

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

Population

The population of the district increased from 8,58,184 in 1901 to 14,20,391 in 1961. An examination of the table given below shows that the year 1931 was a demographic divide:

Census year	Population	Variation	Percentage increase(+) or decrease(—)
1901	8,58,184		
1911	7,40,319	(—) 1,17,865	(—) 13.7
1921	7,98,105	(+) 57,786	(+) 7.8
1931	8,33,837	(+) 35,732	(+) 4.5
1941	9,87,065	(+) 1,53,228	(+) 18.4
1951	11,22,046	(+) 1,34,981	(+) 13.7
1961	14,20,391	(+) 2,98,345	(+) 26.6
1901—61		(+) 5,62,207	(+) 65.5

The major portion of the increase of 65.5 per cent in population during these 60 years occurred during the second part covering 1931—1961. This position is easily explained by the fact that a number of natural catastrophes such as drought, famine and epidemic resulted in high mortality during 1901—1931. Famine and plague were rampant in 1901—1911 and during the decade 1921—1931 plague again took a heavy toll in the years 1924 and 1926. On the other hand, the three decades after 1931 recorded a steady rate of growth. Only the middle decade 1941—1951, recorded a lower rate of growth, owing to the fact that the Hindus, Sikhs and others who migrated to this district after the Partition were 40,361 less than the Muslims who left for Pakistan. The health measures taken by the Government in the post-Partition years reduced the death rate while the birth rate remained almost

unchanged. This explains the increase of 26.6 per cent in the third decade, 1951—1961, which was the highest in this period of 60 years. This growth rate approximated the natural growth rate deduced from the difference in the number of births and deaths.

Apart from the migration of large numbers following the Partition, the population of the district has not otherwise been affected by movements of people leaving the district or coming into it. This is significantly borne out by the fact that 69 per cent of people were recorded to have been born in the very town or village in which they were enumerated in 1961. The larger number of females leaving the place of birth is accounted for by the fact of marriage. Out of the remaining 31 per cent of population recorded as having come from other places in 1961 only 14.6 per cent were recorded to have come from within the district. Out of the remaining 16.4 per cent which had come from outside the district only 4 per cent of the total population had come from other States in India, mainly from Delhi (25,846), Uttar Pradesh (24,817) and Rajasthan (5,275). The remaining 12.4 per cent represented the number of people who had migrated to the district from West Punjab after the Partition. This new element introduced into the indigenous population of the district influenced social and economic life in many ways as the later Chapters will indicate.

Standing third in point of population in the State, the district ranks first in the density of population. Here again, as the table given below shows, while density varied slightly during the first half of the demographic divide (1901—1931), it shot up in the subsequent decades on account of the increase in population and by 1961 it was almost doubled:

Census year	Density (Population per square mile)
1901	368
1911	317
1921	342
1931	358
1941	423
1951	482
1961	609

This density is higher in the Rohtak tahsil mainly on account of the population of Rohtak itself. The lowest density is in the Jhajjar tahsil.

Additional housing is essential to relieve the inconveniences of increased density as conditions of living and working are determined by it. During the period 1951—1961 the rural dwellings increased by 17.7 per cent to cover an increase of 26.3 per cent in rural population. In urban areas while the population increased by 28.8 per cent the urban dwellings increased by 55.5 per cent. In the district as a whole the dwellings increased by 22.2 per cent as against an increase of 26.6 per cent in population. These figures leave no doubt in one's mind that the problem of shortage of housing, unsatisfactory as it is in the whole district, was accentuated in rural areas during this decade.

The total of 2,18,078 houses (1,82,975 rural and 35,103 urban) in the district were occupied by 14,15,778 persons. The houseless persons consisting of wandering tribes, *sadhus* and pavement dwellers was limited to 4,613. Normally a single house was used by one household¹ which on an average consisted of 6.4 persons.² The over-burdened households reflect the shortage of houses in the district.

Distribution of Population

There are 761 villages in which 86.3 per cent of the population lives. The remaining 13.7 per cent of the population lives in seven towns. A reference may be made to Table III of Appendix for details. The village population can be grouped under different units as follows :—

Unit of population	Number of villages	Total population
Less than 200	31	3,279
Between 200 and 499	87	33,250
Between 500 and 999	191	1,38,311
Between 1,000 and 1,999	244	3,51,461
Between 2,000 and 4,999	186	5,61,460
Between 5,000 and 9,999	22	1,38,123
Total	761	12,25,884

1. The term household is taken to mean a group of persons who commonly live together and take their meals from a common kitchen unless exigencies of work prevent any one of them from doing so.

2. *Census of India, 1961, Punjab, Report on Housing and Establishments*, p. 15.

This table shows that 621 villages out of the total number of 761 villages are of moderately good size, with the population ranging between 500 and 5,000. By and large the villages in the Rohtak and Gohana tahsils have an average population of over 2,000 persons whereas the villages in the Jhajjar and Sonapat tahsils have about 1,200 persons. The only exception is Dighal, a village in Jhajjar tahsil, which has a population of 8,233. None of the seven towns qualifies as a class I town as the population is less than one lakh. Rohtak with its population of 88,193 persons is a class II town. Sonapat is a class III town with a population of 45,882; its population increased by 52 per cent during 1951—61 owing to its industrial development. Bahadurgarh, Jhajjar, Gohana and Beri are ranked as class IV towns each with its population ranging between 10,000 and 19,999. The only class V town is Maham with a population of 9,300.

As the Chapter on 'Agriculture and Irrigation' indicates, in spite of some shift of rural population to urban areas consequent upon industrial development, the pattern of distribution of population between urban and rural areas has not been greatly affected. To some extent this balance has been maintained by a large number of people migrating from Pakistan and settling down in rural areas for business purposes in addition to agricultural pursuits.

Sex ratio.—According to the census of 1961 there were 891 females per thousand males. This ratio more or less held good in all the tahsils of the district except that Jhajjar had 909 females per thousand males.

Language

The census of 1961 revealed a multiplicity of 22 spoken languages and dialects of which Hindi is spoken all over the district by 989.1 persons per thousand. Only 10 per thousand speak Panjabi, probably displaced persons from Pakistan. Their effort to converse in Hindi produces a mixed speech which tends to be quite amusing. Urdu is spoken by the negligible minority of Muslims who traditionally stick to the use of their mother tongue.

Pure or *theth* Haryanvi, the major dialect, has many dialectic varieties which are spoken in different parts of the district. Ahirwati, another dialect of the district is a mixed product of Haryanvi vocabulary and Mewati structures. Depending on the nature of the mixture, it is sometimes considered as Haryanvi

influenced by Mewati and at other times Mewati influenced by Haryanvi.

The coming of displaced persons from West Punjab and the progress of literacy through the medium of Hindi among the masses are tending to produce an interesting linguistic pattern in moulding which the vocabulary and pronunciation of the displaced people are playing an important part.

Hindi in Devnagari script is used for writing purposes by an ever-increasing number of people while the use of Urdu in Persian script is limited to the older generation.

RELIGION AND CASTE

The vast bulk of the population amounting to 98.59 per cent professes Hinduism in various forms. However, the Muslims and Sikhs form about one per cent of the population and the number of Jains and Buddhists is negligible.

The Muslims who number 7,349 according to the census of 1961 are chiefly found in the Sonapat tahsil. They observe their various religious festivals like Id-ul-Zuha, Ramzan and Id-ul-Fitr. They also observe Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom of Hassan and Hussain, the Prophet's grandsons. The Sikhs visit *gurdwaras* and the Jains worship the image of Tirthankaras in their own temples.

Christianity was introduced in the district about a century ago under the patronage of the British masters. By the beginning of the 20th century, there were churches at Sonapat, Kharkhauda, Bahadurgarh, Jhajjar, Rohat and Rohtak. The Methodist Church of Southern Asia is running a middle school at Sonapat and two clinics, one at Bahadurgarh and the other at Ganaur. The Church of India has established a church at Rohtak. But in general, missionary activities have slowed down after Independence.

In addition to practising their religion in their own homes and their religious places of worship, the masses follow many traditional superstitions in performing the ordinary acts of their daily life. A cat crossing one's path or a person sneezing at the outset of a special undertaking are commonly shared as bad omens as in many other parts of the country. There is a saying to the effect:

'If someone sneezes, one may take bath or food or go to sleep but should not go to another's house even if it's all made of gold.'

A woman with an empty pitcher crossing one's path is considered as an inauspicious sign. In fact nothing of any importance like, laying the foundation of a house, occupying a new house, digging a well or opening a new shop is done without consulting an astrologer about the auspicious time of commencement.

The local tutelary gods and saints worshipped by the population since time immemorial have lost much of their former importance though they have not disappeared altogether. For example, mention may be made of a Ghaibi Pir (hidden saint) also known as Bala Sayyad. People visit his shrine, built squarely in the form of a tomb on the top of Behrampur hill¹ on every Sunday. The masses in rural areas in particular worship Sitla Mata or Devi, also called Ganwali and Kandi Mata for protection from smallpox. Mata is usually worshipped on Tuesday in the month of Chaitra. Kandi Mata is worshipped on the second day after recovery from an attack of smallpox. Masani is worshipped and propitiated in the hope that children may not be inflicted with *masan*, a disease of emaciation or atrophy.

The Arya Samaj since its introduction has been preaching strongly against superstitions, omens and useless rites, ceremonies and customs. It has exercised a deep influence on the Jats, a unique feature of which is that the Jat womenfolk are generally left free to adopt any religious ceremonies. Consequently the performance of *shradha* ceremony has in many castes been reduced to a formality or even abandoned. The incoming of displaced persons from Pakistan introduced a contrary element as most of these people were followers of the Sanatan Dharma and not of the Arya Samaj. Here again, as in the case of language, the results of the inter-action of new social forces can be judged properly only after the lapse of a certain period of time.

Festivals

Some of the principal Hindu festivals like Holi, Janam Ashtmi, Dussehra and Diwali and others like Sivaratri, Ram Naumi, Solono (Raksha Bandhan) and Bhai Duj are observed by the Hindus here as in other parts of the country. It is, therefore, not necessary to give a detailed account of their observance except when there is something

1. In fact there is no hill. It is only a small raised place situated near Garhi Kajlu, about one mile from Sandhal Kalan.

distinctive or peculiar to this region in the celebration of any of them. There are other festivals, however, which are only of local importance and these require a more detailed description.

For example, people in rural areas celebrate Holi somewhat differently. For many days before the festival, married women play Holi with men by throwing coloured water on them. This resembles what happens traditionally at Barsana, in Mathura. On Dhulendi (Phag), the day following Holi, the menfolk take their turn and throw water on the women who reply by beating the men with sticks or *kolras* (twisted cloth strips). The men act as if they are powerless, and their inability to defend themselves leads to much fun and frolic.

On the occasion of Janam Ashtmi people take out Lord Krishna's image in *dolas* and decorated palanquins in a festival locally called Jal Jholni. While the burning of effigies at the end of Dussehra is not customary in rural areas, the village girls observe Sanjhi for a period of 10 days. They move out at night with earthen pots on their heads. These pots have holes all around and are lighted with *diyas* (earthen lamps) placed in them. This presents a lovely sight. The boys try to break the earthen pots which the girls protect. On the Dussehra evening these earthen pots with lighted *diyas* inside are floated in ponds. The lighted *diya* symbolises Sita (purity) while the boys represent Rakshasas (evil powers) from whose custody Sita is released. On this occasion while the Brahmans offer tender barley shoots to their patrons, the sisters do the same to their brothers and both receive monetary gifts in return. This function is known as Naurte. In villages, Gir-ri, which precedes Diwali, is most significant. Every household decorates the horns of its cattle with peacock feathers which are considered sacred and covers their bodies with coloured cloth on which *kaurles* (cowries) are sewn. On the third day, i.e. the day following Diwali, early in the morning *gosas* (cow dung cakes) are made to observe Govardhan Puja. This is done for the first time after the rainy season which indicates the end of the fermentation stage of cow dung.

