

## *Kangra's from the Pages of History*

*Lying 526-km north-west of New Delhi, Dharamshala is the headquarters of the Kangra District in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. Kangra valley is one of the most pleasant, relaxing and spiritual places in the Himalayas. Marvelously scenic, especially upper Dharamshala, is well wooded with oak, cedar, pine and other timber yielding trees and offers some lovely walks and finer views. In 1855, Dharamshala had only two major areas where civilians settled in : McLeod Ganj, named after Lieutenant Governor of Punjab "David McLeod", and Forsyth Ganj, named after a Divisional Commissioner.*

*Lord Elgin, the British Viceroy of India (1862-63) fell in love with the natural beauty of Dharamshala because of its likeness with Scotland, his home in England. Lord Elgin died in 1863 while on a tour. He now lies buried in the graveyard of St. John's Church-in-Wilderness which stands in a cosy pine grove between McLeod Ganj and Forsyth Ganj. A Legend has it that Lord Elgin liked Dharamshala so much that he had sent a proposal to the British monarch to make Dharamshala the summer capital of India. However, the proposal was ignored. By 1904, Forsyth Ganj and McLeod Ganj had become nerve centres of trade , business and official work of Kangra District, But on April 4,1905, as a result of a severe earthquake, whole of the area was devastated. Alarmed at the massive destruction, the British goverment decided to shift the district headquarter offices to the lower reaches of spur. As a result, the present-day district courts and kotwali bazar areas came into being which earlier had only a jail, a police station and cobbler's shop to boast of. Until India attained independence from Britain on Aug. 15,1947 McLeod Ganj and Forsyth Ganj continued to serve as health resorts and resting places for the British Rulers. But all this changed when the goverment of India decided to grant political asylum to the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatsho, in 1959. In 1960, he was allowed to make McLeod Ganj his headquarters. After his arrival, trade, commerce and tourism picked up afresh. This because with the Dalai Lama came thousands of Tibetan refugees, who gradually settled in McLeod Ganj. During the last three decades, The Tibetans have built many religious, educational and cultural instutions in and around McLeod Ganj, which has helped in preservation of their culture. This has been a keen area of interst for the people around the world and as a result they flock at Dharamshala at various times.*

*The present Kangra district came into existence on the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1972 consequent upon the re-organisation of districts by the Government of Himachal Pradesh. It was the largest district of the composite Punjab in terms of area till it was transferred to Himachal Pradesh on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966 and had Six (6) tehsils namely Nurpur, Kangra, Palampur, Dehragopipur and Hamirpur. Kullu was also a tehsil of Kangra district up to 1962 and Lahul & Spiti which also formed a part of Kangra was created as a separate district in 1960. On the re-organisation of composite Punjab on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966 the area constituting Kangra district were transferred to Himachal Pradesh along with the districts of Shimla, Kullu and Lahul & Spiti and tehsils of Una and Nalagarh and 3 villages of Gurdaspur district.*



### **KANGRA VALLEY**

*Kangra district derives its name from Kangra town which was called Nagarkot in the ancient times Kangra proper originally was a part of the ancient Trigarth (Jullundur) which comprises of the area lying between the river "SHatadroo" (probably Sutlej) and Ravi. A tract of land to the east of Sutlej which probably is the area of Sirhind in Punjab also formed a part of Trigarth. Trigarth had two provinces. One in the plains with headquarter at Jullundur and other in the hills with headquarter at Nagrkot ( the present Kangra).*

*In the time of Harsha, the famous Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsiang visited Jullundur some time in March 635 A.D. and in his writings he has referred to the principality of Jullundur situated towards the north-east of China-Po-ti (China Bhakti) and towards the south east of Kiu-lo-to (Kullu). From the history of Kashmir given in the Rajtirangini, Raja Shanker Verma (883 to 903) of Kashmir held suzerainty over Prithi Chand of Trigarth.*

*In ancient times a number of petty chiefs ruled in the hills within their respected domains owning allegiance to the powerful Raja at the center. However, Katoch princes ruled over Kangra from the earliest times. At the time of invasion of Punjab by Alexander in 326 BC Trigarth was ruled by a Katoch prince.*

