


# **(Presentation of the sublime beauty of the temples of Mandi town of 'Abode of gods' the Himalaya)**



**Dr. Neelmani Upadhyay**

The monograph of 'Temples of Mandi' highlights the main features of the sculpture and architecture of temples of Mandi town. It will as well help understand the artistic niceties and subtleties of the temple-towns of the Himalaya especially Himachal Pradesh. In fact the regional art-history is miniature study and reflection of the national art-history.

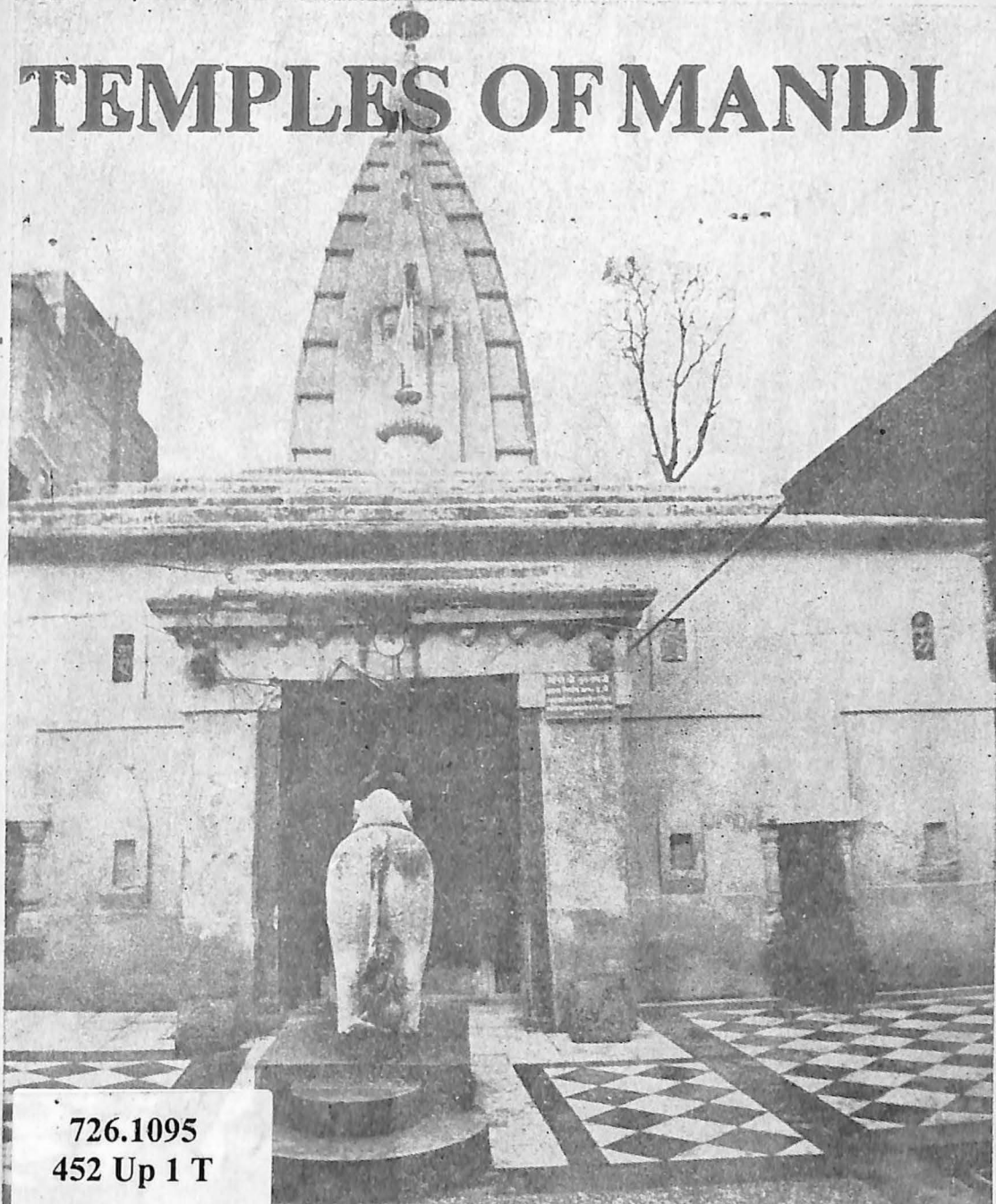
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# TEMPLES OF MANDI



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# **TEMPLES OF MANDI (MONOGRAPH)**

(Architectural and Sculptural Delineation of Temples of Mandi Town)

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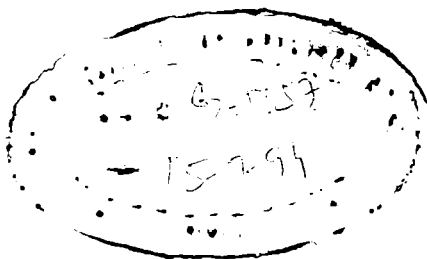


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# INTRODUCTION

Mandi is called the “Kashi” of the mountains for the great number of temples it has and their majestic beauty. This has been possible because of the long history, peace, stability and continuity of the administration for eight to nine centuries of the rule of the erstwhile Mandi State. Moreover the religious nature of the hilly folk and the sense of achievement are the other sources of inspiration behind the phenomenal temple architecture and sculpture here.

This monograph ‘Temples of Mandi’ is the representative description of temple towns of Himachal Pradesh. It is hoped that such monographs of temple towns of this part of the country would follow and would highlight the landscape of this rich tradition of architecture and sculpture.

I express my deep gratitude to the Department of Archaeology, Govt. of India and to all others who have helped me in getting the desired photographs concerning the sculpture and architecture of these temples.

My friend and artist Shri Chetan Ishwar Pandit has helped me much in the visiting and analysing the details of these temples. I express my deep gratitude to him and to all enlightened and religious people and the elite of the town who have guided and helped me by their wise counsel and guidance and thus the publication of this monograph could be accomplished.

Mandi  
January 14, 1986.

—Dr. Neelmani Upadhyay

# Temples of Mandi

From the point of view of the temples Mandi is called "Kashi" (Varanasi) of Himachal Pradesh. This is the town of temples. As Varanasi is named as the city of Baba Vishvanath so Mandi is addressed as the town of Baba Bhutnath. According to the inscription of Triloknath Temple Mandi town was established in 1526 A.D. Since then with the development of the town the number of temples has also increased. Not only the Shaiva but Shakta and Vaishnava religious devotees have contributed to the growth of such temples. Whatsoever it may be this Mandi town situated at the foothills of the Shivalik range of the mountains is primarily the centre of the Shaivites.

## DEVELOPMENT OF MANDI TOWN.

Mandi town is situated on the bank of the Vipasha (now the name is the Beasa). Sometimes Purani (old) Mandi used to be the capital of Mandi princely State and Triloknath temple was the crown of its glory. The new Mandi town is situated at the place of Baba Bhutnath. Its main temple is the temple of Baba Bhutnath (Shiva in the father—image). One, while moving through Bhutnath street, is easily reminded of the street of Vishvanath (Varanasi). The cloth, medicines, general merchandise, etc. are well stocked in glittering shops of this street. Near Bhutnath temple we come across Chohatta bazar which is the main bazar of the town. There used to be tin turrets with pyramid structure which gave it its characteristic form. All this has now been usurped by the wave of modernity of R.C.C. slabs and the slates. On the west of Mandi town one can see easily the temple of Shyamakali on the hill top. It is no wonder as Shiva is not complete without Shakti !

Mandi town as settled in the radius of one mile and a half has its special characteristics of its own. About twenty thousand people live here. This density of population, close contact and the majestic beauty of the temples have given it unique form and individuality. In olden times it was situated on the important Hindustan-Tibet trade route. There was flow of people and trade from Amritsar, Pathankot, Mandi and Kullu to Lahoul and further to Tibet. The wool 'pasham' (very fine soft wool) 'jeera' (cuminseed), 'Heeng' (asafoetida), 'singni-mingni', 'kuth' (local Lahoul herbal product) potatoes, shawls, herbs etc. were imported by the Panjab plains and they used to export salt, cotton, cloth, utensils, cereals etc. to those far off snowy regions. Mandi was an important market of this trade route and was probably named 'Mandi' which in English means market. But viewing the beauty of the natural landscape and the grand panorama of its temples name Mandi must have been derived from Sanskrit root 'Mand' which signifies beauty and decoration. To me the latter derivation of the name of 'Mandi' appears more appealing and appropriate.

Mandi town as surrounded by its towering hills looks like a bowl. It has its special character and culture. It is difficult to erase from one's mind the memories of the wonderful landscapes of its Nature and the majestic beauty of its temples. To describe the religion, culture and civilisation of this important old town is another subject. In this monograph we are concerned only with the architecture, sculpture and history of the construction of the temples of this town.

## A SHAIVA TEMPLES BHUTNATH TEMPLE

The most popular and famous temple of Mandi is Bhutnath temple. It was built by Raja Ajbar Sen in 1526 A.D. This year marks the beginning of the establishment of the new capital of Mandi State i. e. new Mandi town. This temple is in "shikhar" style. As we enter the temple we first of all see the "Nandi" (bull) who is facing Shiva of the sanctum sanctorum. Further there is the rectangular hall which contains the "Yajnakunda" (sacrificial fireplace) and

its "Vibhuti" (ashes) is put on the forehead with great reverence by the devotees. On the right side of this hall is very big drum whose sound, deep and pleasing, reverberates in the entire temple. Next to this hall is the sanctum sanctorum. Here "Shivalinga" with its "Mahayoni" is worshipped. Above "Shivalinga" there is "jalahari" (vessel generally of copper from the bottom of which water trickles down on the idol) and devotees accept its sacred water with much sanctity and reverence. The 'shikhar'<sup>1</sup> style of architecture is on the sanctum sanctorum and above this is the "aamalak"<sup>2</sup> and there on the 'kalash'<sup>3</sup>

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- F. N. 1 In the case of Shiva temple it signifies 'Kailash,' Shiva's holy mountain and as far as Vishnu temple is concerned it stands for his holy mountain 'Meru'.
- 2 On the top of this 'shikhar' of the temple it is an important feature and it is in the form of the ribbed myrobalan fruit or its flattened varieties.
- 3 It symbolises 'Soma' jar- the jar of immortality. It is the pinnacle of the 'shikhar' structure and is decorative, generally gold-plated.



