

HIMALAYAN

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# HIMALAYAN ART

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INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

AUTHOR OF 'THE ART OF THE PAL EMPIRE  
OF BENGAL'

*With an Introduction by*

LAURENCE BINYON



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# HIMALAYAN ART





## INTRODUCTION

I CAN never forget the extraordinary pleasure and exhilaration I felt when I first made acquaintance with drawings from the Kangra Valley. How was it, I thought, that such enchanting things had remained unknown to us in the West? There was one small drawing in particular, a drawing in line without colour, of two lovers sitting in a pavilion, with music played to them by attendants, and hailing with joy the moon-rise over a lake. It drew one into itself, into a world of magical radiance. It was simple and poignant as a song. Since then Dr. Coomaraswamy has made us more familiar with Kangra drawings, and more examples have found their way to England. True it is, that the sweetness of them, in the later productions of the school, is apt to cloy; their grace declines to a weak prettiness. But judged by its best, as it should be, the art of Kangra is a pure delight. We are not to expect from it more than it sets out to give: but where else shall we find drawings more exquisitely expressive of natural feeling in a lyric vein? The drawing on Greek vases, the design of Japanese prints, may have other fascinations and be richer in resource, more vigorous and varied; but in the art of Kangra there is a frankness and abandon, a spontaneous directness, which affects one like some of our own ballad-poetry, with its stock turns of phrase and its traditional refrains, but also its heart-piercing sudden sweetnesses. It is something unique in the world's art.

To pass from the tropical imagination and teeming forms of Hindu sculpture of the Middle Ages to the atmosphere of the Kangra drawings is like passing, I imagine, from the steaming plains of India to the fresh mountain air of the Himalayas. And Mr. French in these pages takes us up into the actual Hills, and makes us feel what it is like to travel in those high valleys, where the means of locomotion, as he says, are still the same that they have been for some thousands of years; and so we can picture in our minds the country where this art was produced and breathe something of the atmosphere of its history. To mingle in this way the account of a traditional art with description of landscape and personal experiences is something fresh; it is like hearing some one talk





of his travels and adventures; and one understands Kangra painting all the better for the unconventional mode in which it is treated.

Kangra drawings are derived from wall-painting. The earliest examples we know, though perhaps scarcely any are earlier than the seventeenth century, are singularly archaic: they substitute traditional formula for observation of living nature, but they retain something of the large design appropriate to mural painting. But during the seventeenth century a gradual transformation takes place; the old severity is supplanted by flowing grace. Mr. French explains the change by the fact that the artists had seen in the houses of their princely patrons examples of the paintings of the Mogul School, perhaps some Persian paintings also, and imitated the qualities they found in these. This no doubt is true. But it would be, I think, a mistake to imply that the Kangra artists derived their style from their contemporaries of the Mogul School. Their style is their own, and retains its affinities with the earlier art. They borrowed nothing of that element of realism which makes portraiture (in a wide sense) the great preoccupation of the Mogul painters. In their art the vision is different, the aim is different, the line has a different function.

But Mr. French, who knows the Hills so well, reminds us that while the new Kangra style spread in the eighteenth century northward to Kashmir, south to Garhwal, and west to Lahore, 'at the same time all over the hills artists went on working in the old style'. And he has some admirable observations on the difference between the provincial and the primitive in art. These local styles of Indian painting are rather baffling to the student in Europe, and for directing evidence we must rely on those who, like the author of this book, have been able to study them on the spot. These pages provide new information on this difficult subject which will be of value to historians of Indian painting. The author finds, for instance, a distinctive school in the Kulu Valley, hitherto unrecorded. Of much interest also is his account of the painting of Mallabhum, a district far away from Kangra, yet in which the same sort of conditions prevailed in the sixteenth century as in the Rajput Himalayas, and a similar art, descended from the same Hindu traditions, was practised.





## INTRODUCTION

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It is a pleasure to find that a busy official can devote so much of his spare time to the patient disinterested study of Indian art. Such men do honour to their Service. But Mr. French, though his primary concern is with Kangra painting, has framed his subject in so wide and rich a setting that many readers who have no special interest in Indian painting will be well content with his pictures of this glorious mountain country and the vivid glimpses of life and history in these strongholds of the proud and ancient Rajput race.

LAURENCE BINYON.





DEMONS COMING OUT FROM LANKA TO ATTACK  
RAM'S ARMY OF MONKEYS AND BEARS

*Collection of Mr. Ajit Ghosh. Size of original 3½ feet by 2½ feet. From Haripur,  
Kangra Valley. Early eighteenth century*





## PREFACE

THIS book is wholly concerned with art. But every picture must have a frame, and I have made this one out of the Government Gazetteers, the *Journal* of the Punjab Historical Society, old Indian Chronicles, and many a tale, song, and proverb heard on the march or round the camp fire in the Himalayas. I have much pleasure in acknowledging the generosity of H.H. the Raja of Chamba, H.H. the Raja of Mandi, H.H. the Raja of Suket, H.H. the Raja of Tehri-Garhwal, H.H. the Raja of Sirmoor, the Raja of Bashahr, the Raja of Arki, the Raja of Jubbal, Colonel the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand of Lambagaon, the Raja of Guler, the Raja of Siba, the Raja of Nurpur, the Raja of Nadaun, the Rai of Rup, Mr. Mukundi Lal, the Mahant of Damthal, Mr. Ajit Ghosh, and the Curators of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, and the Lahore Museum in placing their collections at my disposal. I am also indebted for information, advice, and assistance to Dr. Percy Brown, Secretary-Curator of the Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta, Dr. Hutchison of Chamba, Professor Garrett, Keeper of Records in the Punjab Government, and Rai Bahadur Tara Datt Gairola.

As regards the illustrations, Plate I (from my own collection) has been published in the *Rupam*, in the India Society's book on Indian art in the Empire Exhibition at Wembley, and in Mr. O. C. Ganguly's *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*, in which the frontispiece has also been published. The other illustrations have been photographed for the first time.

The map at the end of this book is merely meant to give some idea of the position and size of the Kangra Valley, and must not be taken as showing the whole area influenced by Kangra art. For this, a much larger map would be necessary.

J. C. FRENCH.

July 1930.





## THE ABODE OF SNOW

THE HIMALAYAS. White peaks in the sky is the image quickest conjured up by the word. The Persians see the western peaks, the Chinese the eastern, and any part of the great white wall between has an equal claim to the name of Himalaya, 'the abode of snow'. The Kangra Valley, the home of the art with which we are concerned, is in the Punjab Himalayas, between Simla and Kashmir. The beauty of this country has to be seen to be believed. To the south is the Beas River, one of the name-rivers of the Punjab—Panch Ab—'The Land of the Five Rivers'. The deep green of tropical vegetation dominates the scene and provides a truly Indian setting for the flashing white of the temples and palaces. Only a few miles to the north, sheer from the plain, rises a wall of mountains. The hillman soon leaves behind him the soft green fields of the valley, and his path climbs through dense forest, until suddenly he reaches where :

The eagles are screaming around us, the river's a-moaning below,  
We're clear of the pine and the oakscrub, we're out on the rocks and the snow,  
And the wind is as thin as a whiplash.

Higher still are the silent peaks of eternal snow, the home of the Shining Ones, as the gods are called in the ancient Hindu hymns.

Between the mountains and the river are the castles, perched where a pointed hill or overhanging crag gives a feasible hold. The River Beas is like the Rhine in the number of castles on its banks. They are empty now, and full of horrible thickets, the home of birds and beasts of prey. If it is the fate of these places that human life shall now give way to animal, perhaps the present tenants are not unsuitable successors to the fierce Rajput soldiers who held these eyries in former days.

Round the Kangra Valley are the great mountains, the home of ancient Rajput states. They all look to the Kangra Valley as the source of their art, and pictures by Kangra artists and the influence of their style are to be found everywhere throughout this region. The Kangra Valley did not attain this pre-eminence by chance. When the Mahomedans invaded India, Hindu culture, guarded by Rajput swords,





retreated to the hills. 'Our royal allies, the Hills.' Of these the greatest were the Himalayas. Most of the Rajput mountain states were barren and remote, but the Kangra Valley was an exception. It was rich and fertile, and easily accessible to the outer world, but at the same time protected by hills, and with great mountains near by as a refuge. So it naturally became the cultural and artistic centre of the surrounding Rajput world, which was all the mountains between Gurkha Nepal in the east and Mahomedan Kashmir in the west.

Before describing the Kangra art in detail it is necessary to give some idea of the place which it occupies in Indian art as a whole. The task is one which requires some courage. If there is one thing nowadays that is changing quicker than India herself, it is her history. Year by year new manuscripts are turning up, new inscriptions are being discovered, the spade of the archaeologist is revealing new periods of long-dead civilizations. And the particular branch of Indian history which is called Indian art is changing as quickly as any. It is not so long ago in Europe that art was denied to India. Ruskin, a great critic, and by no means classical or academic, said so plainly. Indeed Oriental art in general has only lately dawned on Europe. First came Japanese art through Whistler and the Impressionists. Then Chinese, and, just before the Great War, Persian. The bounds of the aesthetic horizon have extended. Instead of a quiet trip through Western Europe, with Athens as its limit, the seeker after something new in art faces the caravans of Asia. And now year by year Indian art is arousing greater interest. But there are still unknown regions in it, which arouse something of the excitement of exploration.

Until lately the earliest examples of Indian art were the sculptures of the time of Asoka, Emperor of India in days when Rome and Carthage were fighting. I say until lately, for the excavations of the Archaeological Department of the Government of India under Sir John Marshall have revealed a new and totally unexpected chapter in Indian history and culture, more than 2,000 B.C. The work is still going on, the inscriptions are not yet deciphered, and the present results are tentative. But they are an example of how suddenly nowadays preconceived theories and ideas about India may be disturbed. The 'tragedy of a theory killed by a fact' is being performed daily in India. With this caution let us glance for a moment at the art of the age of Asoka. It has come down





to us chiefly in the form of figures of animals—bulls, lions, horses, elephants, and birds. It is characteristically Indian. The design is bold and free, and the art is permeated by a certain mysterious vitality accompanied by a simplification which increases rather than diminishes the sense of life in the works. This is typical of all great periods of Indian art. This art is remote alike from the brutality of the old Assyrian-Persian, and from the cold aloofness of the Greek. It is clear that there is a long tradition behind it, but what that tradition is remains to be disclosed. Speculation about Indian art before Asoka is like standing on a mountain ridge and trying to make out the lines of a mist-covered country beyond. It is largely a matter of surmise, but still some of the main features of the landscape may loom through the haze. So it is in the case of Indian art. As we peer into the gloom we see the Aryans, cousins of the Greeks and Germans, crossing the Himalayas and coming down into India from the north. This was before the days of the wars of the Iliad, before Achilles and Agamemnon had been heard of. The White Aryans brought with them the White Art of the North. As they advanced into India they met the dark Dravidians, who then inhabited it. *Dravida* in Sanskrit means *south*. So the White Art of the North met the Dark Art of the South, and the result is Indian Art. Across the Himalayas to the east was the Yellow Art of China. But this Yellow Art had no influence on the mixed White and Dark Art of India. Instead it was influenced itself by India. As we might expect, the White Aryan element in Indian Art is strongest in the north of India, where the Aryans first entered and settled. The Kangra Valley is here. As one goes south in India, the White Aryan element gets weaker, and the Dark Dravidian stronger.

The next great period of Indian culture is the time of the Gupta Empire, which corresponded with the later Roman Empire. The Gupta Empire was a classical age with clear-cut standards in literature and art. Even the style of the lettering of its records shows this. I remember seeing a Gupta inscription on the side of a hill in Western Bengal. Below it was a later inscription. The precise elegance of the Gupta lettering was a singular contrast to the wild roughness of the other. The Gupta Empire had a great art. Meditative, subtle, and delicate, its statues of Buddha suggest 'the idea of immateriality, of some spiritual presence only half materialized into concrete form'.





Between the Asokan and Gupta periods of art a curious style appears in the very north of India, not far from the Kangra Valley. It started about the beginning of the Christian era, and is called sometimes Gandharan (from the place where it was first found in the valley of Peshawar) and sometimes Greek-Indian. The second name clearly indicates its character. The sculptures are unmistakably Greek in style, but Indian in spirit. While the general form of the figures is classical, there are strange oriental details. 'Apollo with a moustache' is a fair description of the school. The mixture is not a success and the art is heavy and lifeless. It failed to maintain itself permanently, and was absorbed in the main stream of Indian art. But it is worth mentioning in connexion with Kangra art because some critics have seen a strong resemblance between the two arts, and have claimed a direct influence. This is of course impossible. The death of the older art took place far too long ago. But the resemblance exists. It is due to the strong Aryan element in the Kangra Valley, which makes its art now and again reminiscent of Greece. And this is a point that people who are always talking of the influence of Greek art on India might do well to remember. The Aryan invaders of India were cousins of the Greeks, and started with a common culture. Is it surprising to find traces of it in India?

The Gupta Empire fell at the hands of the White Huns, brothers of the Huns who made Hungary. In the eighth century the Hindu spirit revived, and expressed itself in great art, the sculptures of Ellora and Elephanta in the west, and the art of the Pal Empire of Bengal in the east. This art is permeated with the strange Tantrik cult, the rousing of the Sleeping Goddess immanent in the human soul. Strange, wild, and passionate, it is a complete contrast to the unearthly calm of the Gupta art.

Between this art and the Gupta period come the famous frescoes in the caves of Ajanta, the classical examples of Indian painting in the old days.

About the time of the Norman Conquest of England the storm of the Mahomedan invasions broke on India. The destruction was fearful, and Hinduism had to fight for its very life. When the storm lifted a little, it was found that Hinduism survived, but its art was strange, weird, and primitive, the art of a people fighting for its life, and face to face with stark reality. This was the time when the Kangra Valley came into





prominence. Previously in the Hindu polity it had been one among many. Among hills and far from the centres of empire, its culture had been provincial. With the Mahomedan invasions everything was changed, and the Kangra Valley became the principal refuge, and therefore centre, for militant Hindu culture in Northern India. But the art remained frozen into archaic stiffness until thawed by the rays of the outer world.

This happened when the Moguls came to India. The Moguls (Mongols) were Mahomedans from Central Asia, but very different from the Mahomedan rulers of India whom they found and dispossessed. The Moguls were cultivated and tolerant, and magnificent patrons of art. Under them new schools of art and architecture arose, combining the indigenous Indian art with certain Persian elements of style and technique which the conquerors brought with them. This art is called by their name, Mogul. Under them the long conflict between Hindu and Mahomedan came to an end, and both alike became loyal subjects of the Mogul emperor. The Hindu sympathy with the Mogul political system extended to its culture, and Indian art as a whole received a Mogul impress. We shall see how the stiff archaic art of the Himalayan Rajputs assimilated and absorbed the easy flowing line of the Mogul style, and the result was the beautiful school of Indian art known as the Kangra Valley.

In this brief sketch we see the terrific tenacity of the culture on which Indian art is based. Invader after invader, with their alien arts and civilizations, broke upon it or was absorbed. This sketch does not pretend to be a complete account of the vast subject which it outlines. It only aims at giving some idea of the perspective and position in Indian art as a whole of the art of the land to which we now return, the Kangra Valley.

Over most of this country the means of travel are the same nowadays as they have been at any time during the last few thousand years, mountain ponies and mules. Wild tracks, hardly deserving the name of paths, skirt precipices, and when they leave the hill-side for a moment, disappear completely into the boulder-strewn bed of a dry river. These 'river' roads are not dry all the year round. In the rainy season there is a boiling mountain torrent in place of the 'road'. I have a vivid recollection of a wonderful mule which I rode for some marches in these hills. This animal was as much at home crossing a moraine of boulders as on





a grass field, but it was on the mountain side that he shone with peculiar brilliance. In one place the wretched track collapsed into a frank and open precipice, with sharp-pointed rocks a hundred feet beneath. The mule went boldly at it, and after what can only be described as a fox-trot step on the face of the cliff, carried me across. The Rajputs did not approve of my use of so humble an animal as a mule. For them the horse was the only possible mount. But this mule was so clever, and swung over the wildest and roughest places with so smooth and sinuous a pace, almost serpentine in fact, that I had not the heart to part with him. Good luck to you, Agni, wherever you may be.

The mules in these hills carry bells, which are called 'goblin' bells. There is something exhilarating in the jingle of mule-bells. It is the sound one hears when railway and motor have been finished with, and the first march has started of some trip which leads to frozen glaciers or Central Asian deserts beyond. Somehow the jingle of the bells is associated in one's mind with the glorious uplift of spirit on the first step to the wilds.

These mules wander all over the Western Himalayas, from Kashmir to Nepal. The men who follow them tend to become, like sailors, a race apart. Long marches, day after day, through the wild country produce something of the melancholy of the sea. In October 1929 I had some mules which did long marches over the roughest and steepest roads. They were splendid animals. I remember one evening giving the muleteer directions about the next day's march. As he went away, he murmured to himself, 'March. March. Forever March'. The gentle melancholy of his tone struck my ear like music, the strange sad music of the songs which the muleteers sing on the road.

There is a fine breed of ponies in these mountains. At that time I was riding one of them. The track was steep and narrow and as it rose up the mountain side the scene grew wilder and wilder. Finally the 'road' became a continuous flight of rocky steps, owing more to nature than to man, and every now and then flanked with a steep rock wall on one side and a sheer precipice on the other. It went on in this way for *two miles*, until a height of nearly nine thousand feet had been reached. The pony went straight up these steps, and carried me to the summit of the ridge without distress.

It is a strange sight to see a hill-pony or mule going up and down a





flight of steps like a man. These ponies make a curious impression at first sight. Short, stocky, and shaggy, they look queer enough mounts. I remember riding one through the cantonments of Simla on my way out into the hills. The sight of a man riding what looked like a child's pony was too much for the Tommies. Amid broad smiles a voice could be heard asking, 'What's the odds?' A little farther on I met a cavalry officer. The animal struck his attention at once, but it was interest and not amusement that it aroused. It takes an experienced eye to detect the bone and powerful build in these shaggy little animals.

Both ponies and mules always try to walk exactly on the edge of the path, no matter how fearful the precipice may be underneath. Some people say that they do this because the path is firmest at the edge, but I don't believe that this is the real reason. The true explanation is that it is always the instinct of pack-animals, and every animal in the hills is or has been one, to walk as far away from the hill-side as possible. The reason is that if their pack strikes a piece of overhanging or out-jutting rock, the blow may cause them to lose their footing. What happens to them when this occurs I saw only the other day. It was on my way from Srinagar to Tehri in the Garhwal Himalayas, a journey which will be described in detail later on. I had just crossed the sacred Ganges, and entered the territory of H.H. the Raja of Tehri. I called on a Rais (landowner) and sat chatting with him on his terrace overlooking the river. Suddenly some one said, 'Look at that cow'. On the top of the opposite bank of the river, a sheer drop of some three hundred feet, a herd of the hardy and active black cattle of the mountains was grazing, and a cow was hovering over the edge of the precipice. Like the Alpine climber stretching too far for edelweiss, she had reached out too far for a tempting bunch of rich grass. She struggled desperately, but all the strength and skill derived from generations in the mountains could not save her, and down she fell three hundred feet. Even then she was not quite dead, for her legs quivered, and she suddenly rolled another twenty feet. But then she lay quite still. It was a wonderful sight to see the way the herdsman descended the face of the precipice to the corpse.

On the main road through these hills motor lorries now run. The coming of the motor lorry for the first time to a village in these hills is like the waving of a fairy-wand, and not the wand of a good fairy. The





old conditions and customs which have continued practically unchanged from the dim and distant past melt like snow under the summer sun. The drab and monotonous dead level of modern commercialism takes their place, and the gracious charm and beauty of the old life vanish like a dream. I have been fortunate indeed to have seen much of the Kangra Valley before it fell under the iron hoof of the motor lorry. Still these lorries, instead of reducing the romance and adventure of travel, rather increase it. Their way of moving is, in the words of the poet already quoted,

A wheel on the Horns of the Morning  
And a wheel on the edge of the Pit.

I remember once going out to Mandi in a lorry which had to stop to let another lorry pass. In the second lorry was a sportsman coming back from a shooting trip in the Upper Himalayas. The outside wheels of his lorry, in order to pass mine, had to go within half an inch of a precipice of three hundred feet sheer down. I watched it crawl along, and when the feat was over I glanced at the sportsman with a slight smile. The latter's features remained immovable except that his right eyelid slightly lowered for a fraction of a second.

Of course the danger was more apparent than real. To the hillman, utterly destitute of any sense of height, half an inch is just as good as half a mile. It is difficult indeed for the traveller from the plains to rival the hillman in this, but I have had one or two curious experiences of how one's head can be acclimatized. Once I was walking along a path on a steep mountain side; suddenly the path stopped, and for a short distance its place was taken by a steep shoot of pebbles and gravel, the result of a small landslide. The shoot led to a precipice. To me, fresh from the plains, the place looked ugly, but it had to be tackled, as the porters with the tent had already gone over. Crossing it made a distinct impression on me. The return was by the same path three or four days later. One day I turned to my guide and said, 'Wasn't it somewhere about here that there was a loose place in the path?' The guide replied, 'It's behind you. You've just crossed it.' Such is the effect of only a few days in the hills on one's head for heights.

But sometimes when a lorry is being driven on these roads, even the hillman's eye or nerve fails, and what happens then I had the opportunity of seeing the last time I went up to Mandi and Kulu. Ten miles before





Mandi a lorry had gone over the side of the cliff, but had only fallen twenty feet, and peacefully reposed in some bushes with the wheels in the air. But five miles before Mandi a lorry had gone down eight hundred feet. The first hundred feet of its fall could be traced in a scar down the face of the cliff, and fragments of the lorry were just visible at the bottom of the precipice. The third case of accident which was pointed out to me was twenty miles above Mandi on the way to Kulu, and here the lorry disappeared without leaving any trace. When I looked into the boiling and foaming Beas River into which it fell I was not surprised. The owner went with it with all his property.

Travel in these hills is rough, and hardship and discomfort are not easy to avoid. I have never yet commenced a trip in these hills without reproaching myself for going on such futile and comfortless errands. But gradually the glamour of the hills steals over one. It may be the blue of the mountains, receding to the sky-line in range after range of ever softer shades, or it may be the scent of the pines, which causes all doubt and depression to vanish, and the mysterious peace of the mountains to take its place.

Such is the land of this art, beautiful, romantic, picturesque, wild, and sublime. The people who live in it are Rajputs, descendants of the Sun and the Moon, the ancient aristocracy of India. Of course other people live there too, Brahmin priests, fat tradesmen, and various low-caste hewers of wood and drawers of water. But these are to be found throughout the length and breadth of India, whereas the Rajputs of the Hills are a class peculiar and apart. Until less than a century ago they were the dominant rulers of the country. Even now they are the dominant class.

The history of the Rajputs is a history of war. Even when, as in the present book, the subject is art, the clash and clang of steel and the whistle of arrow and bullet are never very far away. Much of this art deals with religious themes. The religion of these Rajputs is the worship of Krishna, one of the main cults of Hinduism. The story of Krishna and his worshippers is a long one, but all that concerns us here is that it provides many scenes and subjects for Rajput art. At first sight it might appear that this cult is the significant inspiration of the art. But this would be a mistake. The worship of Krishna is spread all over India and is expressed in many different schools of art. The secret of the





peculiar quality of the art of the Kangra Valley must be sought elsewhere. There is a collection of Hindu tales older than the *Arabian Nights* called the *Ocean of Streams of Stories*. One of them describes how a Rajput prince when he was going to fight another prince put aside his magic sword and invisible helmet and all his other enchantments, for 'he knew that there was no true glory to be had except from a level fight on equal terms'. And again there is the story of the Raja of Chamba, who used to pray daily to the gods that when his life should reach its appointed limit, death might come to him in battle and facing the enemy. The gods granted his prayer and he was killed in war by the great Maharaja Sansar Chand. These two stories illustrate better than floods of eloquence could the character of Rajput chivalry. It is this spirit which gives to the art something lofty and noble, a certain high distinction which separates it from some other schools of Indian art.

The Rajput in outward appearance conformed to the traditional idea of chivalry. He fought in armour on horseback, with sword and spear and bow. Fire-arms were not much relied on, and infantry were despised. It was the wild rush of a cavalry charge that gave him victory or defeat. It may seem odd to talk of the cavalry of the Himalayas, but any one who has seen a Hill Rajput handle a horse up or down a steep hill will cease to think so.

The pictures which are the art of the Kangra Valley are only to be found in the hands of rajas, either ruling princes or territorial magnates, and are their most cherished possessions. They rightly regard these pictures as a cultural heritage of the utmost importance, for both religion and history are reflected therein. In the Far East it is the same, and the resemblance goes farther still. There is an ancient Chinese proverb which describes the three saddest things in the world. The third is 'Vulgar admiration of a beautiful picture'. This sentiment is not to be found in any Indian written work. Indeed the writer has never heard it definitely expressed in words. But of its existence there can be no doubt. One day the writer was going over a collection of pictures, which was open to the public, with the owner, an Indian gentleman. When it was finished he said to the writer, 'I see you have an eye. Now come to my house, and I'll show you something worth seeing'. The writer went to his house, and was shown two drawings far finer than anything in the public collection. In the Kangra Valley





it is the same. The traveller sometimes is shown nothing but indifferent pictures in places where he is certain that some of the great art must still remain, and on one occasion the writer, after having been shown a number of pictures was told that no more could be shown, as the ladies of the family worshipped the remaining pictures and they could not be seen. The writer is all the more grateful to the enlightened gentlemen who placed their collections at his disposal. Of course, when only modern and indifferent pictures are shown, it is a mistake always to jump to the conclusion that fine work is being kept back. It is unfortunately a fact that many owners have parted with their best. The sale of old pictures in these parts in recent years has been considerable, and much fine work has gone abroad, particularly to America.

Only the other day I had a striking example of the way that old pictures are disappearing from the Hills. It was in Nahan, the capital of the Sirmoor State. It is not shown on the map at the end of the book as it lies to the south of Simla. Still it is close to a mountain 12,000 feet high. I was looking round Nahan for old pictures, and I went into a temple which had some frescoes on the walls. These were in the Kangra Valley style, but coarse and modern. Hanging on the walls of the temple I saw a photograph which interested me. It was of a picture in the Hill style. The picture showed the founder of the temple, an ascetic who died two hundred years ago, with the two tigers who always attended him, and the Maharaja of Sirmoor of that age, the ancestor of the present Maharaja, in an attitude of worship. Judging by the line as shown in the photograph, the picture was not much more than a hundred years old. But old pictures are getting so scarce in the Hills nowadays that I wanted to see the original. I asked the priest of the temple to show it to me, but he said that it was with the man who had photographed it. I started to go to his shop, but before I left the temple I suggested to the priest that he should sell me the photograph. It never occurred to me that there would be any objection, as the priest could always get another print when he liked. But to my surprise he said he could not sell it, as he worshipped it every day. So I went through the narrow picturesque streets of Nahan, now rising, now falling, and every now and then turning into a flight of steps, to find the photographer. Now this photographer was also a Brahmin, and when we found him he had just performed one of the duties of the second and more ancient of his





two professions, namely, settling an auspicious date for a marriage. He took me to his shop, and showed me the plate of the photograph, but when I asked him for the original of the picture he said he had returned it to the priest some months before. He came with me to the temple and reminded the priest of this. The priest made a brief search and told us that the picture was 'lost'. It was pretty clear that the picture had been sold, and that this was the reason why the priest was worshipping the photograph. The Brahmin photographer tried to find me some other old pictures in Nahan, but failed completely. Of course Nahan was badly knocked about by the Gurkhas at the beginning of the last century, as, we shall see later, were many of the other Hill states. But while this would account for a certain scarcity of pictures, it is not a sufficient reason for their total absence.

There is a monument in Sirmoor to Lieutenant Thackeray, of the 26th Native Regiment, of the Hon. East India Company's service, who was killed in battle against the Gurkhas on 26 December 1814. He was a cousin of the novelist, and was with the force sent by the British Government to help the Maharaja of Sirmoor against the Ghurkhas.

The town of Nahan makes a beautiful picture. It rises from a great tank of water in tier above tier of red-brown houses, crowned by white palaces—the whole scene set in pine-clad hills. It has something of the beauty of an old Italian town. Not a few such scenes of beauty are to be found in the Rajput Himalayas, but I have found from experience that it is quite impossible to give an adequate idea of them from a photograph. The Rajput builder is like his fellow artist in the Far East, and combines building with landscape. All his works harmonize perfectly with their surroundings. If only the building is photographed the effect is incomplete and misleading. But if the whole scene is photographed, the result is the same. A landscape or a view can only be rendered by the hand of an artist in a sketch or a picture. The selection and simplification in a work of art is essential to give the spirit of a scene. A photograph of a landscape is a corpse. There is too much nature in it. One is reminded of Whistler's remark that for an artist to take wholesale from Nature, or in other words to make an exact copy of a landscape, is like a musician sitting on the keys of the piano. It is selection which produces harmony, design, and indeed intelligibility. There is no one who has not suffered the awful tedium of look-





ing through photographs of landscapes. But a set of sketches is always interesting. This is why some of the hand-drawn illustrations of some old books of travel give a better idea of the countries they describe than modern photographs do. But of course for illustrating actual works of art the exact reverse is true. Nothing but a photograph is any use. 'A copy of a picture gives everything of the picture except that which makes the picture worth looking at.'

In view of the example set by England in the matter of selling pictures, it is impossible to blame the Kangra Valley too severely. Still it is a satisfaction that there are paintings in the Kangra Valley which no expenditure of money or cunning can remove—the frescoes on the walls of the temples. These have never been photographed before, and are of importance because they establish as a fact what has hitherto been only a matter of surmise, namely that the art of the Kangra Valley exists in the form of wall-painting.

It is well to give a word of warning to travellers in the Kangra Valley in search of frescoes. The Government Gazeteer of the Kangra Valley, that otherwise excellent publication, contains the statement that in the temple of Fatehpur there are frescoes of the life of Krishna painted in the time of the Raja Mandhata of Nurpur, at the end of the seventeenth century. I went to Fatehpur, a ten-mile ride through the waving corn-fields of the Kangra Valley, and when I got there I found no frescoes at all. Further, on the way my pony came down with me crossing a dry river and rolled me on the stones. This was the day after I met the wild bees of Basohli, as will be described later, and I could not help thinking that travel in the Rajput Himalayas was rather hard. However, at Fatehpur, as the night was warm, I slept right out in a dry river-bed, a branch of the Beas River, under the stars, and was lulled to sleep by the weird music of the conch-shells of the temples, and in the morning I was awakened by the bugle of the weavers, who had come to the village to ply their trade, and used this way of announcing their arrival.

My trips to Basohli and Fatehpur were examples of the abrupt transitions in Himalayan travel. In each case I had to leave my motor, and take to walking or riding, a change in a moment from the methods of travel of the twentieth century to those in use two thousand years ago and more.

The art of the Kangra Valley is an integral part of Indian art. It





represents the ancient Indian tradition in all its force. Indeed, with it the old great art of India may be said to have died. Kangra painting is the last flower of a tree whose roots stretch back deep into the past, beyond the time of Asoka and Alexander the Great. As the Himalayas are part of India, so is Himalayan art a part of Indian art.

The size of these pictures is interesting. Either they are frescoes, covering the whole of a wall, as in Plates V and XXIII, or else, like nearly all the other plates, they are no larger than the page of a book. The latter are never meant to be hung on walls. They are kept like books, to be taken out when required. The traveller in the Himalayas who is invited to see a collection of pictures does not go into a gallery. Instead a cloth-covered bundle is brought to the verandah or terrace where he is sitting, and inside it are the pictures. The idea is the same as in China or old Japan. Piecemeal ornaments on a wall are not appreciated. Either it is decorated as a whole or left alone. Individual small pictures do not always suit the mood, any more than the same book or the same music does. As we shall see, the small pictures are derived from the frescoes. The original of the frontispiece of this book, which is three and a half feet by two and a half feet in size, is a study for a wall-painting and not an ordinary picture.

Now that we have seen the country in which this art is to be found and the people who live there, the question comes—What right has this book to the title of Himalayan art? If the Persians can see the western peaks of the Himalayas, and the Chinese the eastern, why is there nothing in this book about the art of Kashmir and Nepal? The reply is that I do not claim a monopoly of art in the Himalayas for the Kangra Valley. Art is to be found in other parts of the mountains. But what I do assert is that the art of the Kangra Valley is emphatically and pre-eminently Himalayan, for it typifies and expresses the very spirit of the Himalayas. The clear and pure flow of the line of the Kangra artist is a perfect instrument for rendering into concrete form the visions of the Abode of Snow.





## II SPRING

PLATE I is an example of the art of the Rajput Himalayas in the seventeenth century, before the advent of any foreign influence.<sup>1</sup> It represents the ancient Indian traditional art in all its mysterious force and archaic beauty. This form of art was current throughout the Rajput states of the Western Himalayas in the seventeenth century and earlier, but the cultural centre was the Kangra Valley.

Plate II is from the collection of the Rai of Rupi in Sultanpur, the capital of the Kulu Valley. Apart from its importance as an example of the primitive Hill Rajput art, it is interesting because it comes from the Kulu Valley. This is the first time that a Kulu Valley painting has been published, and Plate II, along with other paintings which will be described later, represents a new sub-school in Indian art. I use the term 'sub-school' because, of course, it is a part of the great school of painting known as the Rajput Himalayan of which the Kangra Valley is the centre. But, as we shall see when later examples of the Kulu Valley paintings are described, certain local differences exist. These are not so apparent in the primitives as in the more recent examples.

Plate III comes from Nurpur, in the Kangra Valley. It is of the same period as Plates I and II or may be even earlier, and is another example of the strange archaic art, frozen into rigidity to resist the Mahomedan invasions, which met the Moguls when they first arrived in India. The design is good, the line is strong, and the whole scene is permeated with a certain mysterious solemnity. Nurpur, the home of this picture, is a great fort frowning down on the plains at the entrance to the Kangra Valley, with a small town nestling under its ramparts half-way up the hill. The streets of this little town are flights of steps and narrow cobbled alleys. The whole effect is medieval to a singular degree. The walls of the castle are enormously thick, but in many places natural precipices make them superfluous. Inside the castle is a ruined temple, with carvings of the exploits of Krishna, including female figures in a costume and style similar to Plates I, II, III, and IV A.<sup>2</sup> This temple was built by the Raja Basu of Nurpur, who commenced to reign in 1580.

<sup>1</sup> In Coomeraswamy's *Rajput Painting*, Plate XLVII (early eighteenth-century Kangra) is clearly a development from this picture.

<sup>2</sup> My photographs of these carvings will appear in *Indian Art and Letters*.





Nurpur was an ancient Rajput state. In the middle of the fifteenth century the Raja was Kelas Pal, fifteenth of the line. A famous Mahomedan general, Tatar Khan, met him in battle, and the following verse records the result:

When Tatar Khan looks at his face in the heartrending mirror  
He sees on his forehead the mark of the sword of Kelas Pal.