*In the beginning of 11th century, Mahmood of Ghazni finished the Turki Shahi family and the Hindu Shahi dynasty of Kabul in Afghanistan and after defeating a large Hindu army at Ohind and later at Peshawar, advanced into the plains of the Punjab. After defeating the Hindu king at Lahore he invaded Nagarkot. He was attracted by the prestige of Kangra fort. After defeating the Rajput Raja at Kangra, who had sent most of his men to fight the Muslims elsewhere, Mahmood satisfied his lust for wealth by carrying away on camel backs, enormous wealth of gold and silver from the fort and temple of Kangra. After this storm had passed away, the Katoch kings continued their rule over the Trigarth area undisturbed. Even after the conquest of Lahore by the Turks the Katoch family held some territory of Jullundur in the Plains. However, one Ibrahim of Ghazni conquered this territory from the Katoch King Jagdeo Chander in 1070 A.D.*

*In 1337. Mohd. Tuglak, an Afghan king of Delhi, captured the fort at Kangra in the reign of Raja Priti Chand. In 1351, however, Raja Purab Chand recovered the fort from the Muslims. One of his successors, namely Raja Roop Chand, became ambitious and led an expedition into the plains of Punjab, plundering the country right upto the outskirts of Delhi. This was an act of effrontery which could not be condemned by the Sultan of Delhi. So Firoz Shah Tuglak invaded Kangra, in 1366, to punish the Raja. The fort was surrendered after a long siege. After the death of Roop Chand, his son Singara Chand succeeded to the throne and was ruling over Kangra at the time of the invasion of Timur.*

*Sher Shah Suri, the Afghan king, who turned out Humayun from India, also captured Kangra in 1540. By 1555, the Muslim influence again declined. Akbar, however, subjugated all the hill Rajas. Occasionally the hill Rajas rebelled against the imperial authorities, but after a few skirmishes with the Mughal Generals, they submitted and renewed their pledges of loyalty.*

*Jahangir also became interested in the kingdom of Trigarth of Kangra. He wanted to annex the territory of this state and to capture the fort, because a lot of prestige was attached to the fort of Kangra. It was said that who-so-ever, held the fort was the ruler of hill state. The invasion took place in 1615 under the command of Sheikh Farid, Murtaza Khan and Raja Suraj Mal of Nirmal who was in the confidence of Jahangir. The fort could not be captured and after one year the siege*

had to be given up. Next year, another expedition was sent by Jahangir under Shah Quli Khan, Mohammed Taqi and Suraj Mal, but Suraj Mal proved unfaithful. The emperor had to send another strong force under Sunder Dass against Suraj Mal and also against the Raja of Kangra. After One year and two months siege, Sunder Dass captured the fort in 1620. The Katoch ruler lost the fort at least for 160 years. The entire state was annexed to the Mughal Kingdom and a strong garrison was left in charge of the fort. In 1622, Jahangir and Begum Nur Jahan came to Kangra via Siba and returned to Delhi via Nurpur and Pathankot. They were fascinated by beauty of the Kangra valley.

In 1752, Punjab was transferred to Ahmed Shah Durani by the weak Mughal rulers of Delhi. The Afghans could not successfully control these far flung areas from Kabul, so local governors were appointed to administer the territory on the behalf of the Afghan rulers. In 1758, Raja Ghamand Chand was appointed Nazim or Governor of Jullundur Doaba under the Afghans. Ghamand Chand was a brave man and a strong ruler who restore the prestige and glory of Kangra. As he was unable to capture the Kangra fort, he built another fort at Tira Sujanpur on the left bank of the Beas almost opposite to Alampur on a hill overlooking the town. This great ruler died in 1774 and was succeeded by his son Tegh Chand who died after one year in 1775