Gugga Naumi.—Gugga Naumi is a religious festival connected with snake worship observed on Bhadon 9 (August-September). A number of legends have clustered around Gugga, who is also called Gugga Pir or Zahir Pir (the Saint Apparent). Some also refer to him as Baggarwala (he of the Baggar) because of his grave near Dadrewa (near Ganganagar), a tract over which he is said to have

ruled. Flourishing about the middle of 12th century, Gugga Bir (Gugga the Hero) commanded great respect. The Muslims going to his shrine are supposed to have altered the name of Gugga Bir to Gugga Pir (Gugga Saint). Some people, however, think that Gugga became a Muslim and hence the changed name. He was reputed to have the power of curing the people bitten by snakes. Monday is his day, the 9th is his date because he descended into the earth on Bhadon 9. Gugga Pir's shrine is distinguished by its square shape with minarets and domed roof and is known as *mari*. This festival is particularly celebrated in the district at Samchana and Khanpur Kalan (Rohtak tahsil), Kanodah, Gurawar, Sewana, Rattanthai, Salhawas, Chhapar, Patauda, Silana, Bahadurgarh and Jhajjar (Jhajjar tahsil).

Mela Devi.—This festival is celebrated at Beri in the Jhajjar tahsil twice in the year on Chaitra Sudi 8 (March-April) and Asuj Sudi 8 (September-October). According to the legend the image of goddess Bhumeshwari Devi was brought from the hills and installed at Beri. Newly-married couples blessed with a son come here to pay homage.

Mela Baba Mast Nath.—It is celebrated in the memory of Baba Mast Nath and is held on Phalgun Sudi 7 (February-March). People worship at the *samadh* of the saint at Bohar (Rohtak tahsil). This fair is held at Khera Sadh (Rohtak tahsil) where people worship both in the temple and at the *samadh*.

Sat Kumbh Fair.—This fair is a religious one and is celebrated at Kheri Gujar (Sonapat tahsil) twice a year, on the last day of Sravana (July-August) and Kartik full moon day (October-November).

Caste

The caste system with all its ramifications is observed among the Hindus but its social influence is diminishing. It must, however, be realised that caste or tribal groups have shown a strong tendency to act unitedly in political campaigns.

Social Groups.—The important social groups are Jats, Brahmans, Ahirs, Rajputs, Harijans, Aggarwals, Khatri and Aroras. The Jats, Brahmans, Harijans, Aggarwals, Khatri and Aroras (the last two communities migrated from West Pakistan) are scattered throughout the district. The Rajputs and Ahirs are chiefly in the Jhajjar tahsil, the latter predominating in Nahar sub-tahsil.

Jats.—The Jats consist of 12 major clans or *gots* and 137 minor ones. The origin of the Jats is shrouded in mystery. Some people believe that they came from outside India and others consider them to be indigenous. In any case they are traditionally treated as a separate caste or a group of castes. The Jats make brave soldiers. They care much for the physical well-being of their children. The tradition of soldiership has become hereditary in many families which take pride if all their adult male members join the army. Apart from his fighting qualities the Jat has few equals for patient industry and endurance as an agriculturist. He is clannish and cherishes the memories of ancient feuds. He is shrewd and loves a joke when he masters it.

Brahmans.—The Jats have traditionally needed Brahmans from the beginning for the performance of religious rites. But with the spread of the teachings of the Arya Samaj respect for the priestly class diminished. In such circumstances some Brahmans took to service and others became agriculturists.

Ahirs.—The origin of Ahirs is even more doubtful than that of the Jats. Like the Jats they are keen on joining the armed services and also make good farmers. The following common saying is an evidence of the Ahir's skill as an agriculturist:—

'Kosli ka Ahir, kheti ki tadbir'
(Ahir of Kosli, the craft of agriculture)

Rajputs.—The Rajputs retain the military instincts of their forefathers and a considerable number of them joins the armed services.

Harijans.—Since Independence, the Harijans have become increasingly conscious of their rights and many of them are holding important positions in government service.

Aggarwals.—They are said to have come from Agroha (Hissar), and settled in different places in the district. Known as Mahajans they formed the economic backbone of the community. Their money-lending capacity enabled them to monopolize the village economy and obtain a hold on the agricultural land. When the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1900, made this impossible, they began to shift to towns. Whether in villages or towns, the position of the Aggarwals was relegated to the background by the skill and adventure of the more progressive displaced persons from West Pakistan. A

good many young Aggarwals were obliged to switch over to service and industry from their traditional family pursuit.

Khatris and Aroras.—These came as displaced persons, mostly from Jhang and Muzzafarpur districts of West Pakistan and established themselves as trading communities. The Aroras in particular, who came in a large number after the Partition are noted for their capacity for hard work as well as their thrift and business acumen. Energetic and enterprising by nature, they engage freely in banking, shop-keeping, trade, government service and agriculture. They turn their hands to anything and are even found weaving baskets and mats, beating out vessels of brass and copper and working as goldsmiths or as tailors.

SOCIAL LIFE

Joint Family System.—The family is locally known as *kunba*. A group of families having common ancestors is called a *thola*. Two or more *tholas* are jointly called *pana*. Brothers, and occasionally cousins, farm the land jointly, but they do not always live together. The income of the whole family is spent for the benefit of all its members, earning or non-earning. Widows and children, whether their parents are dead or alive, elderly and decrepit or physically handicapped members of the family, all receive the attention of the head of family and are supported and maintained out of the joint family funds.

The joint family system which has been a distinguishing feature of Hindu society since time immemorial, is showing signs of breaking up under the stress of the changed economic and social conditions in recent times. The competition for earning a living, the increased cost of living, the tax-structure, the mobility resulting from the requirements of service, the growing spirit of individualism and, above all, the trend of the recent legislation on inheritance, all these factors spell the doom of this ancient institution. Another factor which is hastening the dissolution of the system is that boys and girls, marrying at a comparatively advanced age, prefer to live independently. This new pattern of living with an individualistic bias, is steadily emerging. Usually the branch of the family which earns more money separates from the poorer branch. Those who enter some kind of regular service, have to leave the family home and move from place to place wherever they are posted. It becomes more and more difficult for them to function effectively as

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members of a joint family. The recent legislation passed by the Government, whereby even women are entitled to their share in the family property, has hastened the tendency to break up the family by assigning individual shares to the male members.