The 'Sheshnaga' made of brass metal is spreading its hood over the Shivalinga. The 'Mahayoni' is made of silver. There are the idols of Ganesh in marble and the six-faced Kartikeya too placed nearby.

At the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum the elephants and 'Vidyadharas' (lower class of deities) are engraved. On the topmost door-frame of this entrance 'Kinnaras' 'Gandharvas' with musical instruments like 'veena' are shown. The engravings of the animals, geometrical designs, swans, lions, celestial nymphs, etc. are found engraved on the four sturdy big pillars of the 'mandap' hall.

The temple motifs are found on the 'shikhar' of the temple. There are lines looking like precious stones of the beads on the 'shikhar'. Towards the main entrance in the 'shikhar' Tryambak- Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh in their unified form—figures prominently.

On the right side of the main entrance we have another temple dedicated to Radha-Krishnan built by Thekedar (means contractor but otherwise used as a prefix to the name) Vallabh. On its left side Shri Jayasimha contractor has constructed another small temple of 'Satyanarayan'.

The main door of the entrance is of steel but in the princely State times it used to be made of silver. There are niches meant for different deities on the outside walls of the main temple. On one such niche we find Brahma seated on the lotus. In other niches there are different gods and goddesses. The "aamalak" of the temple is ribbed one and it is quite ornamental. The 'kalash' is embellished with gold plates. Now with the electric bulb on the top of the 'kalash', temple can be seen from any distance in the town at night also. The 'pujari' (priest) of the temple is a 'Nath Sanyasi' and these are called in local dialect 'Raur'. Shiva is naturally connected with 'Yoga-sadhana' and probably this is the secret of 'Naths' becoming the priests of this Shiva-temple.

### TRILOKNATH TEMPLE

The three-faced Triloknath is the presiding deity of Triloknath temple. It is an important temple from historical, cultural and religious viewpoints. Firstly it is the primary temple of Purani Mandi which was earlier the capital of the State. It is from the inscription of this temple we know that Mandi town was established in 1526 A.D. This temple was built by the queen Sultan Devi, the wife of Raja Ajbar Sen in 1520 A.D.

As we enter the temple we first of all find the rectangular hall i.e. mandap. Its roof is slanting in character. These such slanting roofs are a common sight in the mountainous regions as it is useful for the rains and snow to trickle down. Ahead of it is the sanctum sanctorum and herein presides over the temple the three-faced Triloknath. On a big stone pedestal are the figures of the bull and the lion engraved and also the two feet and eight-petalled lotus beautifully carved. Shakti is resting in the lap of Shiva. The headgear of Shiva is quite embellished and elaborate. This must be due to the prevalent royal custom of those times of the princely State. The serpents are encircling the neck of Shiva and the Lord is also wearing the garland of human skulls. In one hand Shiva is holding the 'damru', in the other conch, in the third is 'Chakra' (wheel), and in the fourth one 'danda' (staff). He is absorbed in contemplative meditation.

Outside the sanctum sanctorum are two idols of Narada and Sharada, the two female deities. Narada is the presiding deity of the royal family and Sharada is the revered goddess of Bengal. The figure of Nandi in the 'mandap' is intricately engraved and lively. The iron chain is hanging over it. On the main entrance are engraved the door-keepers whereas outside the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum we find beautiful engravings of the 'Kinnaras' 'Gandharvas' with their musical instruments like 'veena' 'shahnai' etc. The four pillars of the 'mandap' are quite big in size and are very embellished. On the right and left sides of the 'mandap' are the windows with seating slabs. It appears that these 'gavaksh' (windows) are constructed for the musicians or for the main priest or the 'Acharya' conducting the 'Yajna' (sacrificial fire) ceremonies.

On the outside door-frames are beautiful engravings of Ganesh, Kartikeya on his vehicle the peacock, 'Varah' (boar) and other gods and goddesses. Ganesh is seen seated on the mouse, his vehicle and is enjoying the companionship of his two wives 'Ridhi' (literally signifies material wealth) and 'Siddhi' (refers to spiritual success). Inside the 'mandap' we are struck with the delicate beauty of the female figurine—fish-eyed, high nosed and with rosy lips. On the walls are carved the two wrestlers. The nymphs, 'Gandharvas' and 'Kinnaras' with 'mridanga' are beautifully delineated.

There are many broken and some complete idols in the compound of the temple. May be those are the remnants of some nearby 'Shivalaya' (small Shiva temple). There is one big stone pillar and it is connected with the 'Sati' rites of the queens of the dead king. In some niches of the outside walls of the temple are placed the idols of different gods and goddesses.

The back top portion of the 'shikhar' had fallen down and it was repaired with great care by the Department of Archaeology, Govt. of India. Although the original architecture has not been made possible still it has been given an appropriate shape. Like Bhutnath temple this too is of 'shikhar' style and it has added significance that it is frequently visited by the Buddhists (devotees of Lord Buddha) just as they make pilgrimage to famous Triloknath temple in the old Chamba-Lahoul (now in Lahoul & Spiti District of Himachal Pradesh.)

### PANCHVAKTRA

In 'Pratyabhijna Darshan' (Philosophy of Recognition) of Kashmir Shaivism, the five faces of Param Shiva are enumerated as 'Ishan', 'Satpurusha', 'Sadyojat', 'Vamadeva', and 'Aghormukha'. They represent five eternal powers—'Chitta', (Consciousness) 'Anand', (Supreme Bliss), 'Ichha' (Desire), 'Gyan' (Enlightenment) and 'Kriya' (Action). It may be the influence of the art styles of the period of King Lalitaditya of Kashmir or it may be some parallel art-development, the most favourite art figure of Shaiva sculpture is the five-faced 'Panchvaktra'. This conclusion is reinforced not only by the sculpture of five-faced Shiva in Panchvaktra temple but also by its presence in many Shaiva temples of Mandi town.

Panchvaktra is situated on the confluence of the Vipasha and Suketi rivers. Sometimes in rainy season the temple is encircled by flood waters and the 'Pujari' (priest) has either to swim or wade through the waters of the flooded rivers. This temple is erected on a raised platform all round some four to five feet from the ground so that the flood waters do not enter into the temple premises. It is narrated that once the flood waters made their entry into the temple and the 'Pujari' had to protect himself from the fury of the flood waters by clinging to the big iron chain hanging over Nandi in the 'mandap'.

As we enter into the 'mandap' (rectangular hall) of the temple we pay our obeisance to Nandi with its hump. The frill and a chain of flowers on Nandi have been exquisitely carved out. The four sturdy pillars are decorated with ornamental flower and geometrical designs. On the pillars we find engraved the figurines of 'Kinnaras', 'Gandharvas' and the celestial nymphs. There is 'Yajnakunda' (sacrificial fire-place) and there are windows on both sides of the 'mandap'. The two dragons are engraved at the main entrance of the temple. In the different corners we find the idols of Ganapati, Mahishasuramardini (Durga who has slain the buffalo demon), etc.

In the sanctum sanctorum is presiding the most ornately sculptured unique idol of 'Panchvaktra' Shiva. The four faces are on the four sides and one is on the top. In 'Swachhanda Tantra' these are called as 'Urdhva Vaktra', (Top Face) 'Purva Vaktra', (Eastern Face) 'Paschima Vaktra', (Western Face) 'Dakshina Vaktra', (Right Face) and 'Vama Vaktra' (Left Face) and these have been called as aspects of 'Swachhanda Bhairava' (Shiva, the Independent).

In sanctum sanctorum the five faces are so clear and impressive. On the stone-pedestal are engraved the lion and the Nandi (sacred bull) and Parvati is resting in the lap of Shiva. Shiva is wearing the garland of serpents, the garland of human skulls, moon, trident, etc. and all these symbols are most artistically chiselled. The top face too is delineated in very beautiful and enchanting manner. Above it is hanging the 'jalahari' and thus the sanctified water and 'vilvapatra' emerge as a 'prasad' to the devotees. Shiva is seated in the lotus pose.

On sanctum sanctorum the 'shikhar' style temple is erected. On the 'shikhar' we see the usual 'aamalak'. On the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum are engraved the 'Gandharvas', 'Kinnaras' and celestial nymphs. In this sometimes the sun-rays fall in such magical manner that they illumine all the five faces and its sculptural beauty hypnotises the observers and the devotees.

On the right side of Panchvaktra temple is built a small temple dedicated to 'Batur Bhairava.' It appears as if he is standing there as a guard to protect the main temple. He is wearing 'yajnopavit' (the sacred thread) and is garlanded with serpents.

Panchvaktra Shiva is absorbed in meditation and 'samadhi' (deep contemplation). This idol of Shiva is unique and superb from sculptural points of view. Panchvaktra Shiva represents the five Powers of the Lord and this sculpture is most popular and favourite among Mandi sculptors for its artistic beauty and majestic aspect. Panchvaktra temple was erected by Raja Siddh Sen (1684-1727 A. D.) of Mandi State.

### ARDHANAREESHWAR

In Samkhetar street near the 'Math' is situated the famous Ardhanareswar temple. Nandi's face is towards left whereas that of the Lion is towards the right and Ardhanareswar is shown riding on them. He is wearing ear-rings and looks resplendent with the third eye on the forehead. He has the garland of the serpents and is shown wearing the 'Rudra'sh' beads. He has four hands. In the upper left hand is the 'damru' (a small drum) and in the lower left hand is shown the thunder-bolt. In the upper right hand Shiva is holding the garland of beads and in the lower one is the 'kalash' (a small pitcher). On the head are the ornamented hair and the headgear.

The idol of Ardhanareswar is strikingly beautiful and majestic. Its charm penetrates deep into our heart. The idol is life-like and has outstanding sculptural merit. In the entire Mandi Shiva as shown here has rare sculptural beauty. Nearby are the Shivalinga and the 'jalahari.'

As we enter the temple we come across the 'mandap'. Stragely enough there is no roof over the 'mandap'. There was a succession of Rajas of erstwhile Mandi State but nobody cared to cover the 'mandap'. Now the temple has been lately taken over by the Department of Archaeology, Govt. of India and we hope that the 'mandap' would get its desired roof in conformity with the style of the architecture of the temple.

