Ibid., p. 916.
Haunt, representing a snake and a man on horseback, still survives.

**Exotic Themes:**

Paintings with obvious erotic content are of unusual interest. In the tradition of embellishing Hindu and Islamic palaces with erotic scenes, the Sikh royalty and aristocracy got their private apartments adorned with murals around the theme of carnal desires. Hari Singh's villa at Cujramala had murals, 'questionable' enough in character to make Lt. Barr refrain from giving any detailed description. Likewise, General Avitabile's bedroom was covered with pictures of unclothed dancing girls and with the loves of Hindu deities. A number of frescoes in the Shish Mahal at Patiala are covered with *srinagara* themes very appropriate for the *mahal* meant which was primarily for the ladies. Murals in the Rani Mahal at Nabha illustrate passage from the treatise on sex called the *Kok-Shastra*, depicting couples in various attitudes of physical congress. Although erotic themes remained

2. See *HaA*, VIII, p. 209.
confined mostly to murals in the edifices of the upper strata of the 19th century society, the themes sometimes crept also into murals that embellished religious establishments. Some paintings in the temple of Dava Sharwan Nath at Pehowa, for instance, depict scenes of dalliance. James Coley refers to very 'obscene figures' he had seen on the walls of houses at Amritsar. W. Wakefield refers to erotic frescoes that once covered walls of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. However, in the absence of any corroboration, one tends to doubt this statement.

Raga-Ragini Themes:

Raga-Ragini themes were also painted in fairly large numbers. Here, as in the miniatures, attempt was made to give musical form "a more precise expression", through paintings. A panel in the fort of Minimajra depicts beautifully the pictorial versions of Bilaval, Sarang and Purbi raginis. Pictorial renderings of Bairari and Sarang raginis appear among murals in the Shiv temple at Lasara, a village in district Jullundur. The theme also occurs among the murals of an edifice known as Gaddighar, located in the Vaishnava monastery at Pindori near Gujaspur. A panel in the

1. See plate No. 69.
5. See plate No. 72. Also see Kanwarjit Kang and Nirmal Sandhu, "Punjab Murals", plate entitled 'Rag Bilaval'.

Kanwarjit Kang and Hoc Bilawal
Dantthal monastery depicts Todi rasini. In the gundhrara of Baba Kala Dhari, likewise, survives a graphic personification of Sri Rag Hindol. Apparently the tradition of painting Raga-malas was still strong.

Navak–Navika Themes:

Navak–Navika themes based on the traditional rhetorical classification of the situations of love were painted, but the theme has been generally poorly treated except in the frescoes of the Shish Mahal at Patiala. Here in a considerable number of panels the subject is rendered with animation, including complete set of the ashtanavika or the eight heroines. Stray examples of the theme are come across at a number of places. The Vyadhahatika navika, for instance, appears in the Shiv temple at Lasara, a village in district Jullundur and representations of Abhisarika and Virabini navikas appear in the frescoes of the Dantthal monastery. The themes of the frescoes illustrating verses from the Sat Sri of Bihari in Shish Mahal at Patiala are similar in nature and spirit.

Baramasa Themes:

Muralis representing the Baramasa are rare but an

2. Ibid.
3. H.S. Randhawa, Kanora Valley Paintings, p. 11.
4. See Karuna Goswamy, loc. cit., p. 120, pt. 1, 2, 3 and p. 121, pt. 1.
unusually elegant rendering of the theme based on the
Realkariva of Koshav Bass appears in a number of
panels in the Shish Mahal at Patiala. In a panel
showing the month of Jyestha, for instance, the
painter introduces several suggestions of hot months
in the fan held by a lady, the niva in the background,
a man walking with an umbrella etc.

It is possible to study the themes of murals under
several other heads.

The romantic tales of the Punjab, thus, — Noor
Ranjha, Mirza Sahiban, Sohni Mahival, Sassi Punnu,
Laila Majnu and Raja Rasalu — found their way on the
walls of many an edifice. A series of frescoes in
Sumhrara Rathi Mand at Guru Mansahai and in the Aspakh
of Baba Man Singh at Sodhiwala, a village near Zira,
illustrate all the love stories. Murals depicting
noted lovers appear on walls of the shrine of Guga Pir
at Chhapar, a village near Ahmadgarh. A splendid panel
at Shri Pakkana Sahib, a temple near Jaura, a village
in district Amritsar, depicts Mirza being killed by
Sahiban's brothers. The story of Laila Majnu appears
in the shrine of Baba Mahesh Das at Pindori. Many of
the murals representing Noor Ranjha illustrate Neer in