In the days of the Moguls, the Rajputs of Nurpur, like other princes in the Kangra Valley, were often in rebellion against the Emperor. But they were treated with extraordinary leniency, and were pardoned and restored to their states time after time. The Mogul emperors, though separated from the princes of the Kangra Valley by race, religion, language, and almost everything which can separate man from man, were great gentlemen, and had an instinctive sympathy for and appreciation of the Rajput chivalry of the Hills. But all the same the Nurpur rajas were not anxious to have the Emperor as a close neighbour. The Emperor Jahangir with the Empress Nur Jahan once visited Nurpur. The Empress was so delighted with the place that she immediately decided to build a palace there. This did not at all suit the then Raja of Nurpur. However, he started the work at once, but employed only workmen suffering from goitre. In the Kangra Valley, as in other mountainous districts elsewhere, this disease is common. When the Empress came to see the progress of the work, she was horrified to see the hideous gang employed on it, and when she was told that this was the usual appearance of residents of the district, as it was so unhealthy, she hastily countermanded the work and the raja escaped the burdensome honour.

One of the most extraordinary episodes in the long history of the Rajas of Nurpur is the career of Jagat Singh. He went to Kabul in Afghanistan as a general of the Emperor Shah Jahan, and led an army of 14,000 Rajputs into Central Asia, where he won victories over the Uzbeks in Badakhshan, and temporarily conquered the country for Shah Jahan. 'The spirit of the Rajputs never shone more brilliantly than in this unusual duty. They stormed mountain passes, made forced marches over snow, constructed redoubts by their own labour, the Raja himself taking an axe like the rest, and bore up against the tempests of that frozen region as firmly as against the fierce and repeated attacks of the Uzbeks.' His name is remembered in the verse:









Jagat Raja, the holy raja, son of Bas Dav

He conquered the country beyond the Indus, he pitched his camp on the snow mountains, and pointed his guns towards heaven, therefore he was called Jagat (Worldwide).

Early in the eighteenth century the last independent Raja of Nurpur was defeated by the Sikhs of Ranjit Singh and the state was annexed to the Punjab. The ex-Raja of Nurpur was living in poverty and exile, when the vizier of Ranjit Singh, ruler of the Punjab, made the ex-Raja the offer of a fine estate with a great income if only the ex-Raja would give to the vizier the title 'Jaideva' (Victory God), the mode of address of a subject to a ruling prince. The ex-Raja refused, because though dethroned, he was a Raja by immemorial right through the mists of time, whereas the vizier was a Raja only by the favour of the upstart tyrant Ranjit Singh. So the ex-Raja continued in his pride and poverty.

It was near Nurpur that Ram Singh, a Pathania Rajput (the Pathania Rajputs were the clan of the Rajas of Nurpur), raised the standard of rebellion against the English, when they succeeded the Sikhs as the rulers of the Kangra Valley. (How the Sikhs came to supplant the ancient Rajput rulers of this land will be seen later.) He was defeated and the rebellion was suppressed by General Wheeler with a force of all arms. The battle was fiercely contested, and among the officers killed was Lieutenant Peel of the Hoshiarpur Local Corps, a cousin of Sir Robert Peel the statesman. After the battle the British officers asked the local poets and bards of Nurpur to celebrate the exploits of Ram Singh. They did so in a poem which is still occasionally sung. These are some of the verses :

Ram Singh was born in the house of Sham, born in the likeness of God and named 'The Bold'.

He it was who saved the Rajput's honour.

Well did the son of the Wazir fight. The Company wrote and sent an order, 'Do not interfere with the pale-faced soldiers'.

The Feringhi is a great scourge, he will put you in a cage.

Well did the son of the Wazir fight.

Ram Singh wrote and sent this order, 'I will fight with the pale-faced soldiers'.

All alone well did the Pathania fight.

The armies came up from far Calcutta.





Well did the son of the Wazir fight.

The drums rolled on the heights of Dalla, the small drums of the regiments rattled, O people.

All alone well did the Pathania fight.

The Rajputs' honour which was 'saved' by Ram Singh has since been maintained on many a hard-fought field by the famous Dogra regiment which is recruited from the Kangra Valley.

Plates IV A and IV B were photographed by the writer in the palace of the Raja of Mandi. This Raja traces his descent from a line of long-forgotten emperors in far-off Bengal,<sup>1</sup> whose rule extended up to these hills from the borders of China and the Bay of Bengal. 'Behind the ghosts of empires dimmer empires loom.' Mandi is a state to the east of the Kangra Valley, and culturally is closely associated with it. But the outward appearance of the people differs considerably. The people of the Kangra Valley are frank, hearty, and cheerful, while those of Mandi are furtive, secretive, and shy. The approach to Mandi State is a Jack-and-the-Bean-stalk business. At the head of the Kangra Valley the road goes straight up a mountain, and at the top you are in Mandi. A switch-back ride of sixty miles, a bridge with towers and gates at each end over the Beas River, here a boiling mountain torrent, and one is in Mandi town. The river front of Mandi is a miniature Benares, temples, old houses, long flights of steps. The streets are steep and winding, and the market-place has a medieval picturesqueness. Outside the Raja's palace there is a temple with frescoes, and the outer hall of the criminal court inside the palace is decorated with wall-paintings. But they are of a late and inferior style. On the top of a hill, high above the town, a temple dominates the scene.

The Raja who built this temple, and who was the grandfather of the wizard raja Sidh Sen (Plates IV A and IV B), is remembered for a war with the neighbouring state of Suket. The Mandi raja was very dark, and the Suket raja nicknamed him 'Black Pan'. There was a dispute between the two states about some rice-fields on their borders, and an officer from Mandi had gone to Suket to discuss the matter. One day the Suket raja insultingly asked him, 'How is the Black Pan?' The officer answered, 'Red hot, and ready for parching rice'. The reply

<sup>1</sup> For the descent of the Rajas of Mandi and Suket from the Pal emperors of Bengal, see *The Art of the Pal Empire of Bengal*, by the writer.





cleverly connects the nickname and the subject of dispute, the rice-fields. To parch rice on a pan is a common way of cooking it in India. The Mandi raja made good his officer's words by attacking Suket. He won a battle and got the rice-fields. Two trophies of this victory are still shown in Mandi. One is a huge drum, which is called the Drum of the Royal House. The other is a monstrous copper bowl, which can cook enough food for a hundred men.

Plate IV A is in the archaic Indian style, similar to Plates I, II, and III. Plate IV B is in a different style. It is undoubtedly Hindu and in the old tradition. The tree, for instance, is drawn with the formalism of archaic art. But the greater naturalism and more fluid line of the figures indicate the presence of a new influence in the ancient art of the Hills, the art of the Moguls. How this came we shall see later. Plates IV A and IV B are pictures of Sidh Sen, the wizard Raja of Mandi, who ascended the throne in A.D. 1684. These are the oldest pictures in Mandi. The portrait of Raja Keshab Sen (A.D. 1595) in Mandi Palace is clearly not contemporary, but in the style of a hundred years ago. Plate IV A shows Sidh Sen surrounded by his women. Plate IV B shows him sitting on the banks of the Ganges, for by his magic power he could fly to the sacred river every morning for his prayers and bath, and be back again in Mandi in time for his midday meal. Sidh Sen is said to have had a book of charms and spells, by which he controlled the demons and made them obey him. When he died, he threw the book into the Beas River. In Sidh Sen's time Guru Gobind Singh, the famous Sikh guru, visited Mandi. He arrived flying through the air in an iron cage. Sidh Sen entertained him hospitably. In return the guru protected Mandi town with the following charm:

When Mandi is looted.  
Balls of fire will fall from heaven.

We shall see later for how long the charm worked.

Sidh Sen was a giant. Some clothes of his of enormous size are still preserved in Mandi Palace.

Sidh Sen had two wives, both ranis of equal rank and therefore on an equal footing. They each gave birth to a son at exactly the same time. While the two sons were still babies, a dispute arose as to which was the heir apparent. Sidh Sen ordered a sword and a heap of dust to be brought





in, and the infants to be placed on the floor beside them. One child crawled up to the heap of dust and played with it, while the other caught hold of the sword. The one who caught hold of the sword Sidh Sen named as his heir, while the other had to be content with the title of 'Dust-eater' which Sidh Sen immediately bestowed on him.

A curious black skin may be noticed near Sidh Sen in Plate IV B. This is an inflated buffalo skin, such as is used nowadays to cross rivers in these hills which are too deep to ford. The writer has crossed the Beas several times on such skins. To show how slowly conditions change and how intensely conservative these Hill people are in their manners and customs it may be recalled that the army of Alexander the Great, when he invaded India, crossed the River Indus above Attok on inflated skins. The name of Alexander the Great is preserved in a range of mountains in Mandi State, the Sikandar (Alexander) range. There is a cryptic sentence about this range which is taken to indicate buried treasure, 'Sikandar Dhar na war n apar'—'The hill of Alexander is not on this side nor on that'.

There is a curious saying in these hills—'Alexander's head is horned'. Indeed, it is as 'the two-horned Sikandar' that the great conqueror's name survives through Northern India.

But an even more singular memory is to be found in the art of the Kangra Valley. When the traveller Moorcroft visited the Maharaja Sansar Chand of Kangra more than a century ago, he was shown a picture of a helmeted figure and was told it was Alexander the Great. When he inquired how the artists came to imagine such a subject, he could get no information beyond the statement that they had always done it, and had learnt it from their forerunners. The writer has seen a picture of Alexander the Great, painted by a living Kangra artist, Huzuri.

The government in all Indian states is autocratic and the general attitude of the people is summed up in the ancient proverb—'There is no remedy against Ram and Raj (God and the king)'. But Mandi is an exception, for it has the *dum*. The *dum* is a general strike. The people resort to it when the abuses of government transcend their very liberal ideas of what is reasonable. It is announced by beat of drum, and the rebels or reformers, as they regard themselves, gather at the place fixed, temple, hill, or forest. There is a certain god in Mandi who is the special patron of the discontented, and his shrine has been the scene of





many such meetings. Peaceful picketing is well understood, and the crops of those who hang back are damaged. But usually the gathering is good humoured and orderly. The members agree not to work on their fields, pay taxes, or obey orders until their grievances are seen to. If satisfactory assurances of redress are given, they disperse to their homes. Otherwise they march on the capital and take vigorous action against unpopular officials. But it is very rarely against the Raja that they rebel. Even in 1909, when the rising assumed serious proportions, it was remarked that 'the leader and his followers have a curious idea that they are helping the Raja and that it is the proper function of the people to step in when things are going ill. They do not think they have done wrong and point to the absence of looting or molesting of women.' Similarly, the malcontents in their representations were careful to say that, although various state officials had oppressed them, the Raja had not. 'The king can do no wrong' is a statement which the hillman accepts literally, for he believes his Raja to be as much god as man. The faults of the administration are ascribed to the incompetence of his ministers, or the dishonesty of his officials, and when they become so glaring as no longer to be tolerated in silence, the people decide on a change of administration in the interest of the Raja as well as of themselves. The *dum* is the only means the people possess for a collective expression of opinion; but it is an effective one and generally is successful. The *dum* is not confined to Mandi. Kulu also has it. But it is not to be found outside the Himalayas.

Mandi is much troubled with witchcraft. There is a hill near Mandi on which a battle is fought every year between the gods and the witches. 'If the former win, there will be little sickness during the year, but the crops will be poor; if the latter win, the harvest will be good but there will be deaths among the people. On the night of the battle the graziers move their cattle away from the ridge where the rival hosts meet, and the peasants are careful not to go out after nightfall. The doors are bolted, thorn branches placed before them, charms nailed on the lintels, and mustard seed sprinkled on the fields and round the houses and cattle-sheds. That night one should sleep on the left side, for otherwise a witch may snatch one's heart. Fever caught that day is "witch's fever", and very difficult to cure. If it is not shaken off before the Feast of Lamps, the man will die.'





Bad as the witches are in Mandi, they are worse in the neighbouring state of Suket. When the writer visited Suket last year, a trooper of the body-guard of H.H. the Raja of Suket reported an unpleasant experience with a witch. He was crossing a river at night when he saw a woman dressed in black. She called to him, but he hurried on without replying. She cursed him, and when he got home he was laid up with severe pains in the back. However, a Brahmin exorcized him successfully and cured him.

The village Bhajwanun in Suket is famous for witches. It is said that a bhat (bard) was returning from Mandi one day. He was passing Bhajwanun at midnight when he saw a Raja holding a durbar there with officers and courtiers. The Raja sent one of his orderlies to the bhat and invited him into the durbar. The bhat went there and sang some songs to the Raja. The Raja was pleased and gave orders that the bhat should be fed in the royal kitchen. The bhat was not hungry and so he was allowed to carry the food away with him. When he got back home he put away the food carefully before he went to sleep. When he got up next morning he found that the basket in which he had brought the food contained nothing but stones and sand. This led people to believe that he had been at a durbar of witches the previous night.

Another story is told of a Brahmin who, on his way home at night, found a goat following him. A few minutes later the goat changed into a buffalo, and when he reached a river he heard cries as if several people were fighting. The Brahmin looked behind him and saw that the goat and the buffalo had disappeared. It was now that he thought of witches and called for help. When the people from his village came they were terrified to find an elephant-like man with long teeth standing before them. This was the Brahmin, who had been changed into this form by the power of the witches. They fled, but two women took courage and went to the Brahmin with torch-wood in their hands and saved him.

Three hundred years ago Suket was ruled by the famous Raja Shyam Sen. A yogi (a Hindu ascetic who follows the practice of yoga) once gave Shyam Sen a coat and told him that as long as he wore it he would be victorious in battle. One day Shyam Sen thoughtlessly gave the coat to a groom. The groom was instantly burnt to ashes, and from that day Shyam Sen's fortunes declined. While Shyam Sen still had the coat, and his affairs still went well with him, he was attacked by the Raja of





the neighbouring state of Bilaspur. In the battle the horse of the Raja of Bilaspur was killed, and he called on one of his men, a Sangwal Mian, to give up his horse to him. The Sangwal Mian refused, and the horseless Raja was wounded and captured. To commemorate the disloyalty of this Sangwal Mian his descendants even to the present day are not allowed to use horses in Bilaspur State. The wounded Raja of Bilaspur was brought before Shyam Sen as a prisoner. Shyam Sen found that the Raja of Bilaspur had made a vow to water his horse at the tank in Shyam Sen's palace in Suket. Shyam Sen chivalrously allowed him to do so, and then sent him back to Bilaspur on a litter carried by Brahmins. The Raja of Bilaspur died of his wounds on the way, but the descendants of the Brahmins who carried him are exempt from ferry dues between Suket and Bilaspur even to this day.

The town of Suket, though only thirteen miles away from Mandi, is a complete contrast to it. The view of Mandi town is a stern and gloomy one, with the boiling river, the ring of high mountains, and the steep and narrow streets. The impression of Suket is of a collection of mountain farmsteads, a Swiss village, and just above the small town are beautiful alpine pastures, with soft springy turf and mountain flowers. A little away from the town is a group of temples with the rich quaint wood-carving of the Hills, and stone-paved streets between.

There are some sayings about these states: 'Go to Suket and become a *paret*' (a *paret* is a long thin ghost). 'Go to Mandi and become a *randi*' (a *randi* is not a nice woman, and it is a fact that manners and morals in these hills are a bit free and easy among the lower classes). 'Go to Kulu and become an *ullu*' (an *ullu* is an owl). The last proverb is by no means an unsuitable introduction to the queer country which it rhymes.

Kulu lies to the north of Mandi. From the highest point in Mandi town (a temple some 4,000 ft. above sea-level) a magnificent view of Kulu can be had, peak after peak of blue, and finally the snows. Kulu is the last outpost of Hinduism. Farther on the spiritual guides of the people are the red-capped magicians of Tibet.

The road to Kulu runs through Mandi town. Thirteen miles out of Mandi the wind turns cold under the chill breath of snow-peak and glacier. I was interested to see 'dust devils' on the road, those strange columns of whirling dust. I had met them many times before, but always in hot places. Somehow it seemed out of place for them to go





dancing and twirling in the cold blast of the Himalayas. Seventeen miles farther on the narrow gorge of the river Beas opens out into the Kulu Valley and the snows are close at hand. The day I went up the Kulu Valley I saw a man lying on the side of the road. I stopped the motor lorry, thinking the man was ill or dead. He proved to be drunk, another sign of a cold climate. Four miles below Sultanpur, the present head-quarters of the Kulu Valley, there lives a brother of the Raja of Suket. He was interested to learn that I came from Bengal, and reminded me of his descent from the old Pal emperors of Bengal.

The Rai of Rupī, as the present descendant of the old rajas of Kulu is called, lives in Sultanpur. His palace, called the Mehl, is in the Hill style, but with a modern brick gateway. The word 'modern' refers to style, and must not be taken to imply that the rest of the palace is old. The whole structure was built twenty years ago by the father of the present Rai. The approach to the palace is most picturesque. The road runs through the old bazaar up a flight of steep steps and under a gateway with a double-storied house above it. The walls of the upper rooms of the palace are decorated with Kangra paintings in gaudy colours. The most attractive are some frescoes of conventionalized trees, including pines, similar to Plate II. The Rai of Rupī has an interesting collection of pictures. The oldest painting (Plate II) has already been described. I photographed two others, one of a prince and princess playing chess, and the other of a lady feeding a serpent with milk.<sup>1</sup> They are of the eighteenth century, and are evidently derived from Plate II. The same archaic style is to be found in them, but softened and weakened. Though these pictures have a certain grace and charm, and are by no means entirely devoid of merit, they show a distinct decline from the strength and solemnity of the true primitive. There are two more pictures in the same style, but of inferior artistic quality. One shows a lady watching a fight between two rams, a favourite sport not only in these hills but all over northern India. The lady is well drawn, but the rams are feeble. These pictures constitute a distinct Kulu school, which has never yet been mentioned. The complexions of the faces are fair and ruddy, like those seen in the Kulu Valley nowadays. The architecture is of the hills, and pine-trees are to be found in these pictures.

<sup>1</sup> These pictures are being reproduced in *Indian Art and Letters*. In it will also appear other pictures which are described but not reproduced in this book.





In the Rai of Rupī's collections this school is continued into the nineteenth century. There is one picture of a lady feeding a huge wild boar, entitled 'Sri Ragini Gundogri', and another on the same theme as Plate III, a lady feeding cranes. Both these pictures, though showing a strong Kangra Valley influence, are clearly derived from the earlier primitives. They are of the nineteenth century, and probably represent the closing phase of this school. No pictures are painted in the Kulu Valley nowadays.

Sultanpur is a lovely spot. Between the different quarters of the town flow the brown hill-streams, bordered by green lawns and lines of tall and splendid trees, and presenting scenes of English loveliness. But if you lift your eyes it is Switzerland you see, snow-peaks and pines in bright sunshine.

I happened to be in Sultanpur in 1930 on the day of the spring festival. It was celebrated in the open by a solemn dance. The dancers went round in a large circle with rhythmic steps, now slow, now fast, as music and subject demanded. I sat beside the Rai of Rupī and admired the easy grace and the handsome pleasant faces of the dancers, typical of the Rajput chivalry of the Hills. When the dance was over, the procession was formed. The veneration with which the Hill people still regard their old rulers was shown by the fact that the Rai of Rupī took his seat in the palanquin beside the image of the god. At the same time his charger was led close by, for even when a Rajput is sitting beside a god he must be ready to mount his charger whenever required.

Leaving Sultanpur, one goes up the Kulu Valley, past the green lawns and glorious avenues of great trees and the boiling torrent of the Beas River, with trout-fishers in the quiet reaches. Every now and then there is an orchard, and if it is the spring, the time when I went up there, the trees are a mass of rose and white blossoms, with the yellow flowers of spring as a carpet at their feet. Ten miles up the valley one turns sharply up the hill, and exchanges the soft verdure of the valley for the cold and barren mountain side. Soon afterwards comes Naggar, the old capital of Kulu.

Naggar is a queer old place, with some curious temples. One of them, the temple of Krishna on the hill overlooking the town, is in the pre-Mahomedan style of the *shikara*, and closely resembles the temples of the Pal dynasty of Bengal. Near the top of this tall and slender shikara a

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sloping hill-roof has been added to keep off the rain, and the porch or entrance hall has been surmounted with a slanting roof for the same purpose. No better example of the origin of Hill architecture could be imagined. It was the heavy rains of the hills which made the addition of the sloping roofs necessary. Round this temple the air is sweet with the scent of wild mountain thyme, and the climb up to it is through beautiful pine-woods.

One temple in Naggar has three roofs, one above the other, and the topmost one is shaped like an umbrella. Though the effect is that of a Chinese pagoda, there is no direct influence from the Far East. Here again the roofs are the natural result of heavy rains.

But the principal feature of Naggar is the castle, in the old days the fortress-palace of the Rajas of Kulu. It occupies a commanding position on the hill-side, with a magnificent view of the snows to the north, and is in the Hill style of architecture, like the old palace at Sarahan in Bashahr State which will be described later on. Like many other old buildings in the Hills, the walls are made of a mixture of wood and stone in alternate layers. The lower stories of the castle are used for Government offices and the topmost story for a rest-house for travellers. The rooms were fine and large, with something noble and spacious about them, and after the wretched huts and rough bivouacs which had been my lot for some time I felt that I ought to appreciate such quarters to the full. But it was clear that travellers did not stop much in Naggar Castle, for the table-linen was filthily dirty, the fine furniture was deep in dust, and the servants in charge queer decrepit old creatures. Somehow I did not really like Naggar Castle as much as I imagined I should, for when some one came to see me in the afternoon I immediately suggested that we should sit on the grass terrace in front of the castle, instead of inside it, and this in spite of the fact that on the top floor there was a magnificent verandah. I did this instinctively, and was slightly surprised at my own action, but before the next morning I understood the reason. I slept in the western room of the castle, and shortly after midnight I awoke with a sense of uneasiness and oppression. I thought that the night must have turned suddenly warm (it was cold when I went to bed) and I got up to open another window. As I stood up, swift and unmistakable as a gust of cold air or a drive of sleet came the sensation of fear. I went to the west wall of the castle and opened a window, and all the time I was





moving there and back the fear was with me. Also I noticed another curious thing. Slightly more exertion was required to move from the western wall back again into the middle of the room. It was as if there was some force or power which desired to resist my moving towards the east. It was nothing to trouble about, but I noted it with curiosity as a strange and unusual experience. Soon after I got into bed I fell asleep, but as long as I was awake the sensation of fear remained. There was neither sight nor sound to cause it. The fear was absolutely interior, and I instinctively felt without any possibility of mistake that it was useless to search with stick or gun for the Thing which was causing it. My experience in the room was slight, but definite and unmistakable. I had no reason to believe that the room was in any way different from the numerous places I had slept in during my trip, and to put my sensations down to nerves or imagination would have been mere self-deception. What gave this experience peculiar emphasis was that it was unique in all my travels in the Himalayas, and indeed through India, and occurred at a time when I was physically as hard as nails, and with nerves and head for heights about as perfect as I ever get them.

Next morning I marched to Manali, the village at the head of the Kulu Valley, and it was here that I got the explanation of my previous night's experience. Naggar Castle is haunted by the ghost of a rani who was murdered by her husband, a former Raja of Kulu. Until twenty years ago the English Sub-Divisional officers of the Kulu Valley used to live in the top story of the castle, which is used nowadays as a travellers' rest-house, and several people claim to have seen the ghost. It always appeared in the eastern room.

All the way up to Manali the weather had been beautiful, a bright sun, blue sky, and the snows in view all day long. But soon after I arrived a storm broke. All night and all next day it rained, and as the storm went on the rain turned to sleet and the snow crept down the hill-side. It was useless to go out, as the mist made photography impossible. But in the evening I could stand the confinement no longer, so I climbed up through the dripping pine-woods to a temple on a hill above Manali. I found it deserted, and in the evening mist it looked weird and dismal. It had four roofs, one above the other, the top one being circular and resembling an umbrella. This temple was more like a Chinese pagoda than any other building I have seen in these hills.





The door had a wooden frame covered with curious old Hindu carving, and the handle was a metal lion's head. Above the door were the horns of a wild sheep, with ibex horns on either side. Curious as the outside of the temple was, the interior was even more peculiar. The earthen floor was a mass of deep folds and hollows. This was evidently the result of water action, in spite of the four roofs. The image in the temple was of black stone, and showed the Goddess killing the Demon Buffalo. I just got off the hill and out of the pine-woods before dark, but I need not have troubled to hurry, as I was lighted home for the rest of my way by one of the finest displays of lightning which I have ever seen.

Near Manali, at a place called Jagat Sukh (Joy of the World), there is a dainty little miniature temple exactly resembling the temples of the Pal dynasty of Bengal. On the hill just above this temple is a ruined fort which belonged to a raja of the old days whose surname was Pal. Of course the word Pal means 'Defender', and has been adopted by kings in various parts of India, but still the coincidence is curious. Higher up in the mountains is a still older fort, which local tradition assigns to the Pandava brothers of the Mahabharat epic. When I arrived at Jagat Sukh Temple there was a big shaggy hill-dog lying across the doorway. My groom immediately threw stones at it, and chased it away. This was necessary, as these animals are the most savage watch-dogs imaginable and have been known to tear travellers to pieces. But, as their duty is to guard flocks from savage wolves and leopards and still more savage Tibetan brigands, a certain amount of ferocity is excusable. By night these dogs are even fiercer. They are a match for a leopard provided that they are guarded by metal collars from the leopard's sudden spring at the neck. Tigers even respect them. Some years ago a man-eating tiger came to the villages near Srinagar in Garhwal, and used to drag men and women from houses at night. But the shepherds with their dogs, though they camped in the open, were safe. To any one who knows the Scotch sheep-dog his Himalayan colleague is interesting. Nowadays the dog which works the flocks on the Scotch hills with such marvellous skill is rather a small animal, often less than half the size of the collies which are kept for pets and dog-shows, and which pass for Scotch sheep-dogs in England. I was puzzled at this, until I came to the Himalayas. Then I saw the explanation at once. The





collie is the old original sheep-dog of Scotland, in the days when a large and powerful animal was required to beat off wolves and robbers. Now that such dangers are things of the past, it would be wasteful to keep such large animals, when smaller ones are enough merely for the driving of the sheep. But in the Himalayas the great powerful savage sheep-dog is still necessary.

A little north of Manali there is a temple of Krishna with a hot spring in it. Pilgrims are fond of bathing in the miraculous warmth. This is the northern limit of Hinduism in these parts. Just beyond is the great white glare of the eternal snows.

From time immemorial the ancestors of the present Rai of Rupri ruled over Kulu, and many a song and story tells of their exploits. Here are a few of them.

In the thirteenth century there was a Rana (prince) of Baragarh, in the south of Kulu, who was a fool. His vizier was a Brahmin. This vizier fell in love with the Rani (the Rana's wife), but she would have none of him. The vizier for revenge told the Rana that the chief watercourse in Baragarh would never run properly unless the Rani were buried alive beside it. So the Rana gave the order. Now the mason who was to make the tomb was foster-brother to the Rani. She pleaded with him. And he made the tomb so large that she could move about in it. At night the vizier came to see his work. He found the Rani alive and tried to catch her by the hair, but she eluded him, and crouched out of his way. So he threw great stones upon her, and she died. When the vizier came to the palace the children asked him, 'Where is our mother?', and he said 'Ask the mason'. And when they asked the mason he bade them, 'Go look at the horses in the stable, take horse, and tell the Raja, her father, in Suket'. And they went to Suket. And the heir threw his turban before his uncle. Then the Raja of Suket came with an army. He flayed the vizier alive, and then sprinkled him with pepper, and cut him into small pieces and smeared them upon the leaves of the trees. The Rana he could not kill, so sacrosanct was the person of a chief. But he dressed him in a kilt woven with hemp and a necklace of dried cow-dung, and had him pelted with cow-dung all the way to his boundary. His children were taken to Suket. And the Baragarh State was ruled from Suket.

The way in which Baragarh returned to Kulu is interesting. The





whole garrison of Baragarh Fort went off to a fair in the middle of May, and while they were away one of their women waved a red petticoat as a signal to the Raja of Kulu that the fort was empty. So he took the fort, and killed only the woman who had betrayed it. He threw her over the rock on which it stands.

Four hundred years ago in the north of Kulu there was a Rana who had a low-caste groom called 'Whiskers' who had grown a beard nine hands long. To this beard the Rana objected. He said that grooms had no right to grow beards like that. But the groom refused to shave it, saying that servants should shave only when their master died. Now Whiskers was a famous bowman. The question of the beard became acute, and one day, in the course of an argument, the Rana pointed to a sparrow sitting on the back of a cow: 'Kill that sparrow and your beard remains. Miss it and I shave you. Wound the cow and I shave you first and kill you afterwards.' The sparrow was killed and the beard remained. And that was an end of all good feeling between the Rana and his groom. Now to the south of this Rana's state was a rival prince, and here was an instrument to his hand. He sent for Whiskers and bribed him to kill the Rana. The Rana went out one day to look at his rice-fields. As he was riding back Whiskers shot him. A stone pillar marks the place where the arrow pierced his thigh. Every one knows the exact spot on which Whiskers stood to make the shot. And the range is a good three hundred yards. The Rana rode off to his castle with the wound in his thigh, and at a spring by the roadside he stopped to drink water, and there he died. Meanwhile the ladies were in the castle. A horse galloped up to the stable but there was no Rana on him, and just then they heard the noise of drumming. This was Whiskers coming up to the fort and drumming a dirge on a winnowing-sieve to announce the death of his master. At once the Rani—like a true Rajput—set fire to the fort; and she and all her ladies were burnt, as well as Whiskers' wife. The rival prince rewarded Whiskers with the Rana's rice lands, and he founded a flourishing but unpopular family, to this day known as 'Whiskers'. They are great sheep-stealers. But even now they own the Rana's rice-fields. During the earthquake in 1905 a big rock fell into their village and buried four whole households. But they still abound, though they are cast out of religion and cannot go near the village gods.

Guru Gobind Singh, the last and most famous of the ten Sikh gurus,





visited Kulu. To impress the Raja with his miraculous powers he drew out his beard to an enormous length. But the Raja was a wizard, and as fast as the guru drew out the beard the Raja burnt it up with fire from his mouth. Then there was a quarrel, and the Raja locked up the guru in an iron cage. But the guru made the iron cage fly through the air with him to Mandi, as has already been related.

There are no written chronicles in Kulu. The reason is as follows. The last Raja of Kulu, who died in 1848, had two chamberlains called Hukmu and Ghoru. They were keepers of the archives. They fell under suspicion and were summoned from their home. The Raja told them that he had a mind to kill them. 'Slay us if you will, Ruler, but we have left word that if we die our wives are to burn all the state papers.' The Raja was furious and beheaded both the chamberlains then and there. Then he sent off men to secure the state papers. But the news had already preceded his messengers, and they were met by the two widows and a heap of smouldering papers. In the fire were lost not only all the chronicles of Kulu, but also the formulae for a secret method of extracting silver from ore. Thus the Kulu silver-mines were closed down, and the chamberlains were avenged.

We now come to an entirely different art—the art of the Moguls. In the house of the Raja of Guler in the Kangra Valley I photographed a picture, which represents the Raja's famous ancestor, Raja Bikram Singh. In this picture the Raja and his younger brother, who sits behind him, are shown going into battle on a war elephant. The armour of the elephant is interesting. One notes that even the trunk is covered. The only place left free is the solid mass of bone on the forehead which in all elephants is impervious even to the modern bullet. The chain which it carries in its trunk is for offensive purposes against the enemy. At the command of the driver (the small figure on the neck), the elephant whirls the chain in the air, and brings it down with fearful force. This picture is a good example of the guise in which Mogul art first found entry into the Kangra Valley. It is undoubtedly by a Hindu artist, though in Mogul style. A certain spirit marks it as of the Kangra Valley, even if, as is not the case, other evidence were not available. I have not reproduced this picture as it belongs rather to Mogul than Rajput art, and therefore to a better-known and more familiar province. A description of it is sufficient for my purposes in this book. It is for the same





reason that I have not reproduced the next two or three pictures which will be mentioned. To discuss them is necessary in order to show the development and growth of Himalayan art. But to reproduce them would mean unnecessarily increasing the number of plates. And, as already mentioned, Rajput art, especially of the Himalayas, is far less known than Mogul art is.

The State of Guler, of which Bikram Singh was Raja in the middle of the seventeenth century, started in a singular way. In A.D. 1405 the Raja of Kangra went out hunting. He got separated from his followers and fell into a well which had been covered over with long grass. Such an accident even nowadays is sometimes heard of in India. It is utterly impossible to get out of a well, and the Raja stopped there some days. At length a passer-by heard him, and rescued him. In this the Raja was much luckier than other men have been in the same position. These accidents usually occur in wild and lonely places, and when cries come from a well in such a place the hearers think they come from a ghost, and hurry away. However, the Raja was rescued, but while he had been down the well things had moved rapidly. His followers searched the forest in vain, and went back and reported him dead. His queen burnt herself on a funeral pyre and his brother was solemnly installed as Raja. When the real Raja came back, the brother wished to retire in his favour, but the real Raja would not agree, and insisted on maintaining the Hindu principle that the solemn consecration of a Raja is irrevocable. So the younger brother remained as Raja of Kangra, while the elder brother founded a new state at Guler.

For the next two hundred years the history of Guler presented no very striking features. The Afghan Emperor Islam Shah Sur composed an ironical verse criticizing the personal appearance of the inhabitants of Guler. Otherwise there was nothing in the continual wars in which the rajas passed their time to distinguish them from their neighbours. But in the seventeenth century Guler was lit up with a sudden blaze of military glory. First came the Raja Rup Chand, who on behalf of the Emperor Shah Jehan overran the neighbouring Hill states twenty-two times. Finally he invaded the distant mountain state of Garhwal, more than half-way to Nepal. But the force met with disaster. Rup Chand commanded the Rajputs and one Nijabat Khan commanded the Moguls, who came from the imperial army of the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan at





Delhi. The respective parts played by the two commanders are remembered in the popular verses :

Nijabat Khan remembered the prophet, turned his back and fled.

Rup Chand, the jewel of kings, for the sake of Shah Jehan fought and lost his life in Garhwal.

Not all the Moguls escaped like their commander Nijabat Khan. A number were captured and were sent back to Delhi, not only without their weapons but also without their noses. Shah Jahan left the Raja of Garhwal alone after this, and always referred to him as 'Cut-nose'.

After Rup Chand came Man Singh, who fought for Shah Jehan in Afghanistan, and served under Aurangzeb at the siege of Kandahar. He was given the title of the 'Afghan tiger', and the family name was changed by the Emperor from Chand (Moon) to Singh (Lion). He was succeeded in A.D. 1661 by Bikram Singh, of the elephant picture already described. Bikram Singh fought for Aurangzeb on the North-West Frontier and was mortally wounded in a battle near Peshawar. He died in 1675.