There is the idol of Bhairava in the 'mandap'. In one corner there is the stone-sculpture of some 'Rishi' (Seer) with flowing beard. In the 'mandap' we find four big and sturdy pillars and these are decorated with various ornamental designs. Outside the gate two 'dwarpalas' (door-keepers) are prominent figures.

The outside wall of the temple is also decorated. Herein we see 'Kinnaras', 'Vidyadharas', 'Gandharvas', flowers, fruit, Sun disc and other geometrical designs. On the left side of the 'shikhar' in a niche is placed 'Kartikya' riding on his vehicle peacock.

This temple is of 'shikhar' style. On the front side of the 'shikhar' in the middle portion we find the Trinity-the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu & Mahesh-as is seen in other temples also. On the 'shikhar' we have 'aamalak'. Above 'Iryambak' (Trinity) is carved the 'Naga' probably Vasuki and still above it is the lion. This pattern of sculpture has been accepted and repeated in the newly constructed Shakti temples of the town. The temple motif, beaded lines and other usual decorations are also seen here.

This temple was constructed by Mian Kalesar of Mandi. The right side of the main idol is Shiva and the left side is his consort Parvati. From the sculpture point of view Ardhanareswar is unique and outstanding and prominently represents Shaiva culture. The temple is in much dilapidated condition and with the control and care of the Department of Archaeology, Govt. of India, its unique sculptures, we hope, would be preserved for posterities.

## OTHER SHAIVA TEMPLES

The other Shaiva temples and their salient features are detailed below:-

### MAHAMRITYUNJAY TEMPLE

This temple is situated on the other side of 'Jaichun-Ra-Non' near the old Bus-stand. This also is a 'shikhar' style temple. Shiva is seated in 'Siddhasana.' The hands and fingers are very charming and artistic. In the lower left hand is the rosary and in the lower right hand is the noose. He is holding the nectar pot in the upper left hand and the upper right hand is raised in a special pose. The eyes are half-closed in meditation. This is the image of 'Dhyanyogi' (one immersed in divine contemplation) deity. There are ear-rings adorning the ears, locked hair, upper garment on the body, bracelets in the arms, girdle in the waist, resplendent third eye, chin in 'Jalandhur' pose, small but sharp and shapely nose--all accentuate the aspect of 'Mahamrityunjay' in Mahadeva with majestic appeal.

On the entrance there is figure of Ganesh. On the back of the temple is Bhairava with his matted hair and is holding empty skull pot and mace. The engravings of the serpents are adorning the entrance door. On the 'shikhar' is as usual Trinity engraved. On the stone slab is the 'vedika' (pedestal), then the inverted lotus and above it the lotus in natural form and on it is mounted the main idol of Mahamrityunjay Mahadeva.

### NEELKANTH MAHADEVA

Another temple near the Bus-stand in the Thanera mohalla is that of Neelkanth Mahadeva. On a big stone slab is mounted the main temple. On the main entrance we find the engravings of 'Vidyadharas' holding 'veena' in hand, 'Kinnaras', elephants, etc. Inside on a pedestal is 'Mahashivalinga' and 'Mahayoni'. Shivalinga is about three feet high. The temple is in 'shikhar' style. In accordance with the architectural tradition there are 'aamalak' and thereon 'kalash' on the 'shikhar' of the temple. The temple may be about thirty feet high. In the middle of the front of the 'shikhar' is the Trinity engraved. In the compound there is grand and imposing figure of Nandi.

### KAAMESHWAR MAHADEVA

The temple of Kaameshwar Mahadeva adjoining the Krishna Talkies and near the Bus-stand was in much neglected condition. All nomads and those seeking temporary shelter were staying there. It has been of late renovated.

This temple is housed in rectangular shaped stone-building. It has big pillars and on its walls can be seen the flowers, trees, creepers, etc. In the sanctum sanctorum is 'Shivalinga.'

### RANESHWAR MAHADEVA

This temple near the Kesari Bangla is in dilapidated condition. The main part of the temple especially its 'shikhar' is crumbling down. In the temple too we find a small idol of 'Panchvaktra'. Its height may be about three feet. It appears that 'Panchvaktra' idol is much popular and favourite with the craftsmen, Rajas and the wealthy gentry of this town. The small images of 'Panchvaktra' can also be seen in Tarna Shyamakali and other temples. Nandi of this temple is half-buried in the ground. This temple is perhaps looking forward to the day when some religious-minded wealthy philanthropist may save it from destruction and give it its old glory.

### EKAADASH RUDRA

Ekaadash Rudra temple is also called 'Sahabani' temple. The eleven 'Rudras' are established here. In the compound is the beautiful stone-image of Nandi. The main temple is erected on a big stone-basement, about five feet high. One has to climb the steps to reach the main temple. On the gate of the main entrance we find engraved Lakshmi being

worshipped by the two elephants, one each from left and right. There is engraving of Saraswati seated with her 'veena'. On the right side is the image of Ganesh carved out. This is 'shikhar' style temple and is architecturally quite beautiful and appealing. In different ten niches are engraved the 'Dashavatara's' (Ten Incarnations of Vishnu). In the sanctum sanctorum there is 'Shivalinga' and 'Jalahari' above it. The eleven Rudras are encircling the 'Shivalinga'. Above the main entrance there is the stone-palanquin. There are four small temples of Sun god, Ganesh, Durga and Vishnu around the main temple of Ekaadash Rudra and thus these constitute 'Panchdeva' (five gods) complex. With the efforts of the priest this temple is regaining its old glory and magnificence.

### CHALESAR MAHADEVA

Near the burning ghats is situated the temple of Chalesar Mahadeva. Before the dead are consigned to the fire their pyre is brought here to offer 'Pinda', one of the last rites of the dead. On the tenth day of the death, the earthen lamp kept burning in the memory of the departed soul is placed here facing Paddal side. The three-faced Mahakala with his armoury of weapons i. e. trident, a small axe, noose, etc. is really a symbol of Mahakala i. e. the Great and Eternal Time.

### SIDDBHAIKAVA

In the heart of the town in Siddhsar (which is now completely dry) on its own side on the upper part is Siddhbhairava temple and on the lower part is Siddhkali's temple. Outside the main entrance the two stone elephants are adorning the place. On the main entrance are engraved the 'Vidyadharas' with their musical instrument 'veena', 'Kinnaras', etc. Inside the 'Shivalinga' is mounted on a rectangular stone pedestal. Outside there is the image of Nandi facing 'Shivalinga'. This temple is erected in 'shikhar' style. It was built by Raja Siddh Sen.

### PUROHIT SHIVASHANKAR'S MAHADEVA

Near the bank of the Beas there is the temple built by Purohit Shiv Shanka, the Purohit and Guru of Raja Bhawani Sen. A beautiful and majestic image of Nandi is facing 'Shivalinga'. Inside there is 'Shivalinga', the symbol of the main deity Shiva. There is perennial water spring on one side of the temple.

### CHHOTI TARNA SHIVA

Chhoti Tarna Shiva temple is constructed in 'shikhar' style. On the main gate are engraved the snakes. On its entrance we find the engravings of 'Vidyadharas', 'Gandharvas', 'Gaja Lakshmi', 'Ganeh', etc. In the compound there is the beautiful and majestic image of Nandi. On the back side of the 'shikhar' of the temple there is the niche of Kartikeya riding on his vehicle peacock. Inside is the 'Shivalinga'.

### BHATANTI MAHADEVA

Near the palace of Raja Bhawani Sen in Bhatanti 'Behara' (A big building meant as residence for queen or royal relatives and their entourage. It is old-fashioned construction and provides for 'purdah' to its female residents). There is the idol of Mahadeva. Here Mahadeva is shown with eight hands. In one hand is the trident, in the second human skull pot, in the third a small drum, in the fourth mace, in the fifth flower, in the sixth rosary and in two hands are held the serpents. Its sculptural excellence is most remarkable and unique and this can be imagined from the fact that every time as one approaches the idol, it looks fresh and new and thus has an unparalleled charm of its own.

### OTHER SHAIVA TEMPLES

In other minor Shaiva temples Gupteshwar temple near the District Civil Hospital, Siddhshambhu near Joginder Gymkhana Club on the banks of the Beas river, Bhutnath Mahadeva of 'Behara' near Raj Mahal Hotel, Batuk Bhairava near Panchvaktra, Mahadeva temple erected by the Raja's concubine near Shahabani temple, Uttamu's Shiva temple on the other side of the Victoria bridge, Negi Pwadha's temple in Purani Mandi and Shiva temple nearby, Balakrupi in Palakha mohalla, Thekedar's temple as we approach the Victoria bridge

from the town side Gosain's Shiva temple on the right side of Victoria bridge, Batuk Bhairava near the Clock Tower, Shiva idol in Khuha Rani and other Shiva temples are worth-mentioning. It is noticeable here that many such temples are not of 'shikhar' style but have semicircular structures. This seems to be the impact of Mohammedan architecture. After some enquiry it was found out that in the erstwhile princely State of Mandi there were Mohammedan Chief Engineers and it is likely that they have directly or indirectly influenced the architecture of these temples.

## B—SHAKTI TEMPLES

### SHYAMAKALI TEMPLE

In Tarna Shyamakali temple the Devi has three idols. A bigger one is in the middle and small ones on the left and the right side of the main idol. The main idol has protruding and flaming tongue and on the black stone face are shining eyes made of sea-shells and all this creates an atmosphere of power, authority and awe.

It is said that Raja Shyam Sen prayed to the Devi to bless him with victory in the battle of Balh and resolved to build a temple dedicated to the Devi to commemorate this victory. This temple was built in honour of victory over Suket and thus area of Balh was annexed with Mandi State.

On the right side of the main deity is the idol of buffalo-demon-slaying Durga and on the left side is 'Panchvaktra' (five-faced Shiva) image, quite small in size. The ceiling is ornately embellished with golden plates and this naturally reminds one of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. It has its own story to tell.

In the sanctum sanctorum we have the portrait of Raja Balbir Sen. He has a flower in his hand and is wearing much decorated dress of the old Rajas. The sikhs had imprisoned him in the fort of Gobindgarh. The sikhs wanted to extort the tax or the royalty more than State could pay. Raja Balbir Sen prayed to the Devi that if got released from this imprisonment he would execute the same intricate golden panelling of the ceiling of the temple as that of Golden Temple. When he was freed from the captivity of the Sikhs he undertook the promised task of embellishing the ceiling with golden plates with beautiful designs. He commissioned the craftsmen trained in this craft from Jaipur and Jodhpur and accomplished this captivating golden decoration of the ceiling of the sanctum sanctorum. Herein we find the enchanting and varied floral, geometrical and other designs.

