

CHAPTER VIII

MISCELLANEOUS OCCUPATIONS

Miscellaneous occupations in rural and urban areas constitute a significant part of the life of the district and the pattern is the same as elsewhere in the state. Many earn their livelihood from professions other than agriculture and industry. These are mostly in the form of services and sales necessary to attain a certain level of livelihood. The growth of these occupations depends greatly on the economic development of a particular region. These occupations cover members of the public and defence services and in addition, there are many engaged in earning a livelihood on self-employed basis. Self employed persons generally work in shops or in their own houses, some go about hawking their goods or services. In addition to these, there are a few people, who are engaged in domestic services and work as cooks, bearers, servants, gardeners and chowkidars. Some women work as *ayaks* or part-time maid servants.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Before Independence, development was negligible and the growth of employment in the public sector was insignificant. After Independence, and with the implementation of Five-Year Plans, however, there has been a vast increase in the number of jobs in the public services under the state and central governments, as also in local bodies and quasi government organisations. Several new departments came into being to carry out developmental activities in the sphere of agriculture, co-operation, industry, communications, animal husbandry, etc. The new era of development started only after the creation of Haryana in 1966 and a sizeable part of the working population was able to attain jobs in the public sector. The creation of new district of Sirsa on September 1, 1975 gave further impetus to employment opportunities in public services. On March 31, 1973, the number of persons employed in public services in administrative departments and office of the state and central governments, quasi government organisations and local bodies was 4,180. This number rose to 7,621 by March 31, 1976. On March 31, 1982 the number of persons employed in public services was 13,255.

The persons in the government employment are given dearness allowance broadly related to the cost of living. In addition, grade IV employees are provided with liveries and other benefits. The provisions of interest-free advance, for the purchase of wheat recoverable during the same financial year and loans for the construction of houses and purchase of bicycles/automobiles and for the celebration of the marriages of the children also exist for

government employees. The security provisions like group insurance, ex-gratia grant, family pension and other benefits for the families of government servants who die while in service have also been provided. The distribution of Haryana Government employees working in the district on March 31, 1982 is given below.—

Category	Gazetted	Non-Gazetted	Total
Males	45	8,596	8,641
Females	17	1,078	1,095
Total	62	9,674	9,736

Out of the total employees, 3,023 employees belonged to Education Department, 1,792 to Irrigation Department, 764 to Transport Department, 736 to Police, 565 to Agriculture Department, 559 to Medical and Health Department, 41 to Revenue Department, 274 to Animal Husbandry Department, 259 to P.W.D. (B & R) and 247 to P.W.D. (Public Health). The strength of employees in any of the remaining departments did not exceed to 150.

Some categories of government employees are eligible for rent-free accommodation. The government have also provided residential accommodation to government employees against a deduction of 10 per cent of the pay. Since the number of government houses is limited, the allotment is made seniority wise. Other employees who have not been provided with government accommodation are being given house-rent allowance on the basis of the population and Sirsa is the only town in the district where house rent allowance is admissible.

Employees in public services are not restricted from forming associations or unions to safeguard their service interests.

DEFENCE SERVICES

The Jats, Sikh Jats, Bishnois, and Rajputs in the Sirsa district contributed a large number of recruits to the different branches of the defence services during the two World Wars.

A large number of soldiers from the district fought during the Chinese Aggression in 1962. Wing Commander A.J.S. Sandhu of village Morowala (Sirsa tahsil) received Vir Chakra posthumously for his distinguished service during Pakistan Aggression, 1965. Five persons belonging to the armed forces were reported killed while four were wounded during the Pakistan Aggression, 1971.

The ex-servicemen of this district mostly belonged to agricultural community and were concentrated in Ludesar, Rori, Sherpur, Chaharwala, Ding and Kalanwali. There were in all 7,947 ex-servicemen in the district in 1981-82 as against 3,180 in 1973-74.

