

## FOREWORD

A district gazetteer is not merely a compendium of the statistical information in respect of a district. It also gives the historical, cultural and socio-economic background of the district. Since Independence, momentous changes have taken place in the socio-economic situation of the country. There was, therefore, need for reflecting all these changes in the gazetteers and to make them broad based and more meaningful. The Haryana Gazetteers Organisation has taken up this work in right earnest and the present volume about Sirsa district is the ninth in the series.

The distribution of population in Sirsa district is mainly hydrographic in character—the growth centres having come up in places with easy access to water. The recurring famines and droughts used to bring great distress to the people of the district. However, the availability of Bhakra Canal water since the late fifties has transformed the life of this sandy tract. The present volume provides a vivid picture of the socio-economic transformation witnessed by the district since then and particularly after its formation as a separate district in September 1975.

I hope this updated volume of the gazetteer covering all aspects of the district's life will be of great interest to administrators, research and social workers and the general public.

Chandigarh, the 21st April, 1988.

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## PREFACE

Gazetteer literally means a geographical index ; in a broader sense it is a mine of information embracing almost all the aspects of socio-economic life of a region. Foreign travellers and courtiers have left valuable accounts of events of their times and about the socio-economic life of the people of various regions of the country. But these accounts are not comprehensive. However, the Britishers gave a lead and provided authentic documents in the form of gazetteers covering broadly, the life patterns, customs and socio-economic conditions of a region. These writings were mainly based on the settlement reports. The gazetteers were written to acquaint British administrators who were new to the place and knew very little about the life pattern of the people. These broadly laid stress on the things which were of interest to British civil servants. After Independence, the concept of a gazetteer has undergone a radical change.

Sirsa district was carved out of Hisar district in 1975, and the present volume is the first attempt on the district. This gazetteer is the ninth in the series of Haryana District Gazetteers.

Sirsa is proud of its glorious past woven around legends, archaeological finds and Vedic references. The land was associated with Mahabharata. In keeping with this tradition of glory and valour, the people of Sirsa district, ignited the flame of India's freedom in 1857. This area suffered neglect at the hands of the British rulers. The then Sirsa district was abolished in November, 1884, and the areas now comprising Sirsa district were merged in Hisar district.

The antiquity of the district can be established on the basis of the discovery of Late Siswal, Painted Grey Ware, early historical Rangmahal and early medieval pottery from a number of its places. The district, in course of its historical growth made worthy contributions to religious and cultural development. The influence of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism in the region is gathered from many sculptural pieces and archaeological remains recovered from Sirsa, Sikanderpur and other places. Sirsa has seen many vicissitudes. The area lay in olden days on the way from Multan to the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and had to bear the brunt of foreign invaders. Many invaders like Masud found this area remarkable for the growth of sugarcane. About 1341 A.D. Ibn-Batuta, from Tangiers, during his travels from Pak-Pattan (now in Pakistan) to Delhi passed through Sirsa and described it as a large town which abounded with rice.

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From time immemorial, this region has been watered by the mighty river Sarasvati. Drying up of this river brought innumerable miseries to the district. Once a fertile tract, it turned into a desert and became a land of recurring droughts and famines. People have still not forgotten the horrors of great **Chalisa Kal** (famine of 1783) when almost whole of the present Sirsa district was depopulated.

The creation of Haryana in November 1966, and formation of Sirsa as a separate district in September 1975, were two epoch-making events which accelerated the progress of the district. The flow of Bhakra Canal water and rural electrification transformed the life of the people of this district. The district has witnessed a phenomenal increase in agricultural output, which has boosted the overall development of the district. Thanks to infrastructural development, a district which had barely a few hectares of land under cotton in the beginning of the present century, is now a major cotton growing area and is known as a cotton belt of Haryana.

The progress of the district in the fields of agriculture, industries, communications, education, medical and social and welfare services which is a symptomatic of the progress in the state is explicitly given in the gazetteer. The tempo of the development has revolutionised the life of the people, however, the rich heritage has been preserved. No pains have been spared to keep abreast of developments in the district in many spheres and to collect and make use of the latest possible data from the diverse and scattered sources and to make the publication as accurate and self-contained as possible. Useful appendices, an index, a glossary, a considerable number of illustrations, a select bibliography and General and Irrigation maps of the district have been included in this volume. Its reference year is 1981.

The range and importance of subjects that are dealt in a gazetteer are so wide that it becomes essential to seek co-operation of experts of various departments of the state and central government, semi-government organisations and individuals. All these individuals and organisations deserve thanks for making available necessary information for this volume. It may not be possible to acknowledge the contributions to each of them individually but mention must be made of those whose involvement has been commendable. My thanks are due to Shri S.P. Dheer, Editor Gazetteers and his team of Research Officers, Shri A.K. Jain (now Editor), Mrs. Krishna Chakarvarty and Shri S.B. Dahiya who very efficiently drafted and brought out the present volume under the over all supervision of Shri S.K. Gupta, former Joint State Editor. Shri Jeet Ram Ranga, the present Joint State Editor, also deserves thanks for supervising the printing. My sincere and heart-felt thanks are also due to Dr. H.A. Phadke and Dr. K.C. Yadav of Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra who wrote Ancient and Medieval and Modern Sections of chapter on

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'History' and Dr. V. K. Sharma of the same University who drafted the section on Topography of the district.

Written on a pattern prescribed by the Government of India, it is hoped that this gazetteer would be of immense use to administrators, researchers and general readers alike.

S. P. BHATIA, IAS,

Chandigarh, the 21st April, 1988.

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