On the main temple we have 'shikhar' and the gold-plated 'kalash'. The temple is of 'shikhar' style. As we enter the temple we have vast and open compound. On the left side of the main gate is the idol of Hanuman. The main temple is erected on the stone-basement some four feet high. There is gallery all round the main temple. Herein we find the portraits of 'Nav Durgas' painted. On the four corners of the main temple are the stone-platforms for sitting and relaxing. In place of the 'mandap' we have large and wide gallery around the main temple. On the 'shikhar' we see the sacred motifs of the bells, temples, etc. and these lend beauty and magnificence to the architecture of the temple.

It is learnt that there was a rare idol of 'Tara' made of the eight metals in the sanctum sanctorum, stolen of late by the thieves. From archaeological point of view it was important and unique idol. It is said that its form resembled that of Tara of Mahayan School in China.

The feet of the sixty four yoginis are visible in a big stone-slab in the corner of the temple. There is the engraved lion under the 'pipal' tree. On the stone-pedestal on the left side of the temple beyond the courtyard are kept a few idols of the deities.

The Rajas of Mandi are connected with the Sen royal family of the Bengal. Their main deity is Kali. Thus from this point of view this temple has added significance for us.

## OTHER SHAKTI TEMPLES

Shiva and Shakti signify the synthesis of 'Purusha' and 'Prakriti', eternal principles of life. The temples of Shakti are as striking and gorgeous as those of Shiva. As a matter of principle, the idol of Shakti is always placed along with Shiva idol in Shiva temples, although it does not look so prominent.

In addition to the above-mentioned Shyamakali temple there are other Shakti temples and these are detailed below:-

### ROOPESHWARI DEVI

This is the personal and private temple of the royal family. This is situated near the old Maisahiba royal enclosures (now Raj Mahal Hotel has come up there.) The eight-armed idol of Roopeshwari is very charming and magnificent. She is holding in each hand—trident, 'chakra', lotus, dagger, shield, noose, Light and her eighth hand is positioned in earth-touching 'mudra'. There is the ornamented jewelled-crown on the forehead of the goddess and she is seated on the silver pedestal. The third eye of the goddess is very luminous and resplendent with divine power. She is wearing the nose-ring and 'yantra' in the throat. Her eyes are quite large and brightness of other limbs of the body creates an impact of rare and sublime beauty.

On one side of the temple is the idol of the seer Markandeya and it is likely that Mandi is named after him. His matted hair and cloak signify his ancient lineage and is shown in the 'mudra' of benediction. On the other side is the silver idol of Ganesh. The four-armed Ganesh has the book and the pen in two hands and one hand is closed in a fist form and the other is portrayed in meditation pose.

The clothes and the covering like 'choli', 'dupatta', etc. are quite attractive. Nearby the goddess are placed the 'chanwar' (whisk), box of silver and the 'Padukas' (footwear). She is the ruling Sen Raja's family deity and lives in 'purdah' (in veil and not for public view). This temple is exclusively personal temple of the erstwhile Rajas of Mandi.

### RAAJARAJESHWARI DEVI

Raajarajeshwari is the presiding deity of erstwhile State. Her temple is nearby Madhorao temple. She is seated on the blossomed lotus-shaped stone basement. The silver 'Yantra' (esoteric and divine diagram) sanctified with 'mantras' is the symbol of the welfare and prosperity of the aforesaid Mandi State. The stone-pedestal on which this 'Yantra' symbolising the deity is engraved and inscribed, looks very artistic and majestic.

### BHAWANEESHWARI DEVI

Bhawaneeshwari Devi temple is situated near the main offices of Mandi municipality. On the entrance gate are engraved the elephants, the celestial nymphs, 'Gandharvas', 'Vidyadharas' etc. The eight-metalled idol is very majestic and extremely beautiful. She has four hands and in the three hands are placed the spear, trident and the garland of beads. The fourth hand of the deity is depicted in boon-giving pose. Her fish-shaped eyes are very charming and has sharp nose and small and beautiful lips. Her brows are arched like the bow and has high forehead—all these invest her with unique and divine halo and rare charm. On one side is Bhairava and in one cell is 'Garuda'. There are the engravings of the Sun god riding his chariot with 'Arun', the charioteer. The engravings of the descent of the goddess Ganges and the Fish Incarnation of Vishnu are worth seeing. This is 'shikhar' style temple. On 'shikhar' are as usual the 'aamalak' and the 'kalash'.

### JAALPA DEVI

Jaalpa Devi temple is situated on the bank of Beas river at a little distance from the

Paddal playground. This is semi-circular and arch-type temple which has its parallel in the mosque of the Mughal architecture. On the high stone-basement is built the main temple. On the entrance gate are engraved two serpents. The 'Vidyadharas', Kinnaras' and the celestial nymphs are decorating it. There are engraved two elephants and two lions. It has black stone goddess Kali idol. In her hands are shown the sword, trident and other weapons. Nearby it is 'Sriyantra' which indicates prevalence of Tantrik 'sadhana'. In the temple we find the stone-figure of the lion. This Siddhjaalpa temple was built by Raja Siddh Sen.

### SIDDHBHADRA

Near the confluence of the Beas and the Suketi rivers on a small hillock is situated Siddhbhadra. This too is semi-circular and arch-type temple. In the sanctum sanctorum is placed the idol of Kali. The blood-red tongue and sea-shell eyes and black stone impart it fierce and awesome aspect. Outside it is the idol of Bhairava wearing the garland of human skulls and holding human skull pot in one hand. The most notable thing of this temple is the stone slab containing 64 yoginis and they are represented by 64 pairs of feet.

### MAHISHASURAMARDINI

In Bhagwan mohalla we have the temple of Mahishasuramardini. Earlier it used to be in rectangular form and had typical mountainous sloping roofs. It was called 'duaia' (a small temple). The temples which have been reconstructed and given a face-lift include this temple also. The other such temples are the Devi temple in Bangla mohalla, 'Balakrupi' in Palakha mohalla and Durga temple near Bijai High School Mandi.

In Mahishasuramardini temple Durga is riding a lion and in her four hands are trident, sword, 'khappar' (human skull pot) and shield. This stone idol has its usual awesome form. In one corner there is the small image of five-faced 'Panchvaktra'. In another corner is visible the Shivalinga. Now its floor is renovated with marble slabs. The main idol of Mahishasuramardini and her vehicle lion also appear so lively and impressive. This is now 'shikhar' style temple.

### SHEETALA DEVI

In Purani Mandi is situated the reputed temple of Sheetla Devi. The main idol is eight-metalled. The various limbs of the goddess e.g. high forehead, nose, lips and eyebrows are all very artistic and magnificent. She is wearing bangles in her hands and bracelets in the arms. The sleeping bed for the Devi is placed nearby. The boon-giving hand of the goddess is raised in benediction form. On the entrance gate we find the swan and other birds engraved. This is 'shikhar' style temple.

### SIDHKALI

In one corner in the Sunken Garden (now Subhash Garden) can be seen the Siddhkali temple. Above there is Siddhbhairava temple and below is Siddhkali temple. Siddhkali's blood-red tongue is flaming out and in her hands are visible small axe and empty skull pot and these impart terribly fearsome form to the goddess. Recently Bhawaneshwar goldsmith and his family have erected 'Shabhamandap' for the temple.

### OTHER SHAKTI TEMPLES

In the other Shakti temples mention must be made of Durga temple near Bijai High School, Sheetala temple in Samkhetar mohalla (In this temple the silver face is put on the otherwise stone-image), Shakti temple in Bangala mohalla, Mahakali's temple in Purani Mandi, Bhima Kali in Bhiuli, Chamunda in Motipur and a little ahead on the top of the hill Kangani Devi. The old 'Ranis' (queens) who were deified as goddesses have their temples as of Prakashdei's temple in the amadama old palace. This is in a way the gradual ascent from manhood to godhood.



## C—MISCELLANEOUS TEMPLES

### MADHORAO TEMPLE

The building of Madhorao temple has its own history to tell. Raja Suraj Sen (1637 to 1664 A. D.) married several times but was not fortunate enough to be blessed with a heir-apparent, the son. He consulted the scholars well versed in the religious 'Shastras' and the astrologers. On their advice he abdicated his kingship to Madhorao, the form of Vishnu and spent the rest of his life as his regent and representative. To get emancipation from after-death distress and sin this ingenious way was found out.

'Madhorao' idol is made of silver. It was established in 1648 and the Pujari was given a 'Jagir' (gifted estate) in Tungal for the maintenance of the temple. The goldsmith named Bhim made this idol. This is evident from the inscription engraved there.

In the sanctum sanctorum firstly there is the marble basement. This basement is in the shape of flowering lotus. Then there is the pedestal made of silver. The idol of Madhorao reminds one of Vishnu reclining on the ocean of milk 'Ksheersagar'. This temple is situated in the ground floor of the Damadama old palace.

On the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum there are engraved the celestial nymphs, elephants, birds, 'Kalpataru' (wish-fulfilling Tree) flowers creepers, etc. The engravings of Krishna playing upon his flute, cows, Ganesh with his two wives 'Ridhi' (symbolising material prosperity) and 'Siddhi' (indicating spiritual power), Shiva-Parvati riding on the Nandi and other embellished figures are enhancing the splendour of the entrance-gate. There is the figure of Radha-Krishna in the main silver pedestal. The procession is taken out with Madhorao idol in palanquin and it is carried by the bearers. This is generally done on the occasions of Shivaratri, Holi, Krishna-Janmashtmi and other religious festivals. On the occasion of Shivaratri the mountainous gods and goddesses carried in a chariot by the bearers greet first of all Madhorao, the titular Head of State. Similarly on their return they take leave of Madhorao for departure to their places after the termination of Shivaratri festival.