1. See Karuna Goswamy, loc. cit., p. 121, pt. 2 and 3,
depicting months of Jyestha and Rewan and see
plate Nos. 73 and 74.
2. See plate No. 76.
3. Census of India 1961, XIII, Punjab, Part-VII-B,
Fairs and Festivals, p. 45.
4. See plate No. 75.
the act of boating Kaidon while Ranjha grazes buffaloes near-by. The scene from the legend of Raja Rasalu often delineates one of its sub-legends depicting Raja Modi and Rani Kokilan. In addition to widely known legends, several other amorous tales popular in the 19th century Punjab, including themes based on bardic lore, found place among mural embellishments. At Ram Tatwali, for instance, several panels relate to the legend of Shah Dehnan and Nusan Banu and a panel depicts Rani Luna trying to entice Puran, an episode from the famous ballad of Purana Bhagat. In the gurdwara of Baba Lal Ji at Dhanpur and in the temple of Raja Sahib Dyal at Khishkot, both in district Gurdaspur, legends of Raja Gopi Chand are to be seen. In the districts further east, the chivalrous legend of Jaimal and Fatta formed a popular theme.

There are themes with philosophic turns at places.

Over the door-way of Avitabla's gallery of many-coloured frescoes, thus, we read that two angels held scrolls in their hands with French and Latin inscriptions. One was La Fontaine's couplet of "Death and Saga"; the other was an Ovidian distich.

1. See plate No. 78.
2. See plate No. 77; Kanwarjot Kaur and Namal Sandhu, Punjab Murals, plate entitled "This panel depicts several themes, including Raja Banwara, Rani Kokilan and Raja Modi," also see R.C. Temple, The Legends of the Punjab, pp. 54-65; Charles Swynnerton, Romatic Tales from the Punjab, pp. 176-203.
5. French poet (1787-1843).
"Donee eris felix multos numberabis amicos
Tempora si fuerint nubila solus eris."

Its English rendering would run as under:

"As long as you will be happy you will have many friends but in cloudy times you will be alone."

In the house of Shri Rundal Lal at Dasuya, a painting depicts a lady holding a plate inscribed with 2 a Persian distich of Sheikh Saadi, the celebrated poet 3 of Iran. Its English rendering would run as under:

"O, merciful God, pity our condition, because we are captured in the noose of carnal desires."

Islamic themes depicting Shams Tabriz roasting 4 fish in the sun and Mansur being crucified, both painted in the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali and in the 5 sarait of Baba Mohar Singh at Tanda, come as a surprise, for one does not expect to find these in Hindu and 6 Sikh places of worship and habitations. The figure of 6 "Nuluk-o-oil-must", riding on his ghastly charger but bearing in his hand a cup of water, which Lt. Sharma 5 saw drawn on the head stone of a grave in the cemetery 6 of Khyrah and Bhuchur villages, near Sultan must have been based on some ritual in vogue among the Muslims of the locality.

1. The translation of the distich into English by Dr. Herbert Ross, Counsellor, Italian Embassy in New Delhi, was kindly conveyed to me vide his letter No. 7139 dated Dec. 17, 1971.
2. See plate No. 56.
3. Late Shri Kurnal Singh Dedar of Punjabi University, Patiala, identified the verse and kindly translated the distich into English for me.
4. See Kahn Singh, op. cit., p. 119.
Jain themes representing Tirthankaras or 'ford-makers across the stream of existence', appear in all the four Jain temples located at Sadhaura, Ambala, Zira and Faroozepur Cantonment.

Several panels in the Bhadra Kali mandir at Kurukshetra depict curious but unintelligible themes which appear, most probably, to have been based on folk-tales confined to that locality.

In district Ambala and further east of it, are seen murals representing Guru Guga. A typical painting depicting the snake-god was seen by J.R. Douie on the parapet of a new well in a Jat village in district Ambala. "The saint was seated on a horse and was starting from the Bagar country. His mother, standing in front of the horse, was trying to stop his departure. He held in his hand a long staff (ghala), explained to be a mark of dignity, and over his head the heads of two snakes met, one being coiled round the ghala."

