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BILASPUR

PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

Bilaspur is once again in the limelight and there is persistent demand from many quarters to know more about the State and its people. This small booklet is written with the object of satisfying the demand and I hope it will interest those who wish to make closer acquaintance with the subject

New Delhi,

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Anandchand

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CHAPTER I

TOPOGRAPHY OF BILASPUR

Situation and Extent:

Bilaspur lies between $31^{\circ} 12'$ and $31^{\circ} 35'$ and $76^{\circ} 26'$ and $76^{\circ} 58'$ E. It has an area of 453 square miles and a population of 1,26,099 (1951).

Name:

The State was originally known as Kahlur, after a fort of that name, built by Raja Kahal Chand, sixth of his line, and called after himself Kot Kahlur. Raja Dip Chand who succeeded to the gaddi about 1653 A.D. founded Byaspur, the present capital, in honour of Byasji; hence Bilaspur.

Boundaries:

Bilaspur or Kahlur is situated on both banks of the Sutlej, in a tract where the river, breaking away from the middle ranges of the Himalayas, threads its way through the valleys of the lower hills. It is bounded on the North and East by the State of Himachal Pradesh, on the West by the districts of Kangra and Hoshiarpur in the Punjab and on the South by the P.E.P.S. Union.

The Sutlej River:

The Sutlej passes through the middle of the State from East to West with a large bend in the centre, and divides it into two approximately equal parts, that on the right bank being termed Parla (Trans) and that on the left Warla (cis). These divisions have in recent times been

utilized for the formation of Tehsils, Parla becoming Ghumarwin Tehsil and Warla Bilaspur Tehsil.

The Seven Dhars:

The country to the North and West of the Sutlej resembles that of the North-East of the Kangra District. A large portion of it is undulating, or slightly hilly, and between 1,500 and 2,000 feet in elevation but there are four well defined ridges which rise to an elevation of from 3,000 to 4,000 feet, and have a general direction from North-West to South-East. Commencing from the South-West there are the Naina Devi Dhar on the left bank of the river, and the Kot-ki-dhar, the Janjiar Dhar, the Tiun Dhar and Sreewan Dhar on the right bank.

To the South -East of the Sutlej the country is altogether mountainous, and is an offshoot from the higher hills. The elevation rises in one place to over 6,000 feet, that of the Sutlej being about 1,500 feet. The principal ranges here are the Rattanpur Dhar and the Bahadurpur Dhar, which run parallel to one another from the north to the South, the latter being the easternmost. On the highest point of the Bahadurpur Dhar, 6,164 feet above sea level, stands the Bahadurpur fort, and further South, where the ranges extends into Nalagarh, the Malaon fort. The slopes of both ranges are generally steep and their upper parts sometimes precipitous. These seven ranges of Nainadevi, Kot, Jhanjiar, Tiun, Sreewan, Rattanpur and Bahadurpur constitute the seven dhars of Bilaspur and the state is sometimes called "Sat-dhar-Kahlur", meaning Kahlur of the seven hills.

Valleys:

As we have said above, Bilaspur consists of a series of seven principal ranges and in between them lie the fertile valleys wherein most of the people attend to agriculture. The most renowned of these is the Dami valley situated between the Bahadurpur and Bandla ranges at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. About six miles long and nearly half as wide, it is famous for its produce of maize, rice, sugarcane, ginger and wheat. Less renowned are the "mani-ka-khala" between the Tiun and Sreewan ranges and the un-named valley between Jhanjhar and Tiun which begins at Ghumarwin and proceeds right upto the border of Kangra at Hatwar and Bahota. This latter vale is nearly a dozen miles in length and about 3-4 miles wide although it is greatly cut up by the streams and nullas which flow into it from the adjoining ridges. Lastly there is the valley of Chaunta on the Sutlej river nearly 8 miles upstream from Bhakra where the grounds on both sides of the river are very flat and highly productive. It is this area which will form the main storage of the Bhakra Dam and dispossess thousands of people from their agricultural vocation.

Geology:

The rock-facies to be met with in Bilaspur fall into two broad stratographical zones; these are: -

- 1) The outer or sub-himalayan zone composed of sediments for the most part of Tertiary age but including sub-recent deposits; and
- 2) Central zone composed of granite and other crystalline rocks.

The more important sub-divisions of the former zone are known as Sabattu, Nahan and Krol. Mostly the outer hills are conglomerates, sandstones and softy earthy beds but the rocks on the northern side of the boundary consist of limestones wherein some fossils are found, especially in the Haritalyangar area.

Climate and rainfall:

The climate is temperate; although snow falls are regular on the high hills in winter and once in thirty years it snows even in Bilaspur town. The summers are invariably hot, the temperature rising to 110° F in some places but it does not continue at this level for more than 4-5 days just before the break of the monsoon. The rains generally begin in the first week of June and given an average of 46 inches in the year, of which nearly three-fourth falls in the months of July, August and September while the remaining one-fourth is made up during the winter months of December and January.

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE

Population Figures:

The population, which was 86,564 in 1881, had raised to 90,873 in 1901 and stands at 126,099 in the last Census of 1951.

The present average density is 278 persons per square mile on the total area while 90 percent of the people are agriculturists and 10% non-agriculturist. The ratio of urban to rural population is 3:97.

Villages and Towns:

There are 953 villages with roughly 188 square miles (85,000 acres) of cultivation, the balance of 265 square miles being made up of grasslands and uncultivable waste.

There are two small towns of Bilaspur and Shri Naina Devi. The former with population of about 4,000 is the headquarters of the State, while the latter is important only as a place of pilgrimage.

The People:

The people of Bilaspur consist of the early inhabitants of this area known as Kunaits and the Rajputs and Brahmins who came along with the ruling family. The other tribes consist of Rathis, Gujars, Jats, Chamars and Kolis, but the last named area higher in status than the Kolis of the up hills and have recently been accepted into the Rajput fold.

There are said to be about eighty sub-divisions of Kenets in this State, the more important being Noiru, Maliaru, Dodhwalu, Bhadogu, Dalgawal, Kotwal, Dagsechi, Jabliani, Sahreli and Kasoli. Some of these claim to be illegitimate descendants of various Rajas, e.g., the Maliarus, whose ancestor is said to have been Tegh Chand, third son of Raja Kahn Chand, eleventh Raja. More about them will be said later.

The rajputs are a strong and relatively numerous section. They are nearly all of the Chandel tribe, and offshoots from the ruling family. They are usually classified as Kahluria Mians and Chandlas. The former are those who are descended from Rajas belonging to more or less historical times, and are called Ajmerchandias, Tarachandias, Kalyanchandias, and Sultanchandias, after the Rajas from whom they are sprung. The Chandlas are other Rajputs, whose connection with the ruling family is more remote, though as a rule clearly traceable. Their families are named according to the villages held by their founders and are as follows:-

Barhial descended from Raja Udai Chand (1133-1143 A.D). Darol, Chandwal, Singhwal, Ghewal, Nanglu, Maghpuria, Rajada, Bacholar, Kanhiaru, Raipuria, Doklu, descended from Sangar Chand, the 17th Raja, and Manjheru descended from Mian Mithu, brother and Wazir of the 23rd Raja, Narinder Chand, whose younger son Nandu founded another Chandla family, the Badhiatu.

The Kahluria Mians do not touch the plough, but with the exception of the Ajmerchandias, engage in agricultural work. Their women are pardah-nashin. The Chandlas plough their land themselves and are other wise lax in the upkeep of their ancestral customs. They are accused of permitting widow remarriage, but their women do not work in the field.

The Rathis of Bilaspur are believed to be the descendants of degenerate Rajputs and Kanet mothers. They marry their girls to the inferior classes of Rajputs. Their sub-divisions are Mahrani, Baroti, Bandri, Dhuli, Bharol, Lobtri, Rajnal, Gharial, Sin, Basahri, Ikthania, Tania, and Kharial.

The other tribes need no special mention. There are a few Muhammadans, the descendants of certain Chandel Rajputs who are converted to Islam some generations ago, and some Barbais, Telis, Fakirs etc.

The Brahamins are divided into Sasani and Dharebar, Acharaj, Bedwa and Panda. The Sasanis are, generally speaking, strict and orthodox. They serve as priests to the higher castes, and are all nearly muafidars (holders of land free of revenue). They will not intermarry with any of the Brahmins of high hills, not even with the Parsramis. Sasani men will marry Dharebar women, but they will not give their own daughters to Dharebars. No Sasani will eat food cooked by a Dharebar. The Dharebars are the priests of the Kanets, and practice all their peculiar customs, such as rit, widow remarriage, etc. They plough the land and are not, as a rule, muafidars. In fact, their wearing of the janeo is practically

they only thing, which distinguishes them from the Kanets.

The first distinction to be drawn is that between Brahmins who follow, and Brahmins who abstain from, agriculture. Those who have never defiled their hands with the plough, but have restricted themselves to the legitimate pursuits of the caste, are held to be pure Brahmins; while those who have once descended to the occupation of husbandry retain indeed the name but are no longer acknowledged by their brethren, nor held in the same reverence by the people at large. The purer Brahmins, who abstain from agriculture, by no means restrict themselves to sacerdotal duties; they will hold land, though they will not consent to cultivate it; they lend money, engage in service, discharge village offices such as that of lambardar or patwari, and will enter on almost any secular pursuit which promises a subsistence. The majority of them know no language except the current dialect of the hills. Some are sufficiently acquainted with the Sanskrit character to read the texts appointed for ceremonies; but few indeed are entitled to rank as Pundits, or persons learned in the Hindu scriptures. The hill Brahmins will not associate with the same caste from the plains. Both profess mutual distrust, and neither will partake of bread cooked by the other. The hill Brahman and his women fold also eat flesh, which the Brahman of the plains religiously eschews. He is still regarded with considerable reverence. The usual salutations from all classes, the King or the peasant, are "pairi paunda" (I fall at your feet) or "Matha teka" (I bow my head in submission). In returning these courtesies, the Brahman

says “ashir bad” to the higher class”, such as Rajputs, and “Charanji Kalyan” to the other castes who are worthy of any recognition at all.

Manners and Customs:

A child is usually born in the lower storey of a house. If the parents are well-to-do, a Brahman prepares the child’s horoscope at the very hour of birth but the ordinary zamindar often dispenses with it altogether. If the child is a boy, the four gontrals or birth feasts are held at usual intervals prescribed for the caste of the parents and during the period of impurity (sutak) the mother remains in the lower storey and nobody eats food or drink water from the house except relatives and people of lower caste. No particular notice is taken of the birth of a girl although sometimes a small feast is given to Brahmans and the members of the brotherhood, but there are no gontrals.

Betrothals are of two kinds. The orthodox form in accordance with Hindu ritual is barni. It is carried out through the priest and the barber. Clothes and ornaments are exchanged. The barber, priest, and servants of both families receive gifts, and a feast is given. The contract is rendered binding by the distribution of gifts, by the wearing by the girl of the clothes and ornaments sent, and by the painting of her forehead with sandal paste. The other form “sagai or sota” is adopted by the Kanets and lower castes. The father of the boy sends a few ornaments or a rupee or two to the bride’s parents by the hand of a priest or a relation. If the presents are accepted and the

messenger is offered and takes food in the girl's house, the contract is effected.

A betrothal may be cancelled, but the party, at whose instance this is done, must repay the other all expenses incurred in connection with the ceremony.

Marriage rules are not so definite or so strict in the hills as in the plains. Certain degrees of relationship are, however, regarded as prohibited. Rajputs, Brahmans, and the higher class Kanets will not marry within their own gotra. The ordinary Kanet will not marry a girl connected with him on his father's side in the seventh generation. Some make the twelfth generation the limit. All will marry connections on the mother's side beyond the third generation. The lower castes such as Kolis, Rehrs, etc. are said to prohibit marriage between parties connected in the fourth generation on the father's side, and to allow first cousins on the mother's side to marry. But it is probably more correct to say that these castes have no definite rules.

A man may marry as many wives as he pleases or can afford to keep. If he has more than one wife by regular marriage, the first one married is considered the senior until a son is born, and then the mother of the eldest son is the principal wife and supreme in the household.

There are three kinds of marriage ceremonies. First "biah" or regular marriage in accordance with the Shastras. This needs no particular description. The other two forms "jhajra" and "gadar" or paraina" are informal and unorthodox. The bridegroom sends one or two men to fetch the bride, who comes attended by a party of her

own relations and friends. On arriving at the bridegroom's house, a basket of wheat or rice, a lota of water, and a lamp are placed in front of the door, and the bride worships these and the threshold. Then she goes into the house and worships the hearth and Ganesh. In the jhajra ceremony the worship of Ganesh is essential. If this is dispensed with, the ceremony is gadar. There is no other distinction between the two forms. The bridegroom if well-to-do gives a feast which is attended by a representative of every house in the village and fees are given to the priest, the barber, musicians, and village menials. Three days later the bride's parents visit the newly married couple bringing with them some food. The visit is returned by the bridegroom three days after the above visit.

A biah marriage is strictly speaking, indissoluble. The rit system of divorce is applicable to jhajra and Gadar marriages. Rit is the name applied to the value of clothes and ornaments given to the bride by her husband at the time of marriage. A husband can repudiate his wife by taking away the clothes and ornaments given by him to her. If a wife wishes to leave her husband the marriage can be annulled by the latter's acceptance of rit.

By remarrying, a widow forfeits all right to her first husband's property which belongs to his sons whether by her or by another wife. Her children by her first husband are generally supported in any case by the latter's brother, if any, whether he is her husband or not.

After death the people perform the "Kiria Karm" in regular form. The corpse is burnt on the day of death.

There is no band of musicians, and proceedings do not wear the air of gaiety. Only a single drum is beaten, while the corpse is being carried to the burning ground. The sacrifice of a goat to end the period of mourning takes place after sixteen days. The prescribed shrads or offerings to the dead are performed at the proper intervals.

Religion:

The land owning and tilling classes are almost entirely Hindu as indeed is practically the whole village population; in fact, Hindus constitute about 98% of the entire population, the remaining 2% being Muslims.

The State is covered with a network of shrines and temples ranging from the temples of Shri Rangnath and Gopalji at Bilaspur, or the most frequent temple of Shri Naina Devi to the Guga or the roughly hewn figure of the village Siddh under the shade of some papal tree. The important devtas are fewer in number and usually Shiva, Kali or Vishnu in their proper form. Certain other gods are also found, of which the most notable are Guga, Narsing Bir and Dept Siddh.

