

## CHAPTER—III

### PEOPLE

#### POPULