

Kangra as a Mission Field

In Kangra are some of the most sacred Hindu Shrines in North India, so that Kangra is often called "The Benares of the Punjab." The two most sacred shrines are at Jawala Mukhi and Kangra, though Hindu temples and shrines are found in most of the villages of the district and under trees by the roadside, and on the tops of mountains. But the temples of Jawala Mukhi and Kangra are famous throughout India. These temples are visited by 100,000 to 200,000 pilgrims annually. The grossest immorality prevails in connection with the temples, and the pilgrims are fleeced of their money.

"The temples at Jawala Mukhi and Kangra are "in charge of the rapacious Bhojkis who plunder the "unfortunate pilgrims. At the latter place large "numbers of sheep and goats are supposed to be "sacrificed. The appetite of the Devi (goddess) is, "however, capricious, and the votaries are usually "informed that she is not quite ready for her meal. "The offering left is hurried away by the priest, "and sold in the neighborhood for a trifle under its "value to men who again re-sell it to other pilgrims."

The temple at Kangra is to Vagreswari Devi. It was famous even in ancient times, and was plundered by Mohammed of Ghazni in the eleventh century. It was visited by the Moghul Emperor Akbar the Great, and the Sikh leader, Rangit Singh. The temple at Jawala Mukhi has no images, but a stream of bituminous gas issuing from the mountain side. The temple is built over this, and when the