The most ancient temple at Bilaspur is that of Rangnath while Shri Gopalji's temple is the chapel of the rulers dynasty. In Bilaspur there is also a special goddess of the Rajas family and this is the deification of a pious Rani of olden times named Deomati. Her temple is situated at Sakirthin and on all occasions of births, marriages, etc., the royal Chandel family go to this temple for offerings.

The most notable place of worship in the Bilaspur State is the temple of Shri Naina Devi, situated on the hill of that name, whose dome rises 3,000 feet above the sacred town of Anandpur in the Hoshiarpur District, and which is so conspicuous a feature of the landscape viewed from the plains of Rupar and Una. The temple was built by Raja Bir Chand in the eighth century. According to legend, Naina an Ahir to whom the accession of Raja Bir Chand had brought peace and protection, was hording cattle on the flat summit of a hill above Jandbhari, when he observed that his cows were giving their milk to a white stone. He informed the Raja, who proceeded to the spot, and there found a beautiful image of the goddess Durga close to the stone. A temple was forthwith erected, and called Naina Devi after the Ahir.

Gugapir has little shrines in quite a few places. They contain the image of Guga mounted on a horse and are supposed to be especially efficacious for snakebites. Narsing Bir the women's god is worshipped both by men and women and so is Lakhadata in whose honour wrestling matches are often held during the summer months. Another deity is Dewat Siddh, whose place is near Chakmoh on the borders of the State and his symbols are two stones marked with the impress of human feet.

Fairs and Festivals:

An important religious fair at Bilaspur town is that of Rangnath held in the month of May each year. The temple of this deity is believed to be very old. A fair is held at Nainadevi in August when thousands of pilgrims from far

and near flock to the temple. Small fairs are also held here during the Nauratas.

The annual fair at the Jhanda temple in village Boler some ten miles east of Bilaspur is also largely attended. It takes place in the month of Har. Jhanda was the principal man of the Noiru section of Kanets who was deified after his death.

The Naulari or annual cattle fair is held at Bilaspur for four or five days in the third week of March when good trade is usually done. Bullocks and other cattle are brought from the neighbouring parts of Pepsu and the Punjab and sold to the Zamindars of Bilaspur and Himachal Pradesh. The occasion is made an excuse for sports, wrestling and other amusements.

A fair lasting nearly ten days is also held at Geharwin to commemorate the historic exploits of Gugapir. In the month of Bhadon, mandalis of singers move from place to place singing the episodes of his adventurous life and converge at Geharwin proper where Guga's temple is situated.

The chief festival of the people is the annual Sair which is observed on the first day of Asauj. During the early hours of the morning on that day the barber goes about with a basket in his hands. A galgal is placed in it and as he goes about he announces the arrival of that auspicious day. Men, women and children bow to that fruit which is the emblem of the fruits of the harvest about to be reaped. All the members of the family meet on that day, the women appear in their best dress and the best

food is cooked and partaken. This day makes the departure of the rainy season and the people thank God because the rains have gone leaving their houses and crops uninjured.

Another local festival is the Lohri celebrated on the last day of Phon when the family worships a raging fire of logs in the evening. The next day which is the first of Magh, is famous for the partaking of "khichari" a meal made out by the mixture of rice and dall which is partaken by each member of the household.

All the major Hindu festivals like Deewali, Holi and Dussera are regularly celebrated.

Occupation:

Agriculture is of course, the main occupation of the people of the State. The only industries of importance which exist are the extraction of wood and resin grown in the forest and the manufacture of katha from kher trees. At Bilaspur some gun-powder is also manufactured.

Food and Dress:

The chief staples of food are maize and rice. Maize is a very favourite grain and from September till May is in constant consumption. In the rice growing areas the people reserve the clear unbroken rice for sale, retaining the chipped pieces for their own use. The agricultural classes have usually three meals a day. Before going to their morning work the men partake of some bread reserved from the evening repast. This is called "datialu". At 12 o'clock is the first full meal consisting of cakes make

of maize and some dall or chhachh (butter milk). In the evening there is a supper in which rice sometimes appears. On festive occasions a goat is often killed and eaten with relish.

The ordinary clothing of ma man consists of a shirt (kurta) and dhoti. Although a turban was invariably in use twenty years ago, it has given place to a skull cap (topi) or more often the person goes bare-headed. Among the upper classes the clothes are mostly cut on English pattern.

The female dress is picturesque. They wear a frock reaching to the knees (kurti) and long trousers called suthan. A dopatta or mantle to form the head-dress is mostly colourful and embroidered. In recent times, however, the Punjabi kurta and salwar have extensively come into use with the jaldar dopatta thrown across the shoulders. Another ancient dress called "pishwaz" which is a cotton gown of light texture has now fallen into disuse.

Dwellings and Furniture:

The house of the peasantry are scattered in pleasant and picturesque localities. The house is of sun-dried brick, having generally two storey's. The inmates occupy the lower floor, the upper being used during the greater part of the year as a lumber-room or store-room for grain. During the rains the upper room is used for cooking and in many cases as a sleeping room, the whole family occupying it at night in order to escape the close and unhealthy air of the ground floor. The upper roof is

generally made of thatch, thick, substantial, and neatly trimmed, but of late years slates have been extensively used. The outside walls are plastered with red or light-coloured earth. The front space is kept clean and fresh, and the whole is encircled by a hedge of trees and brambles, maintaining privacy and affording material for repairs. On one side of the cottage is the shed for the cows and bullocks, called "gohed" and another building containing the sheep and goats, styled the ori. If the owner of the farm be a man of substance, he will probably possess a buffalo or two, these are penned in separate tenements called "mehara". The thatch of the cottage is renewed every third year; and in parts where grass is plentiful, a fresh covering is added annually. The ridge-pole is made of tun, sisu, ohi, or fir. Every year, in the season of the Naoratra in September the cottage is replastered inside and outside, a labor which devolves up in the women in all but the highest castes. On the occasion of a marriage too, the bride-grooms' house is always adorned with some fresh gay-coloured plaster.

The entrance to the cottage is usually to the east or to the south; but there is no general law, and the favourite position varies in different parts of the State. The west, however, is superstitiously eschewed. The entrance to the cottage is secured by a wooden door, and during the absence of the household is fastened outside by a lock.

The interior of the domicile is furnished generally in the simplest style. Every house has its set of vessels made of brass, copper, or other metal according to the prevailing custom, and there are also the earthen jar (ghada) and

pottery of various shapes and names. The latter is extensively used by the poorer section of the population. In the winter, the women plait mats of rice straw (manjri) which are laid down over the floor of the room. They construct also a sort of quilt stuffed with pieces of old clothes. This is called a "khind" and is used indifferently as a coverlet or as a mattress. A hukka, a few dried herbs, a charpoy (cot) and a wicker basket suspended from the roof containing bread and other articles necessary to be secured from the depredations of cats and vermin, constitute the remaining furniture of the household.

Language:

Language is the common heritage of a people based on their culture and social customs with a historical background. One language can have several dialects but the main difference between the language and a dialect is that the former is written while the latter is only spoken and is not reduced to writing. The common stock words are, however, the same, but the inflections differ.

Perhaps the most comprehensive survey of the Indian languages so far made is "The Linguistic Survey of India" conducted by Sir George A. Grierson and published in Calcutta by the Government of India in 1916. Another survey, no less important, relating to the Himalayan languages, is that by the Rev. T. Grahame Bailey and found in the Royal Asiatic Society Monographs, Volume XVII, published in 1915.

The Linguistic Survey of India, Volume IX gives the language of Bilaspur as Kahluri, which finds mention on

page 677 of Part I of this Volume. In the scheme of nomenclature and classification adopted in this Survey, the language and dialects connected with Bilaspur and adjoining areas are shown as in the following table:

Central Group of Indo-Aryan Languages (Volume IX)				
Punjabi (Part-I)		Pahari (Part IV)		Gujari (Part IV, Page 925)
Dogari (Page 637)	Standard Punjabi	Western Pahari (Page 375)		Sub-mountain Gujari (Page 959)
		Mandi Group (Page 715)		Gujari of Kangra (Page 962)
Kandiali (Page 775)	Kangri (Page 776)	Gadi (Page 792)	Chhota Banghali (page 715)	

From the above, it will be clear that according to the Linguistic Survey of India, "Kalhuri" (Bilaspur) is an offshoot of Punjabi and the dialects of the States of Kahlur and Mangal are termed "Kahluri" or Bilaspuri". Grierson calls it "a rude Punjabi" similar to that spoken in Hoshiarpur district. This is further illustrated in the map showing the dialects and sub-dialects of Punjabi (Plate 2). He supports this contention by giving a few specimen sentences of Bilaspuri on page 678 of Volume IX Part-I.

Rev. Bailey who seems to have made a more detailed survey of the dialects of the Simla Hills, which are reproduced in the Punjab States Gazetteer, Volume VIII "Simla Hill States" and published under the authority of the Punjab Government in 1910, shows in the introduction that his notes concern the dialects of the Northern and Central Simla States and not those of Bilaspur. This omission is however, rectified by him later when in the Royal Asiatic Society Monographs Volume XVII, he describes Bilaspuri as under:-

"There are in all six dialects spoken in Bilaspur, or Kehlur as the State is sometimes called (Plate 3). In the centre of the State extending to a distance of six or seven miles in every direction from the Capital is the standard dialect of Bilaspuri or Kahluri. Immediately to the west of this, in the portion of the State which just out westwards and is bounded on the north by the district of Kangra, we find a dialect which we may call Western Bilaspuri. To the north of the standard dialect are found two minor dialects, that to the west near the Kangra border, to which we may give the name Northern Bilaspuri, while that on the east near the Mandi border is the same as Mandiali which has been treated in the Language of the Himalayas. Immediately south of the area of the standard dialect the people speak a slightly different dialect which I have called Southern Bilaspuri; its area is a narrow strip of country on the Nalagarh border, and to the east of this in south-east Bilaspur is found a dialect locally known as Dami. It extends over the border into Arki State and beyond it commences the Kiuthali dialect which is spoken all over the Central Simla States"

“The Bilaspur dialects are so closely allied that one might call them one dialect Bilaspuri or Kahluri. I have preferred the former name as the State is much better known to the outside world as Bilaspur, the name Kahlur hardly being known to any one who have not visited the State”. (Pages 231-232).

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY OF BILASPUR

Introductory:

Until the early part of the 19th Century, the mountain area between the Sutlej and the Indus retained a political condition, which in its many-fold features recalls the days of the Epic period. The whole of this area, in the outer ranges of the Punjab Himalaya, was divided up among numerous States, each under it's own hereditary chief. Some of these principalities were founded as late as the 15th or 16th Century, while others dated from the early Centuries of the Christian era.

But ancient as many of these States were, they were not the original polity of the hills. The latest traditions refer to a remote period when the hill tracks were inhabited by a people called "Khash", who were without caste or class distinctions. Whether they were or were not of Aryan stock it is difficult to find, but they were presumably of the same race as the Khasias of Kumanon and Garhwal (now in Uttar Pradesh), who are generally supposed to be Aryan. The Khash began by being self-governed by the Panchayat system but gradually leaders sprang up in the persons of Mawis, who formed small confederacies and lived by preying on one another.

The Khash people were later on given the name of "Kanet" which generally means violation of the Shastras and in the Simla hills they are divided into innumerable subsections or Khels. These take their names either from some famous ancestor or from the places where the Khel

was settled and according to the Cambridge history of India (Volume 5) Kenindas were the original inhabitants of these hills and most probably the word "Kanet" is a corruption of the older name.

Later these hills began to be governed by numerous petty chiefs, each owning a small domain and bearing the title of Rana or Thakur. The domain of the Rana was called "Runhun" and that of a Thakur "Thakurai". The Ranas were Kshatris and the Thakurs of some lower caste. These petty chiefs were the primitive rulers of the hills until they were subjected by the founders of the Rajput States, which arose at a later date. But even after their subjection, they continued to exercise great power and even held positions of honour and trust under the Rajas. They were in fact, the Barons of the hills and held a position very analogous to the Barons of the Middle Ages in Europe.

It is interesting to note that the larger and more important States bore names which, as in ancient India, were applicable both to the country and the tribe by which it was inhabited. Such names are Kashmirea, Durgara, Trigarta and Kuluta. In all these States the name of the Capital was different from that of the principality. The States of later origin were generally named after the Capital and when that was changed, the name of the State was changed along with it.

The history of the Punjab hill states is one of almost continuous warfare. When a strong ruler rose to power, the larger State made tributary their smaller neighbours, but these again asserted their Independence, as soon as a

favourable opportunity offered. These wars as a rule did not lead to any great political changes, for on the whole the hill chiefs were considerate of each others rights. Being all of the same race and faith, and also nearly related to one another by marriage and even closer family ties, they were content to make each other tributary or to replace a deposed chief by his own kinsmen.

That the hill States were able to maintain their political status for such a long period was in great measure due to their isolated position and the inaccessible character of the country. It is improbable, however, that they were completely sovereign for any great length of time. In the absence of epigraphically and literary evidence, we may assume that the Western Himalaya formed part, nominally at least, of the great Empires of the Mauryas, Kushanas and Guptas. Each followed one another in succession in Northern India. Kashmir too, as we know, held a loose sovereignty over the hill States between the Sutlej and the Indus and there is a saying:

“Bae Raj Pahad de, Bich Jammu Sardar;

Rakhin laj Pahad di, too para garibnawaz” .

There are twenty two hill chiefs of whom Jammu is the Sardar O God! Please up hold the honour of the hills in your mercy!

The Mohammadan invasion which began about A.D. 1000, seemed to have had little influence on the political condition of the hills. The early Mohammadan rulers were too much engrossed in extending or defending their

conquests on the plains to think of the hills, which were for the most part left undisturbed.

With the advent of the Mogul rule, most of the hill states were compelled to bow to the foreign yoke and early in Akbar's reign, most of them became subject or tributary. During the reigns of Jehangir and Shahjehan, when the Mogul Empire reached the zenith of its powers, the hill Rajas quietly settled down to the position of tributaries and the edicts of the Emperor were received and executed with ready obedience. This may not, however, be true of Bilaspur, which never paid any tribute to the great Mogul (vide provincial government of the Moguls by Saran).