There is a picture<sup>1</sup> in the Lahore Museum which shows the unveiling of Draupadi, a scene from the great Hindu epic, the 'Mahabharat'. Draupadi was the wife of the Pandava brothers. The Pandava brothers had a gambling bout with some other princes, their cousins, the Kaurava brothers. The Pandava brothers lost everything they had, thus illustrating the old Hindu proverb, 'All the money in the world is not enough for a gambler'. Finally they staked Draupadi, their wife, and lost her to the Kaurava brothers. Here we see one of the winners asserting his right of possession by unveiling Draupadi in full durbar, before all the other kings and princes. But a miracle happens to save Draupadi from being put to shame. Every time the winner lifts off a cloth, another is found in its place, until the pile of cloths grows high, and the winner stops from exhaustion. In the picture we see Draupadi standing on the growing pile of cloths. This picture dates from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and shows how the Mogul technique is being adapted to the old Hindu art. Though this picture of the unveiling of Draupadi is only some twenty years later than that of

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by Coomaraswamy in his *Rajput Painting*.





Bikram Singh on the elephant, the difference between the two works is enormous. The reason for this difference is that something happened in between, namely, the end of the art of the great Moguls. Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan were great patrons of art, but they were Moguls, and the languages of their court were Persian and Turki, and their culture was the same: Mogul, in fact. So when Hindu artists went to their court they had to learn the Mogul style. Bikram Singh on the elephant is the work of such an artist. Aurangzeb, who succeeded Shah Jahan, was a fanatical Mahomedan who cared nothing for the arts and so had no difficulty in conforming to the tenets of rigorous Mahomedan orthodoxy in their regard. The artists of the Mogul Imperial Court had to scatter and look for other patrons, and some came to the rajas of the Kangra Valley. Now here their position would be the reverse of what it had been at the Mogul Court. They would have to adapt their acquired Mogul style to Hindu ideas and culture. At first they would not be able to work except in a purely Mogul manner, and so we get the picture of Bikram Singh on the elephant, which is only distinguishable from a Mogul picture by an indefinable Hindu spirit and by a certain lightness and brightness which is not to be found in orthodox Mogul art. But in the unveiling of Draupadi the Hindu culture is predominant, and the assimilation and conjunction of Mogul style and Hindu spirit which is the secret of the beautiful school of Hindu art, known as the Kangra Valley, is proceeding.

There is a picture in the Indian Museum at Calcutta of a woman playing music to wild animals at night, which is an example of the process of the adaption of the Mogul technique to the Hindu culture of the Kangra Valley. The woman seated on the rocks and playing music to the animal is Mogul, and might have been the work of the court of Shah Jahan. The brilliant silhouette of the animals, with its extraordinary brightness and fluency of line, is undoubtedly by an artist of the Kangra Valley.<sup>1</sup>

The frontispiece of this book, which represents a scene from the 'Ramayana', the demons coming out to attack the army of bears and monkeys under Ram, is another example of the same process. Like the Calcutta Museum nocturne, it is sharply divisible into two parts. The left-hand

<sup>1</sup> Other examples of this style of early eighteenth-century Kangra painting are Plates XLII A, XLVI, and LVIII B in Coomaraswamy's *Rajput Painting*.





half, the castle and the demons issuing from it, might have come from some old Persian illuminated manuscript. The right-hand side, Ram with the bears and monkeys, is in the old Indian style.<sup>1</sup> But though the Kangra artist has borrowed from Persia for part of his picture, he has infused vigour and energy into his loan. This picture comes from Haripur, some three miles from Guler. Haripur is a quaint little town, with a semicircle of hills on one side and a river on the other. The river is a regular mountain torrent, set in a deep ravine. The narrow street of the town finishes in a lofty gateway, carved with figures of Ram and Hanuman as protecting deities, and overlooking the river, down to which a steep flight of steps leads. In Haripur town in the evening can be seen the local Rajput gentry taking the air, regular *vieux moustaches*, thin as lathes, straight as dies, carrying their canes in a manner subtly suggestive of swords, and as often as not with a row of medals. The other side of Haripur town is dominated by the castle, built in the fifteenth century by a Raja of Guler. The Rajas of Guler no longer live in this castle.

Twenty-five years ago they built a house at Guler, three miles away from Haripur. This is in a beautiful situation. To the north are the great snow mountains, to the south is the river Beas. Exactly opposite Guler, and on the summit of a hill on the south bank of the river Beas, is the house of the Raja of Siba. In 1873 the grandfather of the Raja of Siba decided that the wars were over for ever, and so he left his castle of Siba, the counterpart of Haripur on the other side of the Beas, and built a house on the present site. This house was decorated with frescoes on the walls, which included a picture of the Raja holding a *darbar*. It fell down in the earthquake of 1905, and the frescoes are in too ruinous a condition to be worth photographing. However, the writer photographed some frescoes in a temple below the Raja's house, which was also built and decorated in 1873 and which has survived the earthquake. Only castles and temples can survive in earthquakes of the Kangra Valley. The present house of the Raja of Siba was built twenty-five years ago. The writer, when he stopped with the Raja, was given very pleasant quarters in a large building, the walls of which consisted entirely of doors. This is an ideal method of building for India, as the breeze can be let in and the sun shut out whenever desired. This building was

<sup>1</sup> The whole picture has been reproduced in O. C. Ganguly's *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*.





on the edge of a precipice overlooking the Beas. Beyond was the Kangra Valley and the snows.

There is an old palace in Chamba, built in the eighteenth century. The height of the lowest window from the ground indicates that it was built to be defensible. It is in the ancient style of the architecture of the Hills like Naggar and Sarahan. In Suket there is a fort like it (at Dehar) which was built over three hundred years ago, and there are similar old forts in Mandi. On a small scale this style may be seen in any big village in the Kangra Valley, among the earth and plaster houses of the village streets. With its high windows for defence and sloping roofs and eaves to throw off heavy rain and snow, it was suitable and natural for the Hills in the old days. The castles of the Kangra Valley are, however, in quite a different style. They are like the castles of medieval Europe.

Below the old palace of Chamba and a little down the hill are some old temples. This fresco (Plate V) is on the northern wall of the courtyard. It is of great importance, as it proves what was hitherto only a matter of surmise, that the art of the Kangra Valley exists in the form of frescoes as well as of small paintings. It has long been noticed that many Kangra paintings, however small they may be in physical size, give the impression that they are reduced reproductions of something larger. There is an air of space about them, and a feeling that if they were enlarged they would be natural decorations for large wall spaces. In Plate V we see this done. There can be no doubt that Kangra painting is derived from wall-painting, and that the Kangra miniature is merely a reduced fresco. In this it is the opposite of the Mogul painting, which has its origin in the Persian art of book-illustration, the illumination of manuscripts. In a word, a Mogul painting is an enlarged miniature, a Kangra painting is a reduced fresco. 'Hindu paintings have stepped from the walls of shrines and palaces and public buildings, where their traces linger still.'<sup>1</sup>

Plate V dates from the early eighteenth century, and illustrates the beginning of the Kangra Valley School, the completed union of Mogul technique and Hindu spirit. This wall-painting is a summary of Indian art. The left-hand picture of Hanuman is grotesque. The right-hand picture of Ravan is sinister and decadent. But the central picture of Ram and Sita is beautiful with the clear flow of the Kangra line. So it is

<sup>1</sup> Coomaraswamy.





with Indian art as a whole. There is much which is strange, much that is weird and even repellent, but every now and then one meets with beauty. Indian art is like travelling in the Himalayas. There are days of dull mist and then suddenly glimpses of almost unearthly loveliness. It may be asked why Plate V is so confidently assigned to Kangra, when it is in Chamba. The answer is not merely style. It is also because the Chamba people say so. It is the same in the Chamba Museum, built by the late Raja of Chamba, and containing some interesting pictures. The best work is frankly assigned to Kangra artists. All that is claimed for local talent is rough and inferior work, mostly in portraits. The artistic supremacy of Kangra is asserted in the Kangra Valley itself. Both Colonel the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand and the Raja of Guler, who are the acknowledged leaders of the Rajputs, not only of the Western Himalayas but also of the whole of the Punjab, impressed on the writer that the Kangra Valley was the cultural centre of the Western Himalayas, and that Kangra artists went far and wide, not only among the Hill states, but to Lahore and even to Delhi. The writer found all this conceded in the state of Chamba to the north of Kangra, and in the states of Mandi and Suket to the east. All these states had local schools of their own, but frankly admitted that they never had anything to compare with the great masterpieces of Kangra. It is not surprising that this should have been so. Kangra, though able to retain intact its ancient Hindu culture, has been in the full stream of Indian history from epic times, whereas the other states have remained in provincial isolation behind their mountains. Take for instance the case of Chamba, whose frescoes we are now discussing. Chamba lies directly to the north of the Kangra Valley. The range of snow mountains which is the northern boundary of Kangra is Chamba's southern boundary. There are a few high passes between the snow-peaks, used only by the Gaddis. The Gaddis are a queer tribe of mountain shepherd, who graze their herds on the highest pastures. They cross freely from Chamba to Kangra and back, according to the grazing seasons. They are no more troubled about tolls and permits to enter Chamba State than are the wild goats and the wolves; for all three use the same paths for entrance. When I was shooting in the east of Chamba State some years ago I heard much about the enormities of the Gaddis, how they had not the slightest respect for the Raja's game-laws, and had no hesitation in taking souvenirs from any place they visited. Here





to-day and gone to-morrow; carrying their blankets and food on their sheep, they were as useless to pursue as marauding animals. As the Kangra proverb has it:

Who is the friend of  
The Mogul when he comes  
The Gaddi when he goes?

The Gaddis are sharp bargainers :

It's always nice to meet a Gaddi  
He offers his cap and asks for your coat.

When the Gaddis want a drink, they are suspected of making it in a hole in the hills, genuine 'dew of the mountain', without bothering about the formality of a licence. One day last October I was riding a pony kindly lent to me by a Hill raja. The groom walked and trotted alongside, and enlivened the way with a continual stream of talk. It turned on drinking, and I asked him if he ever drank. 'Oh no', he answered, 'we're not like the Gaddis. In our state only rich people drink wine. If we poor people (he was of the shepherd caste) drank wine, how could we cut grass and draw water properly?' The wisdom of the East has long ago anticipated the modern American theory (or rather practice) of Prohibition.

There is a song about a romance between the great Maharaja Sansar Chand and a Gaddi girl.

The Gaddi was grazing his goats,  
His daughter was grazing the cows.  
Seeing her young face,  
The raja loved her.

The Gaddis have a rough sort of art, and manufacture objects called Gaddi pictures.

If a traveller wants to get to Chamba from Kangra, he is not recommended to try the Gaddi routes. The easiest way is to go west right out of the Kangra Valley into the Punjab plain, and then go due east again over the mountains and down into Chamba. Even then the traveller has to cross a mountain-pass 7,000 feet high. After leaving the plains the traveller passes near Basohli, which used to be the head-quarters of a small Hill state, but nowadays is a mass of ruins. There used to be





painters at Basohli, who continued to work in the primitive style long after the chief Kangra artists had acquired the Mogul technique.

I went to Basohli in April 1930 to see if I could find any traces of the work of these artists. The journey is an interesting but difficult one. Basohli is ten miles to the west of the main road to Chamba, and is approachable only by a wild and precipitous path. I had to walk the whole way, as I started at midday from the village where I had to leave my motor, and all the horses were out grazing. It was impossible to catch them once they were let loose in the hills, but in the evening they came in to be fed and to get the shelter of the stable from the cold night. A horse could have been provided for the next morning by stopping it from going out to graze, but I could not wait till then. The way to Basohli is beautiful, with high mountains to the right and blue hills to the left rolling down to the misty plains. The path ran up and down, now rising to alpine pastures dotted with wonderful flowers of light purple and blue, and now falling into little cornfields, which were entered by the most primitive of stiles, a forked branch broken from a tree. I had never seen this contrivance before. The hedge round the cornfields was the usual one in India, dried thorn branches. The single stem of the forked branch was stuck in the ground, and went up for two and a half feet. Then it branched off into two arms which sloped away at an angle. The space between these two arms was kept clear of thorns, and it was possible to lift one's legs over the gap, and a primitive stile was formed. At one place the path ran straight up the face of the rock, and footsteps had been worn by innumerable generations of travellers. I was reminded of the lines:

Here in this mystical India,  
Where the deities gather and swarm,  
Like the wild bees heard in the tree tops,  
Or the gusts of the gathering storm,  
In the air men hear their voices,  
Their feet on the rocks are seen.

The marks of feet on rocks were there, and soon, as we shall see, I was to meet the wild bees.

Basohli is magnificently situated on a steep hill on the right bank of the Ravi, the river which runs beside Chamba town. Boldly though the town stands out across the river, it is dominated by the great fortress-





palace, which in turn is overhung by the citadel like an eagle's nest. The scene is framed by the high mountains just at the back, and above them in the sky are the snows of Kashmir. At Basohli the Ravi is not quite the boiling mountain torrent which it is at Chamba, but still it is dark with snow-water and as fast and rough as the hardest traveller could wish for. A ferry-boat gets across, but the trip is just on the verge of the utmost limits of sea, or rather river, faring. The ferry-boat was a broad, stout craft, more like an ocean-going life-boat than anything seen on rivers. A long rope was tied to the bow. A couple of men tied this rope round them and shot across the river diagonally down-stream resting on the inflated buffalo skins which have been already described as a means of crossing the Beas River. When the men were safely across, the ferry-boat started on the same course, and with the help of oar, pole, and most of all rope, got safely across. The help which oar, pole, and rope gave was to check and guide, and not to propel, for heavy as the boat was it crossed the river like a flash. A single slip or error of judgement, and the boat must certainly be dashed to pieces on the sharp rocks which guarded the banks in most places.

The hill-side leading down to the ferry is very steep, and I had forgotten to take a stick out with me that day. In mountainous country a stick is like a third leg. It is an absolute necessity. I was sharply reminded of this fact on my way down the hill. At a very steep and slippery place I slipped, and only just saved myself from taking a short cut down the precipice by falling on my left hand. All the rest of the way down the hill, going across the ferry, and climbing the hill to Basohli my hand was full of a dull pain. However, when I got to Basohli and had my meeting with the wild bees I quite forgot about my hand in the counter-irritant which these insects provided. Basohli is a beautiful old place, perched on a small plateau on a hill-top. At the end of the town is the usual open space, nowadays a park and football ground, and formerly a parade and polo ground. The other side of it is the palace of the old rajas, with a magnificent old water-tank with carved stone sides to the left, and the citadel towering over it on the hill to the right. Before visiting the palace I inquired if there were any old pictures to be found in the town, and I was told that there were probably some with a 'skin' merchant, so called because he dealt in the furs of wild animals. The merchant showed me his collection. He had no drawings of the primitive type which is nowadays associated with the name





of Basohli, but only examples of the Kangra Valley School of the early nineteenth century and later. But while he had no Basohli drawings, he had a curious specimen of the old Basohli art in the shape of an embroidered cloth decorated with figures in the old Basohli style. They were full of life, vigour, and individual characterization, and the floral design of the border was attractive. The colouring was delightful, bright and clear, but in perfect combination and taste. I have seen similar work in Chamba. Indeed there are specimens in the Raja's museum there. But the line of the Chamba work is rather heavier than the Basohli, and lacks its liveliness and freshness. It is difficult to say what the age of this work might be. In an art like embroidery which is done behind the *pardah* (curtain) in the recesses of the *zenana* (the women's quarters in India, the *harem* of the Near East) styles of ancient beauty may survive until quite modern times in out-of-the-way places which have been untouched by modern 'progress'. But that the Basohli embroidery is in an old style I proved beyond doubt when I visited Amritsar city on 1 May 1930, and asked to be shown some embroidered cloths. They were produced at once, but of what quality and how far removed in standard from the Basohli work the reader can be left to imagine.

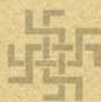
Like other Hill chiefs, the Rajas of Basohli had been rulers of the place from time immemorial, with an origin to be sought in the dim and misty past. When the Moguls came to India the fortunes of the Rajas of Basohli varied. Basohli is close to the Punjab plain, and so to the Mogul power. Just between the plains and the Hills there are forests which used to be full of game. The Mogul Emperor was once hunting there with the Raja of Basohli in attendance. Suddenly a tiger charged the line of beaters and caused a panic. The Raja killed it with his spear, an act of skill and courage which gained him the Emperor's favour. Another raja was a very strong man. He could rub out the lettering on a silver rupee coin with his fingers. But his strength could not save him from slanders and intrigues at the Mogul court. He lost the Emperor's favour and spent many years in prison. But this Raja's son completely re-established the fortunes of his house, and so thoroughly that it endured through all the vicissitudes of fortune for the next two hundred years. He did this through his good looks. 'His face was his fortune.' He was the handsomest man among a class of singularly handsome men, the





Rajputs of the Western Himalayas. The Mogul Emperor Shah Jehan heard of this, and sent for him to Delhi. The beauty of the young Raja came to the ears of the Mogul Empress and Princesses, and they begged the Emperor for a sight of him. For any man other than the Emperor or a eunuch to go behind the Curtain into the Privacy, as the palace of the Emperor's women was called, was unheard of. But at last the Emperor agreed. Before the Basohli Raja passed the Curtain (the entrance to the women's palace) he was blindfolded. But the ladies were not satisfied. They said that a man's chief beauty was his eyes, and to bring in a handsome man blindfolded was merely tantalizing. So the bandage was taken off and the ladies were delighted with a full view of the beautiful Raja. They sent him off with rich presents and the Emperor confirmed him and his descendants in perpetual possession of Basohli State, with the right to adopt successors if direct heirs should fail. This last concession proved useful, for though the Raja married twenty-two times he had no children. But the number twenty-two proved lucky for him otherwise, for he fought twenty-two battles and won them all.

Inside the palace of Basohli there is a well called Drug. It is broad and massive, with the enormous depth of the wells of olden days. Though I saw it in the bright sunlight, there seemed to be in its cavernous depths a certain dark and sinister atmosphere, which is in keeping with its history, for it was the scene of the crime which brought the Basohli State to its end. In A.D. 1834 the Raja of Basohli died, leaving an infant son as his successor and a grandmother as regent. The old lady was completely under the influence of the Brahmins, and they robbed her, and through her the State. She was rightly suspicious of Ranjit Singh, her terrible neighbour in the Punjab. Why this was so we shall see later, when we come to the story of Ranjit Singh and his Sikhs. The Rani (this was the old lady's title) tried to move the State treasure and jewels away from the palace so that they might be safely hidden and not fall into Ranjit Singh's hands if he made a sudden attack on Basohli. But she used the Brahmins for this purpose, and whatever came into their hands they stole. The State was being ruined, and so a cousin of the Raja's went to Ranjit Singh and told him what was going on. Ranjit Singh did not do what he usually did in cases of disunion and disagreement in Hill States, and snatch at the pretext to seize Basohli for himself. Instead he took the moderate and reasonable course of appointing the





cousin as regent. The Brahmins were furious, and when the cousin arrived at Basohli, they enticed him into the palace for a friendly chat with the Rani, the old grandmother. He came unarmed, and the Brahmins caught him and threw him down the well called Drug. He died a lingering death, which Ranjit Singh avenged by seizing Basohli.

The position of Basohli on a steep hill, girt with rocky precipices, overlooking a broad and swiftly flowing river, crowned by one of the loveliest palaces in the Hills (for such was Basohli a hundred years ago), and the whole scene framed in the Himalayan snows, justified its claim to be one of the Seven Wonders of the Hills. Mountains, rocks, and river remain, and the place in which Basohli stands must always be a thing of beauty. But while the work of nature is unchanged, the work of man has altered, and what the palace is now like we are about to see.

After seeing the merchant's collection I went on to the palace. I found the inside of the place a horrible ruin. As I clambered among the ruins I caught sight of a room on the fourth story of the palace which seemed to have paintings on the walls. Next to it was the most enormous comb of wild bees which I had ever seen. It must have been over six feet long. My attention was fixed on the paintings in the room, and I tried to find if there was any possible way up to it. The staircase was hopelessly broken, but as a member of the Himalayan Club I thought it my duty not to abandon the climb merely on that account. I peered round on all sides, and the more I looked at it the less I liked it. However, while searching for a way up I found that I got a very fair idea of what the paintings were, floral designs of an ordinary character. No sooner did I reach this satisfactory conclusion than I found myself entirely alone. The guides and loafers who had hitherto dogged my every step had vanished. I was not left long to wonder about the reason. There was an ominous humming, and suddenly I was stung in half a dozen places simultaneously on the face and neck. The wild bees were upon me. I remembered how people were sometimes killed by wild bees in India, and I ran for my life. Out of the palace they chased me, up to the old tank, and from there to the open green and the village street. Every one fled from my path when they saw the bees, but when I got to the village my porter came to my rescue with a blanket, which he flapped round me. This cleared the bees for a moment, and he said to me: 'Come inside the house'. We rushed inside a ruined house and he at once lit a fire in the doorway. The smoke





drove the bees away. I had a number of bee-stings pulled out of me, and then started back for my camp ten miles away. The only good result of the incident was that the pain of the bee-stings made me quite forget the pain in my hand from the fall on the hill. I got back to my camp at nine o'clock at night. I had been going since midday and I felt a little tired. Of course nine hours is nothing in the Himalayas, but the bees and the fall made it seem longer. A good way to learn the real meaning of the word fatigue is to climb or even travel among mountains. How true is the remark which a Swiss climber made to me in 1929 in the Kangra Valley: 'When the ordinary man considers that he has reached the last stage of exhaustion, it is then that the mountaineer's work begins.'

By riding whenever at all possible much fatigue can be saved. But it cannot be avoided entirely. Even the cleverest mountain pony is not a Rolls Royce or a Pullman car. Every one who travels in the Himalayas sooner or later will have to do a really long ride, and as the hours in the saddle go on the stirrups will get hot, until finally they will seem to have burnt through the boots to the soles of the feet.

This is ordinary travelling in the Himalayas. What mountaineering is like is summed up in a vivid phrase of the German climbers during their last attempt on Kangchenjunga, after one of their men had been killed in an avalanche. 'This is not mountain-climbing. It is war.'

After crossing a high pass, the town of Chamba suddenly comes into sight, white and gleaming in the valley far below the traveller, and he descends straight down to it by a breakneck bridle-path. A bridge leads over the Ravi, another of the rivers which help to compose the name Punjab, and here a boiling mountain torrent, and the traveller is in Chamba town. To any one interested in Himalayan art and culture this is an intensely interesting spot. Chamba has been preserved completely inviolate from the Mahomedan invasions. It is not of course unique in this. Mandi, Suket, and other places can say the same. But Chamba is the largest town in the Western Hills which has escaped destruction at the hands of the Mahomedans, and hence its peculiar interest and importance. The town rises in regular steps up the steep hill-side. First there is a large, level, open space, the pride and admiration of the Chamba hillman, who very often in all his life has never seen so much level ground in one place. This serves as public park, market-place, and parade-ground as required. On this lowest level of the town are the tradesmen





and merchants. Here there used to be a shop called 'The Himalayan Store' which had three things for sale—wild honey, the furs of wild animals, and Hill pictures. The shopkeeper was a Chamba man who dealt in local stuff. Still, he had no false patriotism in matters of art. I remember him saying to me: 'Now I am going to show you the wonder of the world, pictures of the old Kangra *kalam*' (literally 'pen', but meaning 'brush'). Here also is the Museum built by the late Raja of Chamba and containing an interesting collection of pictures and objects of archaeological interest. There is a large series of pictures illustrating the 'Ramayana' done by Kangra Valley artists, and some pictures of Radha and Krishna and female figures by the same hands.

The best picture in the Museum is also by a Kangra artist, a portrait of Raja Charat Singh of Chamba (1808-44) surrounded by his women. Judging from the appearance of the Raja, the picture was painted about 1840. The writer photographed it. The scene is a nocturne, and the colour is glorious, a wonderful soft blue, reminiscent of a Japanese print of the finest period, but the line is feeble. This picture is the last sunset glow of the Kangra art. When line dies, colour cannot stay long, and the last suggestion of a great art will soon be gone.

In this Chamba Museum there are a number of portraits of rajas, which are not assigned to the Kangra Valley School but to local talent. The style of these pictures is similar to that of Basohli, and the writer would be inclined to suggest a local Chamba style allied to that of Basohli, were it not for the fact that he found similar work in Mandi and Suket, and all through the Kangra Valley itself. The writer is convinced that the archaic style of the first three Plates was the style of the Western Himalayas, until in the seventeenth century the artists of the Kangra Valley, the cultural centre of all this land, introduced the Mogul style into the ancient art, thus producing the Kangra Valley School, which in the eighteenth century spread north to Kashmir, south to Garhwal, and west to Lahore. But at the same time all over the hills artists went on working in the old style. In the Kangra Valley the 'high art' of the court artists who had absorbed the Mogul technique went on side by side with the rougher work of the village artists who stuck to the old methods. Indeed, it is not entirely a question of the contrast of court and village, for all the paintings which have hitherto come from Basohli have been in the ancient primitive style. In Chamba, Mandi, and Suket the two





styles went on side by side. In the Kangra Valley throughout the eighteenth century the 'high art', as we may call the glorious combination of Mogul line and Hindu spirit which we know as the Kangra Valley School, reigned supreme; but side by side with it queer little schools persisted in which the old primitive Hindu style survived. Such work inclines to dullness and heaviness. It lacks the strange vitality and the mysterious solemnity of the genuine primitive on the one hand, and the lyrical flow of line of the high Kangra art on the other. It has a provincial spirit and is the work of second-rate artists. Specimens can be seen in the Lahore Museum, but the best place to study it is in the collections in the Kangra Valley itself.

The contrast between the provincial and the primitive is shown with singular clearness in the Kangra Valley School, but throughout the whole history of art it can be seen. The primitive is the complete expression of the spirit of its age in art. In it the highest culture of the time is to be found. The provincial, as its name implies, is something local and isolated, and whatever originality it may possess is due to the fact of mere rustic conservatism which sticks to outworn methods long after they have been discarded elsewhere. The primitive is the mighty source of future art, just as the Himalayan snows give rise to the rivers of India. The provincial is the feeble and undeveloped descendant, which retains some resemblance to its great archaic ancestor merely because it had not had the strength and energy to keep up with the main stream of artistic effort. To continue the simile, the provincial is a muddy little backwater, past which flows the main current of the great river. Mere time has nothing to do with the primitive. Enormously old art may be as dull, lifeless, and decadent as some of the things that are produced to-day. The great and vital periods of art which we call primitive, and which make such an intensely strong appeal to modern taste, are always preceded by cataclysms in culture resembling the geological changes which produce the mountain ranges. Thus the great Byzantine and Romanesque arts succeeded the dull and outworn Graeco-Roman, but between the two was the rise of Christianity. Similarly in China the beautiful Wei art followed the introduction of Buddhism. The splendid primitive art of medieval India, which is as yet hardly known to the West, arose during the convulsions consequent on the Mahomedan invasion. Some violent cataclysm is always required to sweep





away the hollow and lifeless conventions and illusions which tend to cluster round an old civilization like barnacles on a ship, and to shake society out of its routine and bring it face to face with elemental reality. Then the way is clear for the primitive, or, in other words, for great art.

On the next step up the hill of Chamba town we come to the temples and the Brahmin priests, and here Plate V is to be found. Above the temples is the New Palace of the Raja of Chamba. The most striking feature of the New Palace are the frescoes in the Picture Room. They are painted in the Kangra Valley style (indeed they were done by Kangra men) and they are varnished. Varnishing of frescoes came in with the advent of European influence in the nineteenth century. The most important of these frescoes are as follows:

1. A big scene of two opposing armies from the 'Mahabharata'. This occupies the whole of one wall.

2. Some curious old sporting scenes, showing Englishmen in top-hats pigsticking, shooting wild buffaloes with pistols from horse-back, and hunting bears with hounds. All three are famous old Indian sports, but only the first survives nowadays.

3. Some pictures of Radha and Krishna and female figures in the ordinary Kangra Valley style.

4. A picture of an execution by an elephant. The criminal's head is placed on a block, and the elephant is crushing it under his foot. Both Mogul emperors and Rajput rajas frequently employed elephants to execute criminals.

5. A most peculiar scene of two men stripped to the waist fighting with their hands. Each right hand is covered in a metal case, from which spikes stick out, so that it resembles a mace. A raja and a number of other spectators are sitting watching.

6. A fight between two rhinoceroses. It is taking place in an arena like a Spanish bullring, and the Raja and his attendants are sitting in a gallery watching. Animal fights still take place in India. The writer has seen an arena in a certain state. It is specially designed for elephant fights, with a number of small doors at the foot of the high walls, through which the attendants can escape if the fighting of the elephants gets too fierce for them.

Nos. 3 to 6 are about fifty years old. Dr. Hutchison of Chamba, the





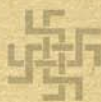
archaeologist and historian, remembers when they were painted. Nos. 1 and 2 are older and their date is probably the same as that of the building of the New Palace, about seventy years ago. In the Durbar Hall the writer noticed some white felt rugs with coloured designs on them, such as are common in the Punjab and Kashmir. These rugs had been made in the nineteenth century, and the pleasant design of the pattern, in the old Indian style and expressed in vegetable dyes, offers a contrast to the glaring ugliness of the modern rug and its awful aniline colours.

Above the New Palace is the Old Palace. There are probably frescoes in the Old Palace, but the writer could not go in, as an aged Rani, the great-grandmother of the present Raja, was living there.

Immediately after the writer photographed Plate V he had a practical example of the way in which frescoes disappear. Some one offered to show the writer a similar fresco elsewhere. They went straight to the place and found that the fresco had been scraped off and the wall white-washed only a week before.

The Rajas of Chamba have reigned for over fifteen hundred years with an uninterrupted descent in the male line. 'It is not material force that has given them a perennial stream of vitality. They have struck their roots deep as trees grow in the rain and the soft air; they have, as it were, become one with nature, a part of the divine and established order of things, and the simple Rajput peasant no more questions their right to rule than he rebels against the sunshine which ripens his harvest or the storm which blasts it. In comparison with them most of the royal houses of the plains are but as of yesterday, and the oldest must yield the palm to some of the noble families of the Punjab Hills.'

A story is told in Chamba which symbolizes the intense attachment of the Hill chief to his native soil. In the old days there was a petty Rana who was constantly in rebellion against his liege lord, the Raja of Chamba. But whenever there was a truce, or a safe conduct, and he came into Chamba and appeared before the Raja, he was all loyalty and submission. As soon as he got back to his native heath, he was as rebellious as ever. The Raja could not understand this and consulted his courtiers. The matter was explained to him: 'It is his native soil which makes him rebellious. When he comes to Chamba, he is on alien earth, and so he is patient and submissive.' The Raja gave orders that some men were to be sent secretly to bring some earth from the Rana's land. This was done,





and the earth was put into the durbar ground in a marked spot. The Rana was then summoned. At first, when he was standing on the outer edge of the durbar ground he was submissive, but the Raja called him in till his feet touched his own earth. At once he broke into fierce defiance and was cut down. The Rana's name and also his wife's have been handed down in an old Hill rhyme :

Rihila Rana Bahila Rani  
Bannu Kot Sarol Pani  
Badram janjan khani.

Bahila and Rihila, queen and king,  
Lived in Bannu fort, drank from Sarol spring,  
And Badram gave them feasts.

All the places mentioned in this rhyme are near Chamba. Bannu has the remains of a fort, Sarol a spring of cold clear water, and Badram the best rice in the neighbourhood. The Hills are full of such rhymes, about people and places of the country-side, and with a metre like the sound of a cantering horse. They are racy of the soil and as natural to their surroundings as the birds, beasts, and flowers, and sometimes in a queer odd way reflect a bit of local history. The rhyme just quoted is a case in point. The Rana Rihila had a striking personality which impressed itself on the imagination of the country-side. But as he was cut down for open defiance of the Raja, people shrank from commemorating his exploits too directly, and so his name survives in a furtive underhand fashion in this rhyme.

Once a year in Chamba there is a picturesque ceremony which dates back to ancient times. All the ranas and chiefs and village headmen come into Chamba town to renew their homage to the Raja. Ornamental arches in the form of big gates with towers are put up on the four roads which lead to the four provinces of Chamba, and they are decorated with the appropriate local symbols, so that the men of each province come into Chamba under their own signs. A great durbar is held, where the Raja sits in state with his mosahibs (peers), soldiers, and ministers, and receives homage. Afterwards there are sports, both ancient and modern. Among the former are wrestling and archery, polo and tent-pegging. Among the latter are a tennis tournament, musical chairs on horse-back, and a competition to see who can drive the longest golf ball.





Chamba town is surrounded on all sides by mountains, in wave after wave, and not a few of them white-capped. The country swarms with game. In particular it is famous for the size of its black bears. They are the largest in the Himalayas. I once had a curious experience with them. I was camping in the north-east of the state, a week's march from Chamba town. I went out before daybreak up the hill with my two Rajput trackers to see what was out and about. There was a good deal that morning. First the tracks of a snow-leopard. Then a herd of tahr (large long-haired mountain goats). I climbed up to try to stalk them, and on the way saw two huge black bears a little to the left. The tahr were considered the rarer and more interesting game, and so I continued my stalk. At the same time the trackers marked down the bears, as a second string to the bow. The stalk of the mountain goats proved a failure, and so we sat above the cave into which the bears had retired for their midday sleep and waited for them to come out. The afternoon passed, and it was five o'clock and my tent was a long and very rough journey away, especially in the dark. So it was necessary to hurry up the meeting with the bears. We started rolling rocks down, but this produced no result. Then I fired a couple of shots. The effect was instantaneous. A bear was seen running like a racehorse across the face of the hill. I opened fire, but the marker failed to register a hit. Suddenly the trackers shouted, 'The other bear's coming up the hill at us'. And so it was. The way that bear came up the hill aroused my admiration. It was a couple of hundred feet, and throughout the whole distance the bear took such advantage of cover that he never gave the chance of a shot. At the same time the charge was pushed home with all possible resolution and swiftness. It was really a model for an infantry attack. It was not until the bear was a couple of yards away that I could get a proper sight of him and stop him with a bullet. The trackers had tears of excitement in their eyes, as they condemned the wicked conduct of the bear in defending itself when attacked. 'Sir, the *brown* bear never never does such things.'

This brown bear is another inhabitant of Chamba. It is a queer-looking animal, with a dirty brown coat. It lives high up in the mountains near the snows, and in winter its coat goes almost white. Meeting a brown bear on the hill-side is a curious experience. With its strange shaggy coat and odd unfinished look it seems an anachronism, a survival, a prehistoric peep.





Even higher up the mountains than the brown bear live the ibex, most mysterious of all Himalayan animals. When winter comes, with its storms and snow, all the other animals move downwards in search of warmth and shelter. The ibex alone climbs up higher. No wonder it is the theme of a thousand legends and stories, and wizards put the horns of the ibex on the roofs of their huts.

In the collection of the Raja of Guler is a picture illustrating an old story from Chamba. In the upper half of the picture we see a drummer, of the low Drummer's caste, raising his presumptuous eyes to a Rajput princess (Plate VI). She is bathing. The snow mountains are brought into the picture with decorative effect. The princess returns his passion, and in the lower half of the picture we see the result (Plate VII). They try to elope and are pursued and shot down by the royal archers. The archers are dressed in the ancient uniform of Chamba. The writer has seen the costume in the Chamba Museum, but indeed there is no need to go to museums for the costume. In Jubbal State in October 1929 I had a porter dressed exactly in this way. These pictures can be assigned to the early eighteenth century. The design is simple and powerful, the line flows freely without any suggestion of archaic stiffness.