Kangra then saw the rise of another great ruler Sansar Chand(II). Though the Punjab has been given to the Duranis, the old Mughal officers had been proclaimed their independence in some outlying part of the country. Nawab Saif Ali Khan at Kangra was one such officer. Raja Sansar Chand had an ambition to recapture the fort and in 1781, he called to his aid Sardar Jai Singh of Kanhaya Misal. The fort was surrendered by the Mughal officer in 1783 but it fell into the hands of the Sikhs. Sansar Chand got the fort after some years by exchanging it with some territory, which he had won in the plains of Punjab. After getting the fort, Sansar Chand revived the tradition and laid a claim to supremacy over all the principalities and hill states of the Jullundur Circle. He made the hill chiefs tributary to himself in his capital at Teera Sujanpur. He erected a great Darbar Hall. For full twenty years he reigned supreme over all the hill states of Kangra, Mandi, Kullu and Chamba. Sansar Chand was well known for his generosity, kindness, bravery, justice and good administration, patronage of art and shewd judgment of men and matters. Sansar Chand was also a great builder. He had beautified

many places in the territory ruled over by him. He planted numerous gardens and the one at Alampur is said to have been as beautiful as the Shalimar Gardens at Lahore. However, reckless bravery and unlimited ambition of this great Raja ultimately ruined him. His dream was to regain the far-reaching dominions of his ancestors and even to establish the Katoch rule in the entire Punjab. In 1803-1804, he invaded the plains of Punjab twice but was defeated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In 1805 he annexed a part of Bilaspur state, thus coming in conflict with the Gurkhas, who in the later half of the 18th century moved south to establish their dominion over the entire hilly part of India from Nepal to Kashmir and had actually come up to the river Sutlej. Gurkhas became angry at the annexation of a part of Bilaspur state, which was under their suzerainty. They invaded Kangra, but were defeated. The hill Rajas of Kangra however, were feeling sore against Sansar Chand. They all approached Raja Amar Singh Thapa of Gurkhas through the Raja of Bilaspur to invade Kangra again. In 1806, with the help of the hill chiefs, the Gurkhas defeated Raja Sansar Chand who had to take refuge inside the fort. The country was laid waste and was plundered by the enemies. During the siege of the fort, a state of anarchy prevailed throughout the Kangra valley. The siege lasted for four years. After the Sansar Chand managed to get out of the fort and fled to Tira Sujanpur.

In 1809, Maharaja Ranjit Singh visited Jawalamukhi temple where Sansar Chand met him and entered into a treaty with him. It was agreed that the Maharaja should help Sansar Chand in expelling Gurkhas from the state and that in return the Maharaja would get the Kangra fort along with nearby 66 villages. Gurkhas were defeated by the combined forces of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sansar Chand. The fort of Kangra with 66 villages surrounding it, was made over to Ranjit Singh. Dessa Singh Majithia was appointed the Nazim or Governor of the fort and Kangra hills and from that day all states of the Jullundur Circle become tributary to the Sikhs. Sansar Chand returned to Tira Sujanpur where he died in 1823.

Sansar Chand's son, Anirudh Chand succeeded his father in 1823 but he was not destined to rule for a long time. Raja Dhian Singh, the Dogra chief of Jammu, the most powerful man in the Sikh kingdom after Maharaja Ranjit Singh, desired to marry one of the two sisters of Anirudh Chand. For the rulers of the Katoch family, this demand in itself was an insult. Anirudh Chand was adamant not to permit

*that alliance. The Maharaja got angry and led an expedition against him. Anirudh Chand had to flee and Sikhs occupied the entire state of Kangra.*

*After the first battle of Sikhs in March 1846, the territory of Punjab lying between the Sutlej and Ravi rivers, including the hill states of Kangra proper and Kullu were ceded to British Government. The entire area, comprising Kangra proper, Kullu and Seraj and the tracts of Lahul-Spiti, was now constituted into the Kangra district, with its headquarters at Kangra. After a few years, the headquarters of district was transferred to Dharmshala because that place was considered cooler and healthier for the British officers and also the slopes of Dhauladhar provided ample room to accommodate in a newly raised local contingent for the army.*



### **THE KANGRA FORT**

*The Kangra Fort*

*was the seat of power of the Katoch Rajas from the time of its 234th Raja, Raja Susharma Chand Katoch, if not from the time of its first legendary Raja, Raja Bhoomi Chand Katoch onwards. It is said to have been founded by Susharma Chand Katoch, an ally of Kauravas in the Mahabharata war. It was the ancient capital of the Katoch kingdom and symbol of power in Punjab Hill States. The Fort is situated on a precipitous cliff overhanging the Ban Ganga and Manjhi rivers. The ruins still dominate the Kangra valley. One can enter the fort by a narrow path. It was protected by a number of gates named after its winners like Jahangir, Ranjit Singh and the British. At the top of the fort, there was the palace of the Katoch kings.*