At the same time, all accounts agree that the Imperial authority sat very lightly on the hill chiefs. Their prerogatives were seldom questioned and there was no interference in their internal affairs. They were left to themselves in the government of their principalities and were allowed to exercise the function of powers of Independent sovereigns. They built forts and waged war on one another without any reference to the Emperor and sometimes even asked and received aid in men and arms from the nearest Mogul Viceroy at Sirhind. On the decline of the Mogul Empire and the transfer of the Punjab to the Afghans in 1752, these hill states came under the supremacy of Ahmad Shah Duranni, but his control was never more than nominal in the States east of the Ravi river.

With the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to power, the States fell on evil days, and about 1809 most of them were

made tributary, and soon afterwards quite a few were annexed to the Sikh Kingdom. Here again, the notable exception was the State of Bilaspur, which never paid any tribute to the Sikhs and its boundaries formed the easternmost limits up to which the authority of the Sikh Kingdom extended even at its height.

With the collapse of the Sikh power after 1848, the Punjab passed into the hands of the British, but even before that most of the Cis Sutlej States had entered into treaty relationship with the then East India Company and their status as rulers had been duly recognized by the British power. Subsequent events are contemporary history and will find mention at their appropriate places.

The suffix of the royal family in Bilaspur was “Chand” from the early times and has remained unchanged to the present day. The title “Deva” is found after each Rajas name in inscriptions and copper plate deeds. This too was a royal designation, as we learn from Sanskrit literature, and was affixed to the names of Kings and Queens in the masculine or feminine form, as Rex and Regina are in the British Royal family. Hence arose the Rajput salutation Jaideya or Jaideva, which originally was accorded only to Rajputs or Royal rank. The original form in Sanskrit was Jayatu - Devah - “May the King be victorious”.

An heir apparent in former times bore the title of Yuvaraja. It fell into disuse in the hills and its place was taken by Tikka. The title of “Mian” is of Mohammadan origin and is said to have been conferred by Jehangir on

the young Princes from the hills, who were hostages at his Court. In later times, its use has become more general.

Sources:

The early history of Kahlur is mainly taken from a "Banswara", compiled under the direct supervision of the late Raja Hira Chand. It was drawn up by men of learning in the State, who were given access to such family and State records as existed. It was finished and printed at Bilaspur in Sambat 1939 (1882 A.D.).

Origin of the Ruling Family:

The ruling family of Kahlur claims descent from Sishupal, a hero of the Mahabharata, who resigned in Chanderi to the south of Rajputana. Hence they are known as Chandel Rajputs. The story runs that Hari Har Chand, the seventieth of his line, succeeded to a diminished heritage, and encouraged by dream in which the goddess Jowala Mukhi appeared to him, sought his fortune at her shrine in the Kangra valley. His youngest son, Govind, was given the kingdom while four sons came in search of adventure with their father.

The Raja of Kangra met the pilgrim army at Nadaon, and the retinues of the two Chiefs held a friendly tournament, in which the Southern knights were successful. The Raja thereupon arranged a tent-pegging contest for the following day, and promised his daughter to the man who succeeded in taking a certain peg. This peg was in reality the trunk of a tree. Sabir Chand, the youngest son of the Chanderi King, entered the lists, promising the bride to his eldest brother Bir Chand. The

day broke inauspiciously and a terrific storm raged. Sabir Chand, losing control of his horse, was killed, and the deception practiced by the Kangra Chief was discovered. A battle ensued, and the Kangra forces were defeated. The Kangra Tikka and Hari Har Chand were both among the slain.

Raja Bir Chand (697 to 730 A.D.):

Bir Chand, Kabir Chand and Ghambir chand, the surviving princes retreated to the shrine of Jowala Mukhi, where the presiding goddess, in reply to long and earnest supplication, promised each of them a kingdom. In fulfillment of her prophecy, Kabir chand wandered to Kumaon, and was adopted by the Raja of that State; Ghambir Chand took possession of Chanehni; and Bir chand, the eldest seized Jhandbari now in Hoshiarpur District. Inspired by a dream vouchsafed by Naina Devi in whose service he had raised a shrine, he gradually enviced the local Thakurs, called Rhunds and carved out for himself the Kingdom of Kahlur. He waged many wars during his reign of 33 years, and subjugated no fewer than fifteen neighbouring states. But he was ultimately checked by the Raja of Sirmur, with whom he was glad to make peace and agree to a boundary between the kingdom.

Kahal Chand (804 to 902 A.D.):

Raja Kahal Chand, the sixth of the line, built Kot Kahlur, and the State subsequently derived its name from this ancient citadel.

Kahn Chand (1057 to 1099 A.D.):

Kahn Chand, the eleventh Raja, had three sons Ajit cha,d Ajai Chand and Tegh Chand. On their father's death, these attacked and dispossessed the neighbouring Brahman Thakur, Handu, of his kingdom. Ajit Chand was installed in his place and founded the present ruling dynasty of Hindus, now called "Nalagarh" after its later capital. Ajit Chand Succeeded his father. Ajit Chand and Ajai Chand had different mothers, and it is sometimes said that Ajai Chand was the elder of the two. According to an account given in the Nalagarh Gazatteer, the brothers spent the latter portion of their lives at war with one another.

Sangar Chand (1197 to 1290 A.D.):

Sangar Chand, sixteenth of the line, was remarkable as the father of ten sons, seven of whom were the ancestors of as many Rajput families, which still hold jagirs in Bilaspur.

Megh Chand (1220 to 1251 A.D.):

The people of the State first showed their insubordinate temper, proved by frequent rebellions throughout its history upto the present date, during the rule of Megh Chand, son of the last named Raja, whom they exiled into Kulu. He reinstated himself with the held of the "Emperor of Delhi" (presumably Shams-uddin Altamash).

Abhaisand Chand (1302 to 1317 A.D.):

Abhaisand Chand, 21st Raja, harried a Mohammadan force advancing from Delhi to Anandpur, and was

subsequently trapped and murdered by the Generals of a relieving force. His death, however, was avenged by his son after a battle lasting several days.

Rattan Chand (1355 to 1406):

His grandson, Rattan Chand had a more pleasant connection with the Court at Delhi, for he distinguished himself by slaying a lion, which was distressing the suburbs of that city. For this feat he received a reward of a lakh and a quarter rupees from the Emperor.

Gyan Chand (1518 to 1555):

Gyan Chand 27th Raja, quarreled with the Mohammadan Governor of Sirhind, and being defeated in battle was forced to embrace Islam. He married the Governor's daughter, whose descendants are now the only landowning Mussalmans in the State. Gyan Chand's tomb is still shown at Kiratpur, now in the Hoshiarpur District.

Bikram Chand (1555 to 1593):

Bikram Chand, his son by his Hindu wife, only won his inheritance by battle with his Mussalman brothers. He abdicated during his lifetime in favour of his son Sultan Chand, who had in his turn to fight for the kingdom with his own half-brothers.

Kalyan Chand (1600 to 1636):

Sultan Chand's son, Kalyan, invaded the territory of the Raja of Suket, whose daughter he had married, and was

there slain. His son, Tara Chand, attempted to avenge his father, but with only partial success.

Dip Chand (1653 to 1665):

Dip Chand, son of Tara Chand succeeded in 1653 A.D. He was a man of religious tendencies, and so evil were the omens at his succession, that he removed his capital from Sunhani to a place on the Sutley, close to which were a shrine of Rangnath Shiva and a cave of Vyasji. Here he founded the present capital of the State, which was first called "Byaspur", a name subsequently corrupted to Bilaspur. He assisted the Emperor Aurangzeb in his attack campaign and received, as a reward of his services, a khillat of five lakhs and a sanad authorizing his suzerainty over no less than 22 States including Kulu, Kangra, Kotkehr, Mandi, Suket and Chamba. But on his way home from the imperial army he was poisoned at Nadaon by the Raja of Kangra.

Bhim Chand (1665 to 1692):

The Mians, whose influence on the subsequent history of the State has been at times so troublous, seem first to have arisen to power during the reign of dip Chand. On his death, they claimed the throne from one of their own member, Manak Chand, and with the help of the Raja of Kangra attacked the rightful heir, Bhim Chand, then a boy of fourteen. Bhim Chand, however, gained a signal victory over the combined forces, an exploit which was the first of a brilliant series of successes in the field of arms. He defeated the Rajas of Bashahr, Mandi and Kotkhair and one by one subdued and subjugated the

twenty two hill states whose over lordship had been passed to his father by the Emperor Aurangzeb. In his time, the territorial limits of Kehloor reached a new height, comprising all the areas between Kulu and Hathawat and Bushahr and Gorakhgadhi. In the words of the Banswara:

“Kepoo Khepu Kheksoo, Duttnagar Nurmand,
Dehu Raju Bhim Ki, Bhoop Bareng dand.”

(Keppo Khepu & Kheksoo, Duttnagor & Narmand (Bushahr State) the Hill Chiefs bow to the Commands of Raja Bhim Chand).

He built the temple of Mariaridevi (at present in Mandi Distt.) and when the Raja of Kangra asked for his aid against the Moghals he advanced to Nadaon and in conjunction with Guru Govind Singh defeated the Moghal Governor Alif Khan in battle. Raja Bhim Chand later on fell out with the Guru who had been given an asylum by his grandfather Kalyan Chand in Parganas Kiratpur and Kalyanpur; and fought many an indecisive battle with the Sikhs in the areas adjoining the present towns of Anandpur and Kiratpur. These are described in great detail in the History of the Sikhs and need not be referred to here. It may, however, be noted that this unnecessary warfare dissipated the energies of the Raja Bhim Chand and made the last years of his reign far from pleasant. He abdicated in 1692 in favour of his son Ajmer Chand and spent the rest of his days as a hermit.

Ajmer Chand (1692 to 1738 A.D.) and Devi chand (1738 to 1778):

Ajmer Chand reigned for over forty years and was at war most of that time. His son, Devi Chand succeeded him in 1738 and was a contemporary of Nadir Shah soon afterwards coming into collision with the Afghanis forces he was taken prisoner, but was subsequently released on payment of ransom. After a fight with Nalagarh, when the Raja there was killed in battle, Devi Chand was offered the rulership but declined and placed a Mian called Gajay Singh on the Gaddi of Hindoor. Later he built a fort and tank at Mahalmorian in Kangra whose signs are present even to this day. Devi Chand did a lot to improve the trade and commerce of Bilaspur and the town became most populous, yielding a revenue of over Rs. 25,000/- per year as octroi duty alone.

It would be correct to say that the decline of the Moghal Empire in Delhi synchronized with the reigns of very successful rulers and administrators in Bilaspur State and the names of Dip Chand, Bhim Chand, Devi Chand, and Ajmer Chand stand out during this period. Whereas Dip Chand consolidated his hold over the Hill States with the help of the Moghal Emperor Aurangzeb, it was left to his son Bhim Chand to stabilize the position and to carry his name and fame to the remote corners of Bushahr. Ajmer Chand stood firm against the invasions from the west and extended his domain upto the Jamuna river, on the banks of which he constructed a fort bearing his name. Later Devi Chand maintained the territorial integrity and independence of the State at a time when Nadir Shah had marched right upto the gates of Delhi and the Moghal power was crumbling throughout Hindustan. In this task he was helped by his feudatories from whom he began to

levy cash tributes of which the Banswara gives the following list:

- (1) Kenthal – Rs. 3,000/-;
- (2) Baghat and (3) Baghal – Rs. 1,000/- each;
- (4) Bhajji and (5) Mailog – Rs. 700/- each;
- (6) Dhami and (7) Kotkhai – Rs. 300/- each;
- (8) Balsan and (9) Mehra – Rs. 200/- each; and
- (10) Bija (11) Mangal (12) Kuthar and (13) Kunihar – Rs. 100/- each.

Loved by his friends and dreaded by his foes, he proved to be a fearless soldier and a good administrator and enhanced the prestige of Kahloor at a difficult period in its long and chequered history.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY OF BILASPUR CONTIUED

Raja Mahan Chand (1778 A.D. to 1824 A.D.):

Raja Devi Chand was married to Katoch (Kangra) Princess named Nagar Devi and late in life had a son named Mahan Chand, born in 1772 who was six years old at the time of his father's death. Mahanchand, being a minor, the administration was carried on by his mother assisted by Ramu of the Derol family and other officers.

Rani Nagar Devi was a very shrewd and able women and conducted the affairs of State with remarkable ability. Early after her husband's death the Raja of Keonthal one of the tributaries showed, signs of insubordination and Nagar Devi had him promptly brought to Bilaspur and put in prison which action had a salutary effect on all to other "thakurais". In 1781 when Kangra Fort was besieged by the Sikh, Sai Ali Khan the last Mughal Kiladar appealed to the Rani for help which was promptly rendered. In March 1783 Forester, the traveler passed through Bilaspur in the guise of a Muhammadan merchant on his way to Jammu and his reference to the siege is of much interest. He states that the Bilspur camp through which he passed consisted of "about 800 horses and 8,000 footmen armed with matchlock, swords, and spears..." The Fort was surrendered to the Sikhs soon afterwards and came into the hands of Raja Sansarchand of Kangra in 1786, who did not forget to reply in kind the part played by the Bilaspur forces in the siege.

Ramu Wazir died in 1785 and was replaced by Airagiram but his oppression and tyranny made the people revolt and kill him. Shortly afterwards Raja Mahanchand assumed full powers but showed no interest in State affairs and spent his time in sensual pleasures. This alienated from him the loyalty of the people and brought disaster upon the State. Firstly the Ranas of the "Bara Thakurain" (feudatories) renounced their allegiance in 1793 and shortly afterwards Raja Ram Saran of Handur (Nalagarh) his own kinsman forsook him and allied himself to Sansarchand. In 1795 Sansarchand invaded the territory of Kehloor on the right bank of Sutlej and although Mahanchand and Rani Nagardevi were successful in getting military aid from Raja Dharam Prakash of Sirmoor, the latter was killed in battle and the combined forces of Kehloor and Sirmoor utterly routed. Sansarchand thereafter occupied all the territory on the right bank and build a fort on Dhar Jhanjhar which he called "chhatipur" (i.e. on the "chhati" (chest) of Kehlooris). Rani Nagardevi died shortly afterwards.