While this position is more marked in urban areas, the joint family system is weakening even in the villages, where people depend almost entirely on farming. The average holding is too small to support a joint family which continues growing in size. It is, therefore, inevitable that some members of the family should move out in search of service to the towns or elsewhere to supplement the meagre family income. In this way the migration of rural population to the cities in search of a living, whether in business, industry, service or other forms of labour, has vitally affected the structure of the joint family. Those who migrate to the towns get used to modern amenities of life and try to settle down there with their families, leaving the care of the farm to those members of the family who stay behind in the village. This kind of situation generates discontentment at home and often leads to the break-up of the family. A village youth moving to town, after a while becomes so absorbed in urban life that going back to live in his village becomes impossible, although his roots are there.

Inheritance

The intestate property, before the enforcement of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, was inherited by the sons after the death of the father, and if there was no son, the widow of the deceased inherited it. The widow had, however, only life interest in the property and she was not legally entitled to dispose it of as she liked. Except *stridhana*¹ a woman was not supposed to be the absolute owner of the property, nor could a married daughter claim share in her father's property.

Now, according to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, sons and daughters, the mother and the widow along with other heirs² of the deceased, if any, inherit the intestate property simultaneously. A daughter has as good a claim in her father's property as

1. *Stridhana* means woman's property that is to say properties over which a woman has got absolute power of disposal.

2. Specified in Class I of the Schedule, vide Section 8 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

a son, provided the father does not debar her by law. In spite of the right conferred by law, however, it appears to have become a general practice for the girls not to claim any part of the intestate property. In the absence of a brother, a girl may sometimes give her land to her near relatives, though in such cases she usually retains her right to property. In a few cases suits were instituted by daughters who were denied their share in the intestate property. But there has been general social resentment against this new legislation.

Marriage

Monogamy is observed as a rule. Apart from the restrictions imposed by law and the economic necessities involved in having more than one wife at a time, the institution of monogamy has always had social sanction. The caste restrictions on marriage alliances still apply though not as rigidly as before. On the whole the old system is weakening under the impact of present day social forces and inter-caste marriages, though scarce, are accepted.

The customs and formalities relating to betrothal (*nata*) and leading to *rokna* or *tikka* and *sagai* are the same as elsewhere. The same applies to the preliminaries of marriage and the marriage ceremony itself. The maternal uncle of the girl or boy brings the *bhat*, a wedding suit for the girl or the boy as the case may be. The parents collect *neota* from their relations at the time of marriage. The tying of *kangna* and the *sehra* ceremony followed by *ghurchari* are performed in the same manner as elsewhere. The *baraat* is received by the bride's party on the outskirts of the village or town from where it is conducted in procession to *jandalwasa* (*dharmsala* or *chopal*). After the *barothi* or *milni* ceremony has been performed, the girl puts *jaimala* round the neck of the bridegroom. As soon as the *baraatis* have been entertained to dinner, the ceremony begins with sacred texts recited in Sanskrit. The Brahman ties the *palla* of the girl's wrap to a piece of cloth called *patka* and the boy takes the latter over his shoulder before the *phera* is performed which constitutes an essential feature of the marriage ceremony. By and large the marriage ceremony is the same in its procedure and performance although here and there minor variations among certain castes are observed. One very important social aspect which is now generally accepted is that the *baraat*

does not stay for three days as before but returns the following day. This has resulted from the pressure of economic forces which make it difficult to provide entertainment over a number of days.

In the old days *muklawā* (consummation of marriage) took place after a long time as girls were married at an early age before they attained puberty. In these days since the boy and girl are married at a fairly mature age this ceremony is performed on the day following the marriage and is termed as *patra pher*. But among Harijans, especially Dhanaks, *muklawā* is still observed as before.

Dowry system.—The dowry system is a social evil from which the people of the district are not immune. On June 12, 1960, a big social conference of all castes and *gots* was held at Sisana (Rohtak tahsil) to effect reforms in marriage and other customs. The conference, which was attended by over one lakh persons, expressed views against the evil of the dowry system. But people in general were not inclined to accept reform in this matter. Even the dowry legislation of 1961 has not fully succeeded in achieving its object. Their ideas not having been reformed, people find ways and means of by-passing the law.

Marital age.—Early marriages were a usual feature in the district in the past. But the position seems to have changed considerably during the last two to three decades. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, popularly known as the Sarda Act, enforced from April 1, 1930, provided penalties for the celebration of marriages of male children under 18 and female children under 14 years of age. Consequently, there has been a tendency for postponing marriages beyond the age specified in the Act. The general tendency at present is for boys to marry between 18 and 20 years and for girls between 14 and 16 years. The findings of 1961 Census, however, reveal that the institution of child marriage, like that of dowry, still prevails to a certain extent despite the civil law prohibiting it.

Widow marriage.—*Karewa* or a widow marrying one of the brothers of her deceased husband is common among the Jats, Ahirs, Gujars and Harijans. *Karewa* is un-accompanied by ceremonies of any kind. The woman merely resumes her jewels and coloured clothes which she had ceased to wear on her husband's death.

Sometimes there is a public ceremony to give it a sanctimonious touch; generally living together is held to constitute *karewa*. The main reason for the connection within the family is to retain the control of the deceased person's land in the family. *Karewa* will not usually take place if the widow has children, unless they and their mother are very young. A widow cannot be compelled to marry according to *karewa*, sometimes she may choose to marry a person outside the family by giving up her husband's land.

In case the husband dies shortly after marriage and the girl has not lived with him or if she has no issue, she is remarried with all the usual ceremonies performed at the marriage. This is called *punar vivah* which is mostly adopted by the Aggarwals and the Brahmans among whom a brother-in-law does not generally accept his sister-in-law as his wife. During the last decade or so *karewa* has been introduced among them too.

When a woman enters into intimacy with any person without any social formalities and they begin to live together as husband and wife, it is called *kara*. Like *karewa* or *krepa*, *kara* is also not attended with any ceremony. This type of marriage is done outside the family.