Plate VIII is a charming example of the Kangra art in the early eighteenth century. The figures, the animals, and even the trees and flowers are drawn with extraordinary feeling and tenderness. The scene is of Krishna in communion with his worshipper. All life—not merely human: animals, trees, and flowers—seems to be conscious of the presence of the Bridegroom.





### III

## SUMMER

PLATE IX was photographed by the writer in the house of the Raja of Guler, and represents his ancestor, Raja Gobardhan Singh.

Raja Gobardhan Singh is remembered in the Hills as the hero of the 'Horse War'. He had a splendid charger, which the Mogul governor of a neighbouring province coveted. He asked the Raja for it. The Raja refused and war followed. The Raja defeated the Mogul army, and kept the horse. Such a reason for war seems strangely trivial and frivolous nowadays, but it would have been viewed rather differently in the Himalayas in the first half of the eighteenth century. Armies depended entirely on their cavalry, generals had to lead their troops in battle in person, and an exceptionally fine charger was worth a fight. I saw several drawings of this horse in the Raja of Guler's collection, with Gobardhan Singh mounted on it. It is a strange animal to modern eyes, heavy, massive, with an enormously broad chest and back, thick neck, and strong bone. It obviously came of a stock bred to carry armour in battle both for itself and its rider, and to bear down opposing cavalry and break the enemy's ranks by sheer weight and strength. The nearest living animals which I have seen to it were the horses of the old Austrian Imperial Riding School, the Haute École, which had preserved unaltered the breed of horses of the days of armour. Gobardhan Singh's horse reminded me of Browning's lines:

The big-boned stock of the mighty Berold  
Mad with pride, like fire to manage,  
With the red eye slow consuming in fire  
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire.

Plate IX is dated 1743. The Raja is listening to music, and the air of gentle reverie is well expressed. The pose of the individual figures and the balance of the whole is admirable. In this respect it resembles the finest of the Mogul paintings, but it has a delicacy and a spirituality of feeling to which the Mogul art never attains.

The colouring of Kangra pictures of this period is extraordinarily delicate. The Kangra artist had the colours of the dawn and the rainbow on his palette.





The next two pictures (Plates X and XI) show Kangra art at its height. The clear flow of the line and the grace and delicacy of expression need no stressing. The composition of the pictures, the manner in which such a large number of figures are combined into a perfect artistic unity without the slightest trace of stiffness or monotony, is admirable. In a word, the artist has achieved design. In these pictures is the glorious Kangra line, 'pure as its native snows'. It is this line which is the secret of the art. A Kangra artist takes some dull and commonplace scene from the Mogul School, and in his hands the figures acquire life and grace, the branches tremble in the wind, and the breath of the Himalayas blows through the picture.

Plate XII is a charming sketch. The phrase of Mr. Laurence Binyon, 'A voice singing in the open air', happily expresses the lyrical tone of these drawings.

Plate XIII introduces us to another aspect of Kangra art. Some old story is here illustrated, of travellers being guided by a crane. The drawing has something of the atmosphere of folk-lore and legend, of an older age. The two heads on the next Plate (XIV A) have something of the same spirit. There is a suggestion about them of superhuman indifference. They might be the 'self-worshipping immortals' of Valhalla. 'Far below them in the valleys toil the hordes of men.'

In Plate XIV B we see one of the toilers, a carpenter at work.

I found in the house of the Raja of Guler a papier-mâché book-cover, which was an interesting example of the use of the Kangra style in decorative art. It showed Krishna and his consort being borne through the air by the bird Garuda. The idea of rushing speed was skilfully suggested. The clouds all round the edge of the picture were varied so as to fill the space and balance the design without monotony. In the picture Krishna was shown carrying in his hand the most beautiful flower in Heaven, the name of which is Parijat. The word 'Parijat' means 'Sea Born'. It reminds us of another Aryan people to whom the sea was the source of beauty. Aphrodite was Foam-Born. Krishna's consort asked him for Parijat, but Indra, the god of the sky, would not let it go. Krishna riding on Garuda fought Indra, who was mounted on an elephant. Krishna won, and the picture showed him returning victorious from Heaven. The bird Garuda seems a fantastic idea, but to any one who knows the Himalayas its origin is clear enough. I remember once





camping in a gloomy gorge, above the limit where trees could grow, with slopes of eternal snow not very far off on either side. It was evening, there was a drizzle of rain, and a mist was coming up the valley. A small tent in such surroundings made a dreary scene enough, and round it there came circling and crying the great eagles of the Himalayas, huge birds, the span of whose wings from tip to tip would be twice the height of a man. Their harsh and mournful cries completed the utter desolation of the scene. Viewed through the mist in which it mostly lives, it would not be difficult to believe that such a bird could carry a man.

Plate XV shows Vishnu in his Lion incarnation doing justice on the wicked King Hiranya-Kasipu. The wicked king's virtuous son, Prahlada, on the right, and the female devotee on the left, adore the manifestation of the god's power. The subject is a little startling, but the design is good. The figures of Prahlada and of the woman are typical of the Kangra Valley, both in art and life.

Plate XVI is a charming idyll of the cowherd god in the evening. Not only the human figures but also the animal and the tree are drawn with a vivid and sensitive appreciation of their beauty. The picture is alive.

In the Lahore Museum there is a picture which shows another phase of the cult of Krishna. The worshipper has gone out into the dark night to seek the Lover, and on the way has chanced upon the most horrible of all meetings, the dreadful *charail*, the ghost of a woman who has died in childbirth. There is no mistaking a charail, for her feet are turned backwards. The grandfather of a clerk in the service of H.H. the Raja of Suket once met a charail. The story is as follows:

The clerk's grandfather, an old Brahmin, was followed by a charail when he was coming back from bathing early in the morning. The woman asked him to take her home with him, but he refused. She insisted and he looked sharply at her and saw that she had a charail's feet. They turned backward. The Brahmin recited the charm:

Sule Naphine Devi Pahi Kharge Nachamiyake Ghanta Swaner  
Napahi Chapa Jane Swane Nacha Prachirjan Raksh Prati Chancha  
Chandike Raksh Dakshne.

The charail disappeared, but before she went she told the Brahmin that she was leaving him only because he was a learned man.

Tira Sujanpur, the palace of the famous Raja Sansar Chand, is a great meeting-place for charails. They hold durbars there, like Witches' Sabbaths.





Plate XVII is a study of a pheasant, and is an admirable piece of work. The design is good, the line is delicate and flowing and instinct with life. It is from an artist's sketch-book, as is shown by the front sketch of the pig's head above the pheasant and the floral designs below it.

The drawing of the two tigers (Plate XVIII) has lightness and grace and at the same time wonderful realism. It expresses to perfection the Indian conception of a tiger—playful ferocity. The exaggeration in the size of the paws emphasizes the essential quality of 'tigerishness', and rather increases than diminishes the realism of the representation. There are many studies of birds and animals in the Mogul style, and it is interesting to compare them with these Kangra works. It must be admitted that the latter are the finer. They have all the realism and artistic design of the Mogul, and at the same time a lightness, brightness, and freshness which the Mogul lacks.

In this chapter we have seen the high summer of Kangra art. The rise and decadence of an art require literary expression. The conditions and atmosphere in which the art began can be expressed in written words. Similarly there can be the story of its decline and fall. But when the art is at its height, its works must speak for it. Art is visual, and can no more find exact expression in words than music can. Allusion, suggestion, casual observation and anecdote, conversations and opinions, such are the means by which the critic must endeavour to evoke a link between art expressed in line and colour and art expressed in words.





## IV

### AUTUMN

**P**LATE XIX is the art of the eastern limits of the Rajput Himalayas, Garhwal.<sup>1</sup> The word Garhwal means 'Fort Full' and arose from the number of forts in the country. Until the Rajas of Garhwal formed their state, the country was ruled by no less than fifty-two petty Thakurs (barons), each with his separate castle or stronghold.

We have already heard of Garhwal as the place where the Raja of Guler, Rup Chand, 'the jewel of kings', was killed in battle by the Garhwal Raja 'Cut-nose', when 'Cut-nose' defeated the Mogul army of the Emperor Shah Jahan. When Shah Jahan's reign ended, there was the usual fight between his sons as to who should succeed as Emperor. This fight is called 'usual' because it occurred after the death of every Mogul emperor. It went on until only one son was left. When this stage had been reached the question of the succession to the throne was considered to have been solved satisfactorily. It ensured a virile succession. After Shah Jahan's reign not only his sons, but also his grand-nephews took part in the contest, and among the latter was Suleiman Shikoh. Suleiman Shikoh was defeated in battle by his terrible uncle Aurangzeb, and fled for his life. He took refuge with the Raja of Garhwal, relying on the honour of a Rajput to protect a fugitive, and arguing that a state which had already defeated a Mogul army was in a position to afford effective protection. The Raja of Garhwal with whom Suleiman took refuge was a son of 'Cut-nose', but he feared to follow in his father's footsteps in putting his state to the terrible jeopardy of another struggle with the mighty Mogul power. The father had come out safe from the whirlpool of war. Could the son do likewise? The son decided he could not, and surrendered Suleiman Shikoh to Aurangzeb and death. He safeguarded his state, but the people of the Hills have long memories, and even now the surrender of Suleiman Shikoh is remembered.

When Suleiman Shikoh took refuge in Garhwal, there followed in his train a Hindu artist. This artist remained in Garhwal after his master left, and settled in Srinagar, the capital of Garhwal state. His descendants are still living there, and I paid a visit to Srinagar this year to see them.

<sup>1</sup> A small Rajput state (Kumaon) formerly lay between Garhwal and Nepal, but Garhwal was the cultural and artistic boundary of the Rajputs.





Srinagar is five marches from the end of railways and motors. The bridle-path goes up and down hill among beautiful pine-forests, with the great snow mountains always on the horizon. Long-horned goats and long-coated sheep, straight from the snowy shrines of Hinduism which lie at the source of the sacred Ganges in these mountains, filled the path. They all carried loads, and are the normal method of transport in these hills. Along with them were large, long-haired dogs, with broad metal collars to protect them from leopards, who always spring at the throat. Srinagar is a pleasant town with a boulevard of trees in the main street and houses with overhanging eaves and richly carved door-posts. The scene has so much the atmosphere of gentle quiet and mellow age that it is difficult to believe that except one or two small temples nothing in it is more than thirty years old. At the end of the last century a sudden flood of the mountain torrent, which here represents the sacred Ganges, swept away the palaces and buildings of the old capital of the Rajas of Garhwal.

I met Balak Ram, the descendant of the old court painter of Suleiman Shikoh, and tenth in descent from him. Plates XIX and XX are the work of his great-great-grandfather, Mangat Ram, and were done some time during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. These designs were stamped from wood-blocks and were made to be reproduced in silver as ornaments on sword-hilts and scabbards. When I first saw them I was doubtful if such elaborate designs were really used for swords, but Balak Ram took me into the street and knocked at a Rajput's house and got the owner to show me an old sword decorated in exactly a similar way. The Rajput, like the Samurai of Japan, held his sword in a veneration not far short of worship. To make it beautiful was noble work for the artist.

These woodcuts show considerable artistic merit. The floral design (Plate XIX) has something of the clarity and pure design of an old Persian carpet. The slight irregularity in the design avoids monotony without disturbing balance. There is beauty in this simple work. The designs on Plate XX are also of merit. The lower design of a stag being pulled down by a panther is reminiscent of the ancient Scythian art. The foxes on the top and bottom of the upper design are excellent, and the lions at the side are good. This interesting art has quite died out now.

I found Plate XXI with another descendant of the court artists, and a cousin of Balak Ram, in Srinagar village. I showed it to Mr.





Mukundi Lall, who has made a special study of this art, and he at once identified it as the work of Molla Ram (son of Mangat Ram), in his earlier period, probably about 1780. Molla Ram is one of the few Himalayan artists who are known by name, and is practically the only one whose history is fairly well known. He was born in the year 1760, and died in 1833. Mr. Mukundi Lall has a collection of pictures of this artist, which he got from Balak Ram, who is the great-grandson of Molla Ram.

The man with whom I found Plate XXI was also a great-grandson of Molla Ram. Mr. Mukundi Lall has two interesting pictures of Molla Ram's, one dated 1775 and the other 1803.<sup>1</sup> These pictures correspond with the periods of Kangra Valley art with which they concur. The picture of 1775 has the simplification of line and severity of design characteristic of that period.

The picture of 1803 has a softer and more luscious line, and the design is more complicated and detailed. The atmosphere is romantic but has not yet become sentimental. It is the school of Sansar Chand whom we shall meet immediately. Molla Ram knew the Kangra Valley well. Balak Ram showed me a map of Kangra Fort and town drawn and signed by his ancestor. But at the same time this Garhwal School, though deeply influenced by and responding sensitively to the Kangra Valley, is yet not quite the same as it. Plate XXI is a good illustration of this. Design, subject, and execution all point strongly to the influence of the Kangra Valley. But in the flow of the line and the general atmosphere there is a certain difference. The lyrical feeling and fluency so characteristic of the Kangra Valley line are present here also, but there is an absence of the extraordinary lightness and brightness which is one of the glories of the Kangra art. There is a slightly heavier and more reflective, indeed one might even say more sombre, atmosphere about Plate XXI, and this is characteristic of Molla Ram and the whole of the Garhwal School. Balak Ram had with him a study of flowers, red poppies, by Molla Ram. Two poppies were drawn separately, one on a rose-salmon and one on a golden ground. Though quite naturalistic, the design was freer and more graceful than a Mogul rendering of the same subject would have been. I was also shown another piece of work of Molla Ram's, a study for a floral border for a picture or other decorative purpose. Though the flowers were completely conventionalized, they had an extraordinary

<sup>1</sup> These have been reproduced and published.





charm and grace, and there is a delicacy and freshness about the colouring which it is impossible to reproduce. A third floral design, a study of palm-leaves and fruit with a conventionalized rose-border, Mr. Mukundi Lall told me was the work of Jwala Ram, Molla Ram's son. Mr. Mukundi Lall recognized it by a peculiar magenta shade at the top and bottom of the picture. Balak Ram has some pictures by his grandfather, Jwala Ram. One in particular interested me. It shows the goddess Kali being drawn in a chariot by two crows. It was coarse and rough, but vigorous and vital. The artist had really left the Kangra School, and had used the more sombre style of the plains. The art of the Kangra Valley is fitted to express the bright nature-spirits of the Aryans, the Shining Ones, and not the darker deities of the Black South.

H.H. the Raja of Tehri-Garhwal kindly showed me his collection, which contains some beautiful and interesting pictures. In date he assigns most of them to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The ancestors of H.H. the Raja of Tehri-Garhwal lived in Srinagar, and were known as Rajas of Garhwal. Early in the nineteenth century they had to meet the first shock of the terrible Gurkha invasion from Nepal, which will be described a little later. The Gurkhas occupied the whole country, and committed the same massacres and atrocities as in the other Rajput Hill states. Unlike his master the Raja, Molla Ram remained in Srinagar throughout the occupation and managed to ingratiate himself with the general who commanded the Gurkha army. He composed a poem on the history of Garhwal for the Gurkha general. Indeed, Molla Ram prided himself more on his poems than on his paintings. The Gurkhas remained in possession of Garhwal until they were defeated in war with the English in 1814, and compelled to give up all their conquests. The English Government restored the Raja of Garhwal and gave him the choice of either keeping up an army sufficient to withstand the Gurkhas in future, or else ceding the eastern part of his dominions, which were exposed to the Gurkha attacks. The Raja chose the latter alternative, and was henceforth known as the Raja of Tehri-Garhwal. As Srinagar fell within the British share, the Raja built a new capital at Tehri. It is two days' ride from Srinagar, which was the route which I followed when I went there.

But before we leave Srinagar I must mention a curious story which I was told just before I rode out of the village. A man told me that the last





member of Balak Ram's branch of the family to paint was his grandfather Jwala Ram. Balak Ram's father had given up the art and Balak Ram had never attempted it. The reason why Balak Ram's father had given it up was that as long as his family practised it, and they could trace it for eight clear generations without a possibility of mistake, one member in each generation had been mad. The branch of the family to which the man belonged who showed me Plate XXI had kept on painting, and the curse had worked. The way I heard it was as follows. As I was riding out of Srinagar I saw a horse tied to a post with a beautiful old Chinese rug on it as a saddle rug. I wanted to take off the rug and see it properly, and I stopped to inquire where the owner was. While I was waiting, a villager came up and asked me who I was and what I was doing there. I told him, and in return he told me the story of the madness in Molla Ram's family. I found this singular story confirmed by reliable evidence. I could not help wondering, however, if the explanation of H.H. the Raja of Tehri-Garhwal about the cause of the extinction of the art, namely the introduction of photography, had not also something to do with Molla Ram's descendants giving up painting.

Molla Ram in his youth was the disciple of a Mahomedan learned in the mystical Sufi philosophy. The Sufi cult was the only form of Mahomedanism which was likely to appeal to a cultured Hindu artist. Arising in Persia, when the Persians found that though Islam meant the ruin of their ancient culture, it was too strong to be resisted directly, it was really a polite evâsion of the new creed. It was pantheism veiled under the outward forms and ceremonies of the Mahomedan religion. Among its adherents were such diverse personalities as the poet Omar Khayyam and the Old Man of the Mountain, the antagonist of Richard Cœur de Lion, from the practices associated with whose name, Hasan, we have the English word 'Assassin'. To the East also this man's name gave a word, 'Hashish', the terribly potent hempen drug with which his followers maddened themselves before entering on their wild atrocities. The Sufi cult is the inspiration of all the magnificent 'Mahomedan' art and literature of Persia. Molla Ram soon returned to orthodox Hinduism, and became a devout adherent of the Shakti cult, the worship of the goddess. He wrote poems in praise of the goddess Kali, and in the picture of him in his sixty-third year by his son, Jwala Ram, his worship is shown rewarded by the goddess manifesting herself to him.





Before I left Srinagar I was warned that I should find nothing of interest in Tehri. Until the Rajas moved there and made it their capital after the Gurkha wars a hundred years ago it was just an ordinary village. I did not altogether accept this warning, as I thought that it might be coloured by village jealousy, which is just as strong in the Himalayas as farther west. But it turned out to be quite true. The buildings in Tehri are in an uninteresting modern style, and I found no good pictures there. But though the buildings are insignificant in themselves, they derive a certain beauty from their position and surroundings. As one rides into Tehri, one passes the Raja's garden-house situated in a beautiful park-like orchard, and opposite the gate is a fountain, with a lion-headed spout, reminiscent of an ancient Roman work in Europe, and round which a certain classical beauty seems to linger. The Raja's palace, fast falling into decay, is boldly situated on a rocky crag above the town, with the mountain torrent boiling beneath, and tall dark hills guarding it closely on each side. Tehri's position as a capital has already come to an end, as the Raja is building a new one nearer to the plains of India. However, the hills widen out into a beautiful valley beyond the town of Tehri, and the ride from Srinagar is a fine one. When I went there the lower hill-sides were ablaze with scarlet flowering bushes, and on the high passes were pine-forests and views of distant snows.

On my way back from Srinagar to the plains I decided to leave the government road and take a short cut. All went well at first, and I was riding along looking at the opposite side of the valley when my hill-pony suddenly stopped. I found he was looking over a precipice. I backed and dismounted, and found that for the next half-mile the 'road' had degenerated into a path twelve inches wide along a precipice varied in places by loose ground and falling stones. However, I got over all right, and my groom managed somehow to get the nimble little hill-pony over too. He was certainly more like a cat than a horse.

The Garhwal hills are full of legend and story. Here are a few of them.

A prince of Tibet had a beautiful daughter who prayed to the goddess for a husband as beautiful as herself. The goddess caused the princess to appear to the god Krishna in a dream. Krishna loved her at first sight, and his love survived into his waking moments. So he sent a letter through the black bees to his brother Surju (Sun) asking him to go to Tibet, and bring the princess. The black bees flew like a flash, and





circled round Surju's head with a loud humming. When they caught his attention, they dropped the letter into his hand. Surju read the order, and got ready for the journey. But his mother protested, saying that Tibet was a land of magicians from which no one returned. But Surju said he must obey, and got ready to start. Meanwhile ill omens occurred. The water in which ashes were soaked for washing Surju's clothes turned red instead of black. Surju's pet goat, which was named Tila, sneezed. Surju's hair began to come out. But still Surju went to Tibet and reached the mountain Kailash, where seven witches lived. They invited Surju to their house and gave him a feast. He fell asleep. While he was asleep they measured his body with charmed three-stringed threads, and turned him into a spotted ram. How Surju was saved and Krishna got his bride is the rest of a long story.

Another story is about the wild boar Kailu who lived at Lohanigarh (House of Blood). There was a Raja in the Hills who had some rich lands, which could not be tilled because the wild boar Kailu always destroyed the crops. The Raja determined to use the land. He planted it with barley. But the wild boar Kailu saw all this in a dream, and as soon as the crops were getting ripe he collected his army of six score wild boars and broke down the Raja's fences and destroyed his crops. The Raja swore to kill Kailu, and came against him with an army. Kailu sent away all his wild boars, and said he alone would deal with the Raja's army. The Raja ordered his soldiers to surround Kailu and warned them that whoever let Kailu escape would be executed. Kailu heard the order, and didn't want to get innocent people punished unjustly. So he escaped by jumping over the Raja's own head. The rest of the story is a long account of how the Raja married a heroic princess, and begot a ferocious son who finally killed the wild boar Kailu.

The phrases and expressions in some of these stories are odd and unexpected to a degree. Thus in one tale we find that when the hero is starting on a dangerous exploit, and his wife is weeping, the hero quotes the local proverb, 'Heroes and billy-goats are born to die early deaths'. The custom in India of killing male goats young for meat and keeping female goats longer for milk explains the reference to 'billy-goats', which would not at first sight be associated with heroes.

Another story starts with two young heroes of twelve years of age, who share in common a wife called Dudhu-Kela (Milky Banana), as soft





as a ball of butter and as beautiful as the full moon. This sharing of a wife shows the influence of Tibet, where polyandry is common. The Rajputs of the Kangra Valley would be horrified at such an idea.

The stories of the Garhwal mountains resemble those of Kulu. Both alike lack the courtly polish of the tales and ballads of the Kangra castle halls, but, though queer and fantastic, they have something of the charm which always attaches to the fresh and unexpected, and they are racy of the soil. The relation of Garhwal to Kangra in art is much the same as in literature. Plate XXI is a good illustration of this. If it is compared with a Kangra drawing it will be seen to have a certain rural and bucolic touch, a not unpleasant suggestion of the freshness of the countryside.

There is one last element in the 'Kultur' of Garhwal which must be mentioned: the games. The Garhwalis are a fine soldierly people, and the regiment which is composed of them and which bears their name gave an excellent account of itself in the Great War. They are a cheery, sporting people, but their amusements do not err on the side of gentleness and effeminacy. They play a ball game which is football in its most primitive form. For the field they take a level patch of ground a hundred yards long, if they can get so much space without a hill in it. It must have a wall at each end. All that is wanted now is the ball, which is covered with leather and stuffed with rags and shavings and weighs about five pounds. The game starts at midday, but only a few of the players arrive at that time. However, they divide into two lines facing each other, and start. Fresh players come drifting in all the afternoon, and by the time that there is a hundred on each side the game may be considered to be in full swing. It resembles a gigantic Rugby scrum, the object being to force the ball over the opposite wall. There are crowds of spectators, who join in when they feel inclined or when the players get tired. The game goes on until it is too dark to see. It is said that in the good old days it used to be carried on into the night, but even with the present degenerate practice of stopping at dusk there are plenty of accidents.

But in point of danger the ball game is nothing to another sport called *Beda*. This consists of tying a long rope to the top of a precipice and bringing it down to a tree on the plain below. A man rides down the rope on a wooden saddle, blindfolded, and with bags of sand tied to his





feet to keep him steady. As he flashes down he waves a bright-coloured handkerchief in each hand and shouts 'Victory! Victory!' and the cry is taken up by the crowd. The rope is incredibly long and is to be measured by hundreds of feet. When the rider lands he is hailed as a hero. But, even if he can keep his balance, the friction of the wooden saddle against the rope often makes the rope catch fire. The fact that the rider performs his funeral rites before he gets into the saddle shows that he is aware of the danger. So many accidents happened in this game that it is now forbidden by law in British territory. In former days it used to be played in the Hill states near Simla in an unpleasant way. The game was not considered a success unless there was an accident and the man riding down the rope was killed. So flaws were made in the rope, to make sure that it would break. It is sometimes said that the chief attraction of tight-rope walking and dangerous acrobatic feats in circuses and music halls is the knowledge that the performer is only separated by a hair's-breadth from a horrible death, and that a single slip and the slightest failure of nerve or eye means destruction. The audience gets the vicarious thrill that is to be had from 'the bright eyes of danger'. But the old games managers in the Simla Hill states were severely consistent and logical, and insisted on an accident and bloodshed on every occasion. The origin of this *Beda* game is said to be that when the god Vishnu, the Preserver (the second person in the Hindu Trinity), was distributing his bounties to his creatures he left out the *Badis*. These were dancers and jesters, and used to sing the pedigrees of the Rajput chiefs at feasts, a sort of low-class edition of the old British *bards*. The *Badis* reminded Vishnu that they had got nothing and so he gave them two gifts with which to earn their living, bamboos and grass. At first sight bamboos and grass would not seem to be very helpful to artists whose profession was singing and dancing. But with the *Badis* these accomplishments are rather their most striking and salient characteristic than their means of livelihood. They would be useful to supplement an income, but in the wild rough country of the Himalayas no man could entirely rely on such slender and uncertain support. But bamboos and grass are so useful, and come into so many articles of necessity, that no one who has them need starve. So in gratitude to Vishnu the *Badis* started the *Beda* game, in which grass is used for the rope and a bamboo for the post on the precipice to which it





is tied. The latter article gives the game its name, for *Beda* means a 'bamboo cane'.

We now come to the famous Maharaja Sansar Chand of Kangra. The state of Kangra is of enormous antiquity. The 'Mahabharata' describes its king as the ally of the Kauravas. Later on in the classics of Europe Ptolemy refers to it, and the historians of Alexander the Great speak of the 'Mountain Kings' of these parts. There is a tradition that Alexander the Great visited Kangra and set up an idol which was the image of his wife. That this tradition is of some age and is not a modern invention is proved by the fact that it was told to a Mahomedan invader six hundred years ago. The Maharaja of Kangra is the head of the famous Katoch clan of Rajputs, the origin of which is lost in the mists of the past. Descent is claimed from the Moon, but it is a fact that no royal family in the world can show a genealogy more ancient. During the Mahomedan invasions, Kangra Fort was captured and recaptured again and again. In the fourteenth century a Raja of Kangra went raiding, plundering up to the gates of Delhi. On his way back, laden with booty, he met the Mahomedan ruler of Kashmir on an exactly similar errand. The meeting was not unfriendly.

Mahomed Tughlak, Emperor at Delhi, stormed Kangra Fort. His court poet wrote, 'When the Sun was in Cancer the king of this age took the stone fort of Kangra. It is between rivers like the pupil of an eye and until now it has preserved its virgin honour of impregnability. Even Sikandar [Alexander] could not take it. Within are the masters of the *mangonels* [engines like catapults for throwing stones on the enemy]. Within are beauties bright as the sun. Its chiefs are strong as buffaloes, with necks like the neck of the rhinoceros. Its people are all on the high road to hell and perdition. They are ghouls, and look like dragons. The great king of the kings of this earth arrived before this fortress at night with a hundred thousand companions. His army had a thousand stars, and under each star a thousand banners flew.' The poem is in Persian, and is by a Mahomedan. It is interesting to compare it with some of the quotations from Hindu literature which are scattered over this book. A great difference is apparent. This Mahomedan poem has a certain precision and elegance, but compared with the rich exuberance of the Hindu style it is thin and cold, and all the allusions to ghouls and dragons do not alter this impression. Like all real expressions of the





genuine culture of Islam, there is something shrill about it. Compared with the Hindu style it is the difference between the high piercing cry of the muezzin giving the call to prayer from the minaret and the deep-toned gongs and drums of a Hindu temple, between dry deserts and rich jungles, between the *Arabian Nights* and the *Ocean of Streams of Stories*. As we shall see, this difference is as pronounced in art as in literature.

The Rajas of Kangra occupied an honourable position as great feudatories of the Mogul emperors. The Emperor Akbar had his attention drawn to Kangra in a curious way. One day Akbar sentenced a criminal to have his nose cut off. This was a common punishment in those days. Not long afterwards Akbar was surprised to see him going about with a new nose. He asked where the man had got it, and was told 'Kangra'. 'Kangra is famous for four things:

First, the strength of the fortress,

Second, the rice which grows there, known as Sweet-Scented rice,

Third, the treatment of eye diseases,

Fourth, the making of new noses.'

The last feature, the making of new noses, went on well into the nineteenth century. But with the advent of the British Government the supply of the raw material for the industry failed.

Akbar was told that these were not the only wonders in Kangra. There was also the Temple of the Goddess in which pilgrims used to cut out their tongues in her honour. In two or three hours the tongues grew again. Akbar wanted to see this for himself. Why he did not go, the chronicles of his reign relate:

'In the night a spiritual form, with which opposition to an act is associated, appeared as a face in the sleeping-apartment, and turned him (Akbar) from his purpose.'

The heir of the Raja of Kangra attended Akbar's court. He had a fine parrot, and Jahangir, who was then a boy, wanted it and asked for it. But the Raja's heir said: 'It is our duty to supply falcons and sparrow-hawks to you (this was part of the tribute, and the birds were used in the imperial hunt), but parrots we can keep for ourselves.' Jahangir knew that his father the Emperor Akbar would confirm the justice of this contention, and so Jahangir pretended to acquiesce in it. But he nourished a grudge, and when he became Emperor he invaded Kangra, and attacked





the fort and took it after a three days' siege. About Kangra Fort the proverb is, 'Who holds the Fort holds the Hills'.

The Raja of Kangra tried to regain the fort, but he failed miserably, for he was captured by the Moguls and flayed alive. But the next Raja continued the struggle, and when a powerful Mogul force invaded the country, he retreated with his army to the top of a mountain 9,000 feet high. After this the Rajas of Kangra kept quiet and bided their time until the middle of the eighteenth century. When Ghamand Chand became Raja in 1751 he saw that the time was come. The Mogul Empire was in the throes of dissolution and he recovered all the lands of his ancestors except Kangra Fort. The Mogul governor of the fort, though completely isolated, continued for forty years more to hold the fort for the Emperor of Delhi, and sent his dispatches and reports as regularly as if that shadowy monarch had been the Great Mogul in fact as well as in name. Ghamand Chand was a strong ruler, and restored the ancient prestige of his house and clan. But he came to power in a cruel way. He was not the heir, as his elder brother had been raja, and had died leaving eleven sons. These sons were disliked by the people on account of their 'whimsicality and cruelty'. Ghamand Chand took advantage of this. He caught them in an ambush, put out their eyes, and had them starved to death in an underground dungeon in a castle. The place is still pointed out. It is between Nadaun and Tira Sujanpur. I photographed a portrait of Ghamand Chand in the house of his descendant Colonel the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand. The portrait was evidently from life, and the cold cruelty in the face was unmistakable. But the line was hard and the figure stiff and wooden, which made me suspect that the picture was not painted at the time of Ghamand Chand, but is a copy of an earlier work.

The great Sansar Chand came to the throne in A.D. 1776 when he was only ten years old. Colonel the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand has a picture of his marriage procession which I photographed. Sansar Chand is the mounted figure in the centre of the picture with the side ornaments to his turban, and the emblems of royalty beside him. Some of the faces are good portraits. Others are highly stylized. The design of the picture is interesting. It is an example of the Oriental method of composing a picture of a crowd with no central figure or even group to dominate the scene. It is the natural relation of all the figures which gives the picture unity and coherence.





As soon as Sansar Chand was big enough for the line of battle he started to try to get back Kangra Fort. The old Mogul governor was dying, but he still stuck to his post, and it was not until after his death in 1783 that the fort fell. But even now Sansar Chand didn't get it, for he had to call in the Sikhs to help him, and when the fort surrendered the Sikhs slipped in ahead of him and held it, and Kangra Fort was as far away from Sansar Chand as ever. The sight of Kangra Fort makes all these stories credible. It is perched at the end of the ridge above Kangra town, and is defended on three sides by terrific precipices. On the fourth side a steep and winding path leads up to it, defended by high walls and numerous gates. The fortifications are of immense thickness. Kangra Fort is exactly like a medieval castle in Europe. Before the advent of modern heavy artillery such places could be taken only in two ways, by starvation or by treachery. Sansar Chand wisely abandoned the hopeless attempt to take the fort by storm, and instead he invaded the neighbouring Sikh territories in the Punjab. Under this pressure, they gave up the fort to him in 1786, and Sansar Chand now proved the truth of the proverb, 'Who holds Kangra Fort, holds the Hills'. He immediately started invading his neighbour's territories, and for twenty years was master of the Western Himalayas. In the course of these wars he killed the Raja of Chamba as described in the first chapter. Sansar Chand was no less great in peace than in war. A contemporary chronicle describes him thus: 'For many years he passed his days in great felicity. He was generous in conduct, kind to his subjects, just as Nushervan, and a second Akbar in the recognition of men's good qualities. Crowds of people of skill and talent, professional soldiers and others, resorted to Kangra and gained happiness from his gifts and favours. Those addicted to pleasure, who live for the gratification of others, flocked from all quarters and profited exceedingly by his liberality. Performers and story-tellers collected in such numbers, and received such gifts and favours at his hands, that he was regarded as the Hatim of that age, and, in generosity, the Rustam of the time.' Sansar Chand was a great patron of art. The English traveller, Moorcroft, of the East India Company's service, who visited him, says: 'Sansar Chand is fond of drawing and has many artists in his employ: he has a large collection of pictures, but the greater part represent the feats of Krishna and Balaram, the adventures of Arjuna, and subjects from the "Mahabharata": it also





includes portraits of many of the neighbouring rajas, and of their predecessors. Amongst these latter were two profiles of Alexander the Great, of which Rai Anirudha gave me one. It represents him with prominent features, and auburn hair flowing over his shoulders; he wears a helmet on his head begirt with a string of pearls, but the rest of his costume is Asiatic. The Raja could not tell me whence the portrait came: he had become possessed of it by inheritance.' I photographed a picture in the collection of Colonel the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand, which shows Sansar Chand interviewing artists and looking at their pictures. The portrait of Sansar Chand is a good one, and evidently drawn from life. The curt and stylized treatment of the other figures shows that the artist took no interest in them except as decorative elements in the general design round Sansar Chand. They are the frame of the portrait. The bearded figure in white sitting in the place of honour above Sansar Chand is either his guru (Brahmin spiritual guide, in English Royal Chaplain), or else an uncle or some other elderly relation. The date of the picture is about A.D. 1786. Sansar Chand's favourite painter is said to have been one Kushan Lall.

In the house of a descendant of Sansar Chand at Alampur, on the right bank of the Beas opposite Tira Sujampur, there are some elaborate portraits of Sansar Chand and his court. Sansar Chand is shown as a young man. They are solemn and dignified, but heavy and baroque, and there is a slight suggestion of the pompous. Pomposity is not a plant that thrives in the wild mountain air of Himalayan art.

There is a picture in the Lahore Museum which shows the return of Ram. It is a typical example of the period of art associated with the name of Sansar Chand at the end of the eighteenth century. In such pictures the artists of the Kangra Valley reach a high stage of technical ability. The line is delicate and clear, and the design does not lack force. There is undoubtedly a sense of onward march in the picture. It does not lack vitality. But if it is compared with the earlier drawings it will be found to lack a certain freedom in the flow of the line. It is not yet stiff or tight, but there is a check, a slowing down. The composition has become more artificial and studied. Though the picture is the work of an artist it begins to show traces of the artisan as well. In the earlier pictures there is something of the freshness of the morning, but here we feel the atmosphere of a crowded court, beautifully decorated





and furnished no doubt, but still close and oppressive. Autumn has come in this art. Another picture in the Lahore Museum, of a princess and her attendants by night, confirms this view. The figures are drawn with delicacy and grace, the line is still free, the design is good, there is the romantic atmosphere typical of this period in the art. In fact the picture as a whole is a charming composition. But there is a certain indefinable lack of freshness, which becomes accentuated when this picture is compared with earlier works.

Plate XXII belongs to the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand. I photographed it in his house. It is of the period of Sansar Chand, the end of the eighteenth century. The design is beautiful. The manner in which the figures are placed is perfect. They balance each other exactly in accord with the scene depicted. They are drawn with grace and sensitive delicacy. And yet, there is something lacking in these works. The drawing of the trees is stiff and formal, as are their positions and arrangement, in contrast to the sensitive beauty of earlier examples. Design is superior to execution. And yet there is a charm about this drawing. It is partly to be found in the subject.

This picture is religious and is designed to arouse fervour and devotion in the worshipper. It relates to the cult of Krishna, to which reference has already been made as the favourite Rajput cult. This Krishna has been the subject of endless conjecture and controversy, which is not surprising when it is remembered that a god of this name has been worshipped in India from more than five thousand years ago up to the present day. When the Aryans, the ancestors of the modern Hindus, first crossed the Himalayas from the north, they brought with them the same gods as we know with their cousins in ancient Germany and ancient Greece, the gods of the sky, rain, thunder, of fire, of spring, of war. But as they pushed their way down into the rich plains of India they picked up various local deities, and among them the jolly cowherd god, Krishna. Krishna is the protector of the herds, and therefore of the herdsmen. He is with them when they go out to graze in the morning, when they rest under the trees in the midday heat, and when they come back in clouds of golden dust in the evening. At night he defends them from wolves and fiercer beasts of prey, and he blesses the produce and increase of the herds. But there is nothing solemn or austere about Krishna. While he likes to see his flocks, both human and animal, happy





and contented, he is fond of a joke, and often appears as a sort of Robin Goodfellow or Puck. Besides being a practical joker, Krishna is as a rustic gallant and meets the cowgirls in the evening. There are many stories of Krishna in this role. The way that the Aryans fitted him in among their gods was to declare him one of the incarnations of Vishnu. Vishnu, the Protector, the Preserver, according to Hindu mythology, has ten incarnations on earth. Nine are over, and the tenth is still to come. We have already seen one of the earlier ones in the Man Lion (Plate XV) and Krishna is one of the latest. Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, is a Himalayan snow-peak in the realm of thought and philosophy. The verses of the 'Gita', that poem within a poem, for it is inserted in the 'Mahabharata', rise to heights of lyrical rapture:

The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.

At no time was I not, nor you nor these princes, nor shall we ever cease to be.

Better one's own duty though destitute of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger.

They who worship the Shining Ones go to the Shining Ones; to the Ancestors go the Ancestor-worshippers; to the Elements go those who sacrifice to Elementals; but my worshippers come to Me.

Of high mountains I am the highest:

Of speech I am the one syllable.

Of immovable things the Himalayas.

Of generals I am the War God.

Of lakes I am the sea.

Of calculators I am time.

Of wild beasts I am the great beast.

Of birds I am the swiftest.

I am the gambling of the cheat, and the splendour of splendid things.

I am victory, I am determination, and the truth of the truthful.

Pure men worship the gods; the passionate, the gnomes and giants; the others, the dark folk, worship ghosts and troops of nature-spirits.<sup>1</sup>

The reference to the 'dark folk' in the last verse reminds us that Krishna himself is always shown as deep blue or black, in memory of his origin, in contrast to the white Aryan gods. But if Krishna of the 'Gita' is a high Himalayan snow-peak, the other Krishna, the jolly cow-

<sup>1</sup> Based on Mrs. Besant's translation.





herd god, is very much of the plains, and many a story of coarse rustic wit describes his tricks on the cow-boys and successes with the cow-girls; how he used to steal butter and then lay the blame on some one else, and how husbands used to tie up their wives in their houses to stop them from going to meet Krishna in the forest, but somehow or other when the time came they always got out to him. The efforts to reconcile the two aspects of the deity are interesting. The writer has a picture showing Krishna sitting in a tree and handing down clothes to some naked cow-girls. The story is that Krishna found them bathing in a pond, and quickly picked up their clothes and ran up a tree with them. They crouched down in the water and begged for their clothes. But Krishna insisted that they should come out of the water hand in hand, and he would throw the clothes down from the tree. At last they had to do as he told them, and the picture shows the scene. This story has been explained as a parable, to illustrate the utter nakedness and humility of the soul before God.

This drawing (Plate XXII) does to a certain extent bridge the gulf between these two widely differing conceptions, which are both applied to the same name among deities. A certain pastoral atmosphere has been maintained, in memory of the cowherd god, but yet it cannot be denied that the picture as a whole breathes the lofty spirit of the 'Gita'. This picture may be said to express the cult of Krishna in a visual form.

The manner in which the cult of Krishna oscillates between the god of the 'Gita' and the god of the cowherd can be seen from a glance at two of the drawings in this book. Compare Plate VIII and Plate XVI. In Plate VIII we see Krishna in a pastoral setting, but the whole scene is permeated by a transcendental feeling. Not merely the worshipper, but the cattle, and even the trees and flowers, seem to be conscious of the presence of some divine force. In this picture we see the Krishna of the 'Gita'. Plate XVI is a charming little study, but can aspire to no such mystical significance. The artist thoroughly enjoys every element in the picture, and makes the most of them for the purpose of the design. The pose of the figures, the line of the animal, the beauty of the foliage of the tree, are all depicted with a sensitive appreciation of their beauty. But that is all. It is impossible to read into the picture a mystical or transcendental feeling or purpose. Here we have the Krishna of the cowherds. Krishna is typical of Indian art. As the latter is the result





of the union of white Aryan and dark Dravidian, so the former represents a similar cultural and ethical fusion.

It may be asked how such a cult as this came to appeal to a race of soldiers. But soldiers who are much on active service are not very keen on meeting war again in the form of literature and art when they are not actually in the field. War is their profession, and they like to get a holiday from it sometimes. In the idylls of Krishna they find change and relief. It is the same spirit which made soldiers during and shortly after the War avoid speaking of it. It was not reluctance to military service or dislike of war, but a desire to get a holiday from a thing they had been seeing too much of. War to them was 'shop'. Similarly the British Tommy, when musically inclined, selects the most sentimental ditties he can find, and leaves warlike ballads to those whose profession is not that of arms.

Secondly, the religious impulse among the Hindus is strong. According to Hinduism, the first path to the gods is the Path of Knowledge, by study and meditation and reading the Sacred Books. This is open to the Brahmin, but closed to the unlearned Rajput, who in the incessant distractions of a soldier's life has no leisure to acquire such learning. But Krishna is to be worshipped by loyalty and fervour. The path to the god Krishna is the Path of Devotion. And this is open to the Rajputs.

Thirdly, the Krishna of the 'Mahabharata' is not merely the philosophical and religious teacher of the 'Gita'. He is also a warlike god, the leader of the hosts in battle. Further, in the Gita itself he completely confutes and crushes a questioner who assumes the guise of a modern Conscientious Objector, and questions the rightfulness of war in any form. The way in which Krishna deals with him is singularly pleasing to a Rajput.

The Rajputs of the Hills tell a story of Krishna which suits the brush of the Kangra Valley artist. I have three pictures which show the story at a glance. In the first picture we see a pious Brahmin sitting with his wife. The Brahmin is in rags and the hut shows signs of dire poverty. The wife is eagerly gesticulating and the Brahmin seems nervous and uneasy. What the wife is telling the Brahmin is that Krishna, the god to whom the Brahmin has always addressed most fervent prayers, is now on earth in human form as the Raja of a neighbouring Hill state. Why does not the Brahmin go and salute him, and get some reward for his





long years of devotion and service? In the left-hand corner of the picture we see the Brahmin setting off. This manner of showing two scenes of a story on the same picture is not uncommon in Rajput art, and is sometimes to be found in Mogul pictures. It recalls the Italian primitives. There is an example of it among the illustrations of this book. Plates VI and VII, the Chamba elopement, are parts of the same picture. (They have been separated so that they could be produced on a larger scale.) My second picture shows the Brahmin worshipping Krishna in the palace. The Brahmin was so poor that the only offering which he could bring to Krishna was a small bag of rice. But Krishna accepted the offering in the spirit in which it was made, and in the picture we see him eating the rice with avidity and declaring that it is the best he had ever tasted. The Brahmin's face and attitude express *bhakti* (ecstasy and devotion), and the whole picture is permeated with a red glow which suggests the burning zeal in the heart of the devotee. The Brahmin spent some days worshipping Krishna, and when he left his soul was still alight with the fire of his devotion. It was not until he was some distance on his way home that he suddenly remembered that he had spent his whole time in the palace adoring the god, and in his ecstasy he had forgotten to ask any favour. He was wondering how he would face his wife, when suddenly his path turned a corner and far away he could see his home on the top of a hill. My third picture shows the sight which met his eyes. All the trees and bushes had burst into flower, and his hovel on the hill-top had been changed by the power of Krishna into a golden palace. In the picture the Brahmin is shown standing transfixed for the moment by wonder and joy.

We have seen how Sansar Chand at the beginning of his reign called in the Sikhs to help him to get Kangra Fort, and when he had done so got rid of them. Twenty years later he had to call them in again, but this time he did not free himself from them so easily. It was Sansar Chand's inordinate ambition which made this course necessary. He was not satisfied with the overlordship of the Western Himalayas which he had gained, but was for ever meditating new conquests. It must be admitted that in doing so he was only carrying out the old Indian political precept that a ruler's position becomes precarious when he is satisfied with what he has got. Like the tides of the sea he must advance or recede. But Sansar Chand's adversaries also had recourse to another old Indian





political maxim. In the Eastern Himalayas the Gurkhas of Nepal were engaged in much the same way as Sansar Chand, and it required little persuasion to bring them against him. They defeated Sansar Chand in the field and besieged him in Kangra Fort. The siege lasted for four years and the whole country was laid waste: 'In the fertile valley of Kangra not a blade of rice was to be seen, grass grew in the towns, and tigresses whelped in the streets of Nadaun.' Finally Sansar Chand sent to Ranjit Singh for help.

Ranjit Singh was leader of the Sikhs and therefore ruler of the Punjab. These Sikhs (Learners) are nonconformist Hindus. They practise Hinduism in a form of extreme simplicity. For instance, there is no caste among them. And they take converts freely. But, above all, theirs was a fighting religion. The Sikhs were terrible soldiers. The Great Mogul emperors could not be expected to appreciate such subjects, and the Sikhs suffered fearfully under them. But when the Mogul Empire waned, and Hinduism revived, the Sikhs had their chance and took it. By the end of the eighteenth century they were masters of the Punjab. In response to Sansar Chand's call Ranjit Singh came with his Sikhs. As soon as he saw the enemy he said to his troops, 'Now then, boys, you mustn't show the white feather to the Flatfaces' (an allusion to the Mongolian features of the Gurkhas). The 'boys' replied, 'They fight. Two foot men with one foot swords' (an allusion to the small stature of the Gurkhas and their *kukris*, short heavy fighting knives).

The Gurkhas were driven away. But Ranjit Singh kept Kangra Fort for himself. The proverb about the fort worked true, and Sansar Chand lost his overlordship of the Western Hills.

As Kangra Fort was in Sikh hands, Sansar Chand lived in his beautiful fortress-palace at Tira Sujanpur. Tira Sujanpur, in spite of all its vicissitudes, is still a place of beauty. The town and temples lie between the fortress-palace on the one side and the stony bed of the Beas River on the other, but the secret of the charm of the place is the large open space beside the town, which gives the most lovely of all views, neighbouring snow mountains seen across level ground. But Sansar Chand was not fated to live quietly at Tira Sujanpur. The story is that he borrowed some money from a Brahmin, and could not pay it back. The Brahmin annoyed him with his dunning, and finally Sansar Chand had him driven out and forbidden to mention the debt again on pain of his life. Next





day the Brahmin came back and stood beside Sansar Chand, but uttered no word. He suddenly drew a dagger, and plunged it into his own heart, so that the blood spurted all over Sansar Chand. The Brahmin fell dead and Sansar Chand knew that the creditor's curse was on him. He had not long to wait for the result. His dinner that evening turned to blood and worms as soon as it was served before him, and so did every other meal served in Tira Sujampur. So he had to leave the place and go elsewhere.

Nadaun he found a pleasant place to live in sometimes. This is the Nadaun already mentioned, where tigresses whelped during the Gurkha siege of Kangra Fort. It is half-way between Kangra and Tira Sujampur, and is a pleasant spot. The old proverb says:

Aega Nadaun jaega kaun?

People go to Nadaun, but who comes away?

In the old days at Nadaun there used to be small rajas, under the Maharajas (great rajas) at Kangra. One of these Nadaun rajas was not very wise. The country people still tell stories about him.

One night, they say, the Raja of Nadaun was riding and heard the jackals screaming. He asked what they wanted, and his servants replied: 'Sir, they are cold and want blankets. Of all your subjects, they alone cannot approach you. All they can do is to scream from the jungle when you pass by.' The Raja said: 'Poor things. Poor things. Give every one of them a nice warm blanket.' The Raja's order was obeyed, at least as far as presenting the bill to him was concerned. A month later the Raja happened to be riding past the same place, and found the jackals still screaming. He called up his servants: 'What is this? Did not I order blankets to be given to these jackals? Have not my orders been carried out? If so, why are they still screaming?' The servants replied: 'Sir, your orders have been carried out. Every jackal has his blanket, and they are now screaming their thanks.'

The Raja's wife was disgusted with all the cheating that was going on. One day she said to him: 'Can't you show them your eyes?' (a Hindustani idiom signifying bringing people up to the mark by frightening them). The Raja replied: 'A good idea. I'll do it.' At his next durbar he told his vassals that he was going to show them his eyes. To his surprise this simple remark produced the payment of more rent and





taxes than he had seen for many a year. So he repeated it at subsequent durbars, with similarly pleasing results. But at last the vassals came to him in fear and trembling, and told him that he must now show them his eyes, if such was his will, for their money was at an end, and they could pay no more. So the Raja lifted his eyelids with his fingers, and gave them a good look at his eyes.

One year there was a magnificent harvest, but very few crops were coming into the Raja's granary. The Raja asked his servants the reason, and they replied: 'The flies are eating them up.' The Raja asked their advice, and they said: 'The only thing to do is to go out and shoot the flies with bows and arrows.' So out they went. Now there was one servant who was discontented, as he was not getting his fair share of the stolen crops. So he went to the Raja and exposed the fraud. The Raja sent him out to see what the other servants were really doing. He found them among the crops with their bows and arrows. As soon as they saw him they shot him down. When the Raja demanded the reason of his death the servants said: 'He had a fly on his forehead and we shot it.'

The jackals of Nadaun have been mentioned. There is a story about one of them. A tiger and a wolf once met in the forest near Nadaun. They started arguing about which was the coldest time of the year. The tiger said January, the wolf urged February, and repeated the saying, 'Magh ke seet se bagh bhi roye.' 'February<sup>1</sup> cold makes even tigers cry.' The dispute got louder and louder. A jackal heard the noise, thought that the tiger had killed, and came hurrying up in the hope of some scraps. 'Let's put it to the jackal', said the tiger. 'What's the coldest time of the year, jackal, January or February?' The jackal was in a terrible fix. If he gave the question against either of the disputants, he would be sprung on and killed at once. So he said: 'My Lord tiger! Good Master wolf! I submit it is not January that is cold, nor is it February. When the wind blows it is cold.'

In the forests round Nadaun there used to wander at night the terrible Fi-u. The traveller on a lonely road sometimes heard the long-drawn sound Fi-u, weird and mournful beyond description, and his blood turned cold. For he knew he was near to 'Death in shining ebony and orange tawny gold'. A tiger was always piloted to his prey, whether

<sup>1</sup> Indian and European months do not correspond. February is a rough approximation.





man or animal, by the cry of the Fi-u. The Fi-u was something like a jackal and something like a wolf, but more slinking, treacherous, and fierce than either. I have met people who have seen the Fi-u. There are sceptics who say that there is no such animal, and that the noise which gives it its name is merely the cry of fear of the ordinary jackal when it scents a tiger. But nobody in Nadaun believes them.

In Nadaun when the sun shines through rain in an April shower, the little boys call out:

Rode rode jal hai  
Siyal siyalir byah hai.

When sun shines in rain  
Jackals marry.

I remember a meeting I had with a jackal. It was in Eastern Bengal, in a great grass jungle under the Garo Hills. The Garo Hills are an offshoot of the eastern end of the Himalayas. Full of wild elephants and other great animals, they are the scene of Kipling's story, 'Where the elephants dance'. This story is founded on the belief that once a year the elephants meet and dance all night. There is no mistaking the elephant's ball-room. The forest is neatly trampled flat in an exact circle. I once got into one of them. I had left my camp in the evening to go and shoot green pigeon. I couldn't find any, and on the way back I heard peacocks calling in the forest a little way from my path. I left the path and pushed among the trees and high grass after them. They led me farther and farther, and suddenly dusk began to fall in deeper and deeper folds. I saw it was time to get back to the path and tried to do so. I struck a kind of track which I soon saw had not been made by human foot. It was a wild animal path. I went along it as I saw a glimmer of light at the end. It led through cane forest. I pushed through and found that the light came from a circular open place, with a solid wall of high cane forest all round. The ground had been beaten flat by some large animals, but the whole place looked strangely neat. When I had satisfied my curiosity I tried to get out, and couldn't do so. There was a solid wall of cane, and I could see no opening anywhere. The forest was full of tigers, and no place to spend the night in. When it was quite dark, in desperation I felt with my hands all round the cane wall. At last I found an opening, and got through the cane into more open forest. Suddenly I saw a ghostly glimmer in a tree. It was a piece of paper I





had stuck there as a guide on my way out. In a short time I was back in my camp. Sticking pieces of paper in trees may seem an odd thing to do on an evening walk, but any one who has had something to do with a strange forest in India very soon learns to mark his path if he wants to come back by the same way. For a night mark a piece of white paper is useful. There are of course Indian hunters and men of forest tribes who would no more require marks on trees to guide them than a Londoner would need to mark street corners between Piccadilly and Oxford Circus. It is interesting to hear one forest man giving another directions where to go to fetch in some animal which has been shot. He gives them as precisely as if he were telling the man to go to a house in a particular street. There may be Europeans who have this extraordinary sense of direction in the forest, but, like the Fi-u, I have never met them.

The Indian forest is all right in the daylight. In the darkness it returns to its old masters, the creatures who follow the laws of an older world, laws which were made long before man was dreamed of. This is part of the fascination of the forest. When you go into it you enter an old and mysterious world, where everything is different from the world of man. If you see a path you don't know in the forest, consider before you take it. Instead of leading to a village, you may find it takes you straight to a wild beast's lair. It was just at the foot of the Eastern Himalayas I once crossed the path of the night lords of the forest. I went out on an elephant in the evening to look for bison. I stopped out late, and it was almost dark when I turned back campwards. Suddenly a tremendous storm came on, and the mahout who was driving the elephant found he had left the small path and was lost. There was no use wandering about, so we stood quiet and waited. We were drenched to the skin by torrents of rain, and the lightning came unpleasantly near, but very soon we forgot all this in the presence of the thing that came along. Through the noise of the storm I heard a curious sound of breaking and crashing branches. The mahout shivered with fear and said: 'Wild elephants. They're all round us. They hate a tame elephant. We may be attacked at any moment.' I got my rifle ready, and peered out into the pitchy blackness. Though I could hear loud noises close all round, I could see nothing. After some time, the moon showed through a rift in the clouds and we knew our direction. Just then the storm suddenly dropped, and as suddenly the noise of the wild elephants





stopped. The herd disappeared as mysteriously as it came, and in a short time I was back in camp. It was a striking example of who is master of the forest at night. In the day the rifle makes man master, but in the night the old lords of the forest resume their ancient sway. But to return to my meeting with the jackal in the grass jungle. I had got news of a great wild buffalo, a solitary bull with huge horns. For a week I hunted him without success. One day I was out with my tracker, a pious Mahomedan. He said to me: 'Men say this buffalo is under the protection of a Pir (Mahomedan saint) and no mortal bullet will kill him. I'm afraid it's true.' Touching my rifle I said: 'This is my Pir.' The tracker looked grave, but just then our attention was suddenly occupied. We came on a herd of swamp deer, which are similar in size and appearance to the Scotch red deer. Usually they are timid and shy and dash off at first sight, but on this occasion they simply stood and looked at us. The tracker whispered to me to fire, but I would not dream of alarming the jungle with a shot at a stag when I was after the great trophy which I was hunting. We passed across the open glade leaving the deer staring at us, and plunged again into the great grass which waved high above our heads. We were going along a narrow cattle-track when suddenly in the middle of the path we saw a jackal. It made no attempt to move, but sat and looked at us until we were quite close. The tracker then addressed the jackal in a muffled voice in the ritual proper to jackals. 'Jackal, do not sit and stare at us, but go back into the jungle where you belong.' The jackal slowly moved aside into the long grass. To the tracker the behaviour of the jackal, coming on the meeting with the deer, was a sure sign that things were coming to a climax, and that our long search would soon be over. Sure enough, the high grass soon widened out into a big clearing and there, with horns which, huge as they were, looked small on that great black shining bulk, stood our quarry.

The method of narration which I have just been employing, of fitting one story into another like Chinese boxes, may seem a little involved, but it follows the strictest Oriental precedents, as witness the *Arabian Nights* and the Indian 'Katha Sarit Sagara'. But speaking seriously, all this wild animal and forest talk is not so irrelevant as it seems. The art in this book belongs to a different age from ours, and it is not easy for us to envisage it. In those days the great wild beasts were names of terror





to the traveller, instead of, as nowadays, material for the pastime of wealthy tourists. Forests were enormously larger in those days, and their wild denizens vastly more numerous. The wild beast in India has lost his ancient might and arrogance, and degenerated into a slinking fugitive. It is only in the dark hours of the night that sometimes he tastes his ancient power. To trace the steps of his decline would be interesting, but it is time that we returned to the Maharaja Sansar Chand.

The curse of the Brahmin on Tira Sujanpur was not exhausted by its being left empty. When Sansar Chand was in Lahore one day meeting Ranjit Singh, the latter said to him: 'I hear you have a beautiful palace at Tira Sujanpur.' In dealing with Ranjit Singh men had to think, and think quickly. Sansar Chand saw in a flash the result of a visit from Ranjit Singh. He would covet the palace, and for Ranjit Singh to covet was to have. Sansar Chand remembered what had happened to Kangra Fort. If Ranjit Singh came to Tira Sujanpur, Sansar Chand was certain to lose the rest of his territories, and perhaps even his life. So Sansar Chand replied: 'I had a palace there, but it is in ruins now.' Ranjit Singh expressed his regret, and the subject dropped. The moment Sansar Chand left Ranjit Singh's presence he sent a man to Tira Sujanpur to dismantle the palace and make it as ruinous in appearance as possible. As Sansar Chand anticipated, Ranjit Singh sent off a messenger to see if he had spoken the truth. But Sansar Chand's man was a hillman, and knew the short cuts across the hills. He got there three days before the Sikh messenger. The three days were enough, and when the Sikh arrived Tira Sujanpur looked a ruin.

When the English traveller Moorcroft visited Sansar Chand he found in his employ a soldier called O'Brien, a deserter from the British service, who drilled Sansar Chand's troops. He is still remembered as Gibbern Sahib. He came to India with an Irish regiment. The way that he came to desert was that one day he went on guard without some of his equipment. He was reprimanded and answered insolently. On being touched or struck with a cane, he knocked the sergeant down with the butt end of his musket. He got hold of a horse, galloped off out of British India, and finally drifted up to Sansar Chand. He constructed a small-arms factory at Kangra which produced some sort of fire-arms, and for the infantry he drilled he devised a quaint uniform, something like that of John Company's sepoy. I have seen pictures of men in this





uniform in the collection of Maharaja Sir Jai Chand. Of course O'Brien was only capable of teaching Sansar Chand's foot-soldiers the elements of drill, and of training them to stand in line and move in a more or less orderly fashion. The strength of Sansar Chand's army was the Rajput cavalry, unaltered in character since the Middle Ages. This queer vagabond O'Brien was well suited for the easygoing life of the Kangra court in Sansar Chand's declining years. I photographed a drawing at Alampur (opposite Tira Sujampur) of him sitting in Sansar Chand's durbar at the time of the Holi festival. They are squirting the red juice at each other, O'Brien taking a leading part. He is dressed in Indian costume, except for his hat, which resembles a soft black clerical hat. The drawing is in a coarse local style, and is rather a curiosity than a work of art. Its date is probably about 1810, as Sansar Chand is shown in middle age. This portrait is interesting for other than aesthetic reasons. It has a certain realism and is evidently from life. I have already mentioned some other portraits of Sansar Chand which are to be found at Alampur, and which show him in his youth. Though they are inclined to be pompous and grandiloquent, in a word baroque, yet the youthful face depicted in them is not without a certain beauty. Dignity and solemnity are accompanied by a sense of reverie and mystery. 'The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.' And it is not difficult to imagine what these thoughts were. It is the face of the youthful hero that is shown in these pictures, the conquering overlord of the Western Hills, to whom the most pleasing salutation a courtier could give was, 'May you get Lahore'. For he dreamed of extending his power over the Punjab, and conquering the Sikhs. And considering his uninterrupted course of victory in the Hills, the dream did not seem utterly impossible of realization. But when put to the test of the Gurkha war it turned to dust and ashes. The Sansar Chand in the picture of the Holi festival, squirting the red juice on the deserter O'Brien, is an utterly different man to the youthful hero. Broken and disillusioned, his high hopes and ambitions crushed for ever, he has settled down to snatch what pleasure and even comfort life has still to offer him. The face in the picture is jolly and good humoured. The storms and struggles in which his ambition perished have passed away, and he has been left in the comfortable and inglorious calm in which he passed the rest of his life.

Some years ago I bought in the Golden Temple of Amritsar a picture





of two ladies speaking to a peacock-messenger. It is an example of Kangra art of the early nineteenth century. The design is magnificent. And this small picture has all the spacious freedom of a great fresco. There is something in it too of the solemn mystery of the primitive. Mr. Laurence Binyon says of this picture: 'We find an art that has developed an exceeding suavity and elegance, yet which has not become over-sweet. This is an enchanting composition, even without the colour of the original, with its wonderful glaucous greens and the silver hue of its sky. It is exquisitely refined, yet keeps a certain largeness of design.' But in this fine work of art there are unmistakable signs that a period is drawing to its close. The line is stiffer, the pose of the figures more statuesque, there is a cold feeling about the style as of the approach of winter.

Some time after Sansar Chand had ceased to live at Tira Sujanpur his queen built a temple at the foot of the hill on which the fort stands. The temple is called Narbadeswar and the date of its building is 1823. The whole of the walls and ceiling of this temple are painted. Plate XXIII shows one of these frescoes. The scheme of decoration, though somewhat ornate, is not unpleasing, and there is a sense of a classical taste and judgement about it, the result of the standard set by the Court of Sansar Chand. The design of the painting above the doorway combines with the rest of the decorative scheme.

Over the western arch of the northern verandah there is an interesting group of horsemen and carriage which, especially in the stance of the horses, is reminiscent of a hunting-scene of the early Italian Renaissance. Unfortunately it is too discoloured for effective reproduction. On the western wall of the eastern verandah there is a much-damaged fresco of a scene from the 'Ramayana', of demons fighting Ram's army. The figures of the demons might have come straight from the caves of Ajanta. Apart from the artistic value of these frescoes they have an interest and importance in that, like Plate V, they prove as a fact what has hitherto only been a surmise, the use of the Kangra Valley art on a large scale as well as for miniature drawings.





## WINTER

SANSAR CHAND died in December 1823, and with him the art of the Kangra Valley may be said to die also. For his successor did not reign long. Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of the Punjab, had a Rajput governor in Kashmir who was famous for his cruelty. In his time men were flayed alive, and the skins taken off so cleverly that they could be stuffed with straw. Then the head was cut off, and put on to the straw, the arms were stretched out, and the ghastly dummy was ready for placing on the side of the highway as a warning to the governor's enemies. On one occasion, when the executioner hesitated to perform some unusual horror, the governor jeeringly said to him: 'Do you think it's your father you're working on?' This governor persuaded his master, Ranjit Singh, to demand the daughter of the Maharaja of Kangra for the governor's son. The governor's rank was so much below that of the great chief of the Katoch house that the proposal was nothing short of an insult. The Maharaja of Kangra struggled desperately to evade the demand, but to no purpose. Ranjit Singh sent an army to enforce it. The Maharaja found resistance hopeless (later we shall see why) and fled to Arki.

Arki is a Hill state east of the Kangra Valley. It can be seen gleaming in the distance from the cantonments of Simla, twenty miles away. I went there in October 1929 as I expected to find some Kangra pictures in a place where the successor of Sansar Chand had taken refuge. As I came near the town I saw what seemed to be an extraordinary atmospheric effect, a shimmering cloud against the mountain side over the river. It reminded me of heat-waves, the first beginning of the mirage, but it was only a single patch. Next day as I rode out of Arki I found what it was—locusts. For half an hour as I rode over the hill above the town these great insects dashed against my horse, my coat, and my face, and made it impossible to ride faster than a walk.

Arki town is like Chamba. It is dominated by a fortress-palace, and below there is an open space in the centre of the town. The walls defending the palace are in some places carved out of the living rock, and precipices continue them. The vista up the narrow streets of Arki town to the palace is old Italian, and even finer is the view from the west, of fortress, palace, and houses overhanging a mountain torrent in sombre steepness.





Seen from a distance, the buildings of Arki are magnificent, but on a closer view the vision fades. Old and new are mingled together, and the result tends to be drab and commonplace. The best piece of architecture is the Haveli, built fifty years ago. It is in the style of Rajputana architecture, perfectly proportioned, and with a certain lightness and grace. Other parts of the palace, said to be over two hundred years old, are nothing like so effective. The Diwankhana, built and decorated seventy-five years ago, has frescoes on the walls and pillars. Those on the walls are in a coarse and decadent Kangra Valley style. There is some curious work on the pillars, exact copies of some European pictures of the eighteenth century, including a seaport scene with full-rigged ships. It is curious to see the two styles of art, European and Kangra, side by side and the work of the same artists, and neither showing the slightest sign of being influenced by the other. I photographed two pictures said to be by Fattu, one of Sansar Chand's painters. They were in a style similar to Plate XXII, but of less artistic merit. They had a certain delicacy and grace, and at first sight they seemed to be more realistic than the older work. What they really were, however, was more commonplace, not more natural. The date of the pictures was obviously the end of Sansar Chand's reign. I was shown some pictures by a painter called Hastu, who worked about seventy years ago. The craftsmanship was delicate, but there was no life in the pictures.

I met a Rajput gentleman in Arki, Mian Basant Singh, a cousin of the Raja of Arki. Mian Basant Singh paints pictures in the Kangra Valley style. His work is very interesting as a modern rendering of the old art. He showed me a picture by Raja Amar Chand of Bilaspur, who died thirty-five years ago. Mian Basant Singh told me that all the old painters were low-caste men. It is true that Hastu, who has just been mentioned, was a Rajput, but he was an exception. Mian Basant Singh said that for the Raja of Bilaspur and himself to have taken up painting was as great an innovation as if they had taken to motoring when it first started, or flying nowadays. In the collection of Mian Basant Singh I saw an interesting example of Kangra art of the early nineteenth century, Ganesh on his throne attended by maidens. Below the throne was the mouse, on which Ganesh rides. Every Hindu god has some bird or animal for a 'mount', and Ganesh has a mouse. In this picture the throne and the floral ground, which in the original are brilliantly coloured, come





straight from the Mogul School. The figure of Ganesh belongs to the old Hindu mythology. Ganesh is the god of wealth, but not of wealth in the sense of a gambler's winnings or finding hidden treasure. He is the god of honest prosperity and rational increase, and so naturally he is the god of successful endeavour, and is invoked at the beginning of undertakings. Every book of the 'Katha Sarit Sagara', the collection of ancient Indian stories, starts with a prayer to Ganesh. In one book it is: 'Honour to the elephant-headed god, who averts all hindrances, who is the cause of every success, who ferries us over the sea of difficulties'. In another: 'We worship Ganesh. When Ganesh fans away the wild bees from his trunk with his flapping ears, he seems to be dispersing a host of obstacles.' The elephant, carrying his riders across rivers and forcing a way through the thickest forest for them, is the source of such images. While the tame elephant is the overcomer of obstacles and the friend of man, the wild elephant is the terrible lord of the forest. No other animal can oppose him, and he is undisputed master of all he surveys. Man alone is dangerous to him, but until recent years even to man he represented force in a formidable form. A savage wild elephant would hold up a whole country-side. The conception of the god Ganesh contains the idea of force and power as well as of help and service.

In this picture of Ganesh the two attendant figures, the maidens, are interesting. Though the cold chill which marks the winter of this art makes itself felt in a certain stiffness and formality, still the pose of the figures is solemn and dignified, and at the same time graceful, and the line has a freshness and delicacy in its clear flow, which in this Kangra art always reminds me of its own snow mountains.

