

CHAPTER-XV

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

No information is available about the education in the district during the ancient or medieval period. However, the discovery of a stone slab inscription in Sanskrit (5th/6th century AD) and an inscription of the time of Bhoja (C 836—890 AD) from Sirsa and another inscription of 9th century in beautifully carved alphabets of the northern group from Jodhkan indicate that some system of education was prevalent in the district in those days. Since the district was located in the Sarasvati valley, it has been a part of cultural mainstream of northern India.

During the medieval period, the system of education was still at a rudimentary stage. Primary schools in the modern sense did not exist and only places where some sort of education was imparted appears to be temples or mosques. These were also called *pathshalas* and *maktabs*.

The district was depopulated during the great famine of 1783. During the 19th century, the education was backward in Sirsa district. So late as 1856, the Superintendent of the then Sirsa district reported that there was not a single school in whole of the district. An Anglo-Vernacular middle school was opened at Sirsa in 1863, but very few boys attending this school were above the lower primary classes. Later a few vernacular primary schools were opened.

In 1892, the district had one Anglo-Vernacular middle school at Sirsa and 11 vernacular primary schools at Jodhkan, Khoewali, Naurang, Mithri, Matho Dadu (Matdadu), Chutala, Jagmalwali, Rania, Maujgarh, Rori and Abub Shahar. These schools were run by District Board. Besides, there was a zamindari school at Jamal. This school intended to supply sons of zamindars and *Kamins* with really needful rudimentary education, such as simple reading, counting and *baniyas'* accounts.¹ This school used to remain closed during harvesting. Besides, there were indigenous schools. Most of them were in village mosques where teaching was of Persian character. The teacher was mosque attendant who gave lessons as part of his religious duties. In few schools Nagri or Shastri character was taught. In school at Sirsa *lande Mahajani* were taught by a Brahman and was attended by sons of Brahmans, Baniyas and Aroras. The usual subject of instruction was mental arithmetic with a

1. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, 1904, p. 312.

little writing which the boys practised at home. In all these schools, attendance was often irregular and school education given to them was of most elementary nature. The education was almost confined to trading classes and the number of peasants who could write their names was exceedingly small. The education among females was negligible.

By 1904, the number of vernacular primary schools in the district rose to 14. These schools were located at Mangala, Rania, Jagmalwali, Sahuwala, Jhiri, Rori, Matho Dadu, Desu Malkana, Kalanwali, Naurang, Dabwali, Sakta Khera, Bhurtwala and Ding.¹ Zamindari school at Jamal continued to exist. Though the number of vernacular primary schools rose to 14 in 1904, but vernacular primary schools at Jodhkan, Kheowali, Mithri, Matho Dadu, Chutala, Maujgarh, Abub Shahar were closed between 1892 to 1904 and new vernacular primary schools were opened at Mangala, Sahuwala, Jhiri, Matho Dadu, Desu Malkana, Kalanwali, Dabwali, Sakta Khera, Bhurtwala and Ding during the same period. Besides a girls' primary school was opened at Sirsa. In all these schools, Urdu script was used. Besides, an aided primary school for European boys is reported to exist at Sirsa.

As a general rule, however, the majority of the children taught in all these schools were either the sons of officials or of the shop-keeper class. The value of education was as yet not understood by the great mass of the agricultural population.² Indegenous schools were generally decreasing as vernacular primary schools increased, despite increase in the number of schools the education remained confined to well-to-do classes only.

Things materially changed after Independence and even female education expanded at a rapid rate. With the passage of time, the initial prejudice of people against the western system of education also disappeared. As a result of keen interest taken by the government and voluntary organisations in the spread of education, a number of new educational institutions were opened after Independence.

In 1980-81, there were 407 different types of educational institutions which included 3 degree colleges, 1 teachers' training college, 57 high/higher secondary schools, 52 middle schools, 290 primary schools, 1 polytechnic, 3 industrial training institutes/schools/centres and 1 oriental college.

1. J. Wilson, *Final Report on the Revision of Settlement of the Sirsa District in the Punjab* 1879-83, pp. 127-128.

2. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, 1915, p. 241.

The following table shows the vast expansion of education during 1975-76 to 1980-81 :—

Type of institution	Year	No. of Institutions			Number of students		
		Govt.	Non-Govt.	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Colleges	1975-76	—	3	3	1,058	653	1,711
	1976-77	—	3	3	1,284	607	1,891
	1977-78	—	3	3	1,507	982	2,489
	1978-79	—	3	3	1,424	1,245	2,669
	1979-80	1	2	3	1,498	1,216	2,714
	1980-81	1	3	4	1,705	1,211	2,916
High/Higher Secondary Schools	1975-76	35	5	40	15,246	6,471	21,717
	1976-77	35	5	40	13,824	6,085	19,909
	1977-78	35	6	41	14,924	5,685	20,609
	1978-79	39	6	45	20,223	10,243	30,466
	1979-80	46	6	52	23,807	11,446	35,253
	1980-81	51	6	57	26,139	13,262	39,401
Middle Schools	1975-76	36	3	39	6,896	3,511	10,407
	1976-77	36	3	39	7,926	3,621	11,547
	1977-78	36	3	39	8,325	3,882	12,207
	1978-79	36	3	39	9,588	4,288	13,876
	1979-80	48	3	51	10,643	5,319	15,962
	1980-81	49	2	51	12,213	7,125	19,338
Primary Schools	1975-76	291	4	295	43,617	19,172	62,789
	1976-77	291	4	295	22,840	10,920	33,760
	1977-78	291	4	295	23,038	11,039	34,077
	1978-79	287	5	292	22,621	11,293	33,914
	1979-80	288	5	293	21,615	11,197	32,812
	1980-81	284	6	290	20,048	10,363	30,411

EDUCATION OF WOMEN

Education of women remained completely neglected in the areas now forming Sirsa district till the close of 19th century. Female education was confined to religious instructions only and that too was imparted to them in their homes. Girls were not allowed to go outside their homes for education. It was only in the beginning of the present century that a girls primary school was opened at Sirsa. The school was aided by municipal funds. Majority of the students in this school were Mohammedans and Urdu script was used.

The progress of female education accelerated only after Independence when voluntary organisations like Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Ayra Samaj and others opened number of schools for girls. In 1980-81, the district was well ahead in the field of female education and there were 2 colleges, 8 high and higher secondary, 2 middle and 4 primary schools exclusively for girls. Besides, the district had one industrial school for girls. All schools in rural areas were co-educational.

EDUCATION OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES

Before Independence, hardly any effort was made in the direction of eradication of mass illitracy among the Scheduled Castes and other Backward Classes. They remained educationally the most backward section of society till then. It was only after Independence that the government vigorously directed its policy towards raising general level of literacy among them.

The students belonging to these classes are provided with various facilities by way of reservation of seats in professional and technical institutions, exemption from payment of tuition fee and reimbursement of examination fee and also by giving financial assistance in the form of stipend. School books are supplied to them free of cost in 9th, 10th and 11th classes. Free college education is also provided to students belonging to these classes. Stipends under the State Harijan Welfare Scheme and Government of India Post Matriculation Scholarship Scheme are also awarded. Despite these concessions and the efforts made by the government in this direction, literacy among these classes is still low as they prefer to employ their children on odd jobs to supplement their meagre family income and are not quite alive to the benefits of education.

The following table shows the enrolment of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes students in different institutions in the district during

1975-76 to 1980-81 :—

Enrolment of Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes

Type of Institution	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary Schools :	1975-76	3,417	1,280	5,598
	1976-77	5,015	1,406	6,421
	1977-78	4,260	1,419	5,679
	1978-79	5,087	1,696	6,783
	1979-80	4,912	1,640	6,552
Middle Schools :	1975-76	1,443	378	1,821
	1976-77	1,469	466	1,935
	1977-78	1,525	509	2,034
	1978-79	2,081	694	2,775
	1979-80	1,995	665	2,660
High/Higher Secondary Schools	1975-76	2,534	622	3,156
	1976-77	2,488	823	3,311
	1977-78	2,576	859	3,435
	1978-79	3,808	1,269	5,077
	1979-80	3,307	1,468	5,875
	1980-81	4,925	1,641	6,566

LITERACY RATIO

Backwardness of the district in the field of education can be easily assessed from the fact that according to 1911 census, the then Hisar district (also having areas now comprising Sirsa district) ranked twenty fifth among the twenty-eight districts of the then Punjab Province in respect of literacy of its population.¹

According to 1891 census, there were 4,258 (2.31 per cent) literates in the then Sirsa tahsil. Literacy among males was 4.31 per cent and females

1. *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, Punjab Vol. I., p.24.*

only 0.13 per cent. In 1911, even after two decades, the literacy ratio remained almost the same. There were only 4,694 (2.45 per cent) literates in the tahsil. Literacy among males was just 4.33 per cent and among females barely 0.15 per cent. There was marginal rise in literacy ratio in 1931 (3.6 per cent for total, 6.3 per cent for males and 0.3 per cent for females). Thus literacy remained almost negligible among females even up to 1931.

With the expansion of educational facilities after Independence, the literacy took a significant upward trend. According to 1951 census, the percentage of total literates in the then Sirsa tahsil work out to 8.35 per cent and that of males and females, respectively to 13.00 per cent and 2.92 per cent. There was significant increase in the literacy ratio among males in 1961 which rose to 21.42 per cent and only marginal increase in case of females where it just increased to 4.61 per cent.

Literacy both among males and females took significant upward trend in 1971. According to 1971 census, the percentage of total literates in the district rose to 22.70 per cent and that of males and females, respectively to 31.60 per cent and 12.40 per cent.

The extent of literacy of the Sirsa district as revealed by the census of 1981 is 51.51 per cent (59.30 per cent for males and 42.34 per cent for females) in urban areas and 24.32 per cent (34.37 per cent for males and 13.24 per cent for females) in rural areas. The overall percentage of literacy is 29.87 per cent (39.52 per cent for males and 18.98 per cent for females). The extent of literacy in the urban and rural areas of the district shows a wide divergence more so in the case of females

Despite marked increase in the number of literates in 1981, the district remained educationally a backward district. Literacy wise, it ranked 11th in the 12 districts of the state. Literacy ratio of the district was also lower than the state average which is 36.14.

DISTRICT EDUCATIONAL SET UP

The District Education Officer is responsible for the administration and control of all primary, middle, high and higher secondary schools. He is directly under the administrative control of the Director, School Education, Haryana, Chandigarh. The District Education Officer is assisted by one Deputy Education Officer, two Sub-Divisional Education Officers (one each at Sirsa and Dabwali) and 6 Block Education Officers. The area of operation of Block Education Officer is normally coterminous with the development block but few development blocks have been sub-divided according to the number of schools.

GENERAL EDUCATION**Pre-primary Education**

Pre-primary education caters to the need of children in the age-group 3—6 years. The system of pre-primary education has not yet developed and it is not well organised. But for few nursery schools run by the private bodies, there is no pre-primary and nursery school run by the government.

There are 5 balwaris (two each at Sirsa and Dabwali and one at Rania) run by the Haryana Child Welfare Council.

Primary Education

The course of primary education covers children in the age-group of 6—11 years and consists of five classes i.e. from Class I to Class V. Since 1961 primary education has been made compulsory. The education at this stage is imparted free. Teachers are provided at the pupil teacher ratio of 40 : 1. Single-teacher schools are very few and function only in villages with a small population. In March 1981, there were 290 primary schools in the district.

Middle Education

The middle education covers children in the age-group of 11—14 years and consists of classes VI to VIII. The pupil teacher ratio of 30 : 1 has been adopted for this stage and the education is free in all government schools. In March 1981, there were 51 middle schools in the district.

Secondary Education

The secondary education comprises Classes IX and X but it also extends to Class XI in higher secondary schools. For majority of students, the secondary education is of a terminal character. To meet the requirement of those who wish to earn their livelihood after completing secondary education, besides providing broad base for admission to higher courses of study, diversified courses were provided in some of the schools which were converted into higher secondary schools.