### BABAKOT

In the adjoining building of the Damadama old palace and towards Bhawani Niwas we come across the temple of Babakot in the upper-most storey. There are many legends associated with Babakot. Smoking his 'Hukka' (tobacco pipe) this deity is believed to guide people to their right destinations especially when at night they seem to have lost their way. He protects his devotees from the evil designs of 'Pretas' (the dead evil souls) and demons. This is a belief prevalent among the common folk that Babakot materially helps the needy and the poor common people. This is the reason why this deity is popular among the common folk.

Babakot is wearing the ear-ring as we find in the ears of the 'Nath yogis'. He looks like a 'gaddi' (one who tends the sheep and goats) 'Veer' (gods belonging to a lower category). He has wooden footwear in his feet and has trident in his hands. His two shining eyes make him look bright and magnificent. His nose and chin and their shape give an idea of a 'Yogi' deeply absorbed in his meditation. Babakot is seated on stone-pedestal. His head is decorated with embellished crown. He is wearing spotlessly white garments. He rides a horse whose figure is nearby. His favourite pastimes are wandering, display of chivalry, helping the poor and showing the way to those who have lost their path.

Babakot is wearing the garland of the snakes. In one hand he is holding 'khappar' (empty skull pot). Like a 'Yogi' he is seated in a lotus pose. The sixty four 'yoginis' are placed near him. There is the garland of human skulls round his neck. His cap resembles that of the 'Gosains' (a sect of 'Sanyasis') and his cloak has resemblance with that of the 'gaddi'. In the waist can be seen the long girdle twisted in many turns ('dora'). He apparently looks like a gaddi 'Veer'.

The other image along with Babakot is that of Narsimha. His turban is that of a 'gaddi'. He is wearing a sacred thread. There is a rosary in his hand. The fingers are closed in a fist form and the thumb is raised upwards. He is seated in the lotus pose. He is the main supporter and commander-in-chief of Babakot.

In folk songs and ballads Babakot's and Narsimha's description of bravery depicts them as very popular figures. These two deities are simple and natural like a common man of the region.

## JAGANNATH

On the way to Siddhbhadra temple and just a few steps from Paddal playground is Jagannath temple. As known by its very name, this is the local prototype of the famous 'Dham', (centre of pilgrimage) of Puri, Orissa. Here too we have images built in 'sandal' wood of the three deities Srikrishna, Subhadra and Balaram. Their eyes of sea-shells give an attractive look. The 'tripunda' ('tilak') in vertical lines refer to their Vaishnava form. There are many Sanskrit 'slokas' (Sanskrit religious poems) inscribed in the hall where these images are worshipped.

In the other miscellaneous temples we have the Sanatan Dharam Sabha temple dedicated to Rama, Sita and Lakshman. There are the images of other Hindu deities also. Ramachandra's temple near old Bijai Palace is important from the points of view of architecture and sculpture. In Purani Mandi Radha Krishna temple and Hanuman's temple are worth-mentioning. Just ahead of District Civil Hospital there is Ganapati's temple where Ganapati's size and form correspond to the size and form of then ruling Raja Siddh Sen. On the banks of the Beas river we have Hanuman engraved there, Shri Ramachandra's temple near Paddal playground and other Vaishnava temples are indicative of inroads of Vaishnavism here.

In other temples mention must be made of Chuni-Muni 'Samadhi' near 'Siddhbhadra' temple and this points towards the prevalence of 'Tantrik Sadhana' in those days. Similarly on Tarna hill facing Kusum Theatre there is 'Nagarjuna's place and this symbolises then prevalent cult of 'Vajrayani Sadhana.' Near Arya Samaj in Samkhetar there is Lakhdatta's place which suggests the existence of worship of 'Piras' and such like lower category deities. There is the Sikh Gurudwara on the Kullu road and it is associated with Dashmesh Guru Gobind Singh and in Ram Nagar (old Mangwain) Namdhari Gurudwara has also come up. There is Valmiki temple near Bijai High School. Thus we find trend of new temples and gurudwaras being established.

Mandi town has grown along with the development of temples of Mandi. One may call it happy coincidence or the grace of the gods and goddesses. It is evident that the description of the history of Mandi town remains incomplete without the study and delineation of the temples of Mandi.





# PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TEMPLES

In the photographs of the temples of Mandi town firstly our focus is on the four main temples—Bhutanath, Triloknath, Panchvaktra and Ardhanareeshwar. The objective is to highlight the style of their architecture and their architectural details. Along with this the photographs of the four main deities of these four outstanding temples—Bhutanath, Triloknath, Panchvaktra and Ardhanareeshwar are given here to underline the main characteristics of the sculpture of these temples.

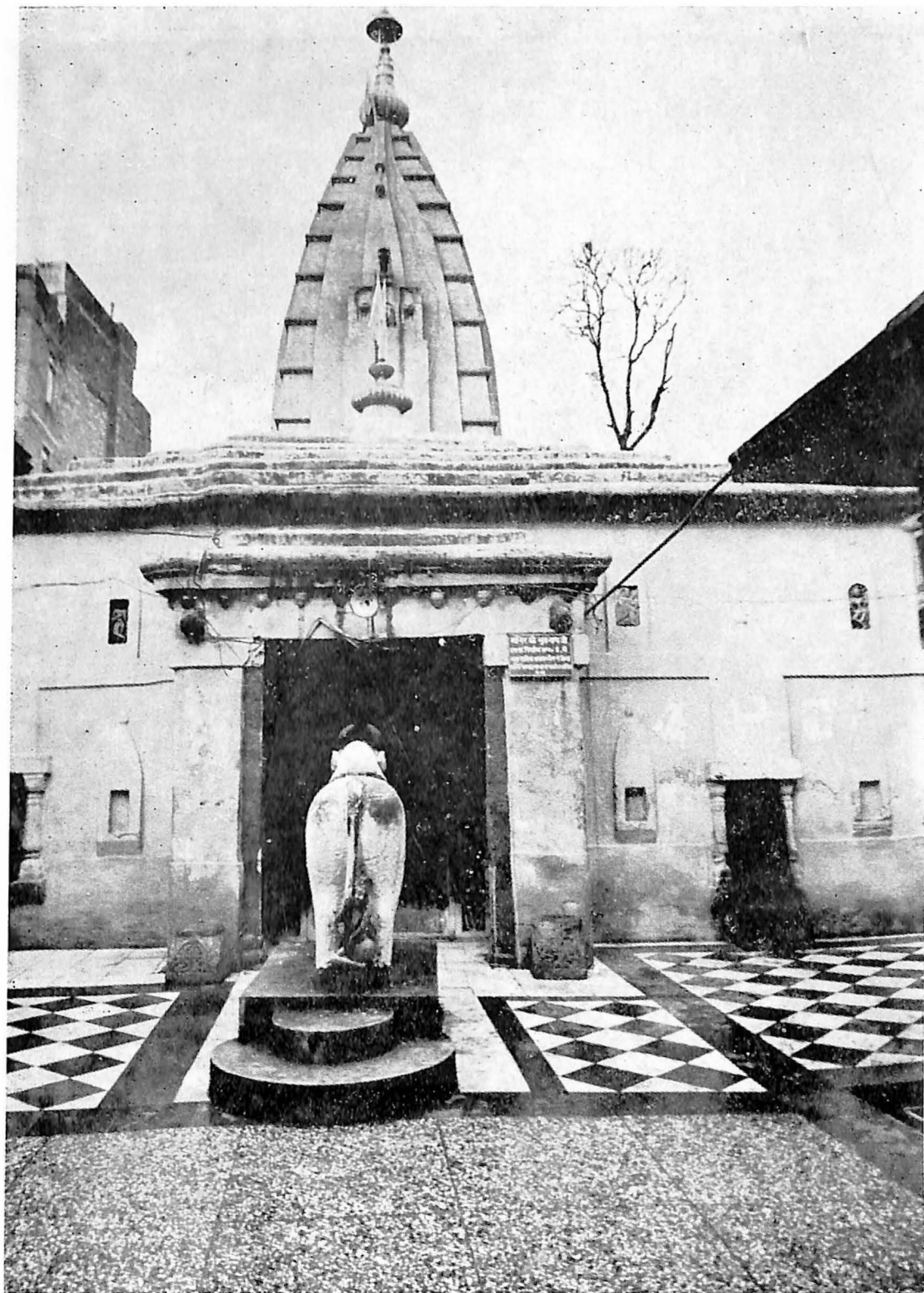
The temples of Mandi have their own special features and just to give a glimpse of this aspect the photographs of 'Architectural Details of Triloknath and Panchvaktra' have been included.

In addition to the four main deities of the four prominent Shaiva temples the various images of Shiva are equally important. Among these Shiva-idols the photographs of Mahamrityunjay of Mahamrityunjay temple and Ekaadash Rudra of Ekaadash Rudra temple have been included here.

In the photographs of the main deities of Shakti temples place has been given to Shyamakali (Tarna) and Bhawaneeshwari. In the third category of the temples i.e. Miscellaneous Temples the photographs of Madhorao of Madhorao temple and Babakot and Narsimha of Babakot temple have been presented here.

Mandi town is well known for its predominant Shaiv culture. The images of Nandi (the vehicle of Shiva) of the temples here may not have the largeness of the size of Nandi idols of temples of South India but they have certainly the rhythm of the lines, liveliness, proportion, beauty and ornamentation in large measure in delineation of different limbs of Nandi. Here we have included three photographs concerning the outstanding sculpture of these Nandi images. Even the images of the 'Dwarपालas' (door-keepers) have been chiselled with great care and sophistication and to give an idea of this sculpture the photograph of 'Dwarपालas of the Triloknath Temple' has been given here.