One of the most widely painted themes which almost developed into a decorative motif in murals of the 19th century Punjab, was the representation of soldiers in various forms. Allard's Garden House, beyond Anarkali

1. See plate No. 42.
3. Ibid.
4. For instance, see plate Nos. 52, 60, 61, 62, 63 and 64. Also see Kanwarjit Kang and Nirmal Sandhu, Amritsar Murals, plate entitled "A Sikh fighter".
at Lahore, was "embellished with paintings of dragoons, lancers and foot-soldiers, nearly as large as life*. On the pillars of a **dham-sala** at Lahru, a village in district Ludhiana, were painted "files of soldiers with old-fashioned head-gear and ancient muskets at the slope, drilled by a Sahib on horseback, conspicuous of his huge baggy breeches*. A similar painting is still extent in the Fort of Manimajra near Chandigarh. In the 19th century **viharapalas**, often painted flanking gates, had turned into company soldiers.

Another prevalent decorative motif was fairies or winged figures. In a Muhammadan tomb at Aandlu, in district Ludhiana, appear all the different types of fairies identified through Gurmukhi inscriptions. These included **Shah-pard, Jahan-pard, Mum-pard, Thali-pard, Jal-pard** and **Age-pard**. Intrados of all the eight entrances to the temple of Bairagis at Ram Tatwali are painted with winged figures. Other elegant examples are to be seen in the Golden Temple at

3. See plate No. 62.
4. See plate No. 94.
5. See coloured plate No. III.
Amritsar and in the peyshara at Nawanshahar. These often represented the notion of "western angels".

The advent of Europeans in the Punjab became increasingly reflected in the themes of murals. Reference has already been made to the portraits of European dignitaries and to the representation of railway trains and soldiers in their proper uniforms—things that Europeans brought in their train.

Paintings illustrating white sahibs listening to the petitions of natives, taking joy-rides with their spouses in phaetons, or strolling with their families outside their bungalows and going on hunting expeditions on elephants and horses, had become popular with the passage of time.

Not infrequently are to be seen in murals representations of birds and animals of the land of five rivers, appearing as a part of other themes or as individual motifs. Scenes depicting monkey-masters, bear-masters, chariot races, ladies feeding parrot.

2. See R.E. Parry, op. cit., p. 91.
3. See plate No. 66.
4. See plate No. 67.
5. See plate No. 64, p. 43.
6. See plate No. 56.
7. See plate No. 56.
8. See plate No. 55.
peacock or buck, show representations of animals and
birds. Paintings relating to Guru Gobind Singh depict
interesting studies of horses, falcons and dogs in
various attitudes. As a motif in itself, the most
popular among the local birds was the peacock which
appears frequently in all its elegant beauty. The most
vivid representations of the bird hail from the
gurukwara of Baba Bir Singh and the samadh of Baba
Khaja Singh, both located at Naurangabad, a village
near Tarn Taran and also from the haveli of Sandhan-
walla Sardars at Raja Sansi. James Coley noticed that
figures of peacocks predominated in the murals that
embellished houses in Amritsar. Besides the ubiquitous
peacock, there are to be seen a number of birds, including
chalora (Electoria gracca), hansa (Phoenicopterus ruber),
keol (Eudynamys scolopaceus), koonia (Acanthostes virgus),
mang (Acridotheres tristis), and several forms of local
sparrows. The parrot being a pet bird, was often painted.
In the gurukwara of Baba Bir Singh at Naurangabad and in
the samadh of Sarju Das in the Nirankari Dera at Patiala
appear so many birds that it may not be inappropriate to
call

2. See plate No. 87.
3. See plate No. 89.
4. See plate No. 90.
5. op. cit., p. 107.
6. See plate No. 90.
7. See R.E. Parry, op. cit., pp. 51 and 55.
edifices picture-galleries of local birds.

Among the animals, elephant figures were a 1
favourite motif of decoration. Decorative motifs 2
consisting of figures of dogs and deer were also
usual, the latter finding a fine representation in
Ahkara Sangal Wala at Amritsar. A fifty to sixty feet
high square tower at Wazirabad was noticed by Vigne
as being painted with themes intermixed with horses
and other animals. Tombs of certain Muslim saints at
Khangan Dogran, in district Gujranwala, were ornamented
with pictures of birds and animals. Figures of a camel
and a dog appear on one of the walls of the mausoleum
of Lope Shah at Jagraon. Frolicsome monkeys, perched
in high bushes, appear in the gumbadara of Baba Bir
Singh at Naurangabad. An exceptionally interesting
panel in the house of Shri Baru Mal at Salchini, a
village in the Hansi sub-division, illustrates a
story of 'two cats and a monkey', wherein a monkey,
acting as a mediator in a dispute between two cats over
a piece of bread, cunningly manages to cheat the cats.