In March 1981, there were 57 high/higher secondary schools in the district.

Medium of Instruction

The medium of instruction in the schools of the district is Hindi. The teaching of Hindi as the first language and as medium of instruction starts from Class I. English is taught from Class VI as a second language. Sanskrit, Urdu, Telgu or Punjabi is taught as an optional language in Classes VII and VIII. However, a few private schools, which had Punjabi as the medium of instruction prior to the formation of Haryana in 1966, have been

allowed to continue instruction through the medium of Punjabi. To provide safeguard to the linguistic minorities, provision has also been made for the teaching of Urdu/Punjabi as an additional subject from Class I, provided 10 pupils in a class or 40 in whole of a primary school, or primary section of a middle, high or higher secondary schools, are desirous of studying this language. But the medium of instruction and the first language even for such schools remains Hindi.

INCENTIVES

Education is free upto middle. Thereafter, boys and girls belonging to poor families are charged a reduced scale of fee up to high/higher secondary level. The education is free for all whose family income is less than Rs 1,000 per annum in the case of boys and less than Rs 3,000 per annum in the case of girls. Boys whose family income is between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 3,000 are charged fee at half rates. Boys whose family income exceeds Rs. 3,000 per annum are charged fee at full rates whereas the girls are charged fee at half rates.

The students belonging to Scheduled Castes and other Backward Classes, who are studying in 9th, 10th and 11th classes, are given stipend at the rate of Rs. 20 per mensem under the Haryana State Social Welfare Scheme, provided the income of their parents/guardian does not exceed Rs. 10,000 per annum. They are also allowed refund of examination fees. Scheduled Castes are exempted from the payment of tuition fee, but the students belonging to other Backward Classes are allowed this concession subject to the above income condition.

Scheduled Castes are also given stipend under the Government of India Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme. The stipend includes maintenance charges, refund of examination fee, tuition fee and other compulsory non-refundable charges. The rate of stipends varies from Rs. 50 to Rs. 200 per mensem according to different income slabs and for different post-matric courses.

No tuition fee is charged from the children of serving defence personnel or of defence personnel who have been killed or disabled.

HIGHER EDUCATION

There were no facilities of higher education in the district before opening of Guru Nanak College for Girls at Dabwali in 1951.¹ The National College, Sirsa was opened by Sirsa Education Society in 1957. Maharana Partap College (for Women) was opened at Mandi Dabwali in 1968 and C.M.K. National Girls College at Sirsa in 1970. Bhagwan Shri Krishan College of

1. This college now falls in Punjab side of the town known as Mandi Killanwali.

Education for Women was opened at Mandi Dabwali in 1980. All colleges in the district are affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

Government National College, Sirsa .—Located on Hisar road, the college was started in 1957 by Sirsa Education Society, Sirsa. The college campus covers an area of 30 acres. An evening shift in the college was started in 1968. The college was taken over by the government in 1979 and was re-named as Government National College. It is a co-educational institution.

Affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, the college provides courses in humanities, commerce and science up to degree level and honours courses in English, Hindi and Mathematics.¹

The college has a well-stocked library with 21,294 books and subscribes to 50 periodicals and journals. A book bank has been set up in the library to help deserving and needy students.

It has extensive playground for various games, well-equipped laboratories, an open-air theatre, a day scholars centre and a shooting range. The college also has a hostel for its students.

In 1980-81, 1,577 students were on its roll in morning shift and 166 in evening shift. It included 31 students belonging to Scheduled Castes and 156 to other Backward Classes in both the shifts. It had 81 members on its teaching staff. The college had one N.C.C. company and a unit of N.S.S. The college brings out annually a magazine named 'Ghaggar'.

Maharana Partap College (For Women), Mandi Dabwali—The college was founded in 1968. Affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, the college provides courses in humanities up to degree level.

The college has a library with 6,495 books and subscribes to 30 periodicals and journals. It also has playgrounds for various games and a hostel for its students.