Mohanchand was much depressed by this double tragedy and retired to Anandpur leaving his ministers in Bilaspur to avenge the Kangra victory. In the meanwhile Raja Ram Saran of Handur had attacked Bilaspur and sacked the town. He also captured the forts of Fatehpur, Bahadurpur and Rattanpur and desecrated the temple of Sakrithin. Consequently the territorial limits of Bilaspur had shrunk to a few sq. miles of area on both sides of the river Sutlej and in dire distress Mahanchand sent emissaries to the Gurkhas of Nepal who had conquered the Hill tracts west of the Sutlej by 1803 and had their

headquarters at Garhwal. Raja Mahanchand's emissary invited the Gurkha General Amarsingh Thapa and being in full accord with their designs, this invitation was readily accepted. The Gurkha forces crossed the Sutlej in 1805 and defeated Sansarchand at Mahalmori. Thereafter they laid siege to the Kangra Fort for four years but were compelled to withdraw owing to the outbreak of cholera in their ranks. Meanwhile all the "Thakurain" had fallen to the Gurkhas one by one and although they handed over Bhajji, Dhami and Koti to Mahanchand the rest were kept by them for expenses. Ram Saran of Nalagarh also got his due and after his complete route at Nalagarh large portions of his territory were annexed by the Gurkhas and he was forced to seek asylum in the fort of Plassi on the banks of the Sirsa nadi.

In 1808 Ramu Kotwal of Hathawat (an area on the left bank of Sutlej including Anandpur Sahib) had a quarrel with the Anandpur Sodhis and in consequence they appealed to Maharaja Ranjit Singh for help. This was readily extended and after a short battle Hathawat was lost to Bilaspur. Later Maharaja Ranjit Singh was willing to give up the conquered territory to Mahanchand in lieu of war expenses totaling Rs. 5,000/- but the Rajas advisors gave him wrong advice and thus one of the most fertile areas of the State was lost for ever.

The Nepalese war began in 1814 and Raja Ramsaran of Nalagarh and the "Bara Thakurain" asked the British for help against the Gurkhas and Mahanchand who had driven them out of their homes. This was assented to and a column under the command of General Ochterlony

advanced through Nalagarh to Malaun where a pitched battle was fought between the British forces on one side and the forces of the Gurkhas and Raja Mahanchand on the other. Truce was subsequently declared and the Gurkhas retired to their old border at the end of hostilities. Meanwhile Mahanchand had sent emissaries to General Ochterlony asking for protection and this was granted to him under the terms of the British declaration issued at the commencement of hostilities. A "Sanad" confirming Mahanchand in the ancient territories of Kehloor on this (left) bank of the Sutlej was accordingly granted on 6th March, 1815 but his claim on the "Bara Thakurain" was rejected and most of them were made independent.

In 1819 the Sikhs once again invaded Bilaspur territory on the right bank of the Sutlej and occupied Dhar Kot which was subsequently given by them to the Majithia family. Although Raja Mahanchand asked the British for help in its restoration this was denied owing to the fact that the English were not going to interfere in trans-Sutlej areas which were under the complete sway of the Sikh power at Lahore.

Mahanchand's only son Kharakchand was born in 1813 and the Jyotshi in drawing out his horoscope found that he had been born under an unlucky star and would cause a great calamity to the State. Mahanchand was forbidden to see him for 12 years and the boy was sent for village Kallar to be brought up. In 1823 Mahanchand at the end of 10 years yielded to an overpowering desire to see his young son and sent for him. This action on the part of the Raja was regarded as a bad omen and his death in

the following year (1824) was attributed to his not having complied with the terms of the warning.

Mahanchand's long reign of 46 years was an eventful epoch in Bilaspur's history. It is true that this weak and ease loving Ruler reduced the once powerful State of Kehloor to a third rate British dependency and lost much of its original territory but considering the tumultuous times in which he ruled these calamities may be taken as inevitable. The emergence of the powerful Sikh kingdom upon the disintegration of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar Shah II was a new challenge to the old Rajput States of the Punjab Hills and many of them were completely liquidated by the Sikhs including the once powerful State of Kangra. Thus Mahanchand's move for British protection was a timely gesture and it must be said to his credit that inspite of his deep friendship for the Gurkhas he was able to preserve the entity of Bilaspur through British aid although he had once openly fought them in the battlefield. The loss of the "Bara Thakurain" was also a natural corollary to the new order that was emerging and all said and done they had already forsaken allegiance to Kehloor many years before. Their subsequent recognition by the British as full fledged States was a political gesture which could not be circumvented.

Raja Kharak Chand (1824 to 1839 A.D.):

Kharak Chand's reign marks the darkest page in the history of Bilaspur. From early youth he seems to have fallen under evil influence and vicious habits, that remained with him during his short life. For some years in the beginning, however, there was peace and quiet in the

State but suddenly the Raja's wrath fell on his officials many of whom were caused to be publicly hanged for no apparent fault. Thereafter he confiscated the jagirs of most of his collateral Mian's and persecuted them from pillar to post. This continuous tyranny and oppression resulted in open civil war in which the Raja's chief opponent was Mian Jangi, grandson of Mian Chimna, the younger brother of Raja Ajmer chand. The Raja now enlisted a force of nearly 300 Rohilla Pathans to put down the open rebellion and many skirmishes took place between the Mians and Rohillas in which neither gained a signal victory. The Mians thereafter approached Major Clark, the British Political Officer at Ambala but Kharak Chand refused to listen to his advice and so increased his terror that the Town was half-depopulated, the inhabitants having fled to other States for security. Shops were looted in broad daylight and heavy fines were imposed on all sympathisers of the popular movement.

In 1835 A.D. Raja Kharak Chand married the younger siste of the Raja of Sirmoor and thereafter toured the whole State. Later he invaded the State of Mandi whose ruler Raja Zalimsen fled from the capital and left Kharakchand in virtual control for nearly a fortnight. This invasion was prompted by the alleged support by Zalimsen to Mian Jangi and was given up after the former had pledged to withdraw all help.

During the last years of his reign Kharakchand made peace with the Mians and returned to them their Jagirs. Mian Jangi who had been living as an exile in Hathawat was recalled and reinstated in his previous rank. Shortly

afterwards the Raja contracted smallpox and dies in 1839 at the early age of 26 years.

Raja Jagat Chand (1839 to 1850 A.D):

Kharakchand died issueless and on hearing of his death Mian Jangi performed his funeral rites. Notice was sent to the Political Agent at Ambala who came at once and after satisfying himself that none of the widow ranis was enceinte he reported to Government in favour of Mian Jangi who was duly installed as Jagatchand in April 1839.

Later one of the two Sirmoori ranis of Kharakchand said that she was pregnant and a son named Garabh Chand was said to have been born to her in November of the same year. Jagatchand, however, affirmed that the child was surreptitious and this view was accepted by the British Government. The Rani did not accept this and with the help of her brother Raja Fateh Parkash of Sirmoor she invaded Bilaspur and succeeded in ousting Jagatchand from his newly acquired Chiefship. Jagatchand thereafter fled to Hindur and informed that Political Agent who came with a force and restored Jagatchand to power. The Rani fled to Subathu and passed the rest of her days there.

Raja Jagatchand was of a devotional spirit and spent much time daily in the performance of the rites of his religion. In 1847 on the Cession of the Jullundhar Doab to the British after the First Sikh War, Jagatchand was confirmed in the possession of the territory on the right bank of the Sutlej also and a Sand was granted to him on 21st October of the same year. The Raja also extended his

unstinted aid to the British in the Second Sikh War and turned the Sikh forces out of the territory of Kot Dhar and Hathawat. The East India Company, however, refused to accept his claims to these ancient lands of Bilaspur and he had to hand them over to the British at the cessation of hostilities.

Jagatchand had only one son, Narpatchand, who died in 1844 leaving a son named Hirachand, nine years of age. As the Raja was now well advanced in years, his chief concern was to equip his grandson in every way for the high position he was destined to fill. In 1850 when Hirachand was only 15 years of age he was married to the sister of Maharaja Ranbir Singh of Jammu and soon afterwards Jagatchand abdicated in favour of his grandson and himself retired to Brindaban.

Raja Hirachand (1850 to 1882 A.D.):

Hirachand's kindly reign of 32 years is still remembered as a golden age in Bilaspur's history. He was assisted by a Wazir of excepted ability named Mian Bharji who organized the government in a very complete and efficient manner. All branches of administration were overhauled and much attention was given to the provision of tanks and other public conveniences at different places. He also constructed various public and private buildings amongst the latter of which the Houses at Hardwar and Simla are notable.

Raja Hirachand gave effective support to the British during the rising of 1857 and in 1863 he changed the land revenue structure of the State fixing the State share at

1/3rd of the total produce. The Revenue demand was also made payable partly in cash and partly in kind.

In 1867 the long strip of territory called Kot Dhar which had been occupied by the Sikhs during Mahanchand's reign in 1819, was restored to Bilaspur. This was an occasion of much rejoicing in the State. In 1871 Lord Mayo, the Viceroy and Governor-General passed through Bilaspur on his way to Kangra.

In the winter of 1882 Raja Hirachand had gone to Simla with his son yuvraj Amarchand and was taken seriously ill there. He died at Namhol on his way to Bilaspur the same year.

Raja Amarchand (1883 to 1888 A.D.):

Raja Amarchand was installed in January 1883 and had a short reign of 6 years. He was unfortunate in the administration of the State owing to the inadequate assistance rendered by his officials. The affairs of State became chaotic resulting in disorders and outbreaks of violence from discontent at changes made in the tenure of land. The first of these broke out in Pargana Geharwin where many lives were lost. Later the new impositions were completely withdrawn and resulted in the restoration of complete peace in the State. Raja Amarchand opened the first hospital in the State and organized a Forest Department. He re-organized the State militia and rearranged the administrative sub-divisions of the State into Tehsils and Thanas. He also opened the first Hindi Pathshala in Bilaspur and ordered that henceforth all work of the State be conducted in that language.

Raja Amarchand had a good command of Sanskrit and was also fond of painting. He built the famous Rang Mahal Palace at Bilaspur at a cost of over 2.5 lakhs and also constructed a bridge across the Sutlej at Bhajwani.

He dies in 1888 at the age of 31 years.

Raja Bijai Chand (1888 to 1927 A.D.):

Yuvraj Bijai Chand was only 16 years old when he was installed as Ruler in May 1889. As he was a minor the Political Agent appointed a Council to administer the State under the President ship of Mian Badan Singh, and sent the young Raja to the Chief's College at Lahore for education. He was formally invested with ruling powers in 1893.

Almost from the beginning Raja Bijai Chand seems to have been discouraged about State affairs. Although he was desirous of introducing reforms on the British model still his rather limited education proved to be a serious handicap and the officers whom he selected were self-seekers who only promoted their self-interests. Consequently the Political Agent advised the Raja to appoint a Council under him and although this was done the result were not satisfactory. Thereafter one Dr. Thakurdas was appointed as Wazir on a salary of Rs. 1,500/- p.m. but the Political Officer was against this appointment and consequently Thakurdas had to go and another Council was appointed. Raja Bijai Chand greatly resented this continuous interference by the Political Agent and submitted a Memorandum to the Viceroy

against these encroachments on his powers. As a result the Council was dissolved but the Political officers became the firm enemies of the Raja and struck at the very first opportunity.

This was not long in coming. The Mians at that time had very large civil and criminal powers in their Jagir villages and used to harass the peasants. Raja Bijai Chand abolished these completely and also forbade them to charge any Nazrana on the escheated land which henceforth was declared to be State property. This put the Mians up and a minor rising took place which resulted in the political officers forcing the Raja to appoint Shri Harichand, a Punjab officer, as Wazir. The Raja was now fed up and after going to Benares where he had earlier built a house he refused to return to the State. This happened in 1902.

Next year the Government of India forbade the Raja to have anything to do with the State administration and appointed one Mian Amar Singh, a Punjab Tehsildar as Manager of the State. Amarsingh was an able administrator and conducted the first revenue settlement of the State on the British Indian model. He recognized the administration and had many new buildings erected, the chief amongst which was the High School and the State hospital. Nearly 100 miles of new roads were also built and the finances of the State put on a sound footing.

In the meanwhile there was almost continuous agitation for the recall of the Raja by the States people and this led to the Government of India reconsidering their earlier decision. Raja Bijai Chand was accordingly recalled

from Benares and he once again assumed control of State affairs in the summer of 1909. This was heartily welcomed all round and there was great rejoicing throughout the State. The same year Mian Amarsingh was transferred to Keonthal State and Mian Durga Singh, another lent officer from the Punjab was appointed as Wazir.

Mian Durgasingh continued in his post for 9 years i.e., till 1918. In the meanwhile the outbreak of World War I caused Raja Bijaichand to place all the resources of his State at the disposal of the King Emperor and he also rendered all possible assistance in the successful prosecution of the war. Over a thousand recruits were enlisted in the Dogra regiment and a war loan of over 3 lacs of rupees was subscribed. These services were suitably recognized by Government and at the conclusion of hostilities Raja Bijaichand was invested with the KCIE and also given the rank of Hon. Major in the Dogra regiment.

Durgasingh was replaced by Sardar Indersingh as Dewan in 1918 but the latter only served for a year and was succeeded by Babu Hardyalsingh, a local B.A., LL.B. Hardyalsingh was wazir for nearly 3 years but his maladministration resulted in a Court of Enquiry into his conduct. He was later charge-sheeted on 17 different charges ranging from nepotism to criminal misappropriation of the State monies and sentenced to 2.5 years simple imprisonment on six counts and the other 11 having been withdrawn. Indersingh was once again recalled and on his recommendation Hardyal Singh was set free before serving his full sentence. He thereupon

retired to Hardwar from where he made such a dramatic come-back in 1949.

Dewan Inder Singh had bitter experience of party politics for the one year he had served as Wazir and he now aligned himself with the "Hazari" group in power. "Hazari" was the term used for the personal servants in attendance on the Raja and they were a very powerful force to reckon with in 1922-23, having as their head one Finaram. Mian Mansingh a jagirdar from Raghunathpur and the Superintendent of Police at that time also joined hands with the group and Indersingh's complete surrender to them ushered in an era of maladministration in Bilaspur which has had few parallels. Henceforth no one's land or property was safe from the depredations of this clique. There was an old law in the State under which all land to which there were no claimants within the 5th degree escheated to the State and the "hazaris" now embarked upon a policy of progressively snatching away all such lands for themselves without the payment of even nominal nazarana. Raja Bijai Chand hardly noticed those irregularities and Dewan Indersingh reports, invariably directed by the Hazris, got ready approval. Consequently each influential Hazri as well as Mian Man Singh took possession of large areas of lands and so widespread was the consequent agitation that the State people approached the Agent to the Governor-General at Lahore for redress.