A widow who does not choose to marry continues to live on the land left by her husband. In urban areas, however, widows, if they are educated, pick up some kind of paid or honorary social work if they do not wish to marry.

Divorce.—Though not unknown in the past, cases of divorce were rare. Instead of having recourse to a court of law, the general practice has been to leave the girl with her parents and never recall her. However, with the coming into force of the Hindu Marriage Act on May 18, 1955, some cases of divorce are being instituted in law courts as the table below shows:

Year	Cases instituted			Divorce granted	Petitions dismissed	Cases compromised	Cases pending
	Pending cases	New cases	Total				
1956	—	7	7	2	5	—	—
1957	—	13	13	4	7	2	—
1958	—	9	9	2	3	—	4

Year	Cases instituted			Divorce granted	Petitions dismissed	Cases compromised	Cases pending
	Pending cases	New cases	Total				
1959	4	14	18	3	14	—	1
1960	1	16	17	7	8	—	2
1961	2	14	16	7	1	—	8
1962	8	15	23	5	7	—	11
1963	11	4	15	2	7	6	—
1964	—	9	9	1	5	—	3
1965	3	7	10	—	6	2	2
1966	2	21	23	1	10	3	9

Prostitution

Trafficking in women for immoral purpose does not exist, nor is there any organised gang of traffickers of women in the district. Before abolition of prostitution in 1956, there existed some organized brothels in the district.

Position of Women

The census of 1961 showed that in addition to being fewer in numbers, the females were also not as long-lived as the males. Only 9.9 per cent of females attained the age of 50, the number in the case of males being 12.4. This was possibly due to want of proper care and maternity mortality. Their education also suffered due to lack of attention. Only 9 per cent of them were literate as against 32 per cent males, the overall percentage of literacy in the district being 21.1 per cent. Fortunately, the prejudice against the education of women is disappearing although people are still not enthusiastic about imparting higher education to their girls. This feeling is based on the view that the assistance of women is required at home and not in an office. The social atmosphere is such that it is difficult to find a suitable match for a highly educated girl in rural areas.

Women, however, take their proper share in work. They draw water from the village well, cook the morning and evening meals and even carry food to the men at work in the fields. In addition to numerous household jobs they participate nearly in all agricultural operations like hoeing, weeding and harvesting except ploughing, driving of cart and working on the well.

Purdah is still in vogue in some form. Village maidens cover their heads while daughters-in-law cover their faces when moving among the elderly persons in the house or out in the village. The position is different in urban areas, where, with the spread of education, social barriers against the employment of women are collapsing rapidly. Women are increasingly replacing men in many fields or participating with them in parallel fields of social work of many kinds including education, child welfare, community work and arts and crafts. Working women, though economically active, still occupy a subordinate position in social life but they do not observe purdah any more.

Rituals and Customs

As traditional rituals and customs have lost their hold on the people under the influence of modern ideas, these are practised differently in different areas. Not all the old *sanskaras* are observed. The *mundan* ceremony is still prevalent among displaced people. The dead are cremated as a rule, the only exception being *kanphara jogis* who bury their dead like Muslims and Christians. Post-cremation rites include 12-day mourning in the case of females and 13-day mourning in the case of males. The last ceremony is called *tehranmee*.

HOME LIFE

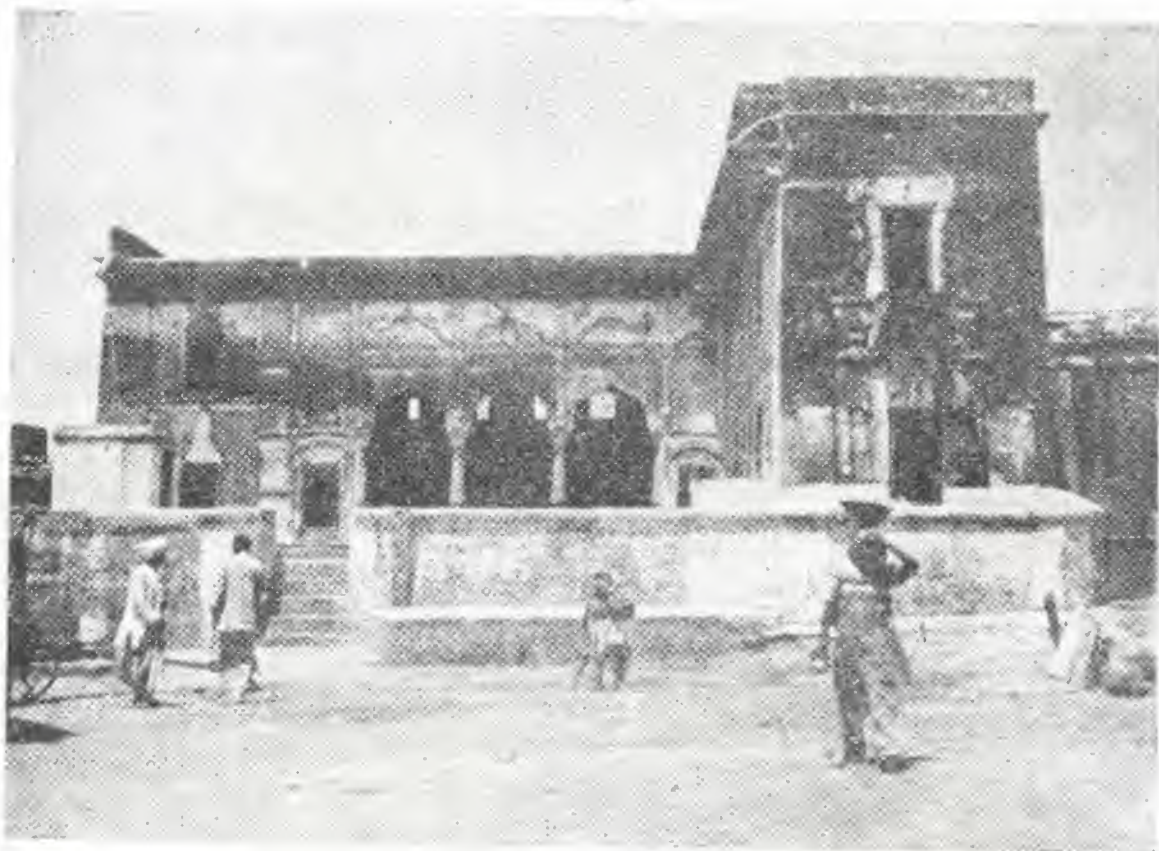
The home life of villagers runs on traditional lines although changes are slowly taking place in the old pattern of living in which custom played an important part.