In 1980-81, 258 students were on its roll, which included 3 students belonging to Scheduled Castes and 2 to Backward Classes. It had 16 members on its teaching staff. The college brings out annually a magazine named 'Partap Jyoti'.

C.M.K. National Girls College, Sirsa.—The college was started in 1970 by Sirsa Education Society. Initially housed in Sanatan Dharam Mandir the college shifted in 1979 to its new premises covering an area of 8 acres.

Affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, the college provides courses in humanities up to degree level. The college maintains a library with 7,010 books and subscribes to 40 periodicals and journals. Book bank facilities also exist for needy and deserving students.

1. Post-graduate classes in Economics were started in 1982 in evening shift.

It has extensive playground for various games, a students centre and well equipped laboratory for home science.

In 1980-81, 604 students were on its roll, which included 5 students belonging to Scheduled Castes and 9 to Backward Classes. It had 18 members on its teaching staff. It has one N.S.S. unit. The college brings out annually a magazine named 'Pragya'.

Bhagwan Shri Krishan College of Education (for Women) Mandi Dabwali.— Located near bus stand, the college was opened in 1980. Affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, the college provides degree course in education.

The college library has 976 books and subscribes to 9 journals and periodicals.

In 1980-81, 96 students were on its roll and it had 6 members on its teaching staff.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

No effort was made to provide technical education in the district prior to the Independence. The first and only technical institution opened in the district was a Government Polytechnic at Sirsa, in 1962. Besides two industrial training institutes one at Sirsa and another at Nathusari Chopta and an industrial school for girls at Sirsa were opened to ensure a steady flow of skilled workers in different trades for industry.

Government Polytechnic, Sirsa.—Opened in 1962, this institute is affiliated with State Board of Technical Education, Haryana, Chandigarh. It provides three years diploma courses in civil, mechanical and electrical engineering.

It has well equipped laboratories and workshops and extensive playgrounds for various games. It also provides hostel facilities. It has a well stocked library containing books on technical subjects.

It had 381 students on its roll in 1980-81 including 89 belonging to Scheduled Castes and 27 to other Backward Classes. It had 57 members on its teaching staff.

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING

There are two industrial training institutes one each at Sirsa and Nathusari Chopta and one industrial school for girls at Sirsa. Training is provided in these institutes in various crafts for the award of National Trade Certificate of the All India Council of Vocational Training, New Delhi. Incentives are provided by way of award of stipends of Rs. 25 per mensem per student on poverty cum merit basis to one-third of the students on roll in each institution. Trainees belonging to Scheduled Castes are given a stipend of Rs. 45 per mensem. Besides, technical training, medical facilities and workshop clothes and hostel accommodation is provided to all trainees free of cost.

A brief account of these institutes is given below :

Industrial Training Institute, Sirsa.—The institute was opened in 1962, with a capacity of 64 trainees . The number of seats for various trades has now been raised to 384. It imparts training to both males and females in engineering and non-engineering trades viz. fitter, electrician, radio and T.V. mechanic, motor mechanic, wireman, draughtsman civil, draughtsman mechanical, machinist and turner of two years duration and diesel mechanic, stenography English and Hindi, painter and cutting and tailoring of one year duration.

The institute has a library of technical books. Facilities also exist for indoor and outdoor games. It has a well-equipped workshop, and administrative block and a hostel for trainees.

In 1980-81, it had 340 trainees (320 boys and 20 girls), out of which 20 boys and 4 girls belonged to Scheduled Castes and 18 boys to Backward Classes. The strength of the teaching staff was 33. During 19 years of its existence, this institute has trained 2,242 personnel.

Industrial Training Institute, Nathusari (Chopta).—The institute was started in 1977 with a capacity of 32 trainees. The number of seats for various trades has now been raised to 260. It imparts training to both males and females in engineering and non-engineering trades viz., fitter, radio mechanic, electrician, turner, motor mechanic of two years duration and diesel mechanic, trailer mechanic, welder, stenography English and Hindi of one year duration.

