

rocks, these are also connected with a legend of the height of ancient giants.

The earthquakes in Kangra have destroyed many of the temples, but the memory of the people preserves the names of heroes and teachers. Here also are erected monuments of a different character, reminding one of things which might well be forgotten. In Mandi and in Kulu you can see big stone stelae like ancient menhirs, with some time-worn images. In close groups stand these granite blocks, hiding some secret. What is this secret? What memory do they recall? These memorials refer to all the generations of local rajas, and show the number of their wives, who were buried alive together with the body of their deceased sovereign.

These stones speak of the past. But to the north of Kulu rise the white peaks of the main Himalayan range. Beyond them lies the road

to Lahoul and Ladak and the main white giant is called Guru-Giri Dhar—the Path of the Spiritual Teacher. This conception unites all Rishis into a great whole, leading the way to the Heights.

In this Silver Valley the Great Shepherd called to life all living beings by the silvery sounds of his flute. He calls toward joy. And the apple-trees, pear-trees, cherry-trees and plum-trees respond in their enthusiasm of blossoming. The willow tree opens its fluffy blossoms, apricot-trees turn lilac, the vigilant nut-tree unfolds in rich yellow, and as a healing nectar flows the aromatic sap of the deodars.

Under the apple-tree, covered with rose-coloured blossom, the eternal Krishna, on his silver flute, plays his divine songs of regeneration.

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GODS OF KULUTA.

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Naggar.

AND so it was. And there came an astrologer and told what was to come. And there visited us our esteemed neighbour—the goddess *Tripura Sundari* and touched her chosen one and he trembled and became pale and said: "Not everything is as yet completed, not everything is over. Great events are ahead and everything will be victorious." And the same was confirmed by the goddess's sister, *Batanthi*. And the severe god *Jamlu* on his part affirmed the same future. And the protector of the house, the white-clad *Narsing*, through his Brahmin heralded the same happy news. And in testimony of the truth the Brahmin held on the palms of his hands glowing charcoal, which did not burn him.

Sometimes it would seem that all the countries of Asia have already been described. We have admired the curious tribe of the Todas. We have been amazed at the sorcerers of the Malabar Coast. We have heard of the Nagas of Assam and of the extraordinary customs of the Veddas of Ceylon. The Veddas and Paharis of Northern India are always pointed out as most unique tribes.

Although many articles have already been published about the Northern Punjab, where an incomprehensible conglomerate of ancient hill tribes is massed together, yet the remote hillmen have been touched so little by civilization, that the inquisitive observer constantly finds interesting new material.

The mixture of ancient Rajputs, Singhs with Nepalese and Mongoloid hillmen has produced quite an individual type, which

also produces a religion—a combination of Hinduism and Buddhism.

The sacred Kulu Valley lies hidden on the border of Lahoul and Tibet, forming the most northern part of the Punjab. Whether this was *Aryavarsha* or *Aryavarta* is difficult to say. But the most significant names and events have gathered in this beneficial valley. It is called the Silver Valley. Whether in winter, when the snowy cover sparkles, or in spring when all the fruit trees are covered with snowy-white blossoms, the valley equally well merits this name.

In this ancient place they have their three hundred and sixty gods. Among them also is *Gotama Rishi*, dedicated to Buddhism, which is known to have been here for ages. There are also Akbar the Great, whose statue is in the *Malana* Temple, and all teachers and heroes who by sword or spirit won great battles.

Deoban, their sacred forest, is entangled with century-old trees. Nothing may be destroyed in the silence of the protective grove. Even leopards, bears and jackals are quite safe in this abode of the God. People say that some of these protected trees are over a thousand years old and some even two thousand. Who has counted their ages? Who knows their beginning? And their end is not near, so powerful are the unembracable trunks and roots.