The villages are usually built on sites which stand high above the surrounding level. If the high site was not deliberately selected as such, it has possibly resulted from the heaps of debris left by previous habitations. The village sites are usually surrounded by trees such as *neem*, *pipal*, *jal* and *jand*.

Every village has its *johar* or pool in which the rain water is collected for the use of the cattle. Often enough there are a few shady trees growing along the bank of the *johar* and a masonry



Drawing and carrying of drinking-water from a village well



Chopal at Mahara



Painting on a well of a Chopal

platform which serves as a meeting place. Close round the skirts of the village is some open space called *gora*, where cattle are gathered before letting them out for grazing. Every village has now circular and approach roads as a result of consolidation of holdings. The former is locally called *phirni*. The roads leading into the village are generally broad enough for carts to move along.

Most village houses are built in the same pattern. Inside the house is a courtyard which is mostly used for cattle or has mangers and stables and a place where fodder is chopped. Beyond the courtyard there is living space for the family. An average type of family has usually two separate houses, one for the residence of women and the other for cattle and men-folk and guests. The wooden pillars which were once the only support for the roofs are now usually discarded in favour of iron girders or brick or stone pillars. One may see dishes and pots, spinning wheels, baskets, receptacles of grain, etc., scattered about in comfortable confusion, while the sound of the stone corn-grinder is heard from some hidden recess. The house tops are used for drying cotton and grain and also for the women to sleep on during the hot weather. The men generally sleep in *ghers* built outside the village to protect their cattle and agricultural implements.

The village *paras* or *chopal* (rest-house) is an institution of considerable importance in the life of Rohtak villagers and serves as a community centre. Usually it is a *pukka* building made of bricks or stone and situated in the heart of the village. A few charpoys are at times placed in the *paras* for the benefit of the village guests. Some of the olden *chopals* have on the walls crude and stylised paintings of Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, the Pandavas, Sravan Kumar, tigers and horses, elephants and railway trains. The *chopals* built recently are made of bricks and cement and have bare walls except for a calendar or two or in some cases some framed pictures.

A note-worthy feature is that a village is divided into separately organized units or *panas*. Each *pana* has a separate *chopal*, *johar*, well and *gora*. Even the land holdings are *pana*wise. Thus there may be seen in a village one, two or three *chopals*, *johars*, wells and *goras*.

Furniture and Utensils

In the old days except for *khats* (string cots), there was practically no furniture in a village home. Now one may see *sani* (sunn-hemp) mats, *peeras* and *moorhas* of low size, *moorhas* of large size (round stool

type and chair type) and a folding camp chair with a cloth seat. A fine and strong bedstead made of wooden frame and netted with thin strings of *sani* in different colours is seen almost in every house. The articles in the house include a *chakki* (corn-grinder), a *musaf* or *musji* (pestle and mortar to grind grain), a *charkha* (spinning wheel) and *belan* or *charkhi* (cotton cleaner), *theke* (tin drums) for storing grain. Earthen bins called *kothi*, *kuthla* or *kuthli* for storing grain are mostly used in the Jhajjar tahsil and by Harijans. A number of utensils, the commonest of which are *parat*, *thal*, and *thali* (trays and plates) of *kansi*, *katoris* and *katorias* (small bowls), *tokna* and *tokni* (large brass pots for water or ghee), the earthen *ghilri* for melting ghee, and cups called *bakhavra*, *behwa*, *katora* and *gadi* comprise the kitchen paraphernalia. The *tawa* (iron plate for baking bread) will be found upon the hearth. There may be other utensils as well. Both earthen and brass utensils are used for bringing water from the well, but the former is preferred for its cooling quality.

In the towns, in middle class houses, chairs and tables may also be seen. The homes of the well-to-do are better furnished and decorated in what passes for the modern style. Sofas, wardrobes, *palangs*, *moorhas*, tables and chairs of different kinds and other items of modern furniture fill the houses. The quantity of furniture is considered as a sign of wealth and taste. The paucity of furniture in an average home is partly offset by pictures and calendars. Urban influence has led even some villagers to provide themselves with tables and better type of cots, though on a modest scale.

Lately, the use of stoves of various kinds for cooking purposes has gained sufficient popularity. Utensils and decorations have undergone a change, particularly in urban areas. Side by side with copper and brass utensils, porcelain and glasswares are finding favour with the people. Stainless steel utensils being costly, are not commonly used. The use of electrical appliances like heaters and table lamps is gaining popularity even in the villages where electricity is available. Radio receivers have come to be regarded as a necessity and an increasingly large number of people both in towns and villages are using them. Battery transistor sets are found to be particularly useful in places where there is no electricity.

Dress and Ornaments

People in general dress in a simple manner. The male dress consists of a *dhoti*, a shirt or *kurta*, a turban and a pair of shoes. A blanket, *khes* or *chaddar* is invariably used as a wrapper in winter. The turban

(*khandwa*) is tied in a different style by the Jat, Ahir and Rajput. A full set of woman's clothes is called *teel*. There is a marked difference in the dress of Jat, Ahir and Rajput woman. A Jat woman wears a *ghagari* (usually red or black) and a shirt (exactly resembling a man's shirt with collar and cuffs), and a printed *orhni* (about $2\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ metres) covering her knotted hair. Yellow colour is not to her liking. The *ghagari* does not fall below the calves. Sartorial changes have started taking place. The *salwar* and *jumper* are being adopted by the young girls, and the grown-ups too have started preferring the *sahwar* to the *ghagari*¹. It has not been possible for the conservative illiterate women to dispense with the *orhni* owing to the prevalence of *pardah* system, but the educated ones now use *chunni* or *dupatta* of voile, georgette, etc. Social change is thus reflected in the dress which contrasts with the traditional wear.

