



HEADQUARTERS OF THE INSTITUTE AT NAGGAR, KULU.

## THE INSTITUTE'S HIMALAYAN HEADQUARTERS

By V. SHIBAYEFF

**I**N THE northern part of the Punjab begin the Himalayan foothills, rising in their majestic heights to the long string of mountain peaks which have no equal in the world.

Going northward through the Punjab, passing Amritsar and Pathankote, one reaches Jogindarnagar, the last station of the narrow-gauge extension of the North-Western Railway. From here the journey continues by motor car, through Mandi and thence along the river-bed of the Beas, the last stage Alexander the Great ever reached in his eastward campaigns. Along the Beas the motor road runs through most picturesque mountain gorges, and on the second day of motoring one enters Kulu Valley. The river-bed rises from a 4000 foot elevation near Aut to 6000 at Manali, with mountains on both sides 10,000 feet to 14,000 feet high, rising up to almost 20,000 feet at the northern end of the Valley, the mouth of the Beas.

The vegetation of Kulu Valley is extremely rich—the fields yielding up to three crops yearly without apparent exhaustion. Maize is 13 feet high. Beautiful stretches of amaranth decorate the lower slopes and green pine forests cover the upper heights. The numerous orchards give abundant crops of first class cherries, apples, pears, plums, peaches, apricots and nuts. Higher up, but quite near by, the chain of snow-clad ranges stands out against the blue sky—all this makes indeed a most beautiful picture.

Here, in the center of the Valley, at an elevation of 6000 feet, N. Latitude of  $32^{\circ} 7'$  and E. Longitude of  $77^{\circ} 10'$ , are the Headquarters of Urusvati, Himalayan Research Institute, uniquely and beautifully situated, for the latitude is the same as that of Algeria and yet in winter the whole Valley is under snow. It is therefore no wonder that these exceptional conditions of nature also give rise to unequalled climatic, magnetic and botanical conditions, and that the richness of scientific possibilities and investigations may be considered almost inexhaustible.

The Headquarters' buildings are situated on a ridge, the southwestern slope of which forms the side of the Beas, the northern slope descending to Chhaki River, a side-stream of the Beas. The house is surrounded by tall old deodars and commands a view over the whole Valley. The building is earthquake-proof, and has two stories: the upper consisting of spacious living quarters for the members of the Institute's staff, and a long glass veranda; the lower housing the Institute's Museum and Library, and also surrounded by a wide veranda on three sides.

The Museum is growing so rapidly that, in less than a winter, the accommodation has become too small. The botanical collection covers the whole of Kulu and the adjacent Lahul and Kangra districts, and consists at present of well over 5000 plants. The zoological collections (birds and mammals) cover the same regions and include



VIEW OF KULU VALLEY FROM URUSVATI, BASE OF HIMALAYAN  
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well over 1000 skins. The geological and archaeological collections are in the making, and a meteorological shelter is at present under construction. The medicinal properties of the many Himalayan varieties of plants are being investigated and are proving to be of colossal value to humanity.

The Library has a large number of scientific volumes which is being continually augmented.

Kulu Valley is the famous ancient route to Ladak and Tibet. Ancient temples are strewn all along the road. There are hot springs in Kulu and in the adjacent Pharbati Valley, where the natives cook rice (rice is actually cooked in the stream) and, remembering the tremendous earthquake on April 4th, 1905, when according to official data 1127 persons and 17,192 animals were killed, one understands that subterranean conditions also play a great part in the remarkable fertility of the Valley and the exceptional magnetic and climatic conditions.

The annual rainfall is not excessive at Naggar, being 49.40 inches (from a 27 years' average); and the lowest mean monthly temperature is 35.3°, in February, and the highest 78.7°, in August, (taken from an average of 21 years). For the higher altitudes, a decrease of 3° in temperature per 1000 feet of elevation has to be allowed.

Let me conclude with a passage from the President-Founder's latest book, *Shambhala*. Prof. de Roerich writes:

"Urusvati—the abode of research, the abode of science, is built in the Himalayas, within the boundaries of ancient Aryavarta. Again the human spirit, purified by the continuous currents of the Himalayas, will search in untiring labor. The healing herbs, medicinal research, wonderful magnetic and electric currents, the radioactivity and all those unspeakable treasures, which are preserved only in the Himalayas . . .

"*Vade, filii ad Montes Indiae et ad cavernas suas, et accipe ex cis lapides honoratos qui liquefiunt in aqua, quando commiscentur ei*—so speaks the most excellent Hali, the Arabian, mentioned by Paracelsus.

"Let us go to the Mountains of the Himalayas!"