The state government have granted several concessions to the armed forces personnel and their families belonging to Haryana. These concessions include rewards in the form of cash and annuity to winners of gallantry decorations; employment concessions by way of reservation in vacancies, age and educational relaxation ; and pension, ex-gratia grants and educational grants to the armed force personnel or the families of those killed, disabled or declared missing. These concessions are granted according to the status of the personnel and the extent of disability. Further facilities by way of reservation of industrial and residential plots, houses of the Housing Board, Haryana and exemption from house tax are also provided to the ex-servicemen.

The Zila Sainik Board, Sirsa looks after the welfare of the ex-servicemen and the families of the serving defence personnel. Two funds, namely Post War Service Reconstruction Fund (raised during the World War-II) and the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Ex-servicemen (raised in 1964) have been created by the Government of India for the welfare of ex-servicemen and their dependents. These two funds were amalgamated in 1980 and this fund is now known as Amalgamated Fund. The income from this fund is mainly utilised for grant of stipends to ex-servicemen/their dependents and grant of loans to the ex-servicemen for their rehabilitation.

SERVICES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

With the growth of economic activity, employment avenues increased within private sector also. Although the people preferred government employment due to security of service and benefits of dearness allowance, house rent allowance, etc. yet the private sector absorbed a significant section of the population. The skilled and experienced persons in private sector get an edge even over the government employees in the matter of wages and perks in some establishments. The provision of bonus, overtime allowance, contributory provident fund and non-transferable status of the employment were quite a few provisions which made employment in private service attractive. The industrial and commercial establishments, shops, schools and other educational institutions provide most of the employment in private sector. 2,587 persons (16.5 per cent of the total employment) were employed in the district in private sector in 1981-82. Excluding Jind district, the employment in private sector in the district is still the lowest among all the districts of the state. There are adequate measures under various labour laws to look after the welfare of workers in industrial establishments.¹

1. For more details see Chapter XVII on 'Other Social Services'.

The commercial establishments and shopkeepers in towns employ assistants, shop assistants, salesmen and helpers. The working conditions and wages of these employees are regulated through the provisions of the Punjab Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1958. In March 1982, 1,834 employees were covered under the Act.

The pay scales of teachers in private institutions, which are recognised and receive grants from the government, are same as of those in government institutions. The teachers in private colleges like those in government colleges are governed by scales prescribed by the University Grants Commission.

Besides the above categories, there are a few professions who go independently and play no less important role in the life of the district. One of them is the category of private medical practitioners. In 1980-81, there were 1,624 registered medical practitioners in the district including 62 medical graduates.

There are 4,100 main workers in the district who are engaged in household industry-manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs while other main workers numbering 57,716 are engaged in construction, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communications and in other services as per 1981 census. It is, however, very difficult to say that the whole of the working population is engaged in a particular service throughout the year. The under employment is quite noticeable and according to 1981 census there are 14,956 persons who have been categorised as marginal workers¹ in the district.

PERSONAL SERVICES

Among these are included barbers, washermen and tailors.

Barbers.—The hair dressing, hair cutting and shaving services are rendered by barbers. Until recently the barbers combined the occupation of shaving and hair cutting with messenger of news weddings and other auspicious events. He took leading part in all family ceremonies of his *jajmans* (patrons). He was not given any fixed remuneration but was given a share in harvest like other village artisans.

The old practice of a family barber is on wane. In urban areas, it is almost non-existent and the people avail of the facilities of hair-cutting saloons. In March 1981 there were 37 registered barber shops in towns. In villages, however, the old practice still persists to some extent. They patronise their clients and visit their houses for service and get remuneration in cash as well as in kind. The wife of the barber called *nain* does some sort of hair cleaning and hair dressing of women in villages and her presence on some social and religious ceremonies is still necessary. The barbers in Sirsa town have formed a union and its members follow rules and regulations relating to their economic and social conditions.