Equally ancient are the deodar trees round the *Mahadevi* temple in Manali. Heavy boulders, stones resembling huge mountains, are scattered all over the mountain-slopes of the Himalayas. Near the temple are seem-

ing altars, built of stone. Here the gods are said to meet during the spring festivals. In the darkness inside the temple rises a rock, washed by a prehistoric stream. Was it here that *Manu* compiled the first commandments for the good of mankind?

On the mountain slope above every village can be seen a comb of ancient giant pine trees or deodars. These are all places sacred to the three hundred and sixty gods of the glorious Kulu Valley, or as the ancient people called it, "*Kuluta*." These places were marked by the Indian pundits, by old Tibetans, and by the famous Chinese traveller of the seventeenth century, Hsuan-tsang.

In the Kulu Valley, even up till now disputes are settled by the prophet priest. In the sanctuaries of temples are untold sanctities, which the human eye is not allowed to see. The guardian of a temple enters the sanctuary only rarely and always blindfolded, and carries out one of the sacred objects to an initiate, for a brief moment.

The people of the mountain nest, Malana, speak an incomprehensible language and nobody has as yet clearly defined this dialect. They live their own lives, and only rarely do their elected representatives descend into the valley to visit the temples of the god *Jamlu*. In high black cone caps, with long ear-pieces, and in home-spun white garments these mountain hermits tread the snowy narrow paths.

During the New Year of India, the entire Kulu Valley celebrates the festival. We were told that the goddess *Tripura Sundari* had expressed the wish to visit us. The triumphal procession of the goddess, of her sister *Bhutanta* and the god *Nag*, arrived. In front of our house stood a long row of multi-coloured

banners. Further away was a multitude of drums, pipes and bent brass horns. Farther on, in finely ornamented costumes, dancing all the way, with bent sabers, came the priests, gurs, kadars and local festival dancers. On the broad terrace the procession halted. Everyone of the three palanquins of the gods was covered with silver and golden masks. The music roared, songs were enchanted, and they began a wild war-like sword-dance. Like Caucasian hillmen or sword-bearers of Kurdistan, the sons of the ancient militant valley, madly but gracefully whirled round in dance.

Then an old Brahmin priest appeared. He took two sabers from the young dancers...as if a miracle had happened, the bent old priest suddenly became full of life, and like a warrior leaped about in a wild sacred dance. The curved sabers flashed. With the back of the saber blade the old man inflicted on himself imaginary symbolical wounds. It seemed as if he would gash his throat. Then with an unexpected movement the bare steel was run between the open mouth...was this an old man, or a youth masked in a gray beard?

All this was unusual. But the most unusual was to come. The dancers calmed down. The musicians stepped aside. The palanquins of the goddesses were borne upon the shoulders of the men, but the men who carried them did not touch the poles with their hands. On the contrary, the palanquins seemed to push them about, and, as if drunk, they staggered around, led by an unknown power. They began turning around with the palanquins on their shoulders. Suddenly the palanquin seemed to rush at a chosen person propping itself up with the end of the poles against his chest. He shuddered, became pale, and his entire body shook.....In a transformed voice

he shouted out prophecies. But the goddess also desired to speak through another. Again the palanquin moved around in a circle. And again some one was chosen and endowed. It was a pale youth with long black curls. Again the blunt look of the eyes, the chattering teeth, the trembling body and the commanding proclamation of prophecies. The New Year had been honoured. The procession lined up again and returned by the steep hilly path to the temple, where drums were to thunder till long after midnight and where the dancers would again whirl round in sacred war dances.

It is good when the gods of Kulu are gracious.

What do the inhabitants of Kulu Valley like most? Dancing and flowers. We visited another sword dance. Skillfully the sword blades whizzed through the air and around in a semi-circle danced a row of colourfully dressed men, arm in arm, singing drawling songs accompanied by drum-beats and large kettle-drums. On rich stretchers, under an ornamented canopy, sat Krishna with a blue face and in gold brocaded garments. Next to him sat Radha, and in front was a small Kali, her face black, like a Nubian, with a long, red, out-stretched tongue attached to it. The children who represented the gods sat up very seriously with an understanding of their nomination. And round stood the crowd, a mixture of many nations: Paharis, Tibetans, Hindus, Ladakis and many other types of hillmen with strange faces. All this seemed to carry me back to the American South-West Pueblos, where, during the festivals, we saw similar rows of people with their arms interwoven, who represented rain clouds, the harvests, and hunting—everything that harasses and delights the people who live in contact with nature.