Nor was this all. The Raja was hence onwards in domestic trouble with his only surviving Rani Shrimati Surajdevi, who advised him not to yield to the Hazari clique and to devote more time and attention to state

affairs. The Raja was married six times and had no male issue by his previous wives who died one by one till he married Rani Surajdevi in 1898 when she was a girl of 12. To her was born a son in 1913 and named Anand Chand. In view of her coveted position the Rani had great influence on the Raja and this coupled with the fact that she came from a village in Bilaspur itself gave her a unique position amongst the States people. The hazari group naturally looked upon her as a serious rival and so poisoned the Raja's ears that relations between husband and wife got highly strained. The Rani therefore removed herself to Simla in 1925 and refused to return.

In 1927 matters had reached such an impasse that the Raja considered it fit to abdicate in favour of his son Tika Anand Chand, and himself retire to Benares. This met the Govt. of India's approval and Raja Anand Chand was installed the same year. He was then 14 years of age and studying in the Mayo College at Ajmer. A Council of Regency was therefore formed to carry on the administration till the young Ruler came to age.

Raja Bijai Chand was now a broken man. Too late he realized the treachery and selfishness of the Hazris who now forsook him one by one. Hereafter he completely shut himself up at Benares where he suddenly died of heart failure in 1931. Thus ended a long career of nearly 37 years.

Raja Bijai Chand was a generous man and although he was faced with administrative difficulties throughout his long reign still he was deeply loved and respected by his people to whom he was always available. Denied the

loving influence of mother who died when he was on a very tender age and not much looked after by his father the Raja often chose as his companions men of low birth and doubtful wisdom. Nevertheless he tried his best to improve the State administration and introduced many reforms, principal of which was the complete breaking up of the feudalism of Jagirdars. He also had a water supply system laid out in Bilaspur proper and the first Forest Settlement was conducted under his order. He abolished many obsolete taxes and raised the local Middle school to high school standard. The Raja also built an estate at Benares called "Bilas-Bhawan" and summer houses at Bahadurpur and Haridwar in Bilaspur.

Minority Administration (1927 to 1933 A.D.):

The Council of Administration appointed by the Resident Punjab States consisted of three members of whom the President was Mr. P.L. Chandulal was a Punjab civilian and the Home member was Mian Mansingh, whose name has been mentioned previously. One Lal Lachhumal was appointed as the Judicial member but he was replaced in 1929 on the commencement of the second settlement by Shri Sarwan Das.

The Council started with many initial difficulties. The pays of State employees were in arrears for the last 4 years and even otherwise there was heavy debts to be defrayed by the administration. The Resident accordingly drew out a strict schedule of work and himself sanctioned the Budget each year after due scrutiny. The financial powers of the Council were practically nil and each and

every new matter had to be referred to the Resident for approval.

The first step taken by the Council was the imposition of "Naz rana" on lands grabbed by the "Hazaris" and their confiscation and subsequent transfer to the rightful heirs where such nazarana was not paid. This yielded over a lac and a quarter rupees and included Rs. 20,000/- received from Mian Mansingh, the new Home Member. Later on tax and incomes were also levied for the first time and the rate of rent on water mills considerably enhanced. The Council also prohibited fishing without licence and imposed other taxes of various kinds. These steps might have been advisable from the point of view of financial solvency but they irked the State people and there was much resentment.

In 1929 the Council of Regency embarked upon the Second Revenue Settlement after sanction had been obtained from the Resident at Lahore. This measure was long overdue since twenty years had elapsed when Amarsingh conducted the first Settlement in 1905 and in addition it was hoped that the resultant increase in income would be in the neighbourhood of at least Rs. 50,000/- per year thus improving the finances of the State. For a year or so the work continued satisfactorily but suddenly in 1930 there was universal demand from the States people for its postponement and when this was not agreed to by the Council, there was open rebellion.

The rising of 1930:

The start of the unrest attracted little notice. It was the refusal of some zamindars of Bahadurpur Pargana to supply free firewood to the Settlement Staff working in their villages. But when the President of the Council went personally to enquire into the matter he was presented with a lengthy charter of grievances which included such matters as high rates of Nazarana, fishing licenses and other taxes, indiscriminate policy of Forest Officers and high handed behaviour of the revenue staff who were publicly accused to molesting village ladies. Later many more grievances were added to the list and it soon became clear that this was not a minor affair but an organized rising against the unjust and unfair impositions of the Council. At the root of all this agitation was the economic factor which resulted from the slump that had suddenly hit India that year and the people feared that any enhancement of Land Revenue as a direct result of the settlement should be entirely beyond their means to pay.

Mr. Chandulal could not rise to the occasion and in spite of his best efforts he failed to satisfy the people. Soon the disaffection spread to other areas and as the local police force was quite unable to cope with the situation, frantic appeals were made to the Resident to send exterior aid. This he refused to do so still he had himself examined the whole situation and came to Bilaspur soon after. After studying the situation on the spot he made a public announcement of many concessions to the States people and exhorted them to let the Settlement operations continue in their own interests. But the people were bent in getting the settlement postponed and the rebellion against authority continued unabated.

The Resident (Sir James Fitzpatrick) now asked Mr. Chandulal to proceed on leave and appointed Mian Man Singh, the Home Minister as acting President. He had hoped that the local influence of the latter would quell the revolt but the people know the Mian's antecedents and refused to listen to him. Thereafter a posse of armed police was called from the Punjab and some of the ring leaders were arrested at a village festival at Namhol and brought to Bilaspur. The next day about a thousand persons collected at Headquarters and demanded the release of their leaders. They were declared an unlawful assembly and mercilessly lathi charged by the Punjab Police, after which they dispersed. The Resident now sent two companies of troops on Flag Marches to Bilaspur and after three months of constant touring they were able to create peaceful conditions. Nineteen ring leaders had in the meanwhile been arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment ranging from two to seven years. A collective fine of Rs. 25,000/- was also imposed on the villages which had taken the initiative in the popular movement.

In April 1931 Raja Anand Chand finished his studies at the Mayo College by standing first in the Post Diploma examination and shortly afterwards he was married to Princess Umawati of Jubbal. The "barat" which started from Simla was a picturesque affair and had the good fortune of coming across Gandhiji who was on his way to meet the Viceroy Lord Irwin for what later came to be known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Later the same year the young Raja was sent for his administrative training in the Gurgaon District of the Punjab. After completing the same

he toured the whole of the State with Mr. Chandulal in the winter of 1932 and renewed his acquaintance with the people.

Raja Anand Chand (1933 to 1948):

Raja Anand Chand was formally invested with full ruling powers on 9th January, 1933 and the administration of the Regency Council thus came to an end. Its term of administration had however been marred by the uprising of 1930, the arrest of the leaders and their subsequent imprisonment at Faridkot jail. The first step of the new regime therefore was to complete the settlement and mollify public opinion. Mr. Chandulal, continued as Dewan and he completed the Settlement early in 1934. By this time the prisoners from Faridkot had also been brought back and set free. This had salutary effect and although the new assessment resulted in an increase of nearly Rs. 17,000/- per annum it was gladly paid and attracted very few objections. The new administration thus made a good beginning and a closer study of the people grievances showed their hopes and aspirations. Every effort was therefore made to modernize the administrative structure and bring it to the standard of modern requirements.

The overhauling started from the Judiciary which was separated from the executive and henceforth only law graduates could be appointed in its cadre. A department of law was created and all legislation duly codified. On the Executive side the Dewan was replaced by Secretariat system of Government on late in 1934 and start was made with three Secretaries for the departments of Revenue,

Home and Relations with other States. This number was increased to nearly a dozen by the end of 1946. In the same year three ministers for Revenue, Home Affairs and Development were duly appointed and henceforth the Raja began to exercise his functions through them. A separate High Court for the State was also established in 1945.

Many reforms were made in the Revenue department and the Revenue Law and procedure prevalent in the Punjab was extended into Bilaspur. A number of rules and regulations peculiar to the needs of the people were introduced and forced labour was abolished throughout the State in 1935-36. The exercise administration also received due attention and total prohibition of liquor was enforced under the provisions of the Bilaspur State Prohibition Act 1942.

Development of forests next engaged attention and their commercial exploitation yielded handsome results. Resin tapping started in 1938-39 began to yield an income of nearly 3 lac rupees a year by 1946 and the extraction of "katha" from "Kher" trees began to bring in another couple of lacs per annum.

The department of Police was modernized and its training and discipline placed in the hands of local officers trained in the police schools in the Punjab. Modern arms were provided for the force which had a strength of nearly 200 men in 1947-48.

In no field of administrative requirements was so much attention bestowed as on education. This period of

15 years saw the start of nearly 30 new elementary schools and two middle school one for boys and one for girls. Compulsory teaching of the mother tongue and craft became regular features of the school curriculum and agricultural plots were attached to each of these institutions where the young scholars worked with their own hands. Many adult literacy centres were opened and free distribution of books was made in them. As a result of these efforts the number of scholars studying in public institutions rose from 300 in 1933 to over 4,000 in 1944 and the percentage of literacy quadrupled itself from 2.5% in 1931 to over 10% in 1944-45.

Medical and public health also received a good deal of attention and in 1936 a new modern hospital was opened at headquarters with accommodation for 24 indoors. Thereafter 12 health centres were opened at each of the Pargana headquarters in the mufasil and the more important of these were manned by qualified medical officers. In the matter of public health a lot of work was done for the eradication of malaria and smallpox and there were regular health visitors for women and children.

Many roads were constructed and realigned for vehicular traffic and the first motorcar reached Bilaspur in 1936. A State controlled Transport therefore took over the transport system that was fully developed and had a dozen vehicles in 1947-48. Many buildings were also constructed during this period notable amongst which are the Hospital, the Girls school, the New Palace, the Ladies Club and Shri Gopalji's temple. The PWD also supervised

the construction of the elementary schools and health centres opened in the villages.

In the matter of local self Government the towns of Bilaspur and Shri Nainadeviji were put under the charge of elected Small Town Committees and by 1946 the whole of the State had been divided into 40 Panchayat areas each with an elected Panchayat under adult suffrage. Financial aid was given to these bodies from State funds and they were also authorized to raise their own monies.

It is interesting to see that all the above improvements in the administration were effected without additional taxation. On the contrary taxes amounting to nearly Rs. 37,000 a year were totally abolished as obsolete. The careful husbanding of financial resources and tapping of new sources of income however paid very good dividends and the revenues of the State which stood at nearly 3 lacs in 1933 and exceeded the figure of rupees 12 lacs in 1946-47.

These 15 years were a period of great change not only in India but throughout the World. In 1935 there was the question of the Indian Federation which did not materialize and in 1939 came the Government sponsored scheme of a joint administration for smaller Indian States in order to give them viability. Bilaspur however, successfully opposed these measure and was left untouched. From 1939-45 there was the Second World War in which the small State of Bilaspur played its full part. Nearly 3,000 men enlisted in India's armed forces and won many awards including the coveted victories Cross and the George Cross. Then came the great political

turmoil in India which started with the “Quite India” demand in 1942 and brought Independence to the country in 1947. Thereafter Bilaspur as one of the Indian States acceded to the Indian Dominion and signed the Instrument of Accession on 10th August 1947 which was ratified by the Governor-General on the 16th of the same month.

The new changes in India’s political conditions after Independence resulted in the integration of the Indian States as a result of which most of them ceased to exist as separate entities. Here Bilaspur’s case for separate existence was based on the fact that an overwhelming majority of its people were opposed to merger with Himachal Pradesh and the interests of the great Bhakra-Nangal Project could only be safeguarded if the State were taken under direct central administration. Detailed negotiations with the Government of India resulted in the Cession Agreement of 15th August 1948 under the terms of which the Raja handed over the administration to the Government of India who on their part agreed to administer it as a separate Unit. Fuller details of this arrangements Bilaspur was accepted as a part “C” State in the Indian Constitution and is being administered as such upto this day.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC & ADMINISTRATIVE

Section (a)- Economic

Agriculture:

Most of the cultivated soil is of the kind grown in the plains as rausli, a light and somewhat sandy soil. This is intermixed with patches of stiff clay (Dakar). Neither description is naturally more than moderately fertile. The zamindars themselves generally use the dual classification of irrigated (kulhand) and un-irrigated (bakhal). This was adopted and extended in the recent settlement, irrigated land being divided into two classes, first and second, and un-irrigated into two groups, andarli (land close to the village and so well manured) and baharli (land at a distance from the village). The latter of these is subdivided into first and second class.

Fully three-quarters of the population are dependent on agriculture. Kanets are the most successful. Rajputs and Brahamans are less painstaking. Rathis are industrious, but their results are inferior to those of the Kanets.

The principal agricultural labourers are Julahs, Chamars, Kolis and Dumnas. These either work as Kamas by the month, or as Chhakus by the day. The village artisans, blacksmiths, barbers, basket-makers, etc., get eight seers (pakka) of grain at each harvest from their employers.

The kharif or autumn is the principal harvest, and maize the chief crop. It provides the staple food of the people. Rice is produced on both irrigated and un-irrigated lands. This crop is usually exported for sale. A little sugarcane and ginger is grown on the best lands, and kulath (*dolichos uniflorus*) is sown on the interior baharli lands.

The most important rabi crop is wheat. Most of the produce is exported. Gram and wheat and gram mixed are also grown. Poppy is cultivated in a few villages of the Bahadurpur pargana.

There is nothing peculiar about the method of cultivation. Most fields can be ploughed, though some of the baharli lands have to be dug up by hand. Seed is scattered broadcast (chhatta), except in the case of rice, which is first sown in a nursery and then transplanted. Ninety-five per cent of the cultivated area is wholly dependent on the rainfall.

The State possesses an indigenous breed of cattle, which differs considerably from the ordinary hill kind. The animals are slightly larger; the heads and horns are courser, and the face longer. The ear assumes a more depending position and the hump, although small, is more developed than in the Pahari breed. The quarters are short, the croup sloping, the tail whip-like and finished off with a tuft of black hair, and, generally speaking, the animals are flat-ribbed and lacking in barrel. The line of the back is very straight and well adapted for pack purposes; there is a slight rise at the croup of an inch or

two, after which it slopes badly and the tail is set on low down.

Colours are very variable, white, black, dun, red or flecked. Labanas use these beasts a great deal for carrying salt. The cows give from two to three seers of milk, and the price of a full-grown animal of either sex is from Rs. 250/- to Rs. 500/-.