*When Mahmud Ghazni conquered it in 1009, the place was known as Bhima Nagar probably after Bhima, the second of the Pandavas. Muhammed Tughlaq also plundered the fort in 1337 but could not hold it for long. Feroz Tughlaq also invaded Kangra and laid siege of the fort in 1365 A.D. For six months the siege went on. Raja Rup Chand Katoch exhibited great courage and endurance, but ultimately submitted and offered apologies to the Sultan who with much dignity placed his hand on the back of the Raja.*

*Jahangir himself states that Akbar could not succeed in capturing the Kangra fort, it was he who did so in 1619-20. Akbar made many attempts to capture the fort but failed. However, his frequent visits to Kangra can also be inferred from the popular song sung in the hill states and elsewhere in the country in praise of Durga Jawalji.*

*“Nangi-Nangi Peri Mata Akbar Aya, Sone Da Chattar Chadaya”*

*Encouraged by the anarchy which prevailed in the plains, during the reign of Akbar all the chiefs of Hill States, resumed their independence and recovered the tracts of which they had been deprived of by the Mughals. It is found that the states of Kangra, Chamba, Jammu etc. were clashing with one another frequently. Raja Bidhi Chand of Kangra and a number of Rajas of the Hill States were involved in the revolt which took place in 1889-90 AD. The 35<sup>th</sup> year of Akbar reign.*

*The Rajas of Jasrota, Lakhanpur, Nurpur etc united with the Raja of Kangra and the united forces of these Rajas with horses numbering about 10,000 and one lakh foot, revolted. However, the Mughal forces defeated them. They were all subdued and carried to the court of Akbar who pardoned them and allowed them to their respective states as his vassals.*

*However, the two Dogra chiefs, Lal Dev and Manga Mana of Jammu, on behalf of the Raja of Jammu, Samhal Dev fought bravely and the Mughal forces did not succeed in overpowering them. They flouted the Mughal authority and therefore the Mughal invasions frequently caused a flare up in the hills of Kangra and Jammu.*

*The Mughals later made friendship with Raja Sangram Dev of Jammu and with his help invaded in 1621. The Mughal forces led by Jahangir's officers, Qasim Khan and The Raja of Jammu succeed in reducing Kangra. The Mughals entrusted the task to Sundar Das. He along with the forces of Raja Sangram Dev and also of Raja Jagat Singh of Nurpur, took over the Kangra Fort the same year. The occupation of the Fort continued with the Mughals from 1621 to 1782. From 1782 to 1785 it remained under the sikhs. Later the Mughals during the time of Shahjahan captured the Nurpur fort also in 1641.*

*Murtaza Khan on this day( 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1615) obtained leave to go for the capture of the fort of Kangra, the equal of which for strength they cannot point to in the hill country of the Punjab or even all the habitable world. From the time when the sound of Islam reached the country of Hindustan up to this auspicious time, when throne of rule has been adorned by this suppliant at the throne of Allah, none of the rulers or kings has obtained possession of it.*

*The Mughals forces inrested the fort, the trenches were portioned out and the ingress of provisions was completely stopped. Not corn or food was allowed to be supplied. For four months the forces of Katoch Raja lived upon dry fodder and similar things which they boiled and ate; but when death stared them in the face and no hope of deliverance remained, the forces surrendered the fort to the Mughals.*

*The fall of the invincible fort of Katoch to the Mughals was possible only with the help of the Hill Rajas adjoining the state of Kangra. The Rajas of Guler and Nurpur and in particular, the Raja of Jammu, played a very important role in helping the Mughals. They were all aware about the secret hideouts of the fort, the style of defence of Kangra Rajas and their internal weakness.*

*Once all such secret information was available to the Mughal forces, the possibility of capture of the fort became easy. These Rajas helped the Mughals in order to see that the Katoch Rajas are defeated and weakened as the Katoch Rajas had become powerful neighbour of these Hill states. Mughals needed local Rajas to help them and were looking for an opportunity to win tem over who in turn were looking for such a golden opportunity in order to defeat Katoch of Kangra.*