During our travels, we heard much of every manner of god. We saw how the Chinese punish their gods, drown them in the river, cut off their hands and feet and deprive them of their dignity. The Samoyeds either anoint their gods with fat or flog them. In short, all sorts of things may happen even to gods. But, that in our times, a legal contract should be made with a god such as is done in Kulu still seems a novelty. In the Bible we read of covenants made with gods, but of course, this was without government revenue papers. But here in Kulu valley the gods are very close to life and they base all their decisions according to the up-to-date laws of the country. Here I have before me a contract between myself and the god *Jamlu*, concerning the water supply. Such written contracts with gods I have never before seen. Everything becomes modern and even gods sign contracts on revenue paper.

But not only do contracts with gods occur in Kulu, before me is a deed of sale of an ancient fortress and there is a special clause that the previous owner retains his right to a quarter part of a golden cock, buried on these grounds. The tale of the *Coq d'Or*.....

The *gur*, priest of the gods, is the most revered person in all Kulu. He is all clad in white, in a homespun woollen mantle, with a small cap on his black and gray hair. His nose is aquiline and he has sparkling deep-set eyes. His legs are also covered with white.

The *gur* is seated on a rug, and having completed the burning of his incense, he gives everyone of us a flower as a sign of grace of the gods.

The gods are very satisfied, he informs us. We did not offend them. On the contrary

we have even collected their images near our house, bringing them from an old ruined temple. There is the statue of *Juga-Chohan* on horseback, there is also the goddess *Kali*, the *Rishi Kartik*, *Swami Narsingang*, *Parbati* and several images of *Narsing*, the protector of this place.

"Tell us, *gur*, have you seen *Narsimha*? we ask him. "We heard that many people have seen the protector of these regions."

Before the *gur* had time to answer, a Hindu school teacher, who was present, replied:

"Certainly many of us have seen *Narsimha*. The old Rajah, who became the protector of this Valley, wanders at night-time near his former castle and along the mountain paths. All your servants here have seen how on a moonlight night, a tall, majestic figure with a long staff has descended the mountain and disappeared under their very eyes...I have myself seen *Narasimha* twice. Once in this very house. The protector entered in my room at night, and touching me, wanted to tell me something. But it was so sudden that I became frightened and the vision disappeared. Another night I returned by the mountain road from the castle homeward. And I met the protector himself, who said: "Why walk so late when everybody sleeps?" You can ask Capt. B, and the wife of the planter L. They both know of apparitions of *Narasimha*."

And the old *gur*, chewing his thin lips, said:

"I have seen *Narasimha*. And also the goddess. She came to me as a small child and blessed me for my initiation as *gur*. I was very young at the time. At the gates of the temple I imposed a fast on myself and sleeplessness for seventy-two hours. And in the morning after these hours had passed, an unknown little girl came to me. She was

about seven years old, dressed in superb robes, as if for a festival, although it was an ordinary day. And she said to me: 'Your task is fulfilled. Go and act as you decided!'

The *gur* has told us much about the great local Rishis: the gods in the valley live in prosperity. They have plenty of property and land. Without their sanction nobody is allowed to fell a tree. The gods visit one another as guests. Many people have seen the gods travelling. Sometimes they fly, sometimes they walk with great leapspropping themselves on sticks. Of course, besides that, several times every year they have triumphal processions with drum-beats and trumpets as accompaniment. In the storehouses of the temples are hidden rich garments, pearls, gold and silver masks—all attributes of the gods.