Buffaloes are numerous and of a good stamp. There is one to every two of the population. Large flocks of sheep and goats are also kept. Pasture is sufficient. Disease is rare.

Five per cent of the cultivated area is irrigated. The means are the ordinary hill kuhls. Most of the irrigation is cis-Sutlej in the Bahadurpur pargana.

Rents:

The usual custom is for owners to cultivate their andarli land themselves and let out the the baharli land to tenants. Rent is nearly always paid in kind, the usual rate being one-third of the grain. Half batai is rate, though three-fourths are sometimes taken. The share of the village menials is considered equivalent to twenty per cent of the crop.

Forests:

The area of the Bilaspur forests is 22,475 acres, or 7.8 per cent of the area of the whole State. Excluding Bahadurur, a forest containing ban (*quercus incana*) and a few deodar, the forests are of three types (1) chil (*pinus longifolia*) forests, (2) scrub jungle, (3) bamboo forests.

The chil forests are usually found along the sheltered upper slopes of the main ridges at an elevation of 2,500 to 4,000 feet, but some are found lower down, and two forests are situated on the banks of the Sutlej at about 1,500 feet. Nearly all are pole forests with trees of the upper classes scattered throughout the crop. The latter are generally malformed, all well shaped trees having been felled by the right holders. Only one forest, Badhaghat, contains large trees, and these are not very numerous. The growth is generally fairly good, but reproduction is poor, perhaps owing to excessive grazing.

Scrub jungles contain a great many species, of which the most important are shisham (*dalbergia sissoo*) and tun (*cedrela toona*). These occur at low elevations, generally in or near cultivated lands and a good many shisham are found on the banks of the Sutlej.

The most important of the bamboo forests are those covering a large portion of the northern slope of the Naina Devi ridge. There are two main varieties of bamboo (*dendrocalamus strictus*) - the small, khirri, and the large, bans. A third species called nal bans (*bambusa vulgaris*) is extensively cultivated by the zamindars, a few clumps being found near most villages in the State. A large bamboo called magar, perhaps the *bambusa balcoa*, is also grown near villages but it less common.

The principal marketable products of the forests are chil timber, bamboos, and baggar grass. The latter is found in Naina Devi and is used for making ropes, rafting timber, and thatching. Timber and bamboos can be floated down the Sutlej and its tributaries, the Gambar and Sir

khads. The Sirhali and Sukkar khads can also be utilized in the rains. The other produce is exported by land. The markets for the sale of timber are Doraka and Bhillour; for bamboos Naila, Rugar, Doraha, and the large town in the plains generally; for baggar grass, Naila; and for fuel and minor produce, Anandpur and the neighbouring villages in the Hoshiarpur district.

Mines and Minerals:

There are practically no minerals of any value. Iron has been found out in Luharara in pargana Rattanpur but on attempt to work it was not successful. A more detailed geological survey made in 1942 has revealed some deposits of inferior coal very near the banks of the Sutlej river at village Bhager and also some galena (lead) in the Bandla range, but these are not commercially exploitable. Large deposits of glass sands have also been reported near the capital but the absence of power has been the main handicap in starting a large factory.

Arts and Manufactures:

There are no factories of any description in the State, but the local varieties of hand-made cloth are legion. The commonest is Khaddar a coarse white cloth with a single warp and weft. The coarse yarn of the Punjab mill is generally used for it but much homespun material is also woven for the cultivators own wear. There is also the industry in hand weaving of pushmina shawls called "pattu" and some of the results are quite good.

At Bilaspur silver ornaments such as finger and earrings necklaces and ornaments for the head and ears

are decorated with blue and green enamel. A few gold ornaments for the nose called bulak and nuth are also made in addition to earrings for females which are called balis and for males which are given the name of nantis.

Commerce and Trade:

There is no grain market as such, though grain, ginger, and ghee is exported mostly to the Rupa Mandi. An effort is now being made to develop a market at Markand in the Bahadurpur pargana.

Means of Communication:

Much has been done of late years to improve communications and there are over a hundred miles of motorable roads.

Bilaspur to Kiratpur	-	30 miles.
Bilaspur to Hritalyangar	-	30 miles.
Bilaspur to Talai	-	28 miles.
Nambol to Bilaspur	-	18 miles.
Bilaspur to Dehar	-	18 miles.
Bhakra to Nangal	-	<u>7 miles.</u>
		<u>131 miles.</u>

There are two bridge over the Sutlej, one at Bhajwani and the other at Dehar. In addition, there are over eight ferries over this river on which boats are used.

There is sub-post and telegraph office at Bilaspur and a sub-post office at Ghumarwin. There are also over a

dozen branch post offices at the headquarters of all the Parganas.

Section (b) - Administrative:

Administrative Division:

For purposes of administration the Bilaspur State is one of the Part C States under the new constitution. It is administered by the President, acting through a Chief Commissioner appointed by him. There are two Tehsils of Bilaspur and Ghumarwin containing Parganas, Sudder, Bahadurpur, Rattanpur, Fatehpur and Kotokehlur in the former, and Basah, Bachretoo, GEharwin, Sunhani, Ajmerpur Tiun and Suryun in the latter Tehsil.

Civil & Criminal Justice:

In the early history of the State when the Ruler was the fountain head of law, he formed the highest court of justice which was regularly dispensed in public Durbars, wherein the sovereign was assisted by his Ministers. There were no regular file, all orders being oral and their execution prompt and swift. As society progressed, the Durbar still continued but the area of the State was divided into various Tehsils, each under a Kotwal or a Negi who entertained certain judicial powers of a minor nature in addition to his duties as a Faujdar at one of the forts which was generally the headquarters of the area.

This state of affairs continued till 1863 A.D. when Raja Hira Chand divided the State into six Tehsils of Bilaspur, Punjgain, Fattehpur, Tiun, Senhani and

Bachretu, each under the charge of a Tehsildar who worked as law courts in their circles reporting their findings for final orders to the Ruler.

His successor Raja Amarchand amalgamated the six Tehsils into two divisions on either side of the River Sutlej in 1885 and placed a Wazir in charge of each. Regular files of cases now begun to be kept in tankriscript and by 1898 Urdu had been adopted as a court language in conformity with the practice in the rest of the Punjab.

As we have seen above, the administrative division created by Raja Amarchand have continued up-to-date in the form of the two Tehsils, whose Tehsildars are now invested with certain criminal powers. With the transformation of the State into one of the units of the Indian Republic the highest court of appeal is that of a judicial Commissioner, who has a district and sessions judge working under him, and the usual complement of magistrates and sub-judges.

Land Revenue:

Provision to the year 1863 land revenue was realized in kind. The yield of standing crops was appraised and a third of the produce taken in kind as the share of the State. The basis of land measurement was the area which could be sown with two kuccha seers (1.6 lbs) was called a patha and 20 pathas made a lukhao or ghumaon. In accordance with present measurement of 5.38 bighas to the acre, a patha is equal to 3.5 biswas and a lukhao to three bighas and 12 biswas. The unit of assessment was the bhaoli which varied in different localities between 12 and 20

lukhaos. A Vazir was appointed to superintend the revenue collections and he was assisted by a number of subordinate officials.

In 1863 Raja Hiarachand established his 6 Tehsils and converted the revenue of most villages into cash. The process was completed by Raja Amarchand in 1888 when the land revenue assessment sat at Rs. 1,42,139/- to which were added various amounts of cesses amounting to 25% of the total payment.

The first settlement was commenced in 1905 and was completed by 1909. It followed the revenue system then prevalent in British Punjab and fixed the cash demand at Rs. 1,70,000/- plus the usual cesses. This demand included the assignments to the Rajas household, Jagirdars and Muagidars, whose dues totaled about Rs. 50,000/-. A second settlement started in 1929 and ended in 1934 and raised the revenue demand to about Rs. 1,98,000/- and another Rs. 40,000/- as dues of Jagirdars and Muafidars.

The total area of the State comprises of 2,85,000 acres out of which only 85,000 are cultivated and another 30,000 acres are under forests. The remainder constitute grasslands, grazing lands and uncultivable waste land. Of the total land under cultivation, only 5% is irrigated and the remainder 95% is wholly dependent on rains. Generally two crops are raised in a year, viz the kharif and the rabi, although in limited areas where sufficient irrigation exists, a third crop named Zaid rabi is also raised. Kharif is the main harvest when maize, rice and pulses are grown. Wheat is the chief grain of the rabi harvest, although gram is also sown to a large extent.

Ginger, sugarcane and other cash crops are also produced in appropriate areas.

The population of Bilaspur has shown large increase during the last 50 years, totaling nearly 22%. Consequently the density of population per square mile of cultivated area had increased to about 850 persons per square mile at the end of the second settlement. Out of the land owning classes, Kanet (Rajputs) comprise 27%, Rajputs 18%, Brahmans 36% and the remainder about 19%. The cultivated land per head of the population comes to about 3 bighas which gives an average of 15 bighas or less than 3 acres of land per average family of about 5 members.

Out of the total cultivated area 60% is cultivated by owners themselves and 40% through tenants. Of the latter, 16% is held by occupancy tenants paying cash rent and for the remainder the rent is paid in kind.

Police:

An exceptional feature of the police administration was its traditional and representative nature. Till about half a century ago, the functions of the police continued to be discharged by a complex body known as Saaths. They were enrolled in twelve different thanas, the strength varying in each from 15 to 20 men known as piadas (or footmen) with Negis (or leaders) at their head.

The headquarters thana was known as the "Chaunta" and the head policeman called "Kotwal". The duties of this force comprised a variety of functions ranging from the investigation of cases to collection of

land revenue and the carrying of mail. They worked for six months in the year while during the other six they were allowed to go home and attend to their crops. Their monthly pay used to be about Rs. 2/-. This system continued till about 1880 when existing requirements brought about a change in the regulations and functions of the police.

It is remarkable to find that the new design adopted as far back as 60 years ago has continued right upto the present and the police station which became the unit of administration then is still very much there as also the headquarter where each thana is situated. There have, of course, been much increase in the personnel of the constabulary and the officers manning it, but the head of the department has been the Superintendent of the Police with the usual complement of inspectors and constables. During the second world war a posse of armed police was added to the ranks and were assigned various duties for protection of law and order within the State. It is now employed mostly on guard duties. Bilaspur is not a criminal area and violent crimes like dacoity and robbery are rare in occurrence. There are a few murders committed each year but they are mostly crime-personnel and need not be taken seriously. As a matter of fact, the work at present being done by the five police stations of Sudder, Ghumarwin, Ajmerpur, Talai and Kot Kehloor is hardly enough for one. The actual registration of cases in all of them not exceeding 200 in a year. There are a few theft cases, however, but the property stolen is of little consequence.

Jail:

There is only one jail at Bilaspur proper. It has accommodation for about 50 male and 12 female prisoners. This is under the charge of a Daroga with the usual staff of warders etc.

A start was made some time ago with the manufacture of Durries and Niwar but the results were not encouraging. A few plots of land are attached to the jail for the vegetable requirements of its inmates. As the population is not very large, the convicts are mostly employed on such odd jobs as attending to public gardens or doing multifarious government duties such as carrying furniture, cleaning compounds etc.

Education:

In 1910 there were only four schools in the whole State and there were 354 students reading in them. The Angle-Vernacular school at headquarters was, however, raised to a High School in 1913-14. By 1933 the number of students in the High School had gone upto 350 but there were hardly any additions to the Primary institutions in the villages.

The educational re-organization of the whole State was taken up in hand in 1938-39 and by 1944 the number of elementary schools had risen to 28 with one girls middle-school and Senior Basic School at Bilaspur proper. The total number of children receiving education at these institutes was about 4,000. Recently the High School at Bilaspur had been raised to the status of an Intermediate College and the girls middle school has also become a

High School. In addition there are 2 High Schools, 18 middle schools and about 40 Elementary Schools in the villages with about 6,000 pupils under instruction. There is also a Teacher's Training School at Auhar alongwith a Janata College started only in 1953.

Medical & Public Health:

In the field of Medical & Public Health the developments have been solid though less spectacular than in education.

Raja Amarchand started the first allopathic centre at Bilaspur in 1886 but it was housed in a proper building only in 1905 and was then in charge of a hospital assistant. By 1933 the hospital had been provided with indoor accommodation of a dozen beds as also a modern operation theatre with an Assistant Surgeon to attend to the medical needs of the people.

In 1936 a ladies hospital was opened and by 1944 there were 12 more Medical Centres in the villages at the headquarters of each Pargana. Some of them were in charge of Assistant Surgeons, while the less important ones were manned by vaidas.

Total number of patients who received treatment in 1944 was over 20,000 and the indoor average was about 10 daily.

Public Health Work consisted mainly of vaccination and free distribution of quinine among the areas where malaria was common. Antirabic treatment was also given at the Centre Hospital free of charge. A regular record of

births and deaths throughout the whole state also began to be maintained.

Public Works Department:

Previous to 1928 there was no qualified engineer in charge of public works and all the work was done under the supervision of laymen called daroga-imarats (buildings). Such roads and buildings as existed required no expert skill for their construction and maintenance and if any new building had to be constructed it was usually of the old prevailing type whose technique was known to local workmen.

The minority administration which lasted from 1928-32 appointed an overseer to take charge of the department but no new works were undertaken and the policy was only one of carrying on.

By 1936 this department had been put in charge of a fully qualified Engineer with the usual number of overseers, mistries etc. and a regular programme of construction was undertaken. With the advent of Central Administration in Bilaspur the P.W.D. is an independent division in charge of an Executive Engineer.

Finance:

Finance plays a very important part in the progress of the people but very little attention seems to have been paid to this subject prior to 1900 A.D. when some sort of a budget began to be prepared. Previous to this, the income and expenditure of the State used to be entered in log books called "bahis" written out by hereditary clerks who

belong to a certain family in the State called "Mehtas". There is a local saying that one of the clever Mehtas would write the income and expenditure of the whole State on the nail of his left thumb.

After the first revenue settlement had finished in 1909, a budget on the Punjab model began to be prepared and sanctioned by the Ruler, but this was neither timely nor detailed and could best be described as a ledger on which were entered the names of the State employees and the salaries they were allowed from year to year. A certain figure in the neighbourhood of 2 to 3 lakhs had been taken for granted as revenue and after paying for certain essential services, the balance was allocated to the privy purse. The minority administration which took charge of affairs in 1927 inherited a large debt and was mainly occupied with the idea of paying it up. However, a distinct effort was made to chalk out the main heads of income and expenditure and also to explore possibilities of new taxation.