The Ahir woman may always be recognised by her *lehnga* or petticoat, *angia* or *angi* (*choli*, blouse) and *orhni*. Her *orhni* is broader than that of a Jatni since she employs it also to cover her abdomen. It is usually red or yellow and is decorated with bosses and fringes of silver with a fall. The dress of a Rajput woman is similar to that of an Ahir woman except for her *orhni* which is usually plain and of white colour with silver fringes but without a fall. The *dhotis* and *saris* are the favourite items of dress among Brahman and Aggarwal women.

The woman's attire is usually of three types for different purposes, one while working in the fields, the other suited for working at the *chakki*, *sanni* (fodder chopping), cow dung and other miscellaneous work, and the third for *panghat*. A woman dresses her best when she visits the *panghat* for bringing water. This is the place where the ostentatious part of her dress is displayed, because here the status of the family is recognised from the display of the clothes. However, a woman whose husband is away on business, service, etc., generally does not dress herself in gaudy clothes and ornaments, but prefers simple attire.

Men do not wear jewellery. A gold ring may be seen worn by the urbanites. The ornaments worn by the women are usually made of gold and silver. They include *jaumala*, *kunthimala*, *kanthi* and *galsari* made of gold; *haar* (necklace) and *hansli* made of silver; and *jhalra* (long

1. *Ghagari* was generally made of twenty to thirty yards of thick printed cloth. The use of more cloth for *Ghagari* was considered to be a sign of richness, so much so that fifty two yards was folded into a *ghagari* which is borne out by the first line of a folk-song running thus :

'Bawan gaz ki lehar swai'

Modern *ghagari* has very much shrunk in size.

hanging string of gold mohars or silver rupees); these are worn around the neck. *Karan phul* and *bujani* of gold, and *dande* of silver are for the ears while there is a variety of finger-rings, plain and ornamented, with different names for each. The large nose-ring is called *nath*. It is worn only after marriage; till then the hole is kept open by a plain ring or a *dandi* (wad). Several ornaments like *kari* (anklet), *chhailkara* and *neori* and *patl* are worn on the legs by Ahir and Jat women but not by Rajput women. Tops and *balian* for the ears, *churis* (particularly ivory bangles in the case of Rajput women) for the wrists and *pandels* for the neck are some of the new type of ornaments which have come into vogue after the influx of displaced persons. On the whole the use of ornaments is on the decline save on special occasions.

Food

The diet of the people is simple and lacks variety. It comprises three meals. The morning meal consists of *lassi* (butter-milk) and *rotis* (chapatis), made from wheat and *besan* (gram flour) in canal areas, barley and gram flour in the *Bangar* and maize flour in the *Khadar*. The lunch menu includes *rotis* and one dish of vegetables or pulses or *kari* (prepared from gram flour). The evening meal varies according to the seasons. Milk and *rotis* (made of wheat, maize or bajra) along with *raabri* are taken in summer. *Raabri* is a special dish of the area prepared by fermenting flour in butter-milk before cooking it. *Dalia* (porridge of broken wheat) is eaten in the rainy season, and *kheechri* (a porridge of *bajra* and *moth* or *moong*) in winter. The use of vegetable oils, instead of *ghee*, for cooking purposes has become very common.

Tea drinking has become popular with all classes of people. Tea stalls in towns and big villages are fast becoming centres of social gossip. People prefer cold drinks or sherbet in the summer season in addition to *lassi*, prepared from curd.

Before the Partition there were no eating houses even in the bigger towns of Haryana. The parsimonious villager used to bring his *sattu*¹, parched gram and *rotl* with him on his visit to the town unless he had friends in whose houses he could eat. Since the influx of displaced persons, *dhabas*, *tandoors*, hotels and restaurants have sprung up and become quite popular. Previously only a few who had served in the army ate meat and took strong drinks, but since 1947 butchers shops have sprung up in towns to meet the demand for non-vegetarian diet on the part of young villagers who have begun to eat in *dhabas* on their visits to the town.

1. Flour of barley, gram, etc.

The men-folk are much addicted to the use of tobacco, but the women do not touch it.

COMMUNITY LIFE

As everywhere else, community life is somewhat more effectively organized in villages than in towns. A growing town cannot claim to be the nucleus of a single community. Its various social and economic groups are more exclusive than inclusive. They do not come into such frequent contact with one another. Civic responsibilities no doubt, are applicable to all, but these are not cohesive in their nature. And this is more true of an expanding town which is sprawled over a large area. There is a growing tendency for voluntary social agencies to establish themselves in local areas or small towns and organize community life in some form or other. They also organize mass celebration of important festivals in their respective areas.

The social situation in villages is different. Big and small land-owners, agricultural labourers and other workers are not far apart from each other. The limited amenities and amusements of village life are equally shared by all of them and require their combined attention. The Community Development Programmes have given a fillip to community activities of various kinds and the *panchayats* have also become a nucleus of community activities.

Folk Culture

Community life is also expressed through folk-songs and dances. Folk culture, reflected in the traditional folk-songs and dances is preserved by the village women. All India Radio has been giving good attention to the revival of folk culture by broadcasting 'Lok Manas' featuring programmes on Haryana. Folk-songs have a peculiar charm wherein we can feel the heart-beats of unsophisticated rural people. The large variety of seasonal songs depicting the mood of the different seasons are very popular. Take for instance the month of Sravana (July-August) which brings ecstasy in its wake. When the sky is overcast with dark clouds, young women come out of their homes and filled with ecstatic joy they sing while they swing:

O mother-in-law, the month of Sravana has set in,

Get me a seat of sandalwood for the swing.....

Teej or Haryali Teej is the main festival of Sravana, falling on Sudi 3 (third of the lunar month). By this time the rainy season starts gathering momentum replacing the scorching heat of the summer.