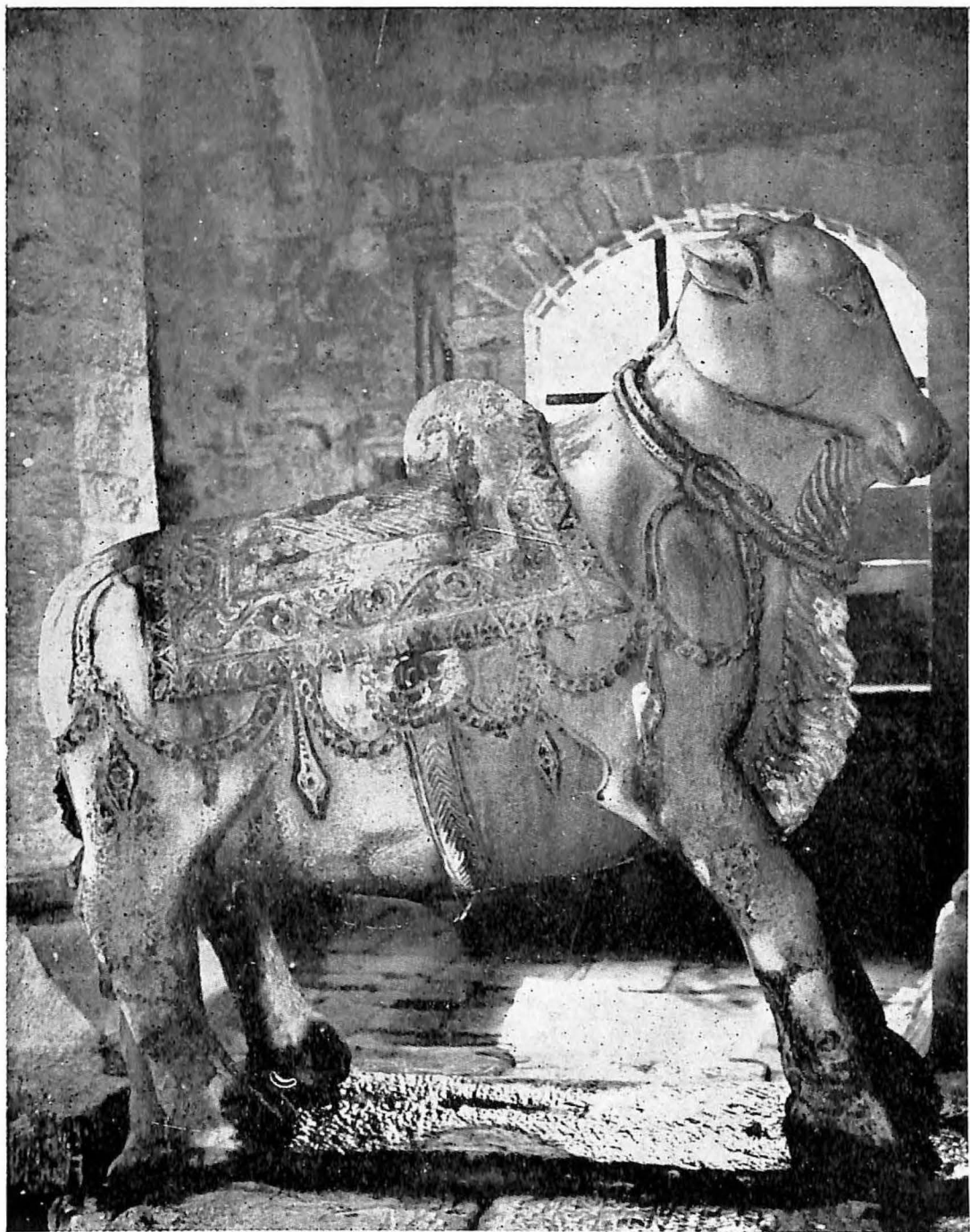




Bhut-Nath Temple, Mandi

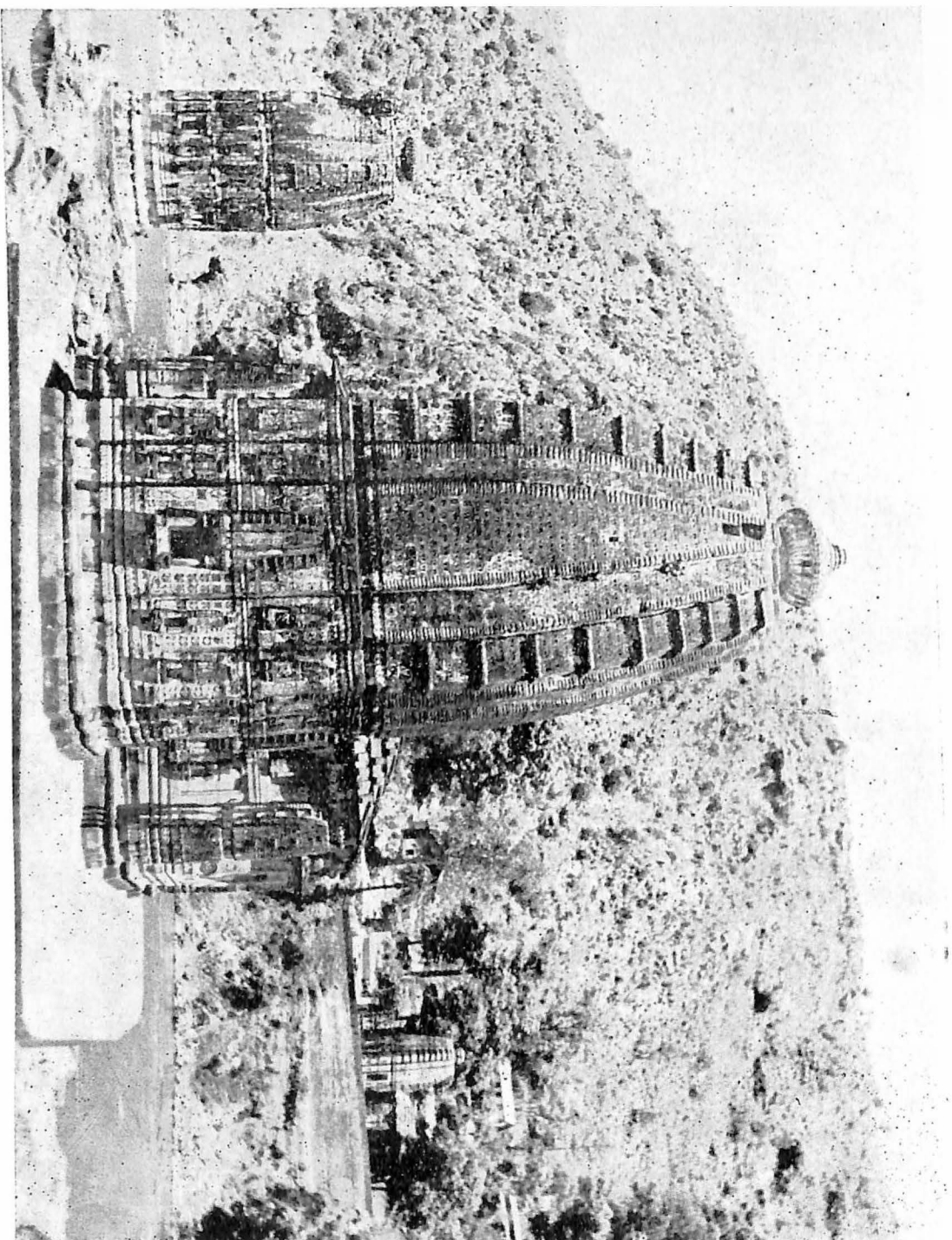


Main Deity : Panchvaktra (Panchvaktra Temple, Mandi)



Nandi (Triloknath Temple, Mandi)

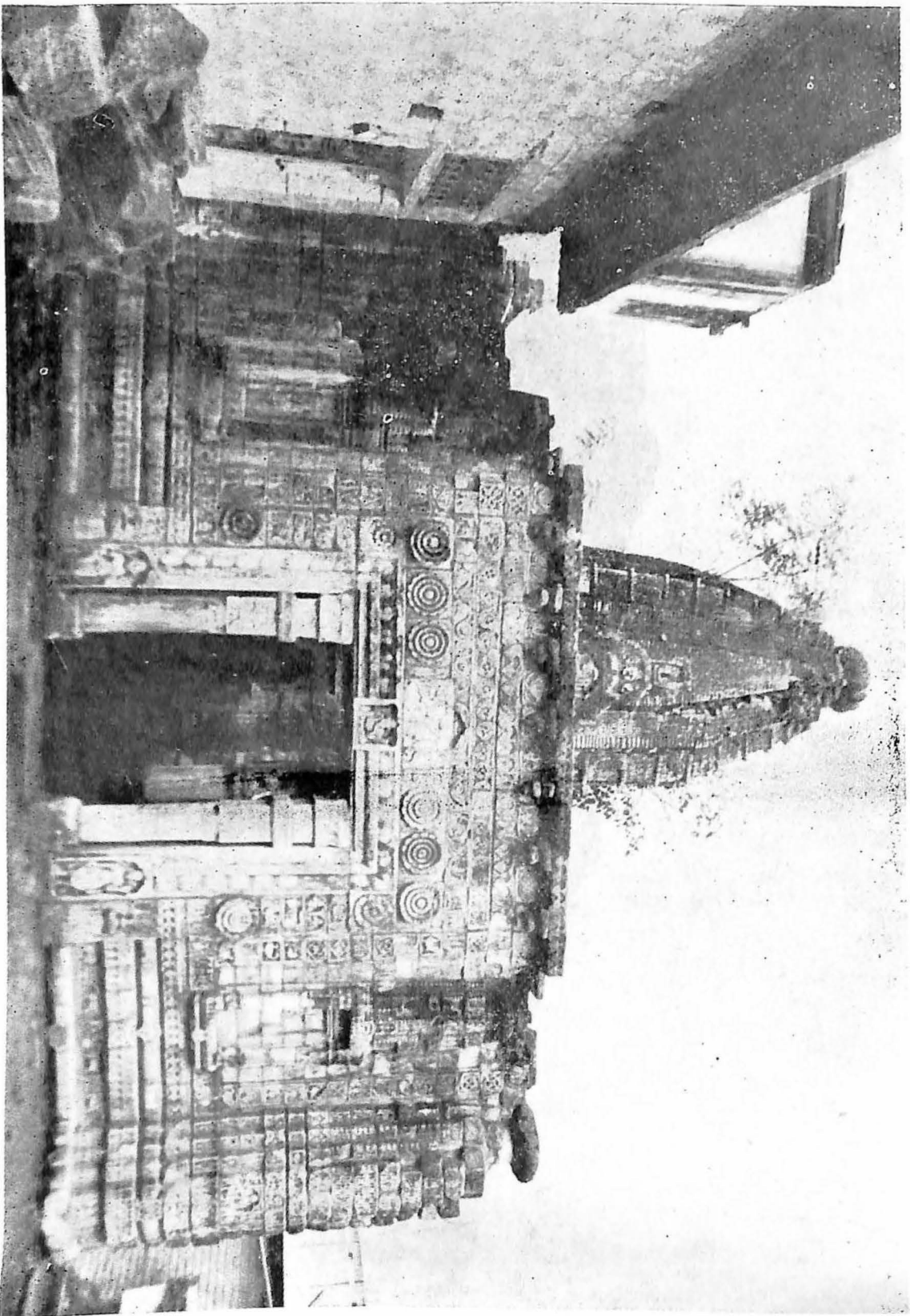




Panchvakra Temple, Mandi



Main Deity: Triloknath (Triloknath Temple, Mandi)