Arki is full of interest. It was the head-quarters of the Gurkhas when they invaded the Western Himalayas from Nepal, and fought with Sansar Chand and Ranjit Singh. After Ranjit Singh had driven them from the Kangra Valley they still remained in Arki. The memory of the Gurkhas is vivid in these hills, especially their behaviour in the villages. In the evening a Gurkha would go to a hut and take all the villager's milk. Next morning the Gurkha would come and ask for curds. As all the milk had been taken the previous night, naturally the curds were not forthcoming. The Gurkha would then take the unfortunate villager and bury him up to his waist and pile heavy stones on him. As even these methods did not produce the curds, the Gurkha would plunder or destroy





whatever property the villager had. If a Gurkha wanted a porter from a village, he would go and catch the first man he met. The porter never got any pay, and so he naturally took the first opportunity of dropping his load and running away. The Gurkha never troubled to chase him, but went to the next village and got another man. But one Gurkha lost a porter and never got another. The story goes that a Gurkha soldier wanted a porter. He caught the first man he met, and gave him the load. The day was hot, and the man looked meek and miserable. So the Gurkha gave his gun to him to carry and swaggered ahead. Suddenly a shot from the gun laid the Gurkha dead. This Gurkha's *kukri* (a heavy fighting knife) is to be seen in the house of Mian Basant Singh, the artist.

The Gurkhas were very sensitive. Any one who was reported to have spoken disrespectfully of even a Gurkha private soldier was immediately executed without further inquiry or trial. They were also very zealous in their religion, which chiefly took the form of sacrifices to the goddess Kali—goats, buffaloes, and also men. The protection of the cow, the sacred animal of Hinduism, gave the Gurkhas another opportunity for the expression of their religious zeal. They were always ready to kill any man who killed a cow. Once while they were in Arki they got news that eleven men of the shoemaker caste had killed a cow. The Gurkha general had them caught at once and brought to a waterfall near a temple outside Arki for execution. When they got there, the Gurkha soldiers executed them so quickly that the Gurkha general found that they had not left even one single man for him to kill with his own hands. Furious at being done out of all share in the fun, he swore that he would neither eat nor drink until he had killed a shoemaker. Next day a shoemaker who knew nothing of what had happened chanced to come into Arki town. The Gurkhas caught him and took him to the general, who killed him at once. The Gurkhas' reputation for revenge was such that it was said that if a Gurkha on the road cut his foot on a stone, he would not go on until he had smashed it to powder. Under the Gurkhas the Western Himalayas, from Nepal to the Sutlej, became a desert. When they left, it is said that only one man in ten thousand could read and write. The memory of the Gurkhas is summed up in the proverb, 'Jo Gurkhayan se bache, so bache', 'Living are they who lived when the Gurkhas left'. A war with the British drove the Gurkhas back to Nepal,





and freed Arki. This account of the Gurkhas is not irrelevant, for it explains why Kangra art is represented in the Himalayas west of the Sutlej mainly by later examples. It is not surprising that the great art of earlier days perished in these fearful convulsions.

In the Kangra Valley Ranjit Singh, after the flight of Sansar Chand's son, the last of the Katoch Maharajas, went to Nadaun, where he was obsequiously received by a *satora*, as the sons of Rajput chiefs by slave girls are called. He found that the *satora's* female relations were ready to marry anybody. So the *satora* was given a small part of the Kangra territories, and Ranjit Singh kept the rest for himself. The rest of the Hill states soon shared the fate of Kangra. They were invaded by the Sikh army under the famous general Ventura. Two hundred forts were taken, and among them Mandi and Kulu. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of the guru about the taking of Mandi, the 'balls of fire from heaven' coming from General Ventura's guns.

I said before that when the Sikh army invaded Kangra after Sansar Chand's death, resistance was useless and the Maharaja fled. Considering that Sansar Chand had fought the Sikhs successfully about forty years before, some explanation seems to be called for. It can be given in a single word—Ventura.

When Ranjit Singh formed into one force the scattered and warring elements which comprised the Sikhs, he established the strongest power in Northern India. But when he occupied Kangra Fort in 1809 Sansar Chand succeeded in retaining the rest of his territories. Resistance would have been thought of and attempted by Sansar Chand's son had he had to meet the same enemy as his father, the old undisciplined Sikh army. But this was not so. Early in 1822 two French officers had arrived at Lahore from Peshawar. They were Colonels Ventura and Allard. Previous to arriving at Peshawar they had been in Kabul, before that in Teheran, and before that in Constantinople. If their movements are required to be traced still farther back, they will be found on the field of Waterloo on that famous day in June 1815. It was after the French army had finally broken and the star of Napoleon had set for ever that they took their first steps on their eastern journey. Earlier still Austerlitz, Wagram, Russia in 1812, had all seen them.

Soon after they reached Lahore, Ranjit Singh sent for them and told them to drill his battalions. They replied: 'A shawl once woven cannot





be rewoven again in a different fashion. Give us raw recruits, and we will show you what we can do.' The Maharaja agreed, and Ventura raised the famous *Francesco Campo*, a brigade of Sikh infantry thoroughly trained and disciplined in the French fashion. Allard, an ex-cuirassier officer, commanded the cavalry attached to it. The new force had not long to wait for an opportunity to show its mettle. The Afghans under Dost Mohamed invaded the Punjab, and were met by the Sikh army at Nowshera. Ranjit Singh's only idea of tactics was to rush at the enemy with his soldiers like a wild bull, and he did so on this occasion. The attack failed, and only a wild charge of Akalis (the fiercest and most fanatical of the Sikhs) saved Ranjit Singh from capture or death. This was Ventura's chance. He attacked the Afghan army on the flank with his disciplined brigade, and turned defeat into victory. After this Ventura's brigade was the model for the whole Sikh army, and so well did they follow it that when the Governor-General Lord Auckland visited Ranjit Singh in 1838 he found the Sikh regiments as well drilled as those in the Company's service.

It is interesting to note that General Ventura's house in Lahore was decorated with frescoes. The traveller Baron Von Hugel describes it: 'General Ventura's house, built by himself, though of no great size, combines the splendour of the East with the comforts of a European residence. On the walls of the entrance hall, before the range of pillars on the first story, was portrayed the reception of the two French officers by Ranjit Singh, consisting of many thousands of figures. We were subsequently shown into the painted chamber, which is illuminated with pictures of battles in which Ventura and Allard have been engaged, executed on the walls by native artists.' The fresco painting of this period can still be seen in Lahore, on the walls of a small building called Ranjit Singh's Court House, outside the Shish Mahal (Glass House) in Lahore Fort. They are by a Kangra Valley artist, but the style is coarse and decadent. Their date is the end of Ranjit Singh's reign.

A story told by the traveller Vigne, when he visited Ranjit Singh, shows Ventura's daring.

'A year or two ago, General Ventura, nettled at something that had passed, told Ranjit in full durbar that his Sardars were all cowards. They immediately rose in a fury and gathered round him, and Ranjit himself, old and enfeebled, leaped from his chair in an ungovernable passion,





called for his sword and shield, and told the General to draw and defend himself; whilst Ventura, a sabreur of Wagram, looked round upon the gathering storm with a coolness that showed he did not expect a practical refutation of what he had just asserted; and then both pacified and pleased the Maharaja by saying that he was his servant, that his life was his if he wished for it, but that come what would, he would never draw his sword against his king and master.'

Ventura was no vulgar adventurer. Though a soldier of fortune he was exact in the performance of his duty to whatever master he served, and was no less punctilious of his professional honour under Ranjit Singh than he had been under the great Napoleon. At the time of the First Afghan War, Ventura was very anxious to join with his Sikhs in the British invasion of Afghanistan, in spite of Avitabile's jest, 'The sight of the Khyber gives the Sikhs the cholera'. But the British Government would not hear of it. Ventura as Ranjit Singh's governor at Kabul was not at all to their fancy. Still Ventura and Avitabile gave the British expedition every assistance, and Avitabile kept open house for all British officers passing through Peshawar. Ventura was esteemed by every one who knew him, and did not leave the Sikh army until the disorganization after Ranjit Singh's death increased to such an extent that he had to use artillery to protect his life against mutineers.

The mention of Avitabile recalls the fact that Ventura and Allard were not the only European officers in the service of Ranjit Singh. General Avitabile was an Italian from Naples and was governor of what is now the North-West Frontier Province. He kept it absolutely peaceful and quiet. His methods were simple and direct. He started his régime at Peshawar by introducing his subjects to 'the blessings of civilization' in the shape of a huge gallows. When all the thieves and murderers had been hanged, he next turned his attention to liars and talebearers and cut their tongues out. When two villages quarrelled, he offered them powder and shot to fight the matter out with. He found that their bluster stopped at once, and they settled their differences. When the tribes came raiding from the hills, Avitabile hanged a hostage from every village they passed, 'for', said Avitabile, 'no raid can take place without the connivance and assistance of border villages'. The raids stopped. As a governor his principle was, 'For every crime a head'. He sometimes took the head without waiting for the crime, as the following story shows:





'After a state visit from one of the Kabul princes, a member of the suite rode back in haste to recover some article which his master had left behind in the Governor's courtyard. Avitabile, seeing a stranger upon the premises, promptly had him strung up to the nearest tree, and when the prince sent to inquire after his missing courtier, returned the body with a polite note apologizing for the error.'

The Sikhs, like all other Hindus, reverence the cow and consider that the killing of cattle is contrary to their religion. While Avitabile was governor of Peshawar some Mahomedans presumed that under a Christian governor they could eat beef. They found out their mistake on the gallows. Ranjit Singh, in spite of his natural prejudices against cow-killing, thought that this was carrying Hindu orthodoxy rather too far, and called for Avitabile's explanation. It was as follows: 'The dead are in Paradise. Were it possible to bring them back again, I would not, and you could not.' Avitabile hanged men by the score and impaled them by the dozen. The wild Mahomedan frontiersmen regarded and spoke of him as 'a tiger among jackals'. I once served in a district in Bengal with an Indian officer whose home was in Peshawar, and whose grandfather had been a friend of Avitabile. He told me that his grandfather spoke of Avitabile as a good governor, and remembered him particularly for two things, first, for building a wall round Peshawar, for until then the city had been open, and secondly for bringing the first wheeled carriage there. Before Avitabile's time horses and palanquins had been the only means of conveyance. The carriage, of course, meant that Avitabile had made roads for it to run on where there had been no roads before. What Avitabile did in Peshawar is now being done all over India, and the picturesque but uncomfortable palanquins, elephants, and horses are being driven into more and more remote parts of the country.

The appointment of Avitabile to Peshawar is an example of Ranjit Singh's wonderful power of selecting men. Ranjit Singh had only one eye, as he had lost an eye in battle, but it was truly said that with one eye he saw farther than other men with two.

There is a story about Ranjit Singh's eye. One day he was sitting in durbar with all his generals and officers and servants round him, giving audiences and receiving petitions. A suitor came, and submitted a prayer which Ranjit Singh refused. Reckless with rage and disappointment, the suitor said to him, 'You do one-eyed justice indeed'. The





sutor of course used the word 'one-eyed' in the same sense that it is used in English slang, which is the reverse of polite. But Ranjit Singh had been flattered so much about the wonders of his single eye, that, luckily for the sutor, he took the word as a compliment, and threw the man some money.

Ranjit Singh was as strange a character and figure as any monarch since Peter the Great of Russia. Every night he got drunk on some terrible mixture of opium, brandy, and country spirit, but next morning his head was clear for business and his hand steady for sword and bridle. Towards the end of his life, when he walked he appeared bowed and stooped and lame, but once in the saddle he was a magnificent figure, erect and straight with the easy grace of youth.

Ranjit Singh once thought of attacking British India, and consulted Ventura, who told him frankly that it was a hopeless project, as the British troops were the finest in the world. Ranjit Singh followed this advice, but after his death it was disregarded, the result being the two Sikh Wars and the ending of the Sikh power.

Ventura and Avitabile did great services to their master, and were splendidly rewarded. But not all the European adventurers in Ranjit Singh's service were equally fortunate. For most of them was the melancholy fate of soldiers of fortune:

War dogs hungry and grey  
Gnawing a bitter bone,  
Fighters in every clime  
In every cause but their own.

There were Frenchmen like Court and Mouton, Gardner the Irish artillery officer, ffoulkes, the Englishman and ex-officer of the 31st of the Line, and Spaniards like Homus and Hurbon. Hurbon is remembered for the entrenchments which he designed for the Sikh army against the British at the battle of Sobraon. Mouton, on the other hand, rejoined the French service, and fought side by side with the British in the Crimea.

Ventura and Avitabile left India with vast fortunes, and retired to wealth and distinction in Europe. In France Ventura found the imperial eagles back again, and was received with honour by Napoleon III. Avitabile retired to a castle in his native Italy. Very different was the fate of Colonel ffoulkes. When Ventura conquered Mandi, he left ffoulkes behind with a battalion of Sikhs. They suddenly mutinied, cut





foulkes down and threw him on a fire, wounded but still living, and burnt him alive. Such was the life of a soldier of fortune under Ranjit Singh. Honours and rewards on the one hand, sudden and savage death on the other.

This brief account of the strange Sikh army is not irrelevant, for one cannot but be interested in the instrument which overthrew the power on which the Kangra art was based. The inexorable law of war prevailed, and the Rajput chivalry went down before the iron strength of discipline. It is impossible to recall the Sikh conquest of the Kangra Valley without regret. Immemorial tradition and culture were suddenly and violently broken. What makes it all the more pathetic is that immediately afterwards came the first British-Sikh war, which freed the surviving Rajput states from the Sikhs. If only Kangra could have survived till then, we should now have a living picture of India a thousand years ago, the India unshattered by Mahomedan invasions, a land of beauty like China and Japan.

Of course pictures continued to be produced in the Kangra Valley after the death of Sansar Chand. To take the wall-painting first, there is on the western edge of the Kangra Valley an *asram* (temple for devotees of Krishna) at a place called Damthal. Inside there is a room with large frescoes on the walls, which I photographed. They are decidedly inferior to those at Sujampur, and obviously of a later date.

Damthal *asram* 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. In time of origin it is exactly contemporaneous with the school of Kangra Valley painting, and arose from precisely similar causes, the absorption and assimilation of the Mogul with the ancient traditional Indian style. Rajput architecture has a warmth and exuberance and flow of line unknown to Mogul work. There is a certain aridity and coldness in all Mogul buildings, even in those of the first half of the seventeenth century, the grand meridian of Mogul power and art, and in their later works there is a suggestion of shrillness, such as is conventionally associated with Mahomedan architecture in the West, a thin note, sharp and clear like the cry of the muezzin from the minaret. I am inclined to think that Rajput architecture would really appeal more to the





modern taste than Mogul. The much vaunted Taj Mahal, Delhi Fort, and Jama Masjid acquired their present reputation in the days when European taste in art conformed strictly to classical standards. There is something in the Mogul architectural style of simplicity verging upon aridity which would appeal more intimately and sympathetically to the old-fashioned classical taste than any other form of Oriental art I know. That is why in the wholesale condemnation of Indian art and architecture which obtained until lately, a solitary exception was made in favour of the buildings of the Great Moguls. My conclusion that Damthal *asram* dates from the close of the seventeenth century is based not only on grounds of style but also on historical and geographical considerations. Damthal is beautifully situated on slightly rising ground on the river Beas at the very entrance to the Kangra Valley. The position is an exposed one, with no natural protection or defences, and 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. But for the whole of the last twenty years of his reign Aurangzeb was completely occupied by his wars with the Mahrattas in Southern India, and his fierce grip on the North slackened slightly. Of course after his death in 1707 there was complete freedom, and Rajput art blossomed out like spring flowers after the winter. The Mogul power had really decayed before this, and it was only the terrific energy and determination of the fierce old fanatic Aurangzeb which kept the empire alive. 1690 would be a reasonable date for Damthal *asram*, for the front and the oldest portions, that is, for there are some much more recent additions. It is in one of the latter that the frescoes are to be found.

The Mahant (chief priest) of the Damthal *asram* showed me his collection of old paintings and drawings, and I photographed Plate XV there.

I photographed some curious frescoes in a temple of the Raja of Siba's. Their exact date can be fixed, 1874. As already mentioned, the change from castle to country-house was made by the grandfather of the present Raja of Siba in 1873, and the temple was built. One of the frescoes, of the childhood of Krishna, has a fine design, and the pose of the figures is powerful and impressive. But at the same time it is stiff, and the line is hard. The dream, the glamour, the magic of the art is gone, and we





face the hard, dull facts of drab and commonplace life. The mists have come down and the snow-peaks are veiled. Beautiful reality has given place to vulgar illusion. The art is dead.

The change which was made by the Raja of Siba from castle to country-house represents something very much more than a mere alteration of residence by a landowner in England nowadays. It typifies and expresses a veritable social revolution, similar to that which took place in England at the end of the fifteenth century. A hint as to the nature of this revolution has already been given earlier in this book, when the Raja of Siba's house move was first referred to. It was also mentioned that the Raja of Guler, the Raja of Siba's opposite neighbour on the northern bank of the Beas River, had made a similar change, and indeed by 1873, the year of the Raja of Siba's house move, nearly every raja in Kangra had left his castle for a country-house. The hint as to the cause of this change is to be found in the words, 'the Raja of Siba decided that the wars were over for ever'. Until the year 1850, when British rule in the Kangra Valley was firmly established, a landowner would no more have dreamed of living outside a castle in an open unfortified house than he would of lying down to sleep unarmed in a tiger-haunted jungle. Long-established habits continue after the necessity for them has disappeared, and it took twenty years of peace and security to convince the rajas of the Kangra Valley that there was no longer any need to shelter themselves in gloomy cells and chambers behind massive walls, and that they could come out into the sunlight at last. \*

I also photographed some frescoes in the palace at Rampur-Bashahr, the capital of Bashahr State. Rampur-Bashahr is on the Sutlej, the last of the name-rivers of the Punjab, and through Bashahr runs the Hindustan-Tibet road, which leads straight over the Himalayas to Central Asia. The frescoes are in the Shish Mahal ('Glass House') built forty years ago. At that time they covered the whole of the walls. Now they have been obliterated with whitewash except for a few fragments in the upper story. Some of these are interesting. There are half-life-size figures of Rama and Sita and Krishna in a late Kangra Valley style, coarse but with a certain vitality. Above them are painted some curious little vignettes of sporting scenes and birds—a hawk striking down a partridge, a heron catching a frog, and a hunting-dog retrieving a bird. These are all done with realism and a certain savage vigour, particularly the dog, which is





instinct with movement. Near them there is a panel of flowers on the wall. The painter was working in the tradition of a great art, for the design has unity, yet is free, and there is balance without monotony. But the line is feeble and lacks life. Execution is inferior to design. The contrast of subject in these paintings illustrates the character of the Rajputs of the Hills. Below is the cult of Hinduism—Krishna, Rama, and Sita; above are blood sports.

Near the Shish Mahal is a Hindu temple with a fresco painted in the Tibetan style. There is a similar picture in the Potala, the Dalai Lama's palace at Lhasa. The subject is a treaty between Bashahr State and Tibet in the days of the Mogul Emperor. It is interesting to find it side by side with the Shish Mahal frescoes. Neither show the slightest sign of any influence from the other. In Rampur-Bashahr the art of the Himalayas and the art of the land beyond the Himalayas, of Tibet and the Far East, meet with a crash.

Two marches beyond Rampur is Sarahan, the ancient capital of the Bashahr State. There is an old palace there, with sloping roofs and overhanging eaves. To any one unacquainted with Hill architecture it would seem to show Chinese influence. But of course there is nothing of the sort there. It is in the style found in the Kangra Valley and in the Chamba palace, except that it is in wood instead of brick or plastered mud. Inside the palace I saw some wood-carving. It was nothing much out of the ordinary, a design of flowers and leaves, but what interested me was that exactly the same style of work is done in Bengal, far away from Bashahr below the Eastern Himalayas. It is an example, though a small one, of the essential unity of Hindu art and culture. Inside the palace is a temple of Kali, in which human sacrifices used to be offered every tenth year in former days. There is a deep pit inside the temple, and the victim used to be thrown into it. If the sacrifices were delayed, a terrible voice used to come roaring from the pit demanding blood.

I met the Raja of Bashahr at Sarahan. He told me that he was the hundred and twenty-fifth of his line in direct succession. He showed me his collection of pictures, which were in the usual Kangra Valley style. There were no old pictures. Their absence is due to the fact that Sarahan was thoroughly looted by the Gurkhas. Sarahan is gloriously situated in a semicircle of snows, with pine-forests above and below. The moun-





tain on the side of which it is built is snow-capped. Not far beyond Sarahan is the old frontier of Tibet, and beyond it are Buddhist temples with Tibetan frescoes.

Between Sarahan and Rampur I saw goats carrying small packs. They belonged to shepherds who take their flocks in the summer up to the high Alps near the snows. In the lower parts of Bashahr State all the dogs wear broad metal collars, to save them from a sudden spring from a leopard. Leopards abound in these parts. They always spring at the neck.

On my way back to Simla I met a queer gang on the road. They carried spears and tent-poles, and had some fine dogs with them, some loose and some on chains. One woman carried a basket on her back. In it was a baby and some hens, with a cock mounting guard over it. I asked them who they were, and they answered 'Bengalis'. This was obviously a nickname or a subterfuge, and intended to conceal a name which, like Magregor of old in Scotland, was proscribed, and could not be spoken. The reason is the same in both cases, except of course that the Indian conceals his name from choice and not by compulsion of law. I was puzzled as to what they really were, when one of the women started begging in a soft insinuating whine. The tone called up some familiar image, and at last I caught it, Epsom Downs. The people were gipsies. Nominally they lived by killing vermin with the spears and dogs, really by stealing. India is the original home of the gipsies, and when I met these ones in the Himalayas I saw them on their native heath. Romany, the language of the gipsies, is simply Hindustani. Any one who has been to India recognizes the words at once. And language is not the only relic of their homeland which the gipsies carry with them. That great student of gipsy life and lore, George Borrow, describes how in Spain he met a gipsy who said, 'Once when I was a boy I was beating a pony. My father said to me, "Don't beat that pony. Perhaps there is in it the soul of your sister who died last year."' And another gipsy told him, 'When I was a young man a very old gipsy said to me that all the things we see in the world—houses, cornfields, vineyards, olive trees—are really a glamour and a sham. Only the mind is real.' Here we have two prominent doctrines of Hinduism, transmigration of souls and *Maya*, 'illusion' (of the physical universe). It is from the hampering meshes of *Maya* that the Hindu strives to escape in





order to attain to *Nirvana* (complete annihilation and absorption in the infinite).

These gipsies were the only beggars I met on the road from Tibet to Simla. Of course in Simla itself, as in the cities of the Indian plains, there are any number. The Hillman is too independent and self-reliant to cringe for alms. I remember just after I saw the gipsies I noticed a woman and a boy on the road dressed in the most fantastic rags and patchwork quilts. I asked my groom if they were beggars. 'Oh no,' he replied, 'they're only poor.'

Other wanderers on the road are *Sannyasis*, wearers of the saffron robe, seeking *Nirvana* in the icy solitudes of the Himalayas, the last stage of the earthly activity of the Brahmin, as prescribed by the Sacred Books. When you meet a *Sannyasi*, he may have been anything before he took up the saffron robe, a clerk, a trader, a judge, a member of a princely family. I remember meeting a *Sannyasi* just outside Chamba town. His face struck my attention at once. I could see that power, authority, and intellect were stamped on it, though I only caught a glimpse of it for a moment as he went on his way to the snows. Strange stories are told of the hermitages among the icy peaks, how the greatest of the ascetics have their homes in the very summits of the Himalayan giants, and live by perpetually subdividing and eating a single grain of rice. They cut the original grain in half, and later divide the half, and so on, so that the single grain lasts them indefinitely until at long last *Nirvana* arrives.

Below Bashahr and lower down the Sutlej is Bilaspur State, the ancient enemy of Suket. It was the Raja of Bilaspur who called in the Gurkhas against Sansar Chand. The ride from Arki to Bilaspur is beautiful with the beauty of these hills, now rising to the high pine-forests and now dipping steeply into the little valleys. The houses in the villages are still covered with the old thatch. Tin roofs, which have spread over the plains of India and even to some of the hills, have not yet penetrated to these remote spots. Over the mountain torrents are the little water-mills with sloping roofs. Nothing more ancient or primitive could be imagined. They seem part of a fairy-tale scene. At the top of every rise the line of snow mountains which separate Kangra from Chamba comes into view. Just before Bilaspur the hills widen out and leave a great amphitheatre of open space. I came to it in the





late afternoon. Under the setting sun the great valley was clothed in a rich blue haze, a scene of mellow loveliness.

Bilaspur is a small town on the Sutlej. No ancient buildings survive. Perhaps this may be due to the Gurkhas. But what could not be destroyed is the great open space in the middle of the town, called the Sandhu. Every hill-town has such an open space in the middle as a park or parade-ground, but nowhere is there one of the size of the Sandhu. A ride across the Sandhu, in the clear evening air, with moonrise over the eastern mountains and sunset over the western, lingers in the memory as a picture of the Hills.

There are some wall-paintings in the palace at Bilaspur. This palace is sharply divided into two styles of architecture. The older part, built about sixty years ago, is in the Rajputana style. The rest of the palace, built about thirty years ago by Raja Amar Chand, the artist Raja, is in the Hill style. The frescoes are in the upper story of the Mogul building, Radha and Krishna and floral designs, in a rough Kangra style. The walls of the Durbar Hall of Bilaspur, built about forty years ago, are painted all over with flowers and birds. At the end of the hall above the windows are some frescoes in the late Kangra style.

From Bilaspur I had a ride of sixty miles to the railway below Simla. My road first ran along the Sutlej river, and then rose through pine woods to a high pass, from which there was a magnificent view of the Kangra snow mountains. A castle guarded the pass, and on the other side of it was Nalagarh State. The road ran steeply down from the cold uplands to the warm plains, and the place where I stopped for lunch, with its brown and green grass waving in the wind, seemed a very vision of summer. I left Bilaspur in the cold light of dawn and Nalagarh, when I saw it, was glistening in the rays of the setting sun. The town is at the very edge of the mountains, and the fortress-palace of the Raja is on a steep hill above it. The view from a distance is beautiful, but like Arki the glamour fades at close approach. It was an attack on Nalagarh which brought the Gurkhas into conflict with the British and led to the expulsion of the Gurkhas from the Rajput Himalayas. The very sight of Nalagarh explains how this happened. Only half of Nalagarh is a Hill state. The rest is the ordinary plains country of Northern India. As long as the Gurkhas confined their wars to the mountains the British dominions were unaffected, but as soon as they came down into the





plains the clash came. I stopped a day in Nalagarh to visit a castle, in which I heard there were wall paintings. It was in the flat country, a few miles south of Nalagarh, and was a massive stone structure, with towers and battlements, just like the castles of the Kangra Valley, or, indeed, of medieval Europe. It was called Plassey, which recalled another Plassey, more than twelve hundred miles away, where a battle was fought in the days when the Kangra art was at its height. The origin of the name is the same in both places, the *palash* tree, a wild growth of the forest with a brilliant scarlet flower. The wall paintings in the castle were of no importance, but there was something very curious outside it. The way to Plassey ran through a little village, with the smallest houses which I have ever seen. I could look over every roof, and the doors were like the openings of toy houses. The people of the village suited their homes. Every one I saw was under five feet high. But in spite of their short stature they had big hands for work. India is the country of human specialization, but I have never seen such a striking example of it as in this village. These people must have come from some stunted aboriginal stock, who were to be found in India long before the Aryans crossed the Himalayan passes. Their manner of life did not require height and so they remained short. But they always had hard work to do, and so their hands are large. I have seen the same thing in other parts of India, among the boatmen of the Brahmaputra river in Eastern India for example, but never on such a complete and emphatic scale as in this village near Plassey castle. The people recalled the dwarfs of German legend, and the whole village some weird scene from a novel by H. G. Wells. They belonged to some low caste, but I had no time to stop and inquire about them, as I was hurrying to see the frescoes in Plassey. I went back to Nalagarh by a different way, and never saw this queer village again.

There are a lot of modern frescoes in these hills. Those in Chamba and Haripur have already been mentioned. There are a number in Kangra town itself. On the whole, the less said about these frescoes the better. The best modern work which the writer has seen is by an old painter called Nandu, in the temple of Lachminarayan in Kangra town.

Large quantities of small paintings continued to be produced after the death of Sansar Chand. It is interesting to see how the Kangra





artists deal with Europeans. In the Lahore Museum there are portraits of Lord Dalhousie and Sir John Lawrence. The Olympian calm of the Viceroy is well contrasted with the nervous harassment of the zealous district officer. In the city of Amritsar the writer picked up a portrait of an English lady and a little girl in the costume of the Mutiny period. It was not without merit and is in the Indian Museum at Calcutta now. The writer found another picture of a rather later date of an English staff sergeant with his wife and child, but no Calcutta museum would take it. It was certainly a repulsive piece of work, and interesting only from the point of view of the morbid pathology of art.

With the development of the British administration in the Punjab, wide new fields of activity presented themselves to the Kangra artists. With the survey of the country for revenue purposes, the vast schemes of irrigation canals, and the construction of means of communication, the services of draughtsmen and map-makers were in strong demand. The training in hand and eye and delicacy of touch made the Kangra artists singularly fit for such work, and many took it up. But pictures still continued to be made. The usual date given as the end of the Kangra Valley School is the great earthquake of 1905, which completed the destruction of the fortress-palace of Tira Sujampur, and made it the horrible ruin it now is. There is no doubt that a number of artists were killed by it, but when the writer visited Kangra in 1929 Nandu, Huzuri, Gulabu Ram, and Lachman Dass were still working. They are all of the Gujeria caste. Nandu's frescoes in the Lachminarayan Temple have been mentioned. He showed the writer some of his small pictures. They are not so good as his frescoes. Nandu has a genealogical roll which shows that his ancestor Suraj came to Kangra in 1563. They have been working as artists there ever since. Reference has already been made to Huzuri's drawing of Alexander the Great. I had an amusing experience with the artist Gulabu Ram. I was looking at a collection of pictures in Kangra town and was shown one said to be two hundred years old. Gulabu Ram happened to be there. I showed the two-hundred-years-old picture to Gulabu Ram, and asked if he knew the name of the artist. 'Oh yes,' said Gulabu Ram, 'it's by Lachman Dass of Ajodh.' 'When did he die?' I asked. Gulabu replied, 'Lachman Dass isn't dead. He's a man about the same age as myself' (about thirty-five).





When the tourist traffic to India increases, I foresee for these artists a busy time in providing 'antiques'. It is difficult to grudge it to them after their long winter of neglect, and really visitors to India might do worse than take back with them as souvenirs some of these pictures, racy of the soil, as Indian as Indian can be, and with a long unbroken line of ancient tradition behind them.





## VI

### A GLANCE BACK AT THE MOUNTAINS

THE relation of this art to the older art of India has already been discussed. But there is one school of Indian painting which for a time was contemporary with the art of the Himalayas, and though widely separated in space shows a curious affinity with it. The writer refers to the painting of Mallabhum, 'The Land of Wrestlers'. This is the name anciently given to the extreme eastern edge of the great Central Indian Plateau at the point where it touches the delta of the Ganges. Its principal town was Vishnupur, in the present district of Bankura in Bengal. From the Land of Wrestlers have come some remarkable painted book-covers, with the magnificent rich colouring, the splendid flow of line, and intense and mysterious significance of the true primitive.<sup>1</sup> This art shows a strong affinity to the primitive art of the Rajput Himalayas (Plates I, II, and III). Though the paintings of Mallabhum are of the sixteenth century and the earliest paintings of the Rajput Himalayas which we have yet been able to discover cannot be placed with any certainty earlier than the seventeenth century, still there is no reason to suppose any direct influence of one art upon the other. Both the arts are descended from the ancient art of India, and conditions in Mallabhum in the sixteenth century closely resembled those of the Rajput Himalayas. In Mallabhum also we find the traditional Hindu culture preserved by hill and forest from Mahomedan invasion and conquest, guarded by warlike chiefs, and quickened and revived by the enthusiastic Vaishnavite revival of Chaitanya. Similar conditions produced similar results, and hence the affinity in the arts.

In Mallabhum in the sixteenth century it was the Vaishnavite (Krishnaite—the cult of the god Krishna) revival which thawed the ancient Hindu art, frozen by the winter of the Mahomedan invasion, and caused it to blossom like the flowers of spring. It was the famous Chaitanya of Bengal who aroused this movement, which eventually spread all over India. It is very likely, though I have as yet no definite proof of it, that it was as much the arrival of this enthusiastic religious force in Northern India as the decline of the Mogul Empire and acquisition of the Mogul

<sup>1</sup> These paintings are illustrated and discussed in an article of mine entitled 'The Land of Wrestlers' in *Indian Art and Letters*, vol. i, part i, 1927.





technique in line and drawing, which produced the beautiful Kangra Valley School. But, at any rate as far as Mallabhum is concerned, the Vaishnavite movement of Chaitanya must be added to the list of great spiritual convulsions which have produced revolutions and catastrophic changes in the world of art. And while we are on this subject we must not forget the spiritual and religious movement which animated and inspired the beginning of Italian painting. Saint Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan movement which revived and reanimated the religion of Europe in the thirteenth century are the spiritual sources of the art of Giotto and Cimabue. Under the warmth of its rays the cold hieratic Byzantine ritual developed into the great and wonderful art which we call Italian painting. And in the series of great religious pictures, from Giotto to Botticelli, there are touches which recall the Vaishnavite art of India. For instance, the dances of the saints and the angels in the pictures of Fra Angelico may be compared with a sixteenth-century painting from Mallabhum of the dance of Krishna, or a work of the seventeenth or eighteenth century of the same subject from the Kangra Valley.

The increasing interest and attraction which primitive art has for modern taste has already been mentioned. On all sides we see signs of it. Every young artist is responding to it and the results are visible in every modern picture 'show'. I remember only the other day going to an exhibition of the work of a young English artist with strong tendencies in this direction. He attempted the bold and simple design, 'the large utterance of the early gods', of primitive art, but in trying to carry it out he made lines crooked which should have been straight, and curves broken and irregular which should have had a perfect flow. Now this is just the sort of thing which you do not find in a real primitive. In fact it is one of the ways of distinguishing the true primitive from the false, from local and provincial work, 'done by the people for the people', or, to use an emphatic Anglo-Indian expression, 'bazaar muck'. The real primitive is always clearly and incisively outlined and finished, by the hand of an artist who can wield a brush with the decision of a sword cut. Straight lines gone crooked and broken curves mark the feeble and unsteady hand of the contemporary provincial or later copyist. Weakness must not be mistaken for simplification, roughness must not be confused with strength.





It has been mentioned that no picture of the Rajput Himalayas has yet been assignable with any certainty to a date earlier than the seventeenth century. Mr. Ajit Ghosh has made an interesting suggestion<sup>1</sup> that certain paintings of the sixteenth century which have hitherto been assigned to Rajputana<sup>2</sup> really come from the Kangra Valley. I am strongly inclined to accept this view. These pictures not only have all the fierce inventiveness of design, magnificent richness of colouring, the note of power, and the spirit of the heroic age which would entitle them to such an attribution, but they are akin to the Kangra primitives which are known to us and appear to be the natural forerunners and sources of the Kangra art of later times. But, as Mr. Ajit Ghosh points out, further research and exploration will be necessary before this view can be definitely asserted.