1. See William Crooke, Religion and Folklore of
Northern India, p. 367; Pottak, A.G., 1883-94, p. 47.
4. R.W. Trafford, "Pictures in Musalam Tomb", Indian
Antiquary, XXVII, May 1898, p. 160; also see
Ramwarjit Kang, "Figural Paintings on Mohamadan
Tomb", The Sunday Tribune, May 1, 1977, p. 5.
and keep the bread for himself. Occasionally aquatic creatures also appear.

Last of all comes 'ornamentation' which is almost a theme with its own entity in some of the places. The most popular form of ornamentation was derived from the myriad forms of vegetation such as trees, vines, grasses, flowers, leaves, tendrils, branches and fruits;
sometimes stylized, sometimes realistic and true to nature, sometimes arranged into wreaths, garlands, fastoons or clusters and sometimes intermixed with the world of birds, with their wings, feathers, talons and eggs. Floral sprays and arabesques usually formed frames for murals which constituted the chief embellishments of an edifice. Typical of this kind of decoration is the work in the Shish Mahal at Patiala. In the Golden Temple at Amritsar, there are about three hundred different patterns on the walls which look from a distance like Kashmir embroidery or Persian carpets hung on walls. The centre of the ceilings or domes, in amalgamation with floral designs, were often painted with a decorative motif representing the 'Sun'.

2. See plate No. 97.
4. See plate No. 96.
5. See plate No. 95.
Edifices related to the Sikhs were often painted with a decorative motif known as *dehin*, executed symmetrically in creeper, floral and bird motifs. It was raised over a base known as *sharvanjik*, a decorative device involving knotted grappings between animals balanced by a similar style of floral patterns. A decorative design known as *pattina* was used around the *dehin*.

Excepting two edifices at Anandlu and Dhun Dhaewal, two villages located respectively in district Ludhiana and Amritsar, all Muslim edifices were devoid of figural paintings. Nevertheless they possessed a wealth of ornament including geometric and floral motifs, arabesques and guilloche interlace formed with an intricate network of lines and figures of cypresses. The shrine known as *Baba Sher Shah da Darbar* at Ghariala, a village near *Patti*, is ornamented with stars and flowers issuing from jars or basins and reminds one of the elegant embellishments of olden days wrought in the mosque of Nazir Khan at Lahore. One of the most unique decorations, scarcely with a parallel anywhere else, was found in the Jahazi

Mughal, Muzaffar Khan's residence at Shujabad, near Multan. In addition to the purely decorative paintings of scrolls, flowers and foliage which filled the spandrels and borders, its walls were decorated with curious pictures of cities and palatial buildings painted on sunk panels of different sizes and shapes, striving to delineate a picture of the Arabian cities seen by the Khan on his pious pilgrimage to Mecca.

This rather rapid survey of the principal themes is in some way revealing, if somewhat repetitive. For through this, one sees the closeness between the themes that the miniature painters of the Punjab and the Punjab Hills hold dear to themselves and the themes that the painters of the murals chose for embellishing the walls of 19th century Punjab. There is the same degree of interest in Vaishnava themes, in illustrations of Bagvrta and Navak-avvika texts and the kind, and there is, in addition, the strong interest in Sikh themes — both representations of the Sikh Gurus and personalities of Sikh history. This interest is there in the miniatures of the 19th century but it is in a different light that we see it manifested in the murals where it intermingles with other traditional themes that are carried over from the 19th century and earlier.

Of special interest are the mural counterparts of what can be called 'Company miniatures' of the 19th century. The awareness that the artist shows of his surroundings, his inclusion of commonplace, everyday themes, are all in a class of their own. This is something that the miniature painter was often slow in doing but the muralist, possibly because he was painting more often for the common man — a pilgrim, a devotee, the owner of a small house — was quick to seize on the 'dramatic' events or developments of his day as themes for his work.

Thirdly, a point which has been made earlier in different contexts, can be made here too. The themes of the murals are chosen almost at random by the artist, without special attention being paid to the nature of the edifice on which painting is being done. Everything is pressed into service because the object principally seems to be to embellish a building rather than use it as an occasion for working around some carefully chosen themes. This gives us some idea of the whole approach to the art of mural painting in 19th century Punjab, some inkling of the way the mind of the painter and the patron alike worked.

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