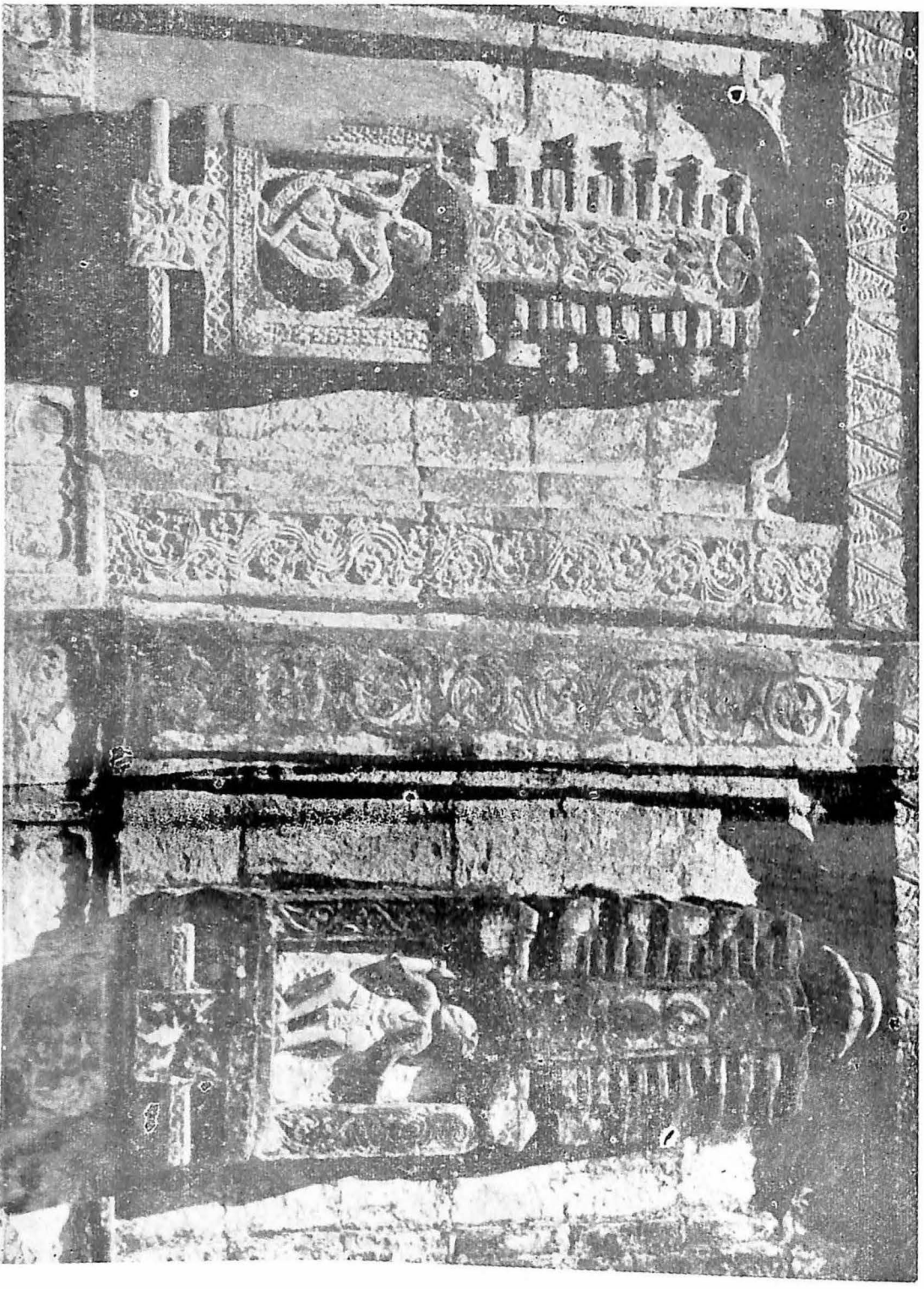


(Aradhanareeshwar Temple, Mandi).

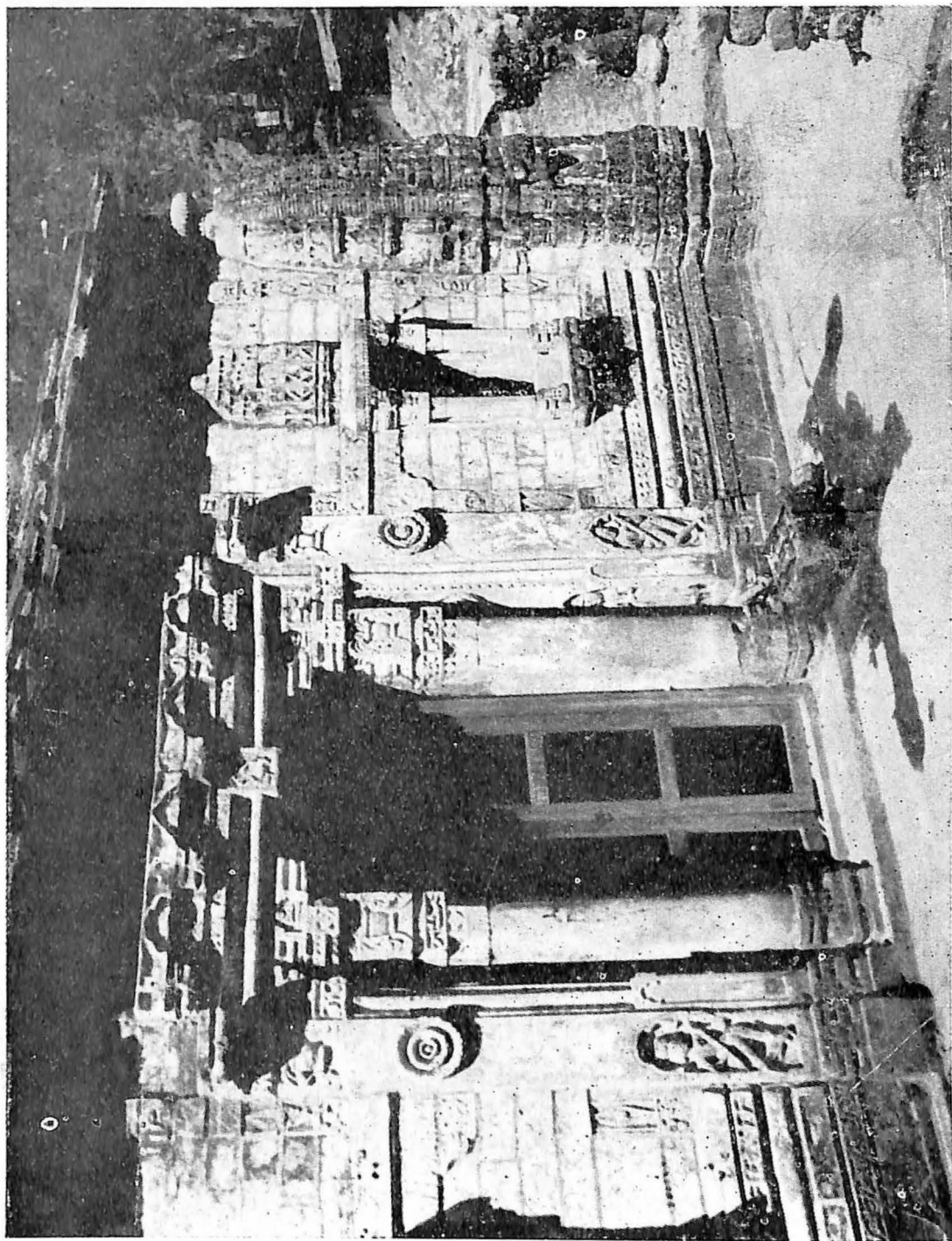


Dwarpalas (Triloknath Temple, Mandi)