*RAJA GHAMMAND CHAND KATOCH ascended the throne in 1751. he made all the states as his tributaries but could not capture the fort from Mughal Kalidar Saif Ali Khan whose control was limited to the walls of the fort. After the death of Raja Ghammand Chand, his son Teg Chand ascended the throne of Kangra. He did not survive and his son Sansar Chand ascended the throne in 1775. It was his greatest ambition to take over the fort from Mughals. Raja Sansar Chand, therefore sought the help of Jai Singh Kanhai a Sikh commander, who agreed. They laid siege of the fort in 1781-82. The Kalidar Saif Khan deid defending the fort and after his death, the fort fell in the hands of Jai Singh, who did not give it to Sansar Chand as promised but kept inder his control till 1785.*



*In 1785, Jai Singh Kanhai was defeated by a combined force of his rival Sikh General assisted by Raja Sansar Chand. Jai Singh has surrender the fort to Raja Sansar Chand in exchange for some territories in the plains of Pathankot. With the occupation of the fort, Raja Sansar Chand became the supreme ruler of the Kangra Valley. The fort fell in the hands of legitimate chief in 1785 itself. >From 1785 to 1809 the fort remained with Maharaja Sansar Chand Katoch.*

*In 1805, General Amar Singh Thapa invaded Kangra and laid siege of the fort for four years. Maharaja Sansar Chand had to take assistance of Ranjit Singh of Lahore who in turn wanted to take over the fort before expelling the Gorkha invaders from the Kangra valley. Maharaja Sansar Chand had to agree to the demand of Ranjit Singh and in 1809 itself the fort was taken over by the Sikhs from Maharaja Sansar Chand. The Sikhs expelled the Gorkhas from the hills forever.*

*After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the British violated the Treaty of Amritsar and defeated the sikh forces. It took them only 10 years to capture Punjab and along with Punjab, Kangra fell into their hands also. During the British rule, the fort remained in their control.*

*The palace and the fort were destroyed by the earthquake in 1905 in Kangra. It is now in ruins. In the courtyard there are two temples. One is that of Lakshmi Narayan and the other of Ambika Devi, a family goddess of Katoch. Jain temple with Adinath in stone image also exists.*

*Jains found this place as a tirtha and settled in Kangra. The fort remained neglected during the British period but now the Archaeological Department of the Government maintains it. The fort is still an attraction to the tourists and the pilgrims visiting Kangra.*



### **DHARAMSHALA**

*Under the shadow of the great rock wall of Dhauldhar, where those legendary shepardesses, the Gaddi maidens, immediately above Dharamshala rises one of the main spurs of Himalayas, the dark, pine covered mountain-side reaching out towards the upper peaks that soar into the regions of eternal snow. Divided into upper and lower towns with a difference of some 457 metres (1,500 ft)*

*between them against a background of snow-capped mountains, forests of giant conifers meet carefully cultivated tea gardens at the beautiful resort of Dharamshala which stands on the spur of the Dhauldhar range. The mountains enfold the three sides of the town and the valley stretches beyond to the south. Known for its scenic beauty amidst high pine trees, tea gardens and other timber-yielding trees vying with one another for height, calmness and serenity. Dharamshala's altitude varies between 1,250 metres (4,100 ft) and 2,000 metres (6,560 ft). The snow line here is perhaps more easily accessible than at any early morning's start. The glittering rays of the sun fall upon the glossy snow and cast their reflections back in the valley in all the seven colours of the rainbow, beckoning people on.*

*The scene shifts as one approaches Dharamshala, the plains below wear a veil of blue while the Dhauldhar spur on which Dharamshala stands rises dark and pine covered. Now the seat of his holiness, Dalai Lama, after the Chinese conquest of his country, Dharamshala is evocative of imperial days in places like McLeodganj and Forsythe Ganj. Headquarters of the Kangra District, it became the capital in 1852 and is 52 years old.*

*Wrecked by an earthquake in 1905, it rose like a phoenix from the ashes, more resplendent than ever steadily acquiring a pride place among tourist attractions in Himachal Pradesh. When Tibetan exodus began, they first went to Dalhousie but later shifted their colony to McLeodganj in upper Dharamshala. Dalhousie's loss was Dharamshala's gain.*