The regular budget began to be prepared from 1933 onwards and the financial year in Bilaspur began to be reckoned from the new years day of the Bikram era.

During the year 10 years of 1933-1942, the estimated revenue never exceeded 6 lakhs of rupees a year and the expenditure was also of a like manner. With the rising tempo of the war, the income showed an upward curve and had reached the figure of over 12 lakhs when the Central Government took over the administration in 1948. Since then, the income seems to have dwindled down and

stood at only 8 lakhs in 1953-1954, while the total expenditure for the same year amounted to over 42 lakhs.

The budget of the State is now a part of the budget of the Union Government and is passed by Parliament in the usual manner.

CHAPTER VI

THE BHAKRA-NANGAL PROEECT

Brief History:

The proposal for the construction of a high Dam on the Sutlej originated in 1908 by Sir Louis Dane, then Governor of the Punjab as a result of a tour from Sunni to Bilaspur and thence onward to Rupar when he floated down the Sutlej river on "Khatnaos". Two sites, one in the Sunni gorge and another at Bhakra were tentatively selected and although estimates for a Dam 200 feet high were drawn up, the cost was found to be prohibitive and the scheme shelved.

The proposal was received in 1915 and the present site at Bhakra finally selected. This site was found to have better rock and the gorge was also narrower hence better possibilities for building of a higher Dam with larger storage capacity. Twelve years later a committee of geologists and engineers made a detailed examination of the site and a higher Dam of either 450 feet (R.L. 1550) or 500 feet (R.L. 1600) was recommended, but no progress was made except the forming of estimates and the writing of a comprehensive Report on the possibilities of the project because the cost was still too high for the provincial exchequer to bear and the Punjab had other less costly and more remunerative schemes to attend to.

In the year 1938-39 there was severe draught in the districts of Rohtak and Hissar, resulting in great loss to life and cattle and the Bhakra Dam scheme again came into the forefront because the reservoir which the Dam creates

is expected to supply water to those dry districts. But he 2nd World War followed in the wake of the famine and although the Punjab Unionist Ministry then in power, was wedded to the cause of the cultivators, still it could not proceed with the project just at that time.

In 1944 Dr. J.L. Savage of U.S.A., world known authority on high Dams, visited the site of the proposed to especially as the town of Bilaspur being situated at a height of R.L. 1600 would have been partially submerged if the height of the Dam were kept at 500 feet (i.e. R.L. 1600). Subsequently however, it was agreed to raise the height of the Dam to 680 feet from the foundation, the highest straight gravity Dam in the world forming a lake over 50 miles long and 2 to 3 miles wide. As now visualized, the proposed Dam will completely submerge the centuries old town of Bilaspur (capital of the state of the same name) situated nearly 35 miles up-river from Bhakra.

A corollary to Bhakra and situated about 8 miles down-stream from it, is the Nangal Project where a 100 feet high Dam will raise the supply level of water about 50 feet thus forming a balancing reservoir to take up the diurnal variations from Bhakra and ensuring a lake feeding to the Nangal Hydel Canal. On this Canal 40 miles long, will be located two power plants to take advantage of the natural drop in declivity, each having 72,000 kilowatt capacity. When complete, the power thus generated will be used at Bhakra Dam construction and will also supply the needs of the States of Punjab and Delhi.

Both the projects are under construction at the moment by the Punjab Government and while it is expected that the Nangal Hydel will be ready for giving power by 1954, the Bhakra Dam will only be finished in 1960. The moneys required for the work are being loaned by the Government of India to the State of the Punjab and it is estimated that upto 1953-54 the centre had advanced nearly 65 crores of rupees which is about one half of the 140 crores required to complete the projects. The Central Government has also established a Bhakra Control Board in 1950 "to accelerate the timetable" in such manner that the Dam might be completed even earlier.

Problem and their solution:

Broadly speaking, the problems connected with the Bhakra Dam Project can be divided into the following categories:

- a) Constitutional and Administrative.
- b) Compensation; and
- c) Rehabilitation.

a) Constitutional and Administrative:

So long as Bilaspur was an Indian State (administered by a Ruler and having district treaty relationship with the British Government), it was necessary that the construction of a Dam at Bhakra (which partly lies in the territories of the Bilaspur State) should have been brought about by an Agreement between both the Government on mutually agreed terms. This is in fact what happened and as a result of long negotiations a workable agreement was

more or less finalized in April 1948. But conditions have changed since then. The Bilaspur State has now become a Centrally administered State of the Union of India, the Ruler having ceded powers of Government to the Centre (vide Agreement dated August 15th, 1948) and with the new Indian Constitution giving equality of status to all the component units of the Union, the barriers that separated the erstwhile Indian States from the Provinces have at least disappeared. This opens up a new field of thought and action in which there are large possibilities of finding a solution different than the one hitherto envisaged.

On first thought, it might be argued that the only concern of the people is adequate compensation in cash or kind for the land and houses they are going to lose and this being reasonably provided for the question of the future administration could best be left in the hands of one of the adjoining States which have better resources than ours to run it according to modern conceptions. But further reflection will reveal the fallacy of its argument. The dispossession of property and subsequent rehabilitation is not confined to the sufferers alone but affects the whole of the State in a number of ways, and it can be said that the State of Bilaspur is as much a participating Unit in the Bhakra Dam Project as the States of Punjab, Pepsu and Rajasthan, with this difference that whereas the contribution of Bilaspur consists of making available the site of the Dam and the willing sacrifices of its people in parting with their homes and lands in order to bring prosperity to these other States of India. Thus it becomes the duty of the Central Government to see that

its direct responsibility for the administration of Bilaspur is not relegated to any third party at this stage and that all the obligations assumed by it for the betterment of the people are fully discharged.

This will help not only in the proper solution of the problems that now confront us but will also inspire confidence amongst the people that the Central Government is ready and willing to do all it can for their proper rehabilitation and the building up of a new Bilaspur on the submergence of the old.

Another possible solution of the administrative problems could be the creation by an Act of Parliament of a Sutlej Valley Authority or Corporation Modeled on the lines of the Damodar Valley Corporation (Act XIV of 1948) and vest complete control of the Bhakra Project in such a body. Item 54 of the Union list gives power to the Central Government to legislate on any matters which appertain to "regulation and development of Inter-State rivers and river valleys" and the already existing Bhakra Control Board established in 1950 could be re-modeled in such a way that it takes over as the corporation enjoying statutory powers. The limits of the Sutlej Valley under the proposed enactment could be defined to include the State of Bilaspur as well as parts of the Punjab. The Corporation could be vested with powers not only to acquire land and construct dams but also to undertake re-settlement of the population displaced by the dams and to arrange for the distribution of water and the sale of electrical energy. To such a Corporation could be attached an Advisory

Committee elected from amongst the inhabitants of Bilaspur to advise it on all problems relating to re-settlement of the displaced population as well as the general welfare of the people residing in the valley.

b) Compensation:

The problem which touches the people of Bilaspur much more intimately is that connected with the flooding of their homes and lands and the compensation which they would receive for these losses. With the heights of the Dam now placed at 680 feet, it is estimated that the reservoir would submerge about 30,000 acres of land and 8,000 houses, thus rendering homeless about 17,000 people. Included in this submergence is the Bilaspur town where, in addition to state buildings about 600 houses and shops, inhabited by nearly 4,000 people, are destined to go under water. But this is not all. The State of Bilaspur makes a very great sacrifice for the cause of the people of India and brought the reservoir it loses nearly one tenth (47 square miles) of its total area and dislocates nearly 14% (17,000) of its population. It therefore, follows that in addition to monetary compensation; it should be allowed other concessions in the form of better roads, and sufficient sums of money to stabilize its administration and to open up a richer and brighter future for its inhabitants.

Upto the present the intention has been to have some kind of an arrangement on paper more or less on the lines of the Agreement negotiated by the Punjab with the late Bilaspur State Government under the provisions of which

the Punjab not only agreed to pay a certain price for the acquisition of property and the subsequent rehabilitation of the people but it also offered concessions to the State of Bilaspur in the form of royalties on electricity and free building up of roads etc. With the establishment of a Corporation this work would be left to the new body that would also be charged with the building of the new Capital Town. The important questions of (i) Land and (ii) New Capital Town, however, need detailed consideration and are mentioned below:-

i) Land:

So far as practicable, land for land should be given to the dispossessed cultivators, so, however, that the new allotment consists of holding of economic size and abnormally large holdings are compensated partly in cash and partly in land. According to present estimate, the total area of privately owned land coming under water is nearly 12,000 acres. This is spread out in many villages and whereas in some of them (e.g. Bhakra, Uttappar, Ghaunta etc.) the entire holdings will be submerged, in other higher up the river there would be cases in which the cultivator would stand to lose no more than one fourth of his total holding and even this would reappear for six months in the year owing to seasonal fall of water in the reservoir. Thus the issue of giving land for land is really limited to an area of nearly 10,000 acres and our main problem is where to find them. Lately, there have been suggestions from the Government of Himachal Pradesh that they have got unbroken land which could be given to

the dispossessed cultivators while on the other hand, the Punjab has all along been saying that after partition there are no longer any Government lands available with them (the Punjab) for the purpose. Another State where land could be available is that of Rajasthan although the area there, which will be commanded by the Bhakra Canal distributary system, will hardly receive any water for irrigation before 1960-61. Recently a house-to-house survey was made in the State and it has been found out that whereas all landowners who face dispossession have flatly refused to go to the bleak and barren hills of Himachal Pradesh, most of them have chosen to go to the Punjab. The first 36 villages will be submerged this winter (1954) by the Cofferdam and the most important of them viz. (1) Bhakra (2) Uttarpar (3) Mahora (4) Tahra (5) Bahl Bhambian (6) Arloh (7) Chanta (8) Thathal (9) piungali (10) Malraon and (11) Gah, are vociferous in their demand for land in the canal irrigated areas of the Punjab preferably those which will get water from the Bhakra Project. Here it should also be borne in mind that although about 10,000 acres is the area privately owned, in providing land for land to the oustees it has to be seen that the holdings that they got are of an economic size. The total number of families involved is about 3,800 of which agricultural families are about 3,200. Even if we have to provide at least 10 acres to each dispossessed family the total area of land required to rehabilitate them will not be less than 32,000 acres, a very considerably figure. So far as compensation for other village immovable property is concerned viz. houses, water springs, trees etc. it should be paid in cash sufficiently in advance to enable the owner

to build a new house before he is actually driven out of the old one. It is further suggested that he may be allowed to continue in occupation of his property until its actual submergence becomes necessary.

ii) Bilaspur Town:

This is a special problem by itself and must be tackled separately. The Bilaspur Town as it exists at present has an area of about two square miles and a population roughly 4,000 living in nearly 600 houses. The rehabilitation of such a large number of urban people is not possible through individual efforts; hence Government should take the matter in hand at the earliest and draw out a comprehensive plan for the construction of the new Capital. As regard the compensation to be paid for the submergence of urban immovable property, it could be arrived at either by individual agreement or under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act 1894, so, however, that the allotment of plots in the new Township and the payment of cash is made sufficiently in advance to give time to the dispossessed owners to build new houses before the existing ones are taken over. With regard to places of worship and public utility (i.e. temples, sarais, baolies etc.) substitutes should be provided at Government expense through suitable public agencies or compensation paid where necessary.

c) Rehabilitation:

Rehabilitation would consist of:

- i) Resettlement of the dispossessed population; and
- ii) Provision for a new Capital Town.

The above would present great difficulties as not only is the dispossessed population going to be mostly agricultural but in a hilly State like Bilaspur, it would be extremely difficult to find a suitable site for building the new capital which would be so ideally situated as the existing one. Moreover, modern conditions demand a better communication system with the outside world and this would be rendered increasingly difficult by the proposed reservoir cutting up the State territories into two halves.

It has been ascertained that the total number of people subject to dispossession would be 17,048 although the exact number of these living in the urban areas is not given. Out of this total, about 8,500 are dependent on land, 1300 on industries, 400 on business, 370 on service and another 8,800 mostly consist of dependents on others. The total number of families involved is 3,838.

Looking into the figures it would appear that the total number of land owners and their families whose entire holdings will be submerged will number about 12,000 while there will be about 4,000-5,000 urban people not dependent on land. Thus, if land could be found for about 3,200 families and a new Township built for the urban population, the whole problem of rehabilitation would be solved.

As stated above, the people are adamant in asking for land in the Punjab and as the largest beneficiary under the Bhakra-Nangal Project it is the moral obligation of this

State to provide the 32,000 acres necessary for the rehabilitation of the Bilaspur oustees. Recently the Punjab Government had made an offer of land in the Government Agricultural Farm in Hissar District but further details are lacking. This matter, however, brooks no delay and must be given the highest priority.

Conclusion:

This Chapter attempts to give a brief outline of the Bhakra-Nangal Project and its implications for Bilaspur. A Rehabilitation Committee under the aegis of the Bhakra Control Board was appointed in 1953 to go into the whole question of rehabilitation as also to report on the selection of a site for the new Township. It visited Bhakra and Bilaspur and had detailed discussions with the affected people. No positive steps have however, been taken so far either to earmark plots of lands to the cultivators who face dispossession or to start planning and construction of the New Township. Meanwhile the spectre of impending submergences draws nearer and the first 36 villages will go under water when the Cofferdam is built in the winter of 1954.

The delay in settling these vital issues seems to have crept in owing to the apparent indecision of the Government of India about the future management and control of the Bhakra-Nangal Project. Although it was decided in 1952 to set up a Statutory Authority under an Act of Parliament as soon as possible, this decision has not been implemented so far and another Conference of the participating States is now being called to consider this vital issue.

CHAPTER VII

THE FUTURE

Short background:

As has been mentioned at the end of Chapter IV the administration of Bilaspur was handed over to the Central Government vide Agreement dated 15.8.1948 and it was accepted as a Part "C" State of the Union under the New Constitution with effect from 26th January, 1950. Thereafter the Representation of the People Act 1950 passed by the Provision Parliament of India gave it a separate seat in the House of the People but no legislature or Council of Advisors was provided for Bilaspur under the Government of Part "C" States Act 1951 which completely excluded it from the scope of the said enactment. Shri N. Gopalswamy Ayyongar then Minister of States speaking on this Bill in Parliament made the following remarks about Bilaspur: -

"Then I came to the tiny State of Bilaspur. I do not know how much of it will be above water after the Bhakra Dam is built. We propose to leave it alone. When the Bhakra Dam is built and we are able to find out how much of the land that is on the surface requires to be provided for by political institutions we will devise some suitable arrangements".

