

## CHAPTER I.

## The Satluj Valley.

We left Simla on the 14th June and reached Kōṭgur (map Kotgarh) on the 16th at noon. At Kōṭgur I enjoyed the hospitality of the C. M. S. missionary, the Rev. Mr. Beutel, who is an authority on the language, customs and geography of his district. On the rocks near Kōṭgur are found carvings in the shape of a *Yōnī*. This is Mr. Beutel's explanation at least, and it agrees exactly with the interpretation I have given of many similar carvings found all over Kuḷū and Lahul. This symbol is found even in Ladakh, but it is rarer there. I am convinced that this symbol is intended to remind the worshipper of deities of the Kālī type, as we find them all over the hills, under various names. These goddesses, together with gods of the Śiva type, represent the creative principle which is the main feature in the religion of all the Western Himalayan tribes.

During our short stay at Kōṭgur, Pindi Lal witnessed the Doum festival which is celebrated annually. The Doum is a tablet with silver and gold masks fixed to it. As Mr. Beutel told me, such masks are dedicated to the temple by the ruling chiefs of Kōṭgur and neighbourhood, on the occasion of deaths in their families. But whether these masks are supposed to be portraits of the deceased persons or not, I have not been able to ascertain. We find the same custom all over Kuḷū,<sup>1</sup> and also at Trilōknāth in Chambā-Lahul. The spirit (of the deceased?) is supposed to enter a man set apart for this cult, who performs a sword-dance and thrusts needles through his cheeks. When he is in a trance, he is asked questions and acts as an oracle. Pindi Lal placed his apparatus carefully in front of the mask board and was on the point of snapping, when he was suddenly assailed by the priests, who said that they could not allow him to photograph these objects of sanctity. Pindi Lal, snapping off his apparatus, calmly said: "Well, if you will not allow me to take a photo, I can do without it," and carried his treasure home (Plate I, a).

That there is a possible connection between these masks and those used for the devil-dances of Ladakh and Tibet, is made apparent by the following passage by Dr. Vogel,<sup>2</sup> who speaks of two miniature *śikhara* temples at Trilōknāth in which a number of wooden masks are preserved. "At the death of a member of the Rāṇā's family, such a mask is prepared and placed in the temple, whence it is on no account to be removed. An exception is made for three masks which are used at the *Chār* or Spring festival, and are said to represent a man, a woman and a demon, called in the local dialect *gāmi*, *mēzmi* and *kulīnza*. The main substance of the *Chār* festival is a performance symbolizing the advent of Spring and the defeat of Winter. The latter, personified as an evil demon, is represented by the bearer of the *kulīnza* mask, who is

<sup>1</sup> *A. S. R.* for 1907-8, pp. 270 ff., plates LXXIV and LXXV.

<sup>2</sup> *Chamba Gazetteer*, p. 44.