In 1980-81, it had 224 trainees (216 boys and 8 girls) on its rolls. It included 26 students belonging to Scheduled Castes and 17 to Backward Classes. The strength of the teaching staff was 19.

Government Industrial School for Girls, Sirsa.—It imparts training to females only in non-engineering trades viz., cutting, tailoring and embroidery. In 1980-81, it had 44 trainees on its roll.

ORIENTAL SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Sanatan Dharam Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, Sirsa is the only institution for teaching of Sanskrit in the district. It was established in 1931. Affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra it prepares students for *Shastri* (Honours in Sanskrit), *Pragya* (proficiency in Sanskrit) and *Visharad* (higher proficiency in Sanskrit). In 1980-81, it had 25 students on its roll. All students are provided free boarding and lodging facilities. Books are also provided to the students free of cost. It had two members on its teaching staff.

SPORTS

Sports activities in the district include school tournaments, panchayat tournaments and open tournaments. These activities in the district are organised by the District Sports Officer who is assisted by 15 Coaches. These coaches

provide specialised coaching to schools and college students and department/club players in various games at Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Stadium, Sirsa.

To promote sports activities in rural areas, 15 rural sports centres have been started at Chutala, Abub Shahar, Dabwali, Odhan, Maujgarh, Kharian, Rori, Bada Gudha, Panjauana, Rania, Nathusari, Ding, Jodhkan, Bhaudin and Jiwan Nagar. Besides, rural sports playgrounds are under construction in few villages. These grounds have already been completed at Madho Singhana and Ganga.

Scholarships.—To encourage young players, who are at least state level players, the state government awards sport scholarship at the rate of Rs. 50 and Rs. 40 per mensem for college and school players respectively.

Tournaments.—The coaches coordinates the sports activities at the district level and organise school/college tournaments. To promote sports in rural areas, the District Sports Officer organises tournaments at the block level.

Following voluntary sports organisations are also engaged in promotion of sports activities in the district :—

1. District Olympic Association, Sirsa
2. District Athletic Association, Sirsa
3. District Cricket Association, Sirsa
4. District Volley-ball Association, Sirsa
5. District Archery Association, Sirsa
6. District Badminton Association, Sirsa
7. District Hockey Association, Sirsa
8. District Table Tennis Association, Sirsa

These associations also organise exhibition matches and district level tournaments.

Stadia.—Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Stadium is under construction at Sirsa and its first phase has been completed. The stadium is spread over an area of 16.7 acres.

NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

National Service Scheme (N.S.S.) introduced in the educational programme in 1969, was adopted in the colleges of Haryana in 1970-71. It aims at educating the students through community service. It enriches the students personality and deepen their understanding of the social environment in which they live. It helps the students to develop an awareness and knowledge of the social reality and to have a concern for the well being of the community.

Under the scheme, the students undertake activities to tackle social problems and promote social welfare. Its activities are multifarious and include adult education, tree plantations, family and child care, rural cleanliness, blood donation, etc. N.S.S. volunteers also render valuable help at the time of natural calamities like floods and famines.

N.S.S. training is imparted regularly during the academic sessions and through out-door camps.

The scheme is functioning almost in all the colleges of the district. In 1980-81, 407 students (200 males, 207 females) in various colleges of the district had opted for the scheme.

NATIONAL CADET CORPS

The National Cadet Corps (N.C.C.) was introduced as part of educational programme in 1948, to develop the qualities of leadership, unity and discipline. Later in July 1963, after the Chinese Aggression, it was made compulsory for all able bodied under-graduate boy students at college level. In 1969, two other programmes namely the N.S.S. (National Service Scheme) and sports were introduced as an alternative to N.C.C., which is no longer compulsory. The N.C.C. training is imparted regularly during academic sessions and through outdoor camps.

N.C.C. is organised in the district through Group Headquarters, Rohtak. It has under its jurisdiction 3 Haryana Battalion Sirsa. This battalion covers cadets of senior division in the colleges and junior division in schools.

In 1980-81, 107 cadets in senior division and 300 cadets in junior division had taken up N.C.C. in different institutions of the district.

Libraries

The history of the establishment of libraries in the district dates back to 1927 when Shri Parmeshwari Yuvak Library was established at Sirsa. Shri Bal Amar Samiti Library was established at Sirsa in 1932. The library movement in the district gained momentum after the Independence. Village library scheme was introduced in 1950 when some panchayates collected subscriptions and opened libraries and reading rooms.

In 1980-81, there were 288 libraries and reading rooms in the district. Of these, 113 libraries were owned by colleges and schools for their students and staff, 160 libraries under panchayats and the remaining 15 libraries and reading rooms were maintained by local bodies and private organisations.

CULTURE

The district in course of its historical growth made worthy contribution to the development of culture. It is testified by the discovery of sculptural pieces and architectural remains from various parts of the district. Among

the sculptures representing gods and goddesses and suggesting influence of Hinduism mention may be made of Vishnu with *Kritimukha* and partly preserved *Prabhamandal* in grey stone, Narasimha along with attendents and a copper image of Samaji (Samadeva) riding a horse belonging to 1143 A.D. A building of temple was considered an important cultural activity in the district. It can be gathered from the Sirsa inscription (836—890 A.D) that it a majestic temple of Yogisvara (Siva) made of burnt bricks and thick slabs of stone with a golden *sikhara* and adorned with images of Vishnu and Lakshmi and various other gods and goddesses. It must have been indeed, a magnificent piece of architecture. The influence of Buddhism in the region is gathered from the *Divyavadan* while many Jaina sculptural pieces and architectural remains recovered from Sirsa and Sikanderpur testify to the growth of Jainism in the area.

No evidence is available about the literary traditions of the district in ancient period. However, in the medieval period literary traditions of the district can be traced to 16th century. Maldev, first Hindi poet of Swetambar sect of Jain's belonged to the district. He was disciple of Acharya Bhavdev Suri, a Jain saint. He wrote about 20 poetry books in Hindi. His prominent Hindi works are *Purandar Chopai*, *Sur Sundari Chopai*, *Virangad Chopai*, *Anjana Sundari Chopai*, *Dhandev Chopai* and *Bohj Prabhand* (having nearly 2,000 verses). Among his Sanskrit works *Kalpantar Vachay* figures prominently. Anandghan or Labhanand was another noted Hindi poet of the district during 17th century. His notable poetical works are *Bahotari* and *Chobisi*.

The district has made significant contribution in the field of literature particularly after Independence. A number of writers and poets of the district have been honoured by Haryana Sahitya Akademi for their works. Surender Verma was awarded prize in 1979-80 for his book *Hathi Bili Pahunche Delhi*. In 1982-83, the Akademi awarded prizes to Sugan Chand Muktesh for his book *Yugantar* (poems), Sukhchain Singh Bhandari for his book *Sarak Udhas Thi* (stories) and Harbhajan Singh Renu for his poetical work *Mastak Andar Suraj*.

Number of cultural organisations are actively engaged in promoting literary activities in the district. Prominent among these are Kala Sangam, Haryana Pradeshik Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Sirsa branch, and Pragtisheel Adhyan Sansthan, all located at Sirsa.

Modern noted classical singer Pandit Jas Raj belongs to this district and was born at village Malari in Sirsa tahsil. During late 19th century, Rameshwar Das Pujari was noted *tabla* player and *thumri* singer of the district. Sirsa town had a tradition of holding Sangeet Sammelans till few years back. Of late, efforts have been made by cultural organisation, Ras Lok to revive this tradition by organising Sugam Sangeet Sammelan. A few music teachers are

running *sang eet vidyalayas* and impart training to students, in both vocal and instrumental music and classical dances. One of the *sangeet vidyalaya* has a library which has over 6,000 books on music, the only of its kind in Haryana.

The colleges and other educational and technical institutions lay a great emphasis on the promotion of cultural pursuits. Some colleges have introduced music and dance as the regular discipline in the course of studies while others have cultural societies for the promotion of fine arts, music, dance, drama, etc. These societies organise cultural functions and partake in various cultural competitions and youth festivals organised at regional and university levels.