(Parliamentary Debates Volume IX No. 10, Page 4735).

General Elections were held in India soon afterwards and when the first Parliament under the New Constitution assembled in May 1952 the list of Government business

contained a Bill to provide for the merger of Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh. This was literally a bolt from the blue for the people of the State who forthwith submitted a petition of protest against the proposed measure to the Hon'ble Minister of States on 1.7.52 signed by over 42,000 persons. In the meanwhile the Punjab Government had also laid claims on Bilaspur (mostly on account of the Bhakra-Nangal Project which lies within the territories of this State) and the proposed Bill was consequently postponed.

Matter could not however rest here. The Central Government now called a Conference of the representatives of the Government of Punjab, Rajasthan, Pepsu and Himachal Pradesh on 18.8.52 and at this meeting a decision was taken about the future of Bilaspur as under: -

- 1) The planning and future administration of the Bhakra-Nangal Project should be in the hands of the Statutory Authority which is to be set up at a very early date and which will function as a regional development authority in all the areas served by the Project.
- 2) All the State Governments concerned with be represented on the proposed authority that would be given all the necessary power through Central legislation.
- 3) After the establishment of the authority mentioned above Bilaspur will be merged into Himachal Pradesh.

(Ministry of States, Report for 1952-53, Page-3).

It is interesting to note that no representative of the people of Bilaspur was ever invited to this Conference.

The Punjab Government did not take kindly to these decisions and on the very next day (19.8.52) its Chief Minister Sh. Bhimsen Sachar in a press Statement said inter-alia: -

“The point of view of the Punjab Government that the decision as to the merger of Bilaspur should be subject to the paramount needs of the Bhakra Dam and Nangal Canal was accepted.”

“..... During the course of the discussion the Prime Minister of India suggested that it might be desirable to set up an Independent Authority in order to safeguard the interests of the Bhakra Dam Project. In that case the Prime Minister said it would be immaterial to which State the Bilaspur territory belonged. Upto the last the Punjab stuck to the view that the question as to whether whole of the Bilaspur State should form a part of the Himachal Pradesh should be deferred till after the examination and adoption of the proposal to set up an independent authority for Bhakra-Nangal Project, as unless the question of the powers and functions of the proposed authority had been agreed upon it would be premature to take a decision on that point”. (P.T.I.)

Matters went on like this for another year but the proposed authority could not be set up. On the contrary when the Hon'ble Minister for Irrigation and Power was

asked a question in the House of the People by Shri L.N. Mishra on 11.8.1953 whether Government proposed to set up such a body the answer was in the negative (starred Q. No. 375). It is clear from this that same hitch had developed and the question had been put into cold storage. At about the same time there was intensive agitation in Bilaspur for the removal of its then Chief Commissioner, a civilian from the Punjab, who had been occupying the post since April 1949. The States Ministry while removing him in the beginning of November last decided to appoint the Lieut. Governor of Himachal Pradesh as the Chief Commissioner of Bilaspur also. This change over was effected on 4.11.53 and matters have moved rapidly since then finally culminating in the introduction and passing of the Himachal Pradesh and Bilaspur (New State) Bill VII of 1954 in the Council of States only a few days back.

The problem of Bilaspur:

The problem of Bilaspur is a threefold one. Firstly there is the Historical background which goes to show that it has flourished as an Indian State for over twelve centuries and this single factor has cemented its people into one political and administrative whole. Of course it is true that the political background of the people of Bilaspur is identical with the people of Himachal Pradesh who like us have been the subjects of erstwhile Indian States but here the comparison is not. As explained in fuller detail in Chapter II of this book there are no pronounced cultural or linguistic affinities between Himachalis and Bilaspuris, the latter's language manners and customs

being more akin to the people living in the present districts of Kangra and Hoshiarpur in the Punjab rather than with those of Mandi or Mahasu districts in Himachal Pradesh. Secondly there is the Constitutional position which flows from the fact that Bilaspur is still a part "C" State of the Indian Union, however small it might be. India today is a sovereign Democratic Republic hence the separate entity of Bilaspur should only be liquidated after the wishes of its people about their future have been ascertained in a fully democratic manner. Thirdly there is the great Bhakra-Nangal Project most of which lies in Bilaspur territory and it is literally true that Bilaspur will be what Bhakra makes it. Here the issue is wholly economic and there can be no denying the fact that in this particular sphere the ties of Bilaspur are stronger with the neighbouring Punjab rather than with Himachal Pradesh. This fact is amply borne out by the almost unanimous verdict of the 17,000 oustees from Bilaspur who face dispossession under the proposed Bhakra reservoir. They have whole heartedly opted for resettlement on lands in the Punjab and have flatly refused to go to the barren and inaccessible mountain regions of Himachal Pradesh.

Bhakra-Nangal Authority or Corporation:

Faced with these conditions it is no easy matter to reach firm conclusions but one thing is certain. Bilaspur has made great sacrifices in the common cause and millions of people will receive life and light from the Bhakra-Nangal Project. It will therefore be a breach of faith of the people of India disregarding the interests of their suffering brethren in Bilaspur and fail to do every

thing that is humanely possible not only to resettle and rehabilitate these oustees but also to open up for them a richer and happier life. This can only be successfully achieved if the Central Government fully discharges its obligations towards the Bilaspur people and immediately sets up a statutory authority for the Bhakra-Nangal Project under an Act of Parliament. The future political status of the State of Bilaspur should only be decided after such an authority has been created. It may well be that the Punjab as the target beneficiaries under Bhakra-Nangal objects to the setting up of such a body but the larger interest of India as well as the fact that the Centre is advancing all the 156 crores needed for this Project should clinch the issue. Moreover item 56 of the Union list empowers Parliament to legislate for the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys hence there is no legal difficulty on this score. We have already got the Damodar Valley Corporation Act (XIV of 1948) and a Bhakra-Nangal Corporation could very well be modeled on those lines.

Future of the Punjab:

Once the Bhakra-Nangal Corporation is set up the future status of Bilaspur has to be decided upon. Bilaspur is in the Punjab hence its future can only be decided alongwith the Punjab's future. Here comes the States Reorganization Commission and the claims made before it by the States of Delhi, Pepsu, Himachal Pradesh and the Punjab. Delhi is the capital of India and although there are moves from various quarters for a larger Delhi State comprising certain districts of the Punjab, Pepsu, Uttar

Pradesh and North Eastern Rajasthan but this will not be a practicable proposition. The best solution for Delhi appears to be to make it a Capital State on the model of Washington D.C. in the U.S.A. or like the federal Capital of Canberra in the Commonwealth of Australia. Then there is the State of PEPSU, which is geographically intermingled and linguistically and culturally no different from the Punjab. There is no reason why it should not be united with the Punjab.

The future of Himachal Pradesh:

Much more difficult is the question about the future of Himachal Pradesh. We know that there are strong moves for a Mahapurbi Punjab whose protagonist's claim that it should contain the existing States of Himachal, Pepsu and the Punjab but linguistically as well as culturally, the people of Himachal Pradesh are different from the Punjabis. Economically also they are very backward hence sure to lose if united with the Punjab. This fact is fully realized by the Himachalis and there is almost unanimous demand from all political parties for a greater Himachal Pradesh, it being fully understood that the State as it exists today with its million people and 1.5 crores of revenues is not viable. How then can a greater and viable Himachal be formed? Obviously by uniting with this State all the continuous hilly area of the Punjab, Pepsu and Uttar Pradesh. If this were done the new State would have within its folds its existing four districts plus the Punjab districts of Kangra, Simla and parts of Hoshiarpur as well as the Kohistan district of Pepsu. To these could be added the hilly district of Tehri Garwhal

and parts of the districts of Garwhal and Dehradun in Uttar Pradesh. The area of such a Himachal, if formed would be in the neighbourhood of 27,000 sq. miles and its population roughly 30,00,000.

The people's choice in Bilaspur:

The people of Bilaspur are fully conscious of these impending changes but they want their economic future to be settled before their existing political and administrative status is interfered with. As we have seen above, our future life is indissolubly bound with the Bhakra-Nangal Project and unless this project is controlled by a Statutory Authority we will never get a fair deal. This stands duly proved by the fact that no steps for the rehabilitation of the oustees from Bilaspur have so far been taken and although they are keen to get land for land in the Punjab, this has been denied to them. Not only this. The existing town of Bilaspur faces submergence within the next four years but nothing has been done till now even to plan the new Township. This delay has produced great distrust in public mind and the people are puzzled and dismayed as to how and why the Central Government is going back on its commitments without assuring our future welfare. Immediate merger in Himachal Pradesh is no solution to the problem as the Bilaspur people do not want to resettle in the former's hilly areas and moreover how can it be said for certain that the existing Himachal Pradesh will survive as a unit in the India of tomorrow. Even after the proposed union of Himachal Pradesh and Bilaspur, the new State will only have a population of nearly 11 lacs and it will still be a

Part "C" State under the Constitution dependent on large dolings from the Centre.

Then there is the question of the Punjab. True enough the majority of Himachalis are for a separate Himachal State but there are also clear signs that some of its areas stand for merger in the Punjab. This is evident from certain Resolutions passed at a recent political Conference held in the Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh. Supposing a greater Himachal Pradesh cannot be formed. Supposing the hilly districts of the Punjab, Pepsu and Uttar Pradesh do not opt for inclusion this State then there is no doubt that a Mahapurbi Punjab will emerge as a single Unit and both the existing States of Himachal Pradesh and Bilaspur will eventually form parts of it.

The people of Bilaspur therefore want that: -

Firstly - As already decided upon by the Government of India in 1952 the planning and future administration of the Bhakra-Nangal Project should be put into the hands of a Statutory authority which must set up under an Act of Parliament as early as possible.

Secondly - After the statutory authority or Corporation for the Bhakra-Nangal Project has been duly set up the people of Bilaspur must be given the right to freely choose their future status either as a separate Unit as here-to-fore or for a Union with either of the States of Punjab or Himachal Pradesh; the peoples wishes to be duly recorded through a referendum conducted under the aegis of the Central Government or through a

Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Government of India in this behalf.

Thirdly - The Himachal Pradesh and Bilaspur (New State) Bill VII of 1954 as introduced in the House of the People to be withheld till such time as the wishes of the people of Bilaspur have been duly ascertained. Thereafter if a majority opts for Union with Himachal Pradesh then the above measure should be proceeded with but if this is not so then the Government of India should take such steps as are necessary to implement the peoples choice in Bilaspur.

Fourthly - If for any reason the Government of India is not ready or willing to conduct a referendum or appoint an Enquiry Commission as suggested above then the whole question about the future of Bilaspur should be referred to the States Reorganization Commission and Government should abide by the verdict of this August body.

Lastly - There is the question about the administration of Bilaspur during the interim period. It is on this score that the Hon'ble Minister of States has expressed some anxiety and apprehension. In his reply to the debate on the Bill in the Council of States he clearly says that Bilaspur is a tiny State and the top-heavy administration is too much. He goes on to say that Government set aside the previous Chief Commissioner and appointed the Lieut. - Governor of Himachal Pradesh as the President's representative there but even then there was no improvement. Moreover the people were getting restless and there was growing demand that something should be

done. Now all these facts enumerated by the Hon. Minister are important by themselves but if the experiment of administering Bilaspur directly through the Lieut. Governor of Himachal Pradesh has proved unsuccessful the fault does not lie with the people of Bilaspur, nor should this failure be made a ground by the Government of India to go back on their solemn undertakings to administer Bilaspur as a separate Unit. The defect has creped in because the new Chief Commissioner can not be in Bilaspur all the time and also because there are no Councilors to assist him in the discharge of his duties. All that is needed therefore is to appoint a Deputy Chief Commissioner resident at Bilaspur and the administrative problem would be solved during the interim period. Such an appointment should be made directly by the States Ministry so that there is no bias in the new incumbent towards either of the two States of Punjab or Himachal Pradesh. This is most important in view of the fact that the people's views have to be obtained about their future and this work could only be done through a neutral person.

It might also be mentioned here that although on the face of it the existing Administration might look top heavy but it is not really so. Bilaspur's Judicial Commissioner is already common with Himachal Pradesh and so also are the Inspector General of Police and the Chief Engineer, Public Works Department. Of course there is still a separate officer designated as the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner with three Superintendents and a dozen Clerks working under him; but surely the expenditure of about Rs. 25,000/- per annum on these persons is hardly

any drain on the Centre's resources when the Budget Estimates for Bilaspur recently passed by Parliament for 1954-55 provide for an expenditure of not less than 50 lacs of rupees.

Conclusion:

The demand for territorial readjustment on the basis of linguistic and cultural affinity is nothing new in India. As a matter of fact the issue of linguistic provinces or States as they will now be called has already aroused much discussion and has deep implications for India's future. The Indian National Congress long ago took the position that the country should be reorganized into Provinces (States) corresponding to language areas and its Constitution specifies about 24 such areas each under the political charge of a Pradesh Congress Committee. The underlying theory is that a linguistic political structure is required if the people in the various sections are to develop fully their cultural and other potentialities and the creation of the Andhra State from 1.10.53 is the first step towards its acceptance. There are however certain dangers inherent in the creation of linguistic States and not only is the creation of a new political structure cutting across the existing States a potential threat to political stability but it is also feared that linguistic States might prove economically unworkable and encourage separatist tendencies.

The task of the States Reorganization Commission is therefore a historic one. Although the Republic of India has come into being as from the 26th January 1950 still many of its States lack political cohesion and there are

other which can not stand on their own legs on account of financial inadequacy and lack of manpower. Moreover the division of the 28 States of India into Parts "A" "B" "C" confers on them varying political and administrative status which hinders their growth in more than one direction. Whatever may have been the historical background of this classification, it should be rapidly removed, to enable the people in all the States of the Union to march forward as equal partners towards the goal of a welfare State. If there are certain Units which are too small to shoulder the burden individually then they have obviously to find their future by uniting with larger States. But in redrawing the map of India it will be well to bear in mind that the proposed territorial readjustments are wholly acceptable to the people concerned. The happenings in Bellary district in spite of the Misra Award have clearly underlined the fact that no understanding of India is possible without appreciating the psychology of our people. Although it might not always be expedient to act strictly according to their wishes still the people's feelings about any changes in their political and administrative set-up must be given due weight and attention as Government is after all for the people and must only be conducted in a manner which leaves them happy and contented.