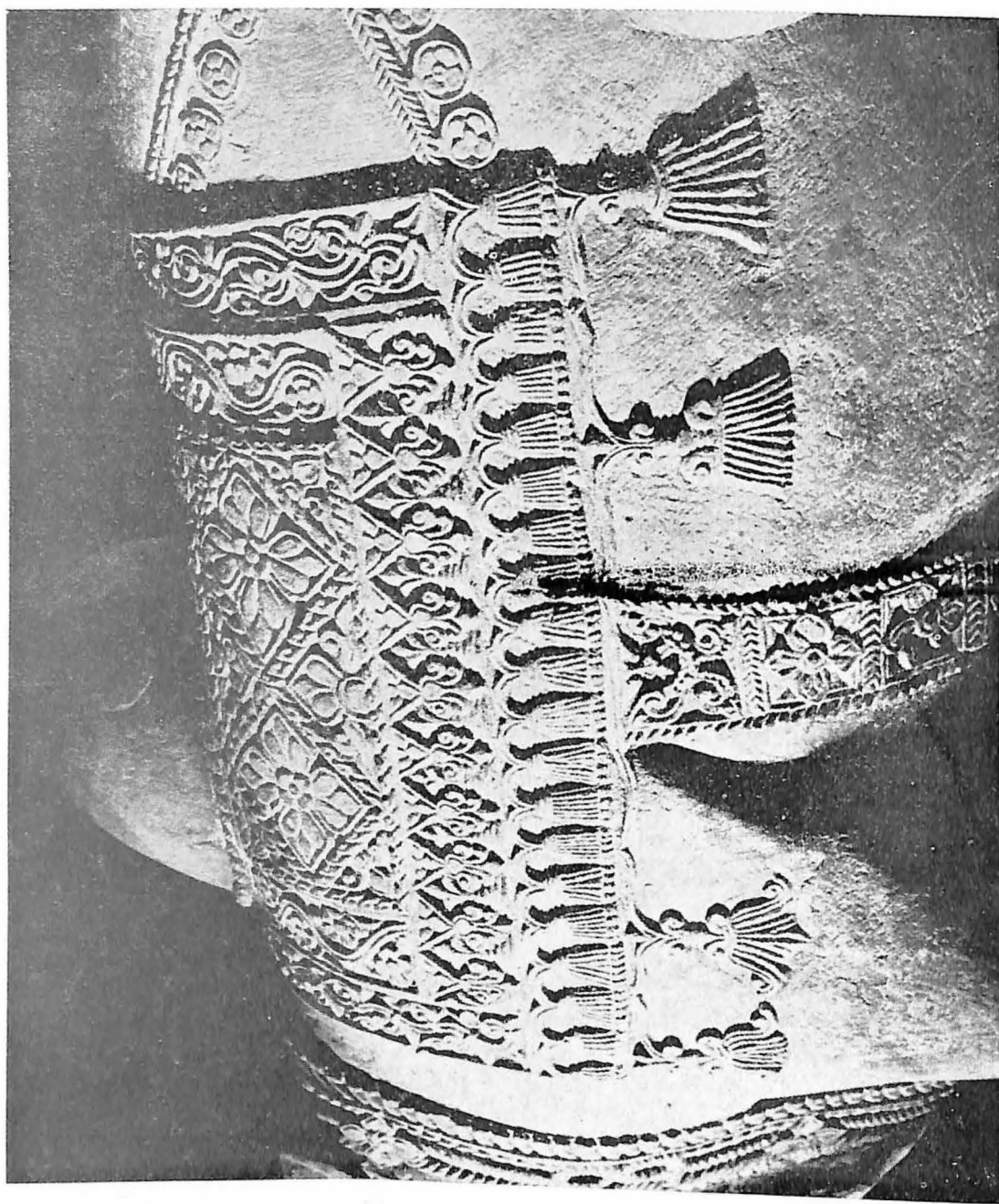




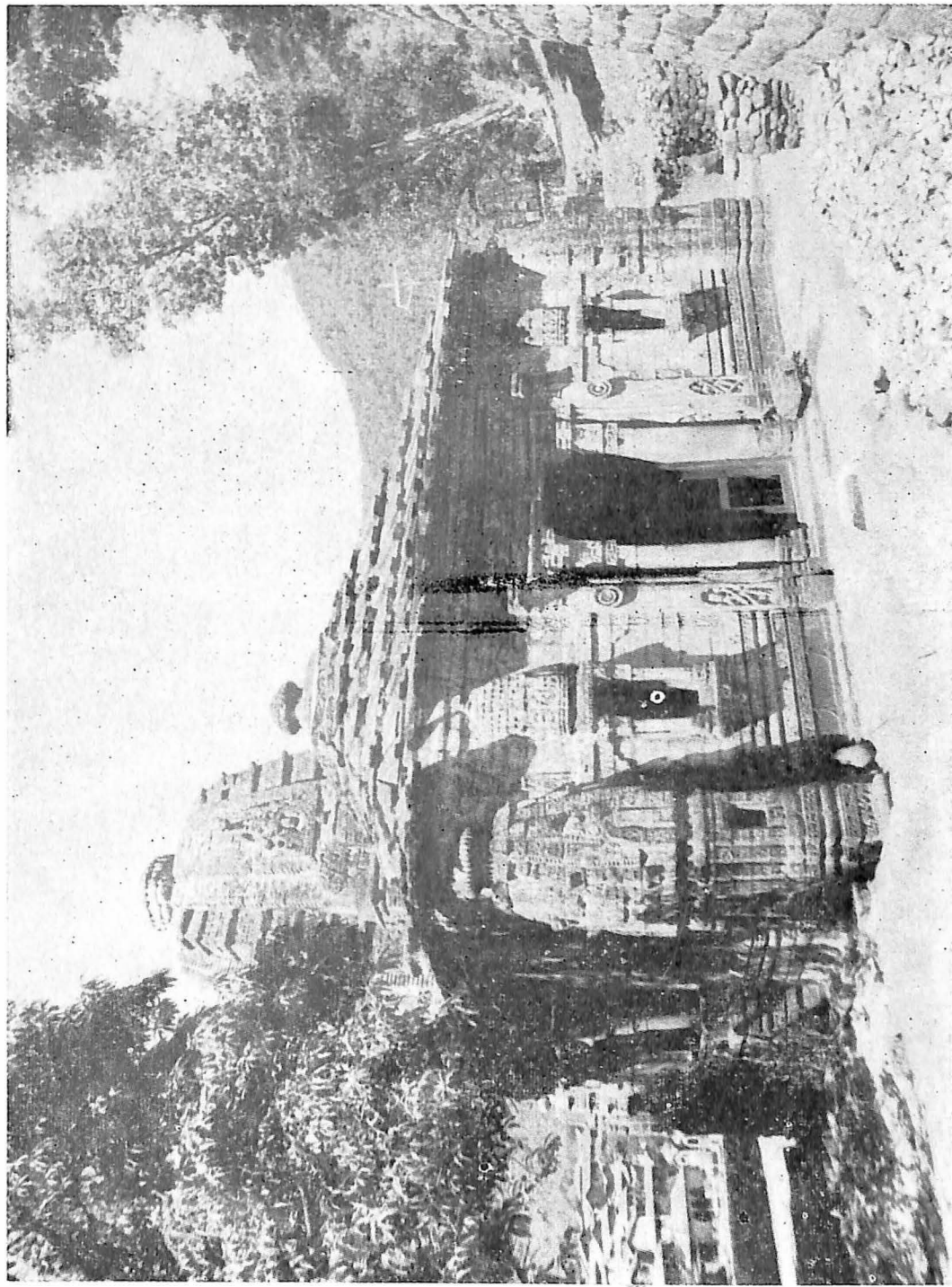
(Architectural details) Panchvakra Temple, Mandi.



Architectural details (Triloknath Temple, Mandi)



Nandi Details (Panchvaktra Temple, Mandi)



Triloknath Temple, Mandi





**Main Deity: Madhorao (Madhorao Temple, Mandi)**



**Main Deity: Bhutnath (Bhutnath Temple, Mandi)**



Back of Nandi (Panchvaktra Temple, Mandi)



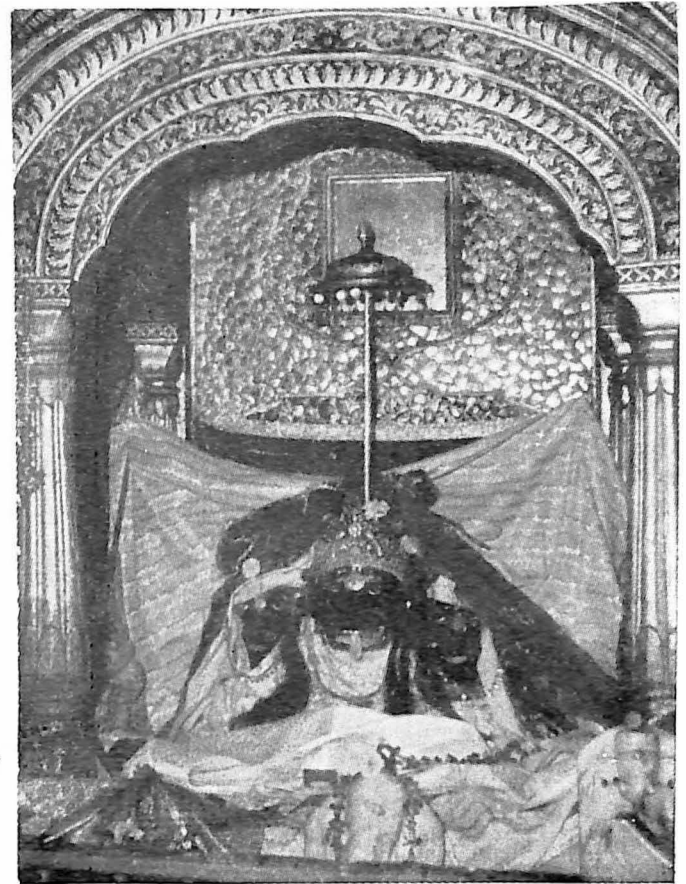
Main Deity : Bhawaneeshwari (Bhawaneeshwari Temple, Mandi)



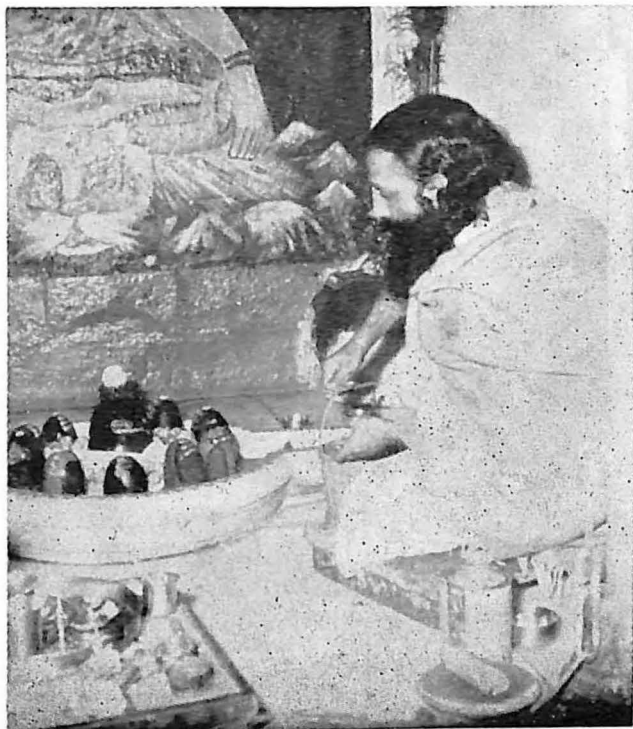
Main Deity : Mahamrityunjay (Mahamrityunjay Temple, Mandi)



**Main Deity: Ardhanareeshwar (Ardhanareeshwar Temple, Mandi)**



**Main Deity: Shyamakali (Shyamakali Temple, Mandi)  
(Tarna)**



**Main Deity : Ekaadashrudra (Ekaadashrudra Temple, Mandi)**



**Main Deities : Babakot and Narsimha (Babakot Temple, Mandi)**