1. A worker who gets work less than 183 days in a year is called a marginal worker.

In 1975, the number of barbers in the district was 1,100 and there was sizeable increase in the number by 1981.

Washermen.—Washermen include *dhobis*, launderers and dry cleaners. In rural areas people do their own washing. In urban areas, *dhobi* used to collect clothes from their customers but of late with the introduction of synthetic yarn clothes, this practice is on the wane. The people wash their clothes and send to *dhobis* for pressing who have set up their pressing stalls at convenient points. Some of them have opened laundry shops where they do washing and dry cleaning. Many exclusive shops for dry cleaning have also been opened. In 1981, there were 27 shops of washermen registered under the Shop Act.

Tailors.—Like other occupations, tailoring is also an age old occupation in the district. In the past, tailors made traditional local dresses and the tailoring was a caste profession. Like the family barber there used to be a family tailor. He would visit his clients and take the family order in wholesale. The tailor in old days was the counsellor to the family on cloth purchases. A tailor used to sit in the clients house a few days before marriage to make the clothes for the bride, bridegroom and members of the family. He got the remuneration in kind at the time of harvesting. Now this system of family tailors is no more prevalent. Tailoring that started as a craft in the hands of a few, has not only become a profession but also a viable industry with the onset of readymade garments. The persons trained in tailoring irrespective of caste and creed have opened shops in towns and villages for their livelihood. Tailors who run their own shops are usually referred to as master tailors and employ some junior tailors, sewing boys and helpers. Almost all are cutters, who have acquired their tailoring skill not through formal training but through long years of apprenticeship under some master tailors. The average monthly income of a tailor varies from season to season. In winter, he earns more than in summer as the stitching charges of the woollen clothes are higher. The tailoring charges vary from place to place and shop to shop depending upon the stitching skill of the tailor and the standard of living of the people. With the passage of time the style of clothes has undergone a complete change and the young men and women increasingly wear modern types of clothing making tailoring more remunerative.

There are few institutions where the females are given training in cutting and tailoring. Consequently, some ladies do stitching for themselves and for others on payment. The number of persons engaged in the occupation were appreciably large in 1981 as against 1,483 in 1975. Under Shop Act, there were 52 tailoring shops in the district in 1981.

DOMESTIC SERVICES

The domestic services include cooks, servants and maid servants. Employing of a domestic servant was considered as a sign of affluence in the past.

People of high class in towns and some land-lords in villages used to engage servants for domestic work. These servants were drawn mostly from under employed population. A domestic servant was paid between Rs. 2 to Rs. 5 per month in addition to meal and clothes till about the first quarter of 20th century. With the passage of time and opening of other avenues which provided increasing opportunities of employment elsewhere, the domestic service has become costlier and is not easily available. However, part-time maid servants to supplement their meagre family income help in washing and cleaning of utensils on an average payment of Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 per month. A few domestic servants who come from other parts of the country, have been employed by affluent and are paid Rs. 80 to Rs. 100 per mensem besides food and clothing. Some people employ *Palis* for grazing their cattle, *halis* for ploughing the fields and other for agricultural operations on contract basis in rural areas, and hardly any family employs servants for domestic work. Mostly women attend to their domestic work themselves, however, the *halis* and other agricultural labourers employed, besides, attending to agricultural operations, do domestic chores of their masters. These persons who are generally landless labourers are paid fixed proportion of the harvest or cash wages.

SELF EMPLOYED PERSONS

The occupational field of self employed persons is very vast in the present day society. In the past, when the demands of the society were limited only a particular section of population of the district was engaged in self employment. It included mostly the traditional village artisans. The institutions of *Purohit*, *sunar*, *halwai*, etc. also fall under self employed persons. Besides, hawkers, petty shopkeepers and all other skilled and unskilled persons who work for their living or provide their individual service on demand fall under this category. Changing concept in the society, circumstances and modernisation involve scopes for new occupational pattern and which in turn provides a new class of self employed persons.