To celebrate this change, young girls of the countryside yearn for the approach of Teej. It is an occasion for the newly-married girls to go back to their parents to celebrate the Teej with their girl friends. The mother-in-law is approached for permission. The following lines beautifully depict a dialogue between the *bahu* (daughter-in-law) and her *sasar* (mother-in-law):—

There comes, O mother-in-law ! the month of Sravana,

Let us to our father's home proceed !

O my bride ! who the accompaniers 've come?

With whose permission you'll proceed?

To your father's home indeed !

O mother-in-law ! brother, the accompaniers 've come.

With your permission I'll proceed,

To my father's home indeed !

The mother-in-law would not object to her going but what about the field and domestic affairs? Who would do these jobs in her absence ?

Who will do the hoeing?

Who will grind the allotted grain?

Who, O my bride ! will wash my head?

And who will fry the *kasar*?

The intelligent daughter-in-law works out the problem very ably:

Elder *jeth*, O mother-in-law ! will do the hoeing,

Elder *jethi*, O mother-in-law ! will grind the allotted grain,

Barberess, O mother-in-law ! will wash your head,

The Barberess will fry the *kasar*.

There are songs connected with marriage, birth of a son and other festive occasions. Of the marriage songs, *banra* and *ghori* are important. There are religious songs and also songs that describe the exploits of the heroes of old like Alha Udal, Fatta

Jaimal, Bhura Baddal and Vir Jawahar Mal. *Ragani* forms another type which is sung when a *swang*¹ is staged.

Early morning when the village women go out for a bath to the village well, they enjoy group singing. They sing devotional songs in praise of Sita and Rama, Radha and Krishna, the Ganga and the Yamuna. When going to the fields or passing through the streets in groups, they sing *jakri* which is now much influenced by the film tunes. Group singing is also common at the time of *sraatia* (group spinning during the whole of a wintry night) and *dhupia* (group spinning in the fields during the whole of a sunny day in winter). Folk-dancing, an outburst of a deep emotion, usually accompanies folk-singing and conforms to its theme.

Games and Recreations

Wrestling, *kabaddi*, *gind khuli*, *gulli danda* (tip cat, and *lhukkam lhukka* (hide and seek) are popular indigenous games in the district, the last three being usually played by children. *Gind khuli* is the indigenous version of the game of hockey, it is played with a stick and a ball made of rags and twigs. *Gulli danda* is played in a ground outside the village and in many forms. *Lhukkam lhukka* is popular among children of both sexes. Wrestling and *kabaddi* here as elsewhere in the country are very popular sports even among older people. Usually every village has an *akhara* (arena) where the young men and children go regularly for wrestling exercises. *Kabaddi* is played by two teams. The dimensions of the field, the number of players on a side and the duration of the game are undefined. Of a number of varieties in which the game is played, *Sanjivini* (reviving type) and *Amar* (all-in game) are common. A player goes to the court of the other team repeating 'kabaddi, kabaddi or kaudi, kaudi.....' in one breath. If the player after touching and encountering any player of the opposite team returns to the boundary dividing the two courts still uttering 'kaudi kaudi.....' without any break, the particular player of the opposite team is considered to be out. In *Sanjivini* when a player is out, he leaves

1. *Swang* is a form of open-air theatre and the stage is in the midst of the audience. The formalities of the drama like costumes, curtains and make-up are hardly observed. The audience sit on all the four sides whereas orchestra takes its seat in the middle of the stage. Generally the leader of the *swang* party plays the role of hero and other actors play different roles including that of females. In summer it is played late at night and continues till early hours of the morning, while it is performed at noon in winter. The mythological stories and folk-tales generally provide the themes.

the court and waits outside to be revived. The team which ousts all the players of the other team, wins. In *Amar* a player who is out does not leave the field; he continues playing and a record is kept of the points scored by each team. The team scoring more points, wins.

Regular tournaments are held to discover promising talent in national events.

Chess, cards and *chopar* are some of the indoor games which are played and enjoyed in urban as well as rural areas. Villagers playing these games in *cho'pal* or *hathai* are a familiar sight. Modern games like hockey, cricket, football, volleyball and basket-ball are popular among students of urban areas where there are facilities of playgrounds, while games like *kho kho*, netball, etc., are popular in girls schools (especially with limited facilities). Lately, *panchayats* and private associations have started organizing these games and holding terminal and annual tournaments. Government subsidizes the construction of playgrounds and stadia and gives grants towards coaching centres and tournaments.

Gossiping and listening to the radio, particularly with the advent of portable transistors, are common pastimes. In towns, cinemas are the most popular centres of mass recreation suiting the pocket of the rich and the poor alike and by and large are the only places of public entertainment. Recorded film songs and music are freely played on marriages and other festive occasions.

General

As stated above, economic and professional groups and classes play an important part in social life. We have farmers' co-operatives of various kinds in villages which bring people together in pursuit of their objectives and give them opportunities of working together. This subject is treated in detail in the Chapter on 'Agriculture and Irrigation'. Since the abolition of *ala malikiyat* and *talukdari* there has been a levelling down of the higher landlord classes. This, combined with other measures of tenancy reforms and a progressive land policy have brought people together on more equal ground and the distinction between the very rich and the very poor is not so great as it was before.

In towns more than in rural areas professional groups of various kinds are organized for the defence of their interests. The lawyers,

the medical practitioners, the teachers are all inclined to think of themselves as members of their professional communities whose interests must be safeguarded in every way. The labour unions of various kinds in big and small industries also function to protect the interests of their members. The over-riding feature of these associations in urban as well as in rural areas is to strengthen the economic interests of different kinds of groups in the total life of the community.

The foregoing pages, while dealing with the population of the district, the language and dialects spoken by the people, the religions professed by them, the observance of the caste system together with important aspects of social and economic life have brought out the slow pace of change being effected under the influence of modern conditions of living. An important fact in this connection is the introduction in the district of large numbers of displaced people from areas in West Pakistan which previously had no social affinity with the people of this district. In more than one way, as explained in the foregoing text, the social, economic and cultural pattern of the urban and rural communities has been undergoing a slow but profound change as a consequence of the Partition. It is no doubt true that while the urban, and more particularly the rural people of the district, have their own distinctive Haryana culture, their way of life is generally evolving in conformity with the national rather than the regional pattern.