The wife of the planter told us that indeed staying once over-night at the Naggar castle, she was awakened by a noise in the neighbouring room and on the threshold a white figure appeared of medium height, but she became terribly frightened and the figure disappeared, making such a loud noise that two English ladies, sleeping next door on the other side, became very much frightened. And with the same noise the figure moved along other parts of the castle. The same person also saw another interesting thing. On the maidan of Sultanpur she saw a dog running, pursued by a white transparent figure.

A Brahmin in a very large yellow turban told us how the local gods help the inhabitants of the Kulu Valley.

"Some misfortune happened in the house of a man, and in terror he fled up into the mountains, seeking the help of the gods. Three days he spent on the rocks. Some one invisible brought him food and a voice said 'You may return home.' And the

man returned and found everything in order. Another man went into the mountains of Manikaran and secluded himself in meditation. An unknown Yogi appeared before him and surrounded him with radiant light. From that day on all the inhabitants of the valley followed that man, paying him homage and trust. This was about fifty years ago. If you want to try to see a Rishi, go up into the mountains, to one of the mountain lakes. And in fasting and prayer stay there, and perhaps one of the protectors will appear before you."

Thus the people of Kulu regard their deities with familiarity. In this ancient place, as in Naggar, and in Manali, are gathered all the great names. The law-giver, Manu himself, gave his name to Manali. The great Arjuna, in a miraculous way, laid a passage from Arjunagufa to Manikaran, where he went to the hot springs. After the great war, described in the Mahabharata, the Pandavas came to Naggar and high above the Thava temple they built their castle, the remnants of which are still being shown. Here also in the Kulu Valley lived Vyasa, the compiler of the Mahabharata. Here is Vyaskund, the sacred place of fulfilment of all wishes. In Bajaura, near the river Beas, stands a temple connected with the name of Geser Khan. Coming from the side of Ladak the great hero here overtook his enemies and defeated them. On the same river Beas, called in his'ory Hypathos, near Mandi, Alexander the Great once stopped. A hill is shown there connected with the conqueror's name. On the top of the hill are some ruins.

Here also in the neighbourhood lies the famous lake Ravalsar, the place where the great teacher Padma Sambhava stayed. Thousands of pilgrims visit this remarkable place, coming from beyond the mountain ridges of Tibet, Sikkim, Ladak and Lahoul,

where Buddhism prospers. From Kulu came the propagator of Buddhism, Santa Rakshita. It has been ascertained that Kulu and Mandi are the sacred lands Zahor, which so often are mentioned in ancient records. Here after the persecution of the impious King Landarma were hidden the most ancient books. Even the place of these hidden treasures is indicated approximately.

In Naggar is shown the cave of the famous spiritual teacher Pahari Baba, who converted the cruel Raja into leading a pious life. It is a lovely, quiet place, hidden among dense deodars and pine trees. A small brook gurgles and birds call to one another. A Brahmin guards the sacred cave, which has now been adorned by a temple. The chief deity of this temple is an image of—as the Brahmin calls Him—Taranata. He brings the image out of the temple, and one cannot fail to recognize in it Tathagat the Gautama Buddha—the Teacher. In this way the Hinduism of the hill Paharis has become blended with its predecessor—Buddhism. In other temples also one can see, besides, Shiva, Kali and Vishnu, images of Buddha, Maitreya and Avalokiteshwar. And all these memorial images are reflected in the gathering of the three hundred and sixty Rishis, the protectors and holders of this blessed place.

One cannot omit to mention that under the name of Trilokanath—Lord of the Three Worlds—in upper Kulu, as also in Chamba State and Lahoul, Avalokiteshwara is worshipped. This is confirmed by the typical aspects of the images.

On the border of Lahoul, which is also an ancient former Tibetan principality, on the rocks, are inscribed images of a man and a woman up to nine feet high. It is said that this was the height of the ancient inhabitants. It is curious, that in Bamiam, in Afghanistan, where there are also huge images on the