The time old *julahas* (weavers), *mochis* (cobblers), *lohars* (black-smiths), *telis* (Oil pressers), sweepers, *Kumhars* (potters), *khatis* (carpenters) are spread throughout the district and serve the community. They get their due share at the time of harvest for the service they render to their clients. Besides, they also get cash for their service. These skilled workers supplement their income by doing some allied jobs. The sweeper is engaged in cleaning houses in rural as well as in urban areas and gets a few rupees per month in urban areas and fixed harvest share and some daily meal in rural areas for his service. However, small gifts in cash and kind are given to him on festive, social and religious occasions. In recent years owing to better employment facilities and privileges, some sweepers have been shifting over to service in government offices and private organisations. Those who are engaged in villages also seek employment in various agricultural and non-agricultural activities. A *mochi* who

was engaged in large scale, in making of local *juties* until recent past has modernised his profession in towns. He has established his shop where besides *desi juti*, he makes shoes, chappals etc. Some cobblers may be seen hawking in town streets for his services and usually attend to the repairing, mending, and reconditioning of shoes. These classes are now well aware of their rights and fully avail of the facilities given by the government for their betterment.

Among semi-skilled workers *thatheras* (utensil makers) of Sirsa and Dabwali are well reputed for their brass utensils. The *tokni* of Sirsa is a popular utensil of the area. The *thatheras* also move from place to place and sell their utensils for their livelihood. Other skilled workers such as electrician, radio mechanic, auto-mobile mechanic and cycle repairer also form a class of self employed persons. With the availability of electricity in rural as well as urban areas, the electrical appliances are widely used and an electrician finds ample jobs to earn his livelihood. Likewise, mass popularity of radio and transistor among masses has given sufficient opportunity for a few persons to turn as radio mechanic. Recent mechanisation in agriculture and rapid development in transport have made it possible to absorb many as auto-mobile mechanics for their earnings.

The priest and *Purohit* still serve on various religious and social occasions. Some of them have switched over to other trades and this profession is on the decline. Even then there are many who exclusively depend upon priestly services. Similarly the goldsmith whose domain was to make gold and silver ornaments till some time back has lost his hold to a greater extent in villages as the villagers now prefer to wear minimum traditional ornaments. Whatever modern ornaments they like to wear are readily available in towns. The goldsmiths are thus mostly concentrated in towns and serve the masses by making and selling ornaments. Some other people have also entered into this trade for their earnings.

Until recent past, *dhabas* and *halwai* shops were the only traditional places where people used to go for food. Rapid changes in food habits of the people have given birth to different kinds of eating establishments. Along *dhabas*, hotels and restaurants have sprung up. Besides *halwais*, tea and snack stalls, hot and cold drink booths and identical refreshment centres have come up well. Tea stalls are a familiar site everywhere and so are *Pan bidi* shops throughout the urban areas. It is also not un-usual to come across a bakery even in a small town. The bakeries have gained popularity owing to the demand for their ready products such as bread, cakes, biscuits etc. Vegetable and fruit sellers are equally important in this field. Many people have adopted this as a whole time profession and have opened shops in towns and villages while a few sell vegetables and fruits on bicycle or on hand carts. The variety of food attracts many persons to adopt different spheres of food industry. They prepare different kinds of eatables in different seasons to earn livelihood.

There is an attractive category of self employed persons who run small shops dealing in ready-made garments, consumer goods, general merchandise or the like. Such type of establishments have engaged many people for their livelihood and most of them are concentrated in towns. Even in villages, some people have switched over to this business. *Paledars*, coolies, hand cart pedlers, rickshaw pullers and *dudhiyas* (milk sellers) are some miscellaneous self employed persons in the district who meet the daily requirements of the community and earn their bread. Till few decades back the jugglers, *banderwalas*, *reechwalas*, snake charmers and *hajigars* constituted an important class of self employed persons. They entertained the people and in return used to get something for their livelihood but they are rarely seen these days.