This art is anonymous. It has been said that Kushan Lal was the favourite painter of Sansar Chand, but I have never seen a picture which was a work of art attributed to him. A string of names of artists could be collected, but to attempt to tack them on to particular works would be to distort the art, for it is collective and not individual, traditional and not eclectic. Like the makers of the Gothic cathedrals, the Kangra artist was satisfied with the realization of his aesthetic powers by the creation of his works, and with the sympathy and admiration which they aroused in the comrades and neighbours who composed his world. And after all, what greater reward can any man get for his work than his own knowledge that it is good, and the admiration and respect of his fellow craftsmen.

There is one artist's name which is often to be met with nowadays, and that is Molla Ram of Garhwal. His history has been sketched and an example of his work has been given (Plate XXI). He is a good artist, but no better than some of his contemporaries whose names have perished. The fact that Molla Ram's name has survived tends to give him a fictitious importance. Its preservation, along with sufficient history to give it life, is due to the fact that his descendants have continued to live in Srinagar, Garhwal, down to the present day as substantial tradesmen. So they have been able to keep sufficient relics and records of their ancestors to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ajit Ghosh's article in the *Rupam*, January 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Coomaraswamy's *Rajput Painting*, vol. ii, Plates I and II. In Mr. O. C. Ganguly's *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*, Plate III belongs to the same series.





and if for Molla Ram 'eighteenth century' and for Jwala Ram 'nineteenth century' be substituted, the discussion could go on exactly as before.

It is sometimes believed that a traditional art imposes narrow and cramping restraints on an artist. 'Within the limits of traditional art' is an expression sometimes used. But there is no foundation for such an idea. The true artist is helped and not hindered by finding a style, natural to him because developed through the centuries by generations of his ancestors, lying ready to his hand. How many gifted artists nowadays spend half a lifetime searching before they chance on the technique which best expresses them? The artist working in a traditional style starts with an instrument which must have some natural affinities for him, but he is its master and not its slave. He can guide, develop, and expand it to his will, but as a gardener trains a plant, not as a mechanic hammers out machinery. It has been said that traditional art leads to copying, but so does all art. The Kangra pictures of the middle and later nineteenth century bear all the marks of copies, overcrowding, monotony, excess of detail, and, above all, design superior to execution: 'The dwarf in the giant's robe.' But there is no need to go all the way to the Himalayas to see examples of this.

The wonderful colours of the Kangra paintings of the eighteenth century have already been mentioned, and if they could be seen, clear, pure, and bright, and yet of a gossamer lightness and delicacy, it would not seem an exaggeration to say that the Kangra artist of this period had the colours of the dawn and the rainbow on his palette. But how can they be reproduced? To attempt to do so would be to ask:

If you could match the smoke,  
The rich grey smoke of engines, or the blues  
In little Chalkhill butterflies, or yellowness  
Of moonlit buttercups; could you invoke  
Some generous water-god that he might lend  
The white foam of a cataract; or blend  
Sea-colour and sky-blue; had you a stock  
Of sunset mixtures on a sky of grey,  
Or pale uncertain shades 'twixt night and day?

Wonderful though the colour of the Kangra art may be, still it is an Oriental art and therefore linear to its essence, and cannot complain of injustice if it is judged by line alone.





The art of the Kangra Valley was made known to the Western world less than fifteen years ago,<sup>1</sup> and the discoverer has summed it up with such felicity that it is impossible to resist quoting his words:

'Rajput art creates a magic world where all men are heroic, all women are beautiful and passionate and shy, beasts both wild and tame are the friends of man, and trees and flowers are conscious of the footsteps of the Bridegroom as he passes by.

'Rajput painting is the counterpart of the vernacular literature of Hindustan. A vigorous archaic outline is the basis of its language. Uncompromising as the golden rule of art and life desired by Blake, sensitive, reticent, and tender, it perfectly reflects the self-control and sweet serenity of Indian society. It lends itself to the utterance of serene passion and the expression of unmixed emotions. But such an outline is not only Indian; it leads us back not merely straight to Ajanta, but in its affinities it is paralleled in Egypt, in pre-Hellenic and Mycenaean drawing, and in Assyrian sculpture. This Rajput art is in effect the last phase of a now long-lost style, a style that rises up before us, and awakens in us . . . an inefaceable regret.'

The last phrase reveals something of the secret of the charm of this art. It does not rely solely on its aesthetic qualities but also on its power to transport us into an older and simpler world, away from the din and stress of modern life to a land where the old tales may still come true. It appeals to an instinct continual in human nature. 'We turn back continually, and as continually try to produce again or to preserve the delicate and beautiful thing from which learning and growing complexity shut us out.'<sup>2</sup>

This art is the art of chivalry, the Rajput chivalry of the Hills. And a comparison irresistibly suggests itself with our own chivalry, the Christian chivalry of the Middle Ages. There are many points of resemblance. In outward seeming are castles, armour, horses, single combats, generosity to fallen enemies, and a disdain of treacherous or unfair means to overcome them. Inwardly we find a vision of the first principle of chivalry, that true glory can only be gained from a fair fight with an equal adversary on level terms. We also find that these wild Rajput soldiers, whatever ferocities they may commit in the fury of the moment, are never entirely without some glimpse of spiritual and transcendental

<sup>1</sup> By Dr. Coomeraswamy in his *Rajput Painting* (Oxford University Press, 1916).

<sup>2</sup> Hilaire Belloc.





realities lying behind the material and physical. But while these are the points of likeness to Christian chivalry, there are also differences. The most obvious is the position of women. Devotion to the lady of his choice was the mark of a knight. Knights used to fight each other in honour of their ladies. No tournament was held without the queen of beauty and her ladies. This most striking and prominent feature of the medieval chivalry of Europe is summed up in the word *gallantry*, which is applied equally to bravery in war and to devotion to ladies. Now this element is completely lacking in the annals of the Rajputs. Their public and outward life was passed entirely in a world of men. If one Rajput chief visited another, he would see nothing of the ladies of his host's family. Merely to inquire after them would be an insult. The invitation of the guest, 'Come. Let us see the ladies', could only come from the lips of a drunkard or a madman in Rajput lands. There is a story told in the Kangra Valley of a time after the British Government had succeeded the Sikhs, and therefore when peace had succeeded the old wars. An Indian, who was an officer in the service of the British Government, was staying with a Rajput chief. This Indian officer heard that the chief's sisters were beautiful with a beauty exceeding the most lovely of the Hill girls he had yet seen. He longed to see them, and at last made an attempt. He got into the women's part of the house, but was seen by the servants. As he was an officer, they did not dare to cut him down at once. They locked the doors of the passage in which he had been found, and went to tell their master, the chief. He was out hunting, but as soon as he came back he rushed to the place sword in hand. Had the Indian officer been there, his life would not have been worth a moment's purchase. But his servants had got wind of what was happening, put a ladder against the wall, quickly made a hole in the roof of the passage, and pulled their master through by a rope. This Indian officer was a bold man, and had given his proofs in battle, but it was generally conceded that not the least daring thing he did was to try to see the sisters of a Rajput chief. This seclusion of women is not the result of forcible constraint, but is insisted on by them as the right of their rank. Only common women go about freely and unveiled. This strange custom dates from the time of the Mahomedan invasion, and indeed was caused by it. Only by such means could the Rajputs keep their blood pure from the invader. By the terrible rite of *jaubar* (burning of women and young





children to avoid capture by a barbarous enemy) the Rajput women were always ready to defend their seclusion to the utmost extremity.

At Baijnath in the Kangra Valley there is an inscription in a temple. It was written at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and is in praise of a prince who after a pilgrimage took the vow, 'Henceforth the wives of others shall be sisters to me'. The inscription says, 'What wonder is it that in battle he is safe from the fiercest attacks, since even the God of Love has failed to conquer him. There are some who think that the chief attraction in ruling a town is the opportunity to rape the wives of the townspeople. But such are held in low esteem by soldiers. Our prince has youth, beauty, freedom, the rule of our town, and many flatterers. If still his heart eschews the wives of others, what austerity is difficult to him?' It is a far cry from these queer old lines, in which frankness verges on brutality, to Sir Galahad in the English poet's verse:

My good blade carves the casques of men,  
My tough lance trusteth sure,  
My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure.

But still there is some kind of common link between them in the association of the ideal of ascetic chivalry with prowess in battle.

Though no written record exists of the power of women in the days of Rajput rule, yet it is to be found marked with no uncertain hand throughout this art. The idealization of love, the placing of women on a pedestal for worship, seem to be inseparable from a warlike chivalry. It is this sentiment which distinguishes the art of Kangra so sharply from some other forms of Indian art. In some schools of Indian art we find the passionate element of love stressed. The Basohli paintings are an example.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, as in the caves of Ajanta, we find the facts of sexual relationship stated with matter-of-fact clearness. But in the art of the Kangra Valley we find the elements of the chivalrous and the romantic, finally, in the nineteenth century, degenerating into the sentimental. But all this has to be discovered from the pictures themselves. There are no love-stories or romances such as are so frequent in the literature of the Middle Ages of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Basohli painting can be seen in the Lahore Museum and in the collection of Mr. Ajit Ghosh. In the *Rupam* for January 1929 a Basohli painting dated 1675 is described.





It may be suggested that the downfall of the great Katoch house was due to a woman, when the Maharaja of Kangra refused to give his daughter to one of Ranjit Singh's favourites, and that this is surely an example of feminine power and influence. But the woman in this case was a mere cipher. The Sikhs knew nothing of her. They had not even seen her. She was only a symbol for a strife of racial and political pride between the old Rajput aristocracy and the new war-lords of the Punjab.

Besides war and love, there was a third element in Christian chivalry—religion. In this respect also, some resemblance to the Rajput chivalry exists. The cult of Krishna, in its story of the incarnation of the deity, in its doctrines of devotion and fervour, and in many of its prayers and hymns, appears to Christians a strange Oriental shadow of their own religion. So is it with the Rajput chivalry. To the West the Rajput riders seem a wild Oriental counterpart of the Christian knights. They are the 'paynim knights' of the old crusading chronicles. This chivalry is reflected in the art.

Historically the art is of great significance. It is one of the signs of the revival of Hinduism which followed the decline of the Mogul Empire, and which is a distinguishing mark of the eighteenth century in Indian history. For those who assert that war and art go together, that the times of great wars are the times of great art, Kangra Valley painting is a case in point. For it rose and flourished in the period of Indian history known as the Great Anarchy, when prince fought prince, and clan fought clan, when raiders rode at dawn, and at night there was the glare of burning villages on the horizon. When peace came, it was dead. But its death was a violent one, at the hands of the Sikh army.

The influence of the Kangra Valley School upon the modern Indian artist is immense. A single glance at an Indian picture 'show' in any part of India—Calcutta, Darjeeling, Lucknow, Delhi, Lahore—will disclose attempts to recapture the Kangra line, pose, colour, and, hardest of all, spirit. Of course the artists who exhibit on these occasions have no connexion with the older schools. The break with the past is complete. The present modern art movement in India owes its beginning entirely to a former distinguished Keeper of the Art Gallery of the Indian Museum in Calcutta, Mr. Havell. He was also principal of the Government Art School. More than thirty years ago he started collecting





old Indian paintings for the Museum, and teaching the students of the School to express themselves in art in the style of these old paintings, which he justly regarded as containing the cultural traditions and instinctive aesthetic aspirations of their race.

The story of how Mr. Havell started the modern art movement in India is a striking one. It is doubtful if there is a more curious and interesting episode in the whole history of the cultural relations of England and India. When Mr. Havell came to Calcutta he found the Art Gallery full of tenth-rate copies of European pictures, and the art students engaged in copying cones, cubes, and busts in the old-fashioned South Kensington style. Mr. Havell made the discovery that India had an art of her own. In the Museum and Gallery he put examples of it, and in the Art School he used it for training the students. The reception which his efforts in the cause of the national culture of India received was somewhat startling. There was a violent explosion of wrath among the nationalist and politically conscious Indian newspapers in Calcutta. The more violent they were for constitutional reform and the more vehement their anti-Government propaganda, the fiercer were their attacks on Mr. Havell. They charged him with withholding from Indian students the first-grade art of Europe, and with serving out to them instead the second-class Indian variety. So all the art students went on strike. But finally reason prevailed, and Mr. Havell's efforts were crowned with success. He employed as his assistant Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore, the first artist and founder of the whole modern Indian Art school. It has already been mentioned that this school owes much to the Himalayas through its devotion to the Kangra Valley art, and direct inspiration from the Abode of Snow is often sought by it. I remember going up to Darjeeling in 1928. Half-way up the hill I met Mr. Goganendra Nath Tagore, an artist and the brother of Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore. He told me that there was an art exhibition on in Darjeeling, and advised me not to miss it. I went to it as soon as I got to Darjeeling, half an hour before it closed on the last day. There was some interesting work by modern Indian artists there, and I picked up a charming little water-colour sketch of sunrise in the Himalayas by an artist called Masoji. In general design it was not dissimilar to a Western picture, but in colour it recalled the Kangra Valley. The utter and absolute necessity of the old art of India for the modern Indian artist was well illustrated in this





exhibition. There were two large drawings of the painter Nanda Lal Bose, hanging almost side by side. One was in archaic Indian style, and was striking, vigorous, and effective. The other was in the conventional European style to which we have been accustomed from the Renaissance down to our own time. In the hands of our own great masters it can be magnificent, but for Nanda Lal Bose it proved a weak and feeble weapon. He could express nothing with it.

The battle which Mr. Havell had to fight has long been over, and nowadays it is frankly recognized that Indian artists cannot afford to cut themselves off from their ancestral heritage. At the same time the artists cannot dissociate themselves entirely from the art of the West, either in spirit or technique. The attempt which is still going on, is on the one hand to express the modern spirit, which cannot escape containing something of the art of the West, in the terms of the old art, and on the other hand to express the Indian spirit in the terms of the art of the West. The Kangra art arose from the union of two widely divergent styles, and is a good omen for the success of the present struggle. Of course these modern Indian artists resemble European artists in their eclecticism, their free choice of the subject of their pictures, and the manner in which they present them. In both these particulars, subject and style, they differ from the old Kangra artists who, except in portraits, had to work on the old stories in the old way. Changes of style were possible in the old art. Indeed we have been tracing them through this book. But they were introduced gradually without any violent break with the past, and the traditional character of the art remained unimpaired. The people who make pictures in the Kangra Valley at the present day are to be classed as artisans rather than artists, very competent artisans, and the writer has no hesitation in recommending their wares, but still there is a difference between them and artists.

Calcutta is the centre of the new Indian art movement, and in the beautiful collection of Kangra paintings and drawings in the Indian Museum which was formed by Dr. Percy Brown, Mr. Havell's successor, artists have a guide and inspiration in their endeavours to recapture the spirit of the old art. The collection in the Lahore Museum commenced by Dr. Percy Brown and continued by Mr. Lionel Heath, the present curator, fulfils a similar purpose for artists of the north. Our regret at the removal to America of much of the great art of the Himalayas should





increase our gratitude to these gentlemen for keeping in its native country so many fine examples of it.

The principal collections outside India are those of the Boston Museum in America, and of the British Museum and of Professor William Rothenstein in London.

In the pictures of Kangra it must be conceded that we have work, not merely of a singular beauty, but also with some of the mystery and spirituality of great art. It is thoroughly Indian, but Indian on the Aryan side. The survival of the traditional portrait of Alexander the Great is not without significance. This is an art not unworthy of the deeds of heroes, of Hector, Tamer of Horses, and Agamemnon, King of Men. But when we see the vision fade, and the work gets poor and cold, we are apt to take the melancholy view that art is dead in India. This is not so. There is a view of shops in Mandi town, which I photographed last year. These shops have pointed turrets which are in perfect keeping both with the general landscape and the particular design of the buildings which they crown. They give to the market-place an air of old-world beauty, half medieval and half oriental. But when we come to ask what they are made of, we get a shock of surprise. They are made of the oddest and queerest stuff imaginable for a work of art—tin. In other places I have seen this unpromising material turned to purposes of art. When tin roofs and tin huts first arrived in India, people of taste declaimed against this monstrous pollution of the beauty of the old Indian life. They need no longer do so. Now that tin has become assimilated as a normal element in Indian house-building, it is being used decoratively, and the writer has seen some interesting results. A frieze of birds and animals cut in tin along the edge of a roof gives a bold decorative effect, while floral designs cut through tin make a beautiful doorway or window-arch. It might be thought that with the use of tin for works of art the limit of strangeness has been reached, but this is not so, for in India the sense of art springs up in even more unlikely places. I have seen a tannery, at the door of which the builder made a pointed tower, which gave a pleasing effect to the eye in breaking the monotony of the wall. It was the natural sense of art in the Indian builder finding expression. Indeed, it is in architecture nowadays that the instinctive forces of Indian art most often find outlet. In many buildings in India which appear to follow European style there is a





strangeness, a certain exotic exuberance, which separates them from their Western models. But in mass and general outline they are harmonious and therefore pleasant to look upon. Indian art springs up as naturally as the wild flowers. The lines which have been written of the greatest of India's gods are no less true of her art:

Let my temples fall, they are dark with age  
Let my idols break, they have stood their day  
My presence may vanish from river and grove  
But I live for ever in Death and Love.

The art of the Hills, though it is an integral part of the art of India, still has a peculiar and intensely individual character of its own. From the scent of the pines, from the foam of the mountain torrent, from the cold wind from the snows come the exhilaration and inspiration of the *Hill* art, as it is commonly called. There is something uplifting in the air of the Himalayas. Lightness, brightness, and strength flow from it, and make credible the words of the old Hindu saying:

The sight of the snows takes away the sins of the world.





## ADDITIONAL NOTES

PAGE 34, line 10. Under strict Mahomedan law all pictures and drawings of men and animals were forbidden as likely to give rise to superstition and idolatry. Nothing was tolerated that could in the slightest degree muffle or weaken the war-cry of the faith of Islam: *La Ilaha Illallah*, 'No god save God'. This led to a concentration on purely decorative art. And so complicated designs of curves and interlaced lines take their name from the head and centre of Mahomedan orthodoxy, and are called *Arabesques*.

PAGE 35, line 4. I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of the entry of the Persian-Mogul art into the old traditional Hindu culture of the Kangra Valley. Its influence was confined to technique, and the spirit of the old art remains unchanged. But still its results cannot be overlooked, as it provided a free and mobile instrument for the expression of the artist's ideas. While 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life', still in art the spirit must find some concrete expression, and not until it meets a suitable and congenial style can this expression be effected, and the dormant spirit of great art made fully manifest. There is also another point about Mogul art which has not, I think, yet been noticed. Mogul art is half Indian and half Persian. Now Persian art, like the Persian language, is founded on the culture of the old original Aryan stock, and this traditional Aryan element made it congenial to the Kangra art, which is also partly Aryan in its ancestry. When the Mogul and Kangra arts met, it was a meeting of cousins. I do not mean to deny for a moment that the Mogul and primitive Hindu arts were not profoundly different in soul and spirit. Indeed, they can be said to be poles apart. But in the case of the Mogul and the particular expression of Hindu primitive art which is to be found in the Kangra Valley, there was a common ancestor in the old Aryan culture, and this made the fusion much easier and more natural than it would have been farther south in India, where the Dravidian element in the old Hindu art was much stronger, and the Aryan weaker.





# PLATES





## LIST OF PLATES

*Frontispiece.* Demons coming out from Lanka to attack Ram's army of monkeys and bears. Collection of Mr. Ajit Ghosh. Size of original  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft. by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft. From Haripur, Kangra Valley. Early eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

### AT END OF VOLUME

- I. Krishna and maidens. Author's collection. Seventeenth century. Slightly reduced.
- II. Krishna and Radha rising from the pine trees at night. Collection of the Rai of Rupin. Seventeenth century. Size of original.
- III. Women feeding cranes. Collection of Mr. Ajit Ghosh. Seventeenth century or earlier. From Nurpur. Size of original.
- IV A. Raja Sidh Sen of Mandi and female attendants. Collection of H.H. the Raja of Mandi. Seventeenth century. Slightly reduced.
- IV B. Raja Sidh Sen of Mandi and attendants on the bank of the Ganges. Collection of H.H. the Raja of Mandi. Seventeenth century. Slightly reduced.
- V. Fresco in northern courtyard of the ancient temple below the Old Palace, Chamba. Boy shows size.
- VI. Scene from a Chamba story. The low-caste drummer raises his eyes in love to a princess. She is bathing. Collection of the Raja of Guler. Early eighteenth century. Size of original.
- VII. Continuation of Plate VI. The princess and drummer elope, and are shot down by the royal archers. Slightly reduced.
- VIII. Krishna and Radha. Author's collection. Early eighteenth century. Slightly reduced.
- IX. Raja Gobardhan of Guler listening to music. Collection of the Raja of Guler. Dated 1743. Slightly reduced.
- X. Scene from the Mahabharata. Indian Museum, Calcutta. Eighteenth century. Reduced by one-third.
- XI. Scene from the Mahabharata. Indian Museum, Calcutta. Eighteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> The left half (demons issuing from the castle) is in the high court style of the Kangra art, while the right half (men, monkeys, and bears) is in an archaic local style. On the question of these two styles see page 46.





- XII. Scene from story of Krishna. Indian Museum. Size of original.
- XIII. Scene from Hill story. Collection of Mr. Ajit Ghosh. Eighteenth century. Slightly reduced.
- XIV A. Heads. Author's collection. Eighteenth century. Size of original.
- XIV B. Carpenter at work. Author's collection. Eighteenth century. Size of original.
- XV. Vishnu in his Lion incarnation doing justice on the wicked king Hiranya-Kasipu. The wicked king's virtuous son, Prahlada, on the right, and the female worshipper on the left, adore the manifestation of the god's power. Collection of the Mahant of Damthal. Eighteenth century. Size of original.
- XVI. Krishna and Radha. Author's collection. Eighteenth century. Size of original.
- XVII. Pheasant. Lahore Museum. Eighteenth century. Slightly reduced.
- XVIII. Tigers. Lahore Museum. Eighteenth century. Slightly reduced.
- XIX. Woodcut of floral design. By Mangat Ram. Collection of B. Balak Ram of Srinagar, Garhwal. Third quarter of eighteenth century.
- XX. Woodcuts of fox and lion design and of stag being pulled down by panther. By Mangat Ram. Collection of B. Balak Ram of Srinagar, Garhwal. Third quarter of eighteenth century.
- XXI. Drawing of Krishna and Radha under canopy of knotted cloths, with milkmaids to left and cowherd to right. By Molla Ram. Collection of B. Tulsi Ram of Srinagar, Garhwal. About 1780.
- XXII. Krishna in communion with his worshipper. Collection of Colonel the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand of Lambagaon. Late eighteenth century. Reduced by one-third.
- XXIII. Fresco of scene from Ramayana above arch in temple of Narbadeswar in Tira Sujanpur, dated 1823. Length about 12 ft. The figures are in Kangra Valley costume.
- Map.





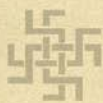
*Plate I*

KRISHNA AND MAIDENS

*Author's Collection. Seventeenth century. Slightly reduced*









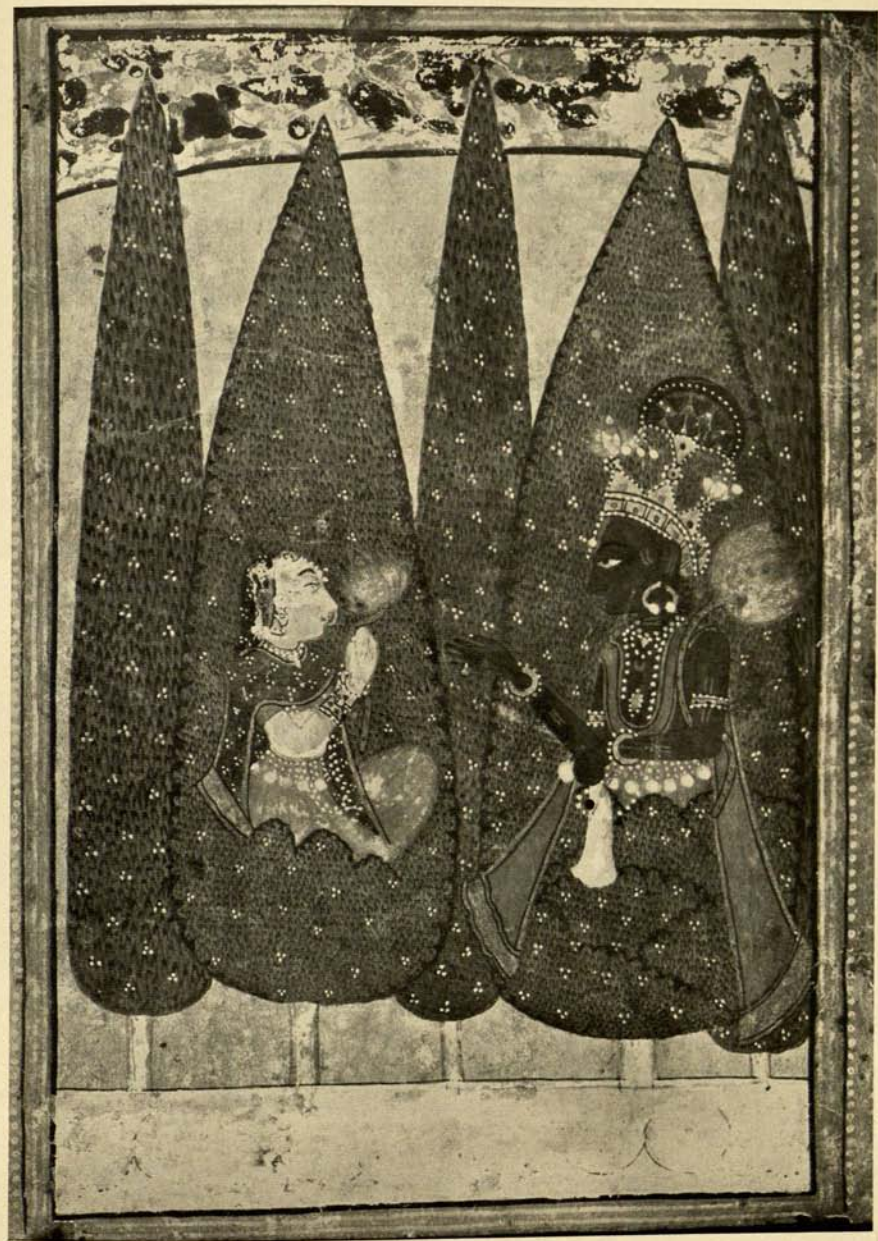
*Plate II*

KRISHNA AND RADHA RISING FROM THE PINE TREES  
AT NIGHT

*Collection of the Rai of Rupi. Seventeenth century. Size of original*









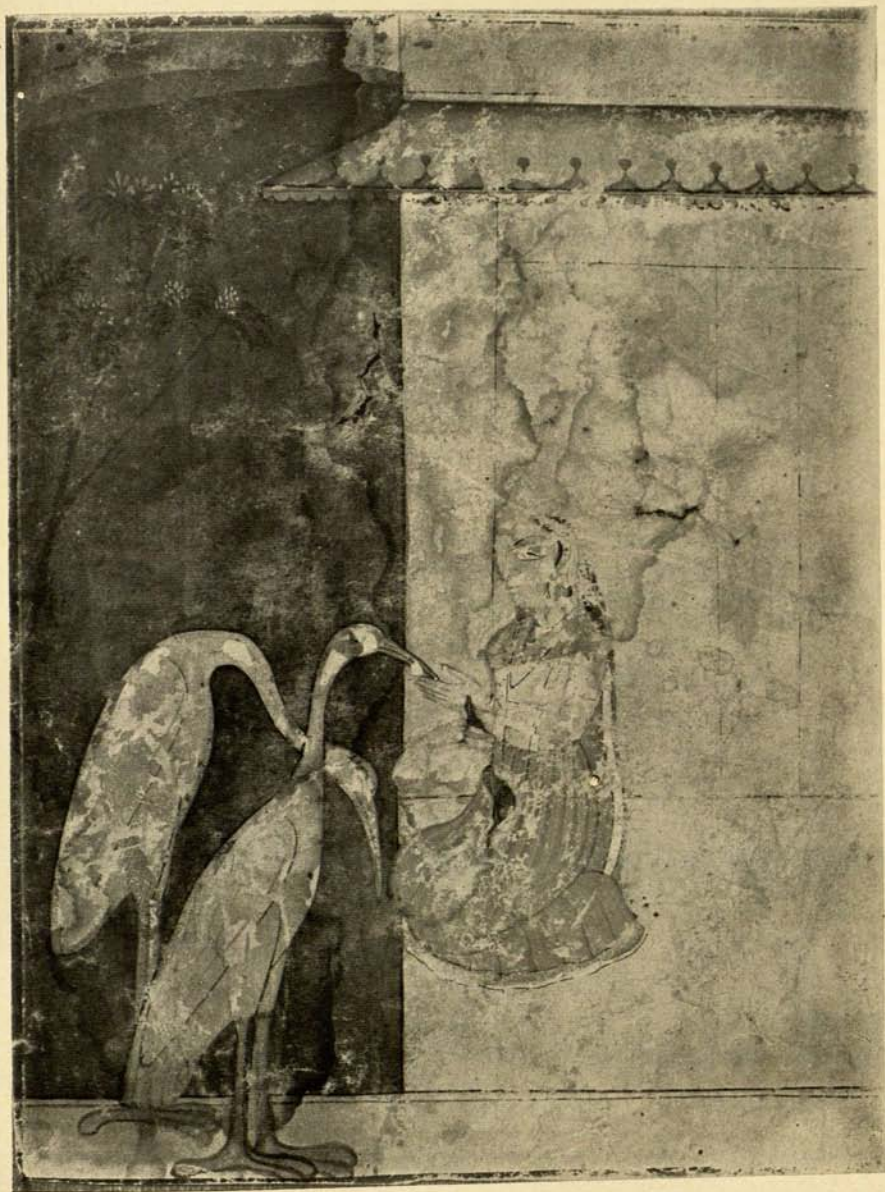
*Plate III*

WOMEN FEEDING CRANES

*Collection of Mr. Ajit Ghosh. Seventeenth century or earlier.  
From Nurpur. Size of original*













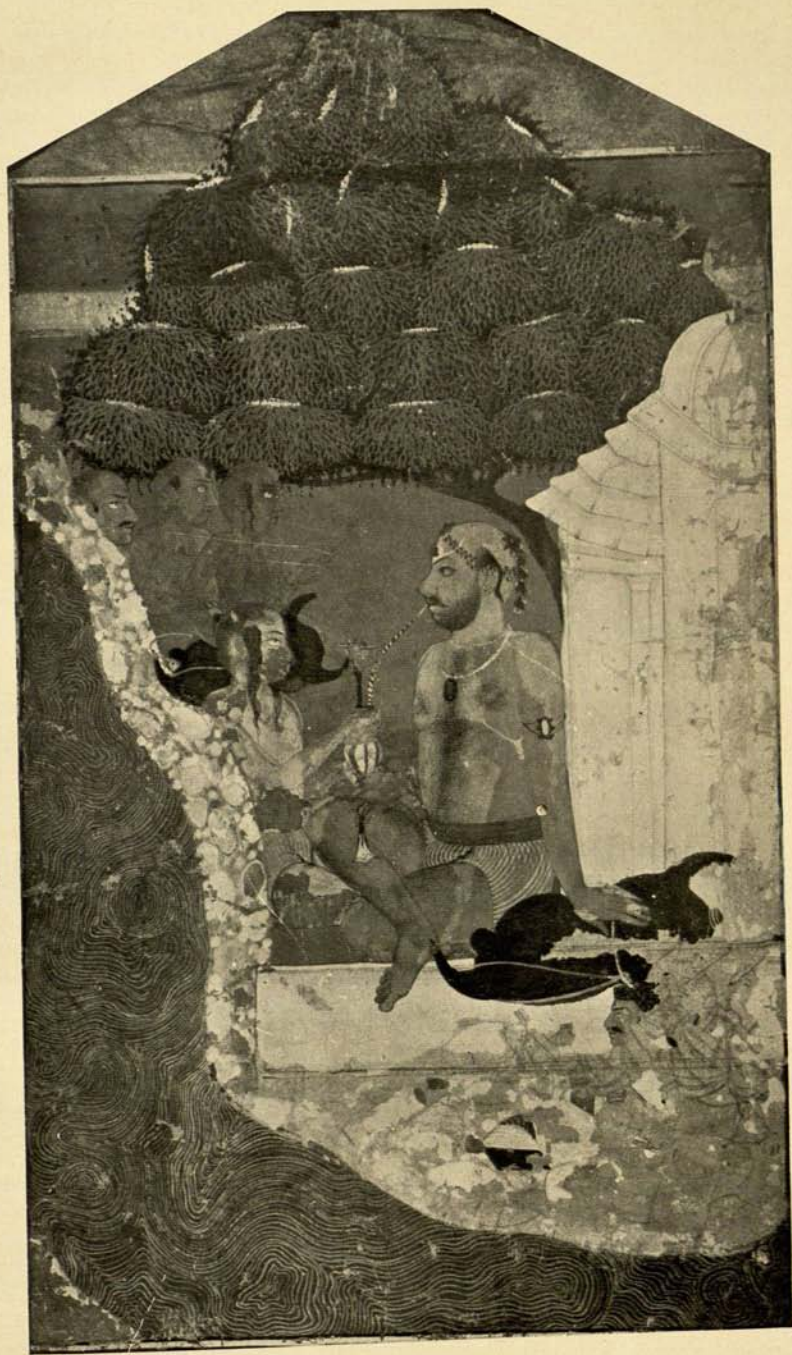
*Plate IVb*

RAJA SIDH SEN OF MANDI AND ATTENDANTS ON  
THE BANK OF THE GANGES

*Collection of H.H. the Raja of Mandi. Seventeenth century. Slightly reduced*









*Plate V*

FRESCO IN NORTHERN COURTYARD OF THE ANCIENT  
TEMPLE BELOW THE OLD PALACE, CHAMBA

*Boy shows size*









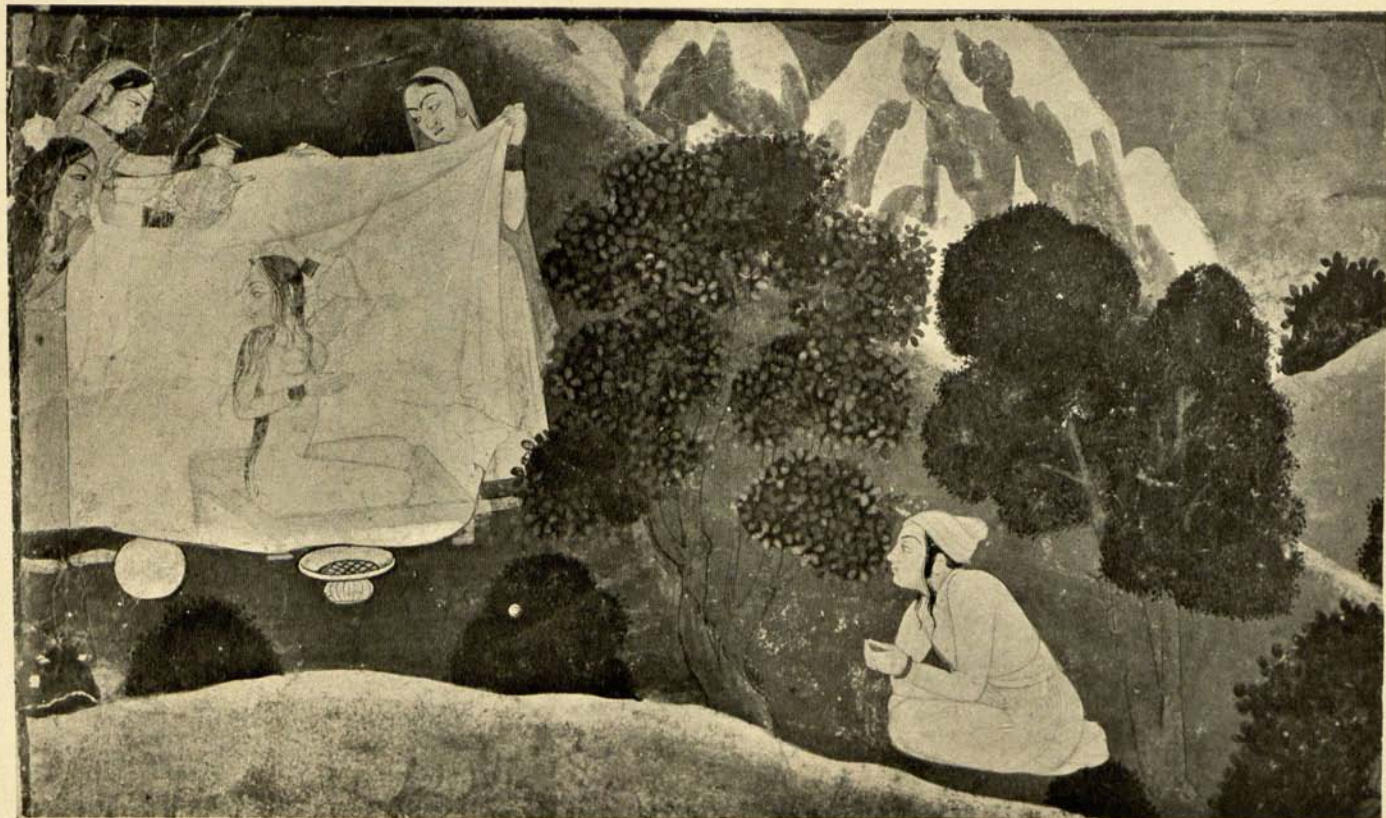
*Plate VI*

SCENE FROM A CHAMBA STORY  
THE LOW-CASTE DRUMMER RAISES HIS EYES IN LOVE  
TO A PRINCESS. SHE IS BATHING

*Collection of the Raja of Guler. Early eighteenth century. Size of original*









*Plate VII*

CONTINUATION OF PLATE VI  
THE PRINCESS AND DRUMMER ELOPE, AND ARE  
SHOT DOWN BY THE ROYAL ARCHERS

*Slightly reduced*









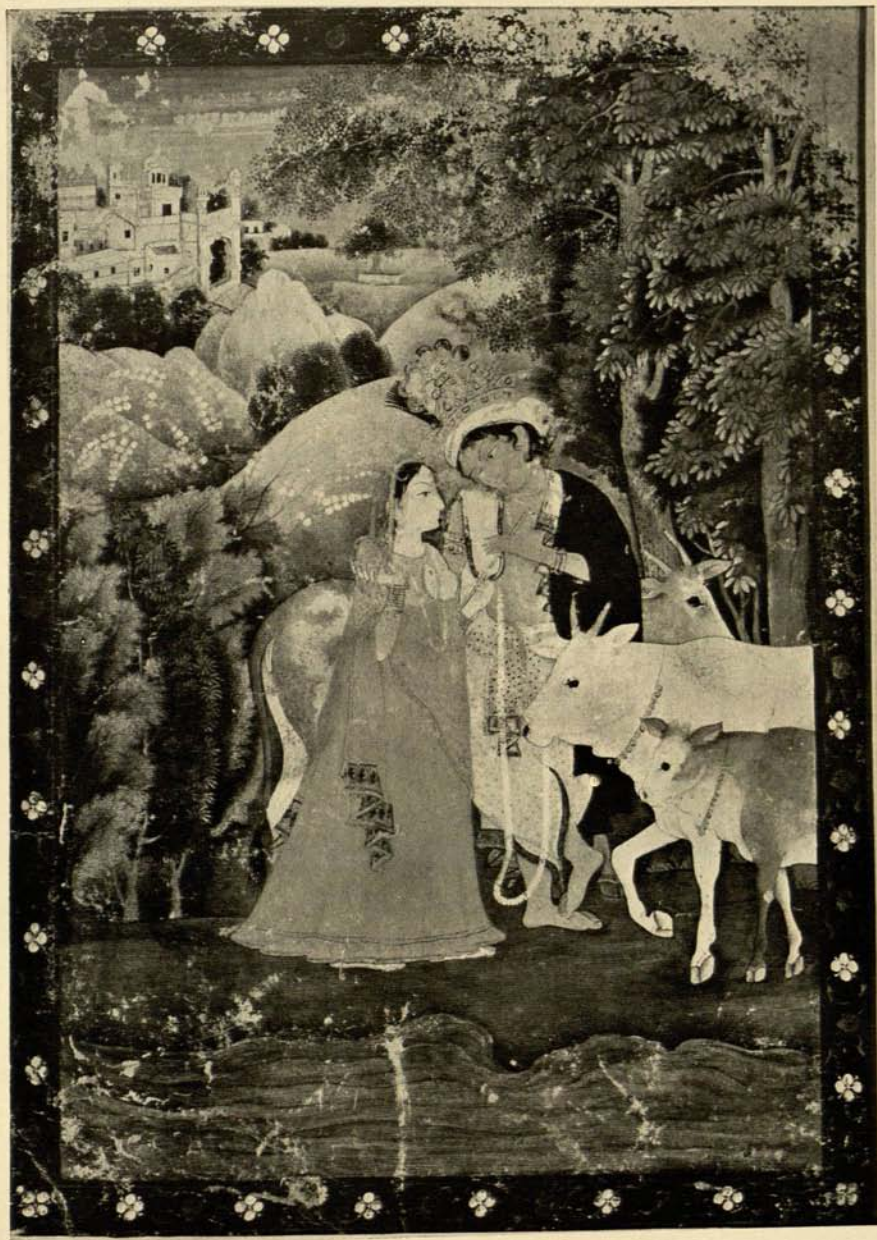
*Plate VIII*

**KRISHNA AND RADHA**

*Author's Collection. Early eighteenth century. Slightly reduced*









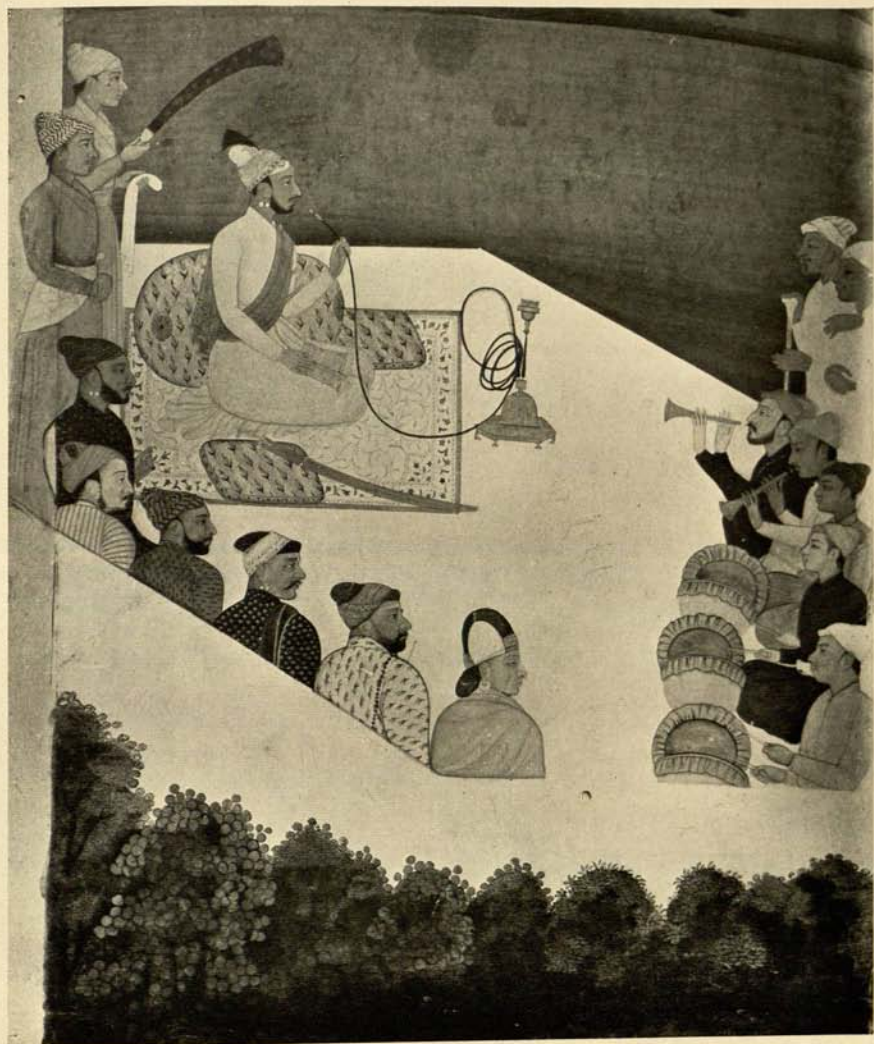
*Plate IX*

RAJA GOBARDHAN OF GULER LISTENING TO MUSIC

*Collection of the Raja of Guler. Dated 1743. Slightly reduced*









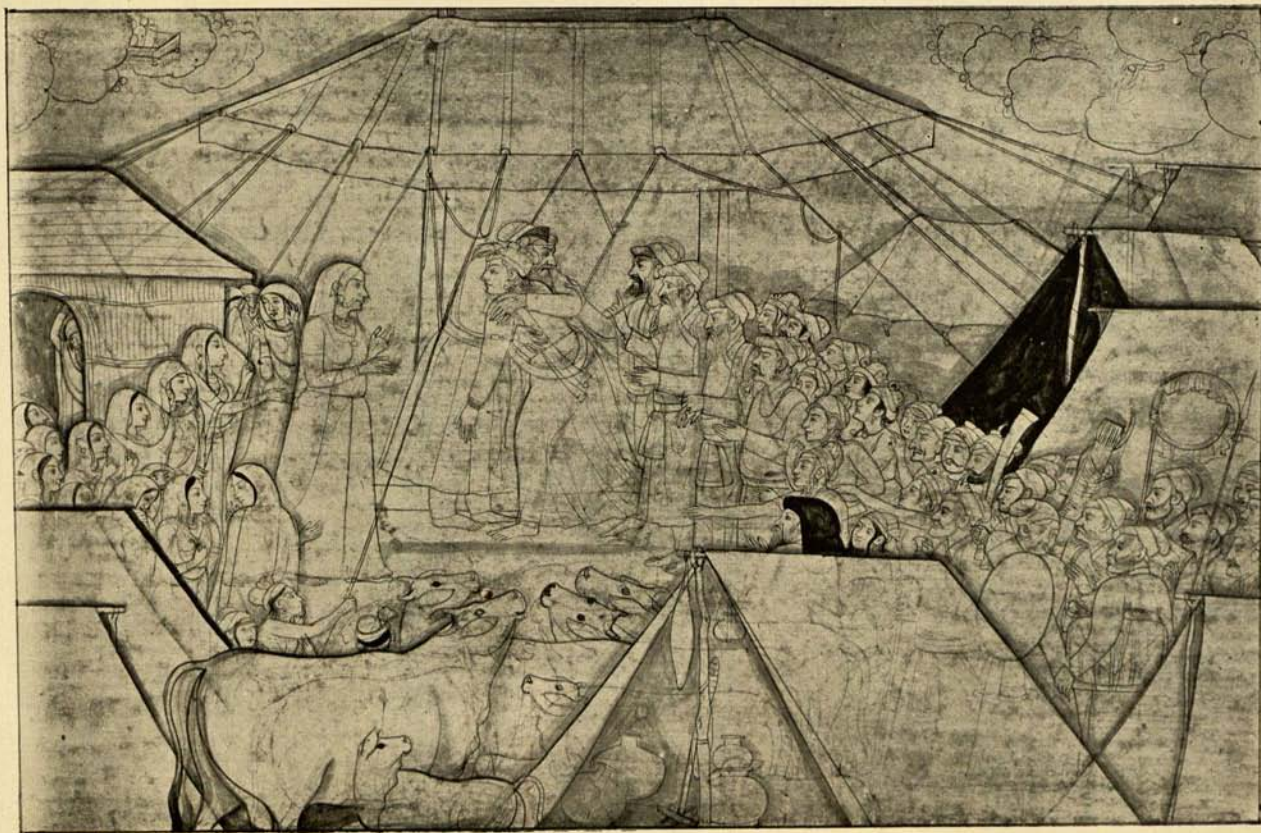
*Plate X*

SCENE FROM THE MAHABHARATA

*Indian Museum, Calcutta. Eighteenth century. Reduced by one-third*









*Plate XI*

SCENE FROM THE MAHABHARATA

*Indian Museum, Calcutta. Eighteenth century*









*Plate XII*

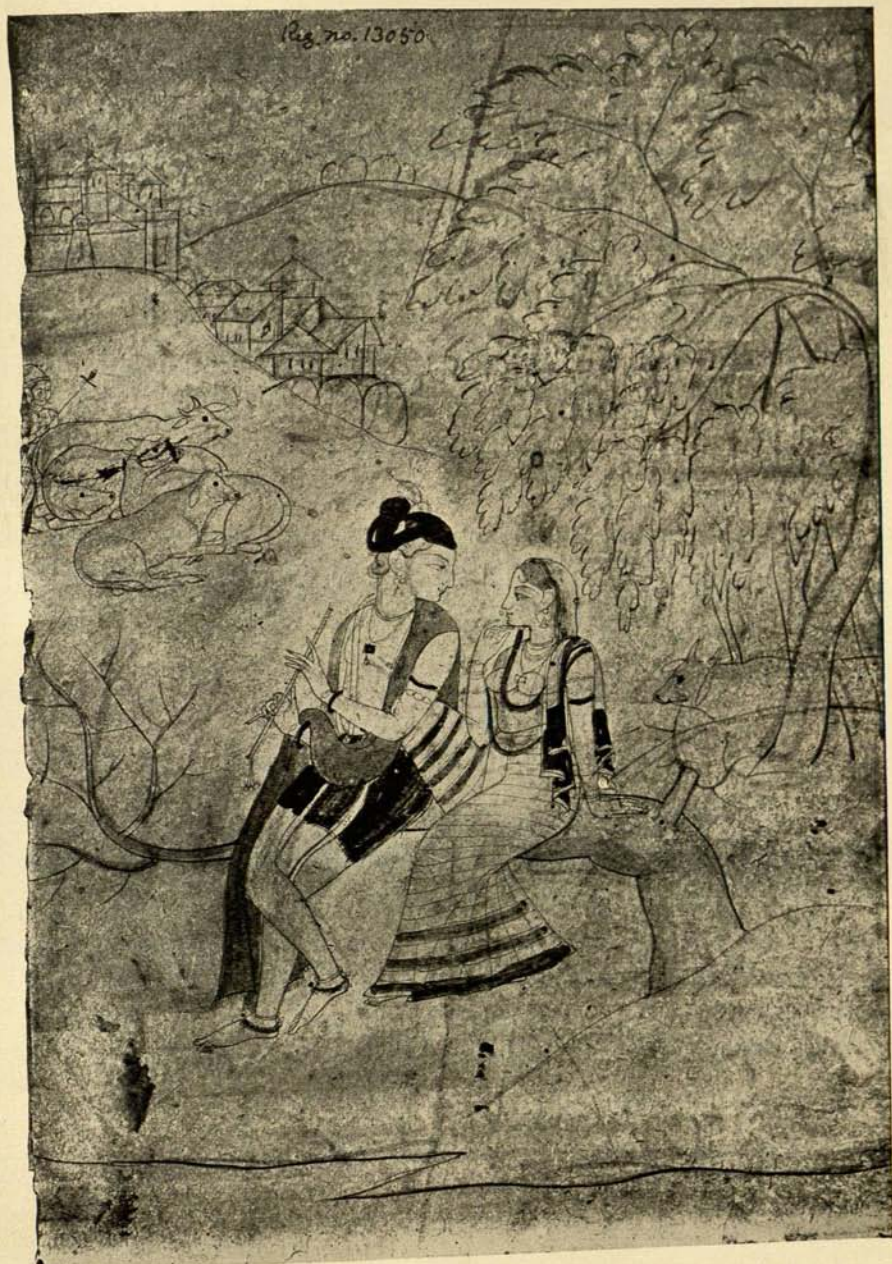
SCENE FROM STORY OF KRISHNA

*Indian Museum. Size of original*

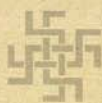
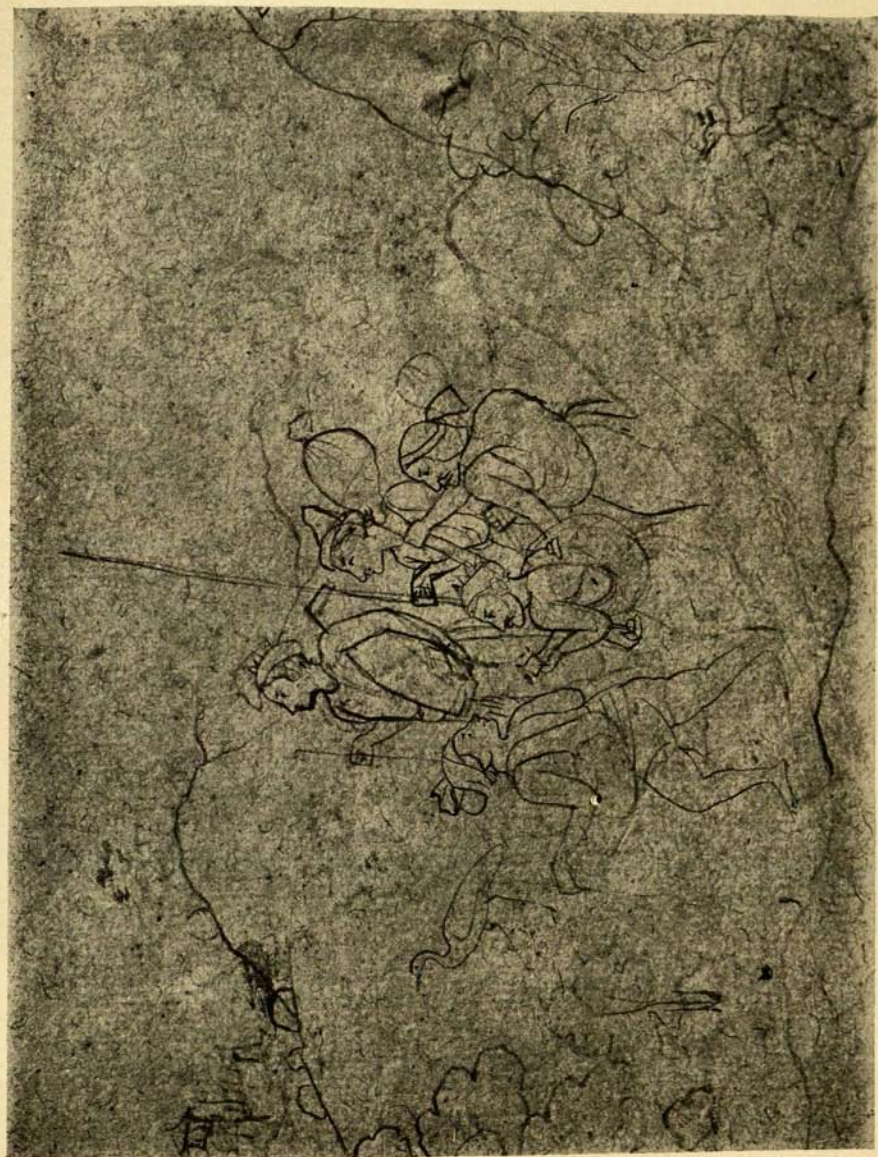




Fig. no. 13050









*Plate XIV*

**A. HEADS**

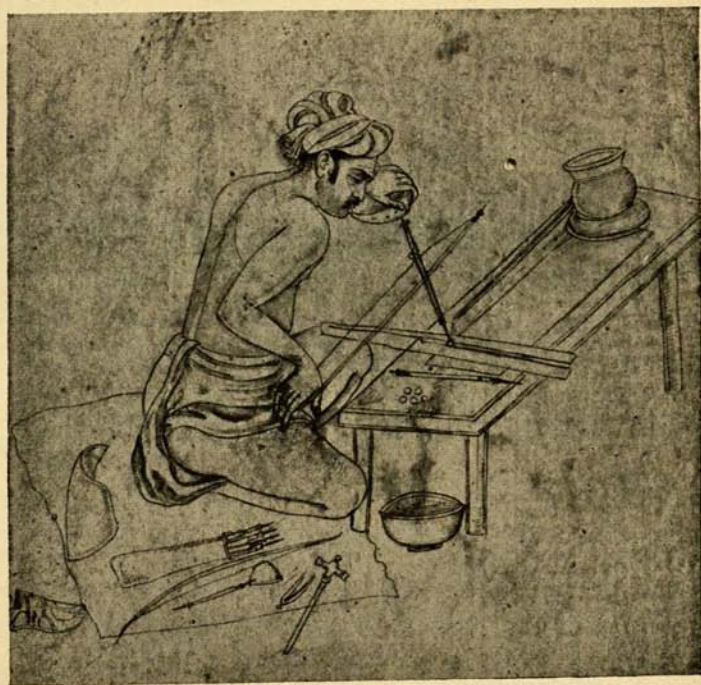
*Author's collection. Eighteenth century. Size of original*

**B. CARPENTER AT WORK**

*Author's Collection. Eighteenth century. Size of original*









*Plate XV*

VISHNU IN HIS LION INCARNATION DOING JUSTICE  
ON THE WICKED KING HIRANYA-KASIPU

The wicked king's virtuous son, Prahlada, on the right, and the female  
worshipper on the left, adore the manifestation of the god's power

*Collection of the Mahant of Damthal. Eighteenth century. Size of original*









*Plate XVI*

**KRISHNA AND RADHA**

*Author's Collection. Eighteenth century. Size of original*









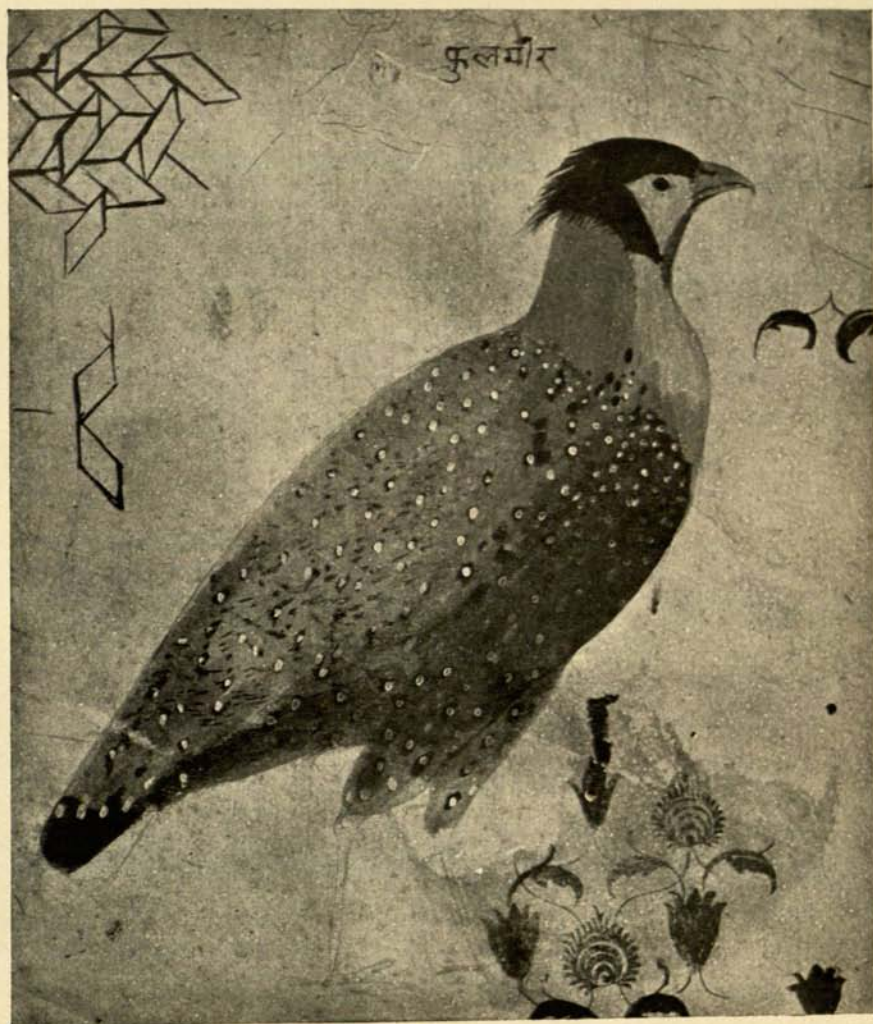
*Plate XVII*

**PHEASANT**

*Labore Museum. Eighteenth century. Slightly reduced*









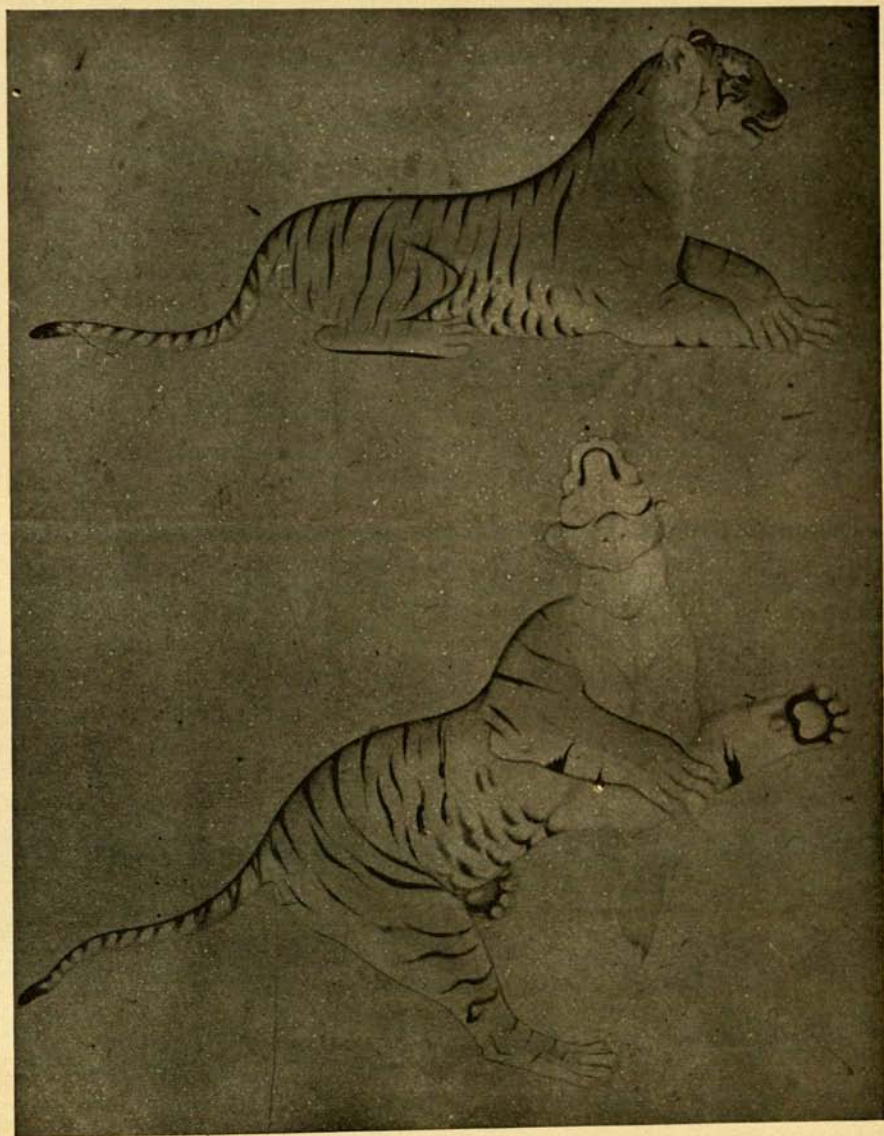
*Plate XVIII*

**TIGERS**

*Labore Museum. Eighteenth century. Slightly reduced*









*Plate XIX*

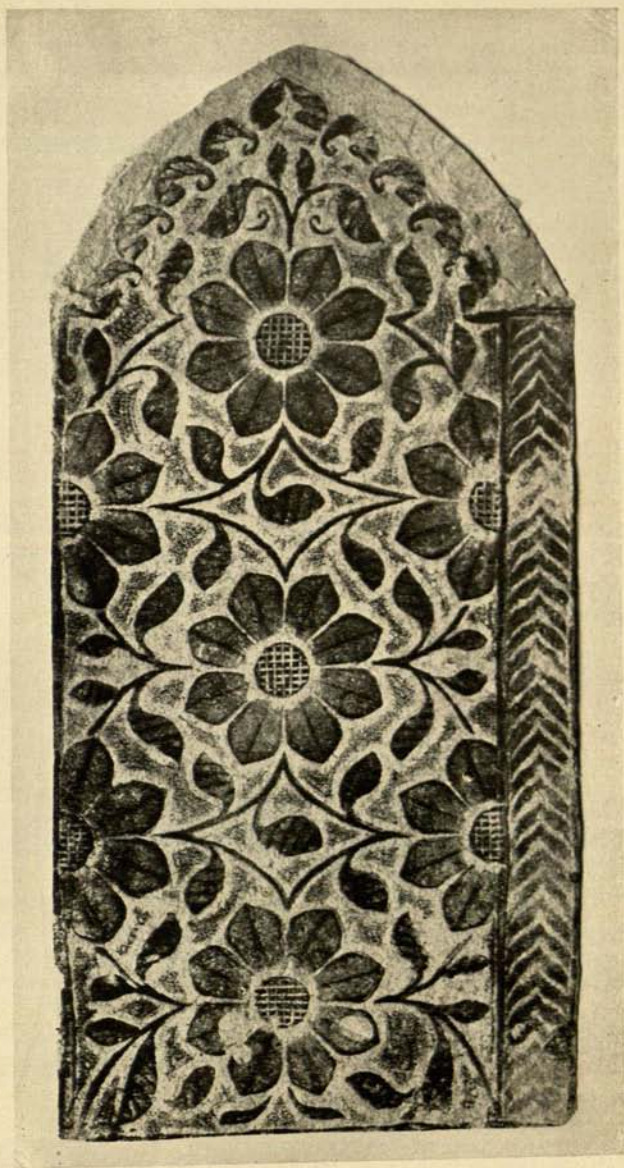
WOODCUT OF FLORAL DESIGN

By MANGAT RAM

*Collection of B. Balak Ram of Srinagar, Garhwal. Third quarter of  
eighteenth century*









*Plate XX*

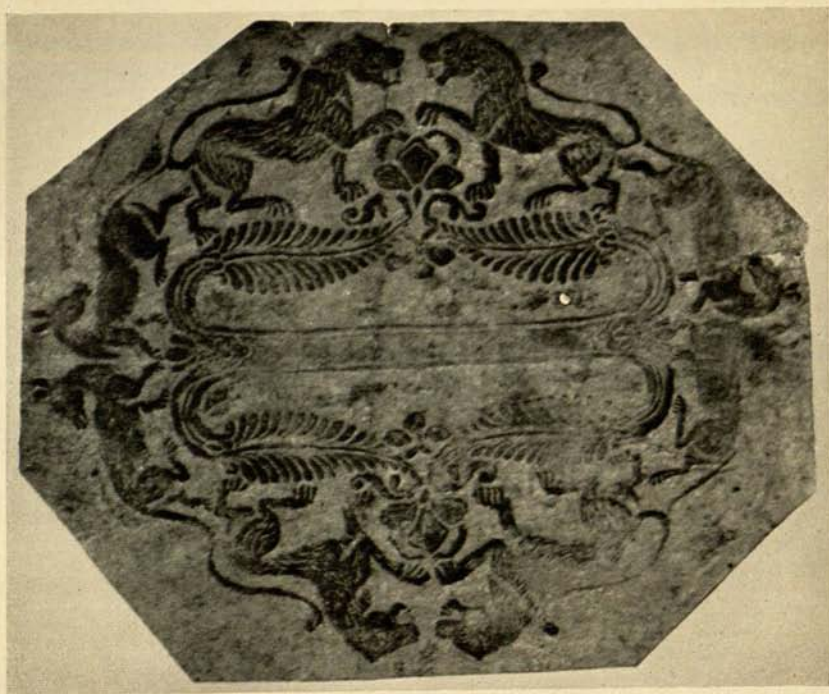
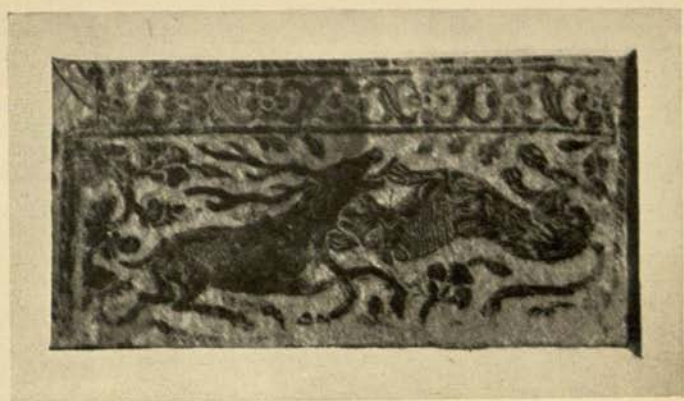
WOODCUTS OF FOX AND LION DESIGN AND OF  
STAG BEING PULLED DOWN BY PANTHER

By MANGAT RAM

*Collection of B. Balak Ram of Srinagar, Garhwal. Third quarter of eighteenth century*









*Plate XXI*

DRAWING OF KRISHNA AND RADHA UNDER CANOPY  
OF KNOTTED CLOTHS, WITH MILKMAIDS TO LEFT  
AND COWHERD TO RIGHT

*By* MOLLA RAM

*Collection of B. Tulsi Ram of Srinagar, Garhwal. About 1780*









*Plate XXII*

**KRISHNA IN COMMUNION WITH HIS WORSHIPPER**

*Collection of Colonel the Maharaja Sir Jai Chand of Lambagaon. Late eighteenth century.  
Reduced by one-third*









Plate XXIII

FRESCO OF SCENE FROM RAMAYANA

*Above arch in Temple of Narbadeswar in Tira Sujanpur, dated 1823.  
Length about 12 feet. The figures are in Kangra Valley costume*