*Since 1960, when it became temporary headquarters of the Dalai Lama, Dharamshala has risen into international repute as "The Little Lhasa in India".*

*The high altitude, cool and favorable weather have contributed towards the creation of a Tibetan environment. More than 3,000 Tibetans have made Dharamshala their temporary living mostly in McLeodganj.*

## The People

*Predominant population of the district comprises of Hindus followed by Muslim, Bhudhists, Sikhs, Christians and Jains constitute the negligible proportion of the district population. The Hindus mostly constitute Rajputs Brahmins and Scheduled Cast. The main Rajput community in the district are viz. Katoch, Pathania, Dogra, Jasrotia, Jaswal, Jamwal, Katwal, Guleria, Mian, Thakur, Rana, Rathi etc. The Rajputs are well known in the history for displaying their valour and fighting qualities.*

*The Rajput of high class never gave their daughters in marriage to those belonging to lower ones. The Brahmin generally acted as priest and religious devotees. During the early period they occupied an important position in royal courts as well as in the religious life of the people. The Brahmins also constitute various classes/groups. Those belonging to high class generally act as priest and preceptors of the people. The lower class Brahmins apart from their religious function also plough their fields. Still lower in hierarchy are Acharj and Ghirath. The matrimonial alliances of the Brahmin of different classes are restricted to their own class/group.*

*Apart from these, the cast Hindus also constitute communities like Sood, Khatri, Mahajan, Walia, etc; who are mainly engaged in business activities. The scheduled castes constitute Chuhre/Bhangi, Barad, Chamar, Chhimbe, Dumne, Julahe, Lohar, Sanhai, Teli etc. (Hindi caste names) Matrimonial alliance of Schedule Caste are also restricted to their own community. The scheduled Tribes population is negligible in the district Gaddi and Gujars two tribal communities have lost their Scheduled Tribes status in district because of area restriction. The Scheduled Tribe population in the district is mainly represented by the persons belonging to other Scheduled Tribe communities in the state who are mostly in government service.*

## Folk Dances



*Jhamakada is a group dance performed in Kangra. This dance is exclusively performed by women. The dance is accompanied by a variety of percussion instruments and lyrical songs.*



## Fauna & Flora

### *Fauna*



The district is rich in animals and birds which include some of the rare species. The animals and birds that are found in the district are- Ghoral, Kakar, Kastura, Aimu, Ibex, Blue mountain sheep, Thar, Black Bear, Brown Bear, Panther or Leopard, Snow Leopard, Wild Boar, Spotted Deer or Chital, Samber, Porcupine, Flying squirrel and Himalyan Pine Martin. Apart from the important game animals described above animals like Jackal, Monkey, Langoor, Fox etc. are also met within the area.



There is a variety of birds in the district like Monal pheasant, Snow cock, Western horned tragopan, Juguriam, Pea-cock, Ring dove, Spotted dove, shikara, parrot, tawny eagle, green pigeon, pigeon, gritton vulture, tits, nut cracker, Pies, Wood peaker, Crow, Himalyan fly catcher, etc. which are found in the tract of this district.

## *Flora*

*This district is rich in flora. The following various species of plants and forest trees are generally found in Kangra district.*

<b><u>Vernacular Name</u></b>	<b><u>Botanical Name</u></b>
<i>Bil</i>	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>
<i>Neem</i>	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
<i>Tun</i>	<i>Cedrela toone</i>
<i>Am(cultivated)</i>	<i>Mangifera indica</i>
<i>Deodar</i>	<i>Mimosa rubicaulis</i>
<i>Kikar</i>	<i>Acacia arbaica</i>
<i>Khair</i>	<i>Acacia catech</i>
<i>Behera</i>	<i>Terminalia belerica</i>
<i>Harrer</i>	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>
<i>Kinu</i>	<i>Diospyross fomentosa</i>
<i>Tut(cultivated)</i>	<i>Morus alba</i>
<i>Palakh</i>	<i>Ficus rumphii</i>
<i>Pipal(cultivated)</i>	<i>Ficus religisa</i>
<i>Rumbal</i>	<i>Ficus glomerata</i>
<i>Khor, Akhrot</i>	<i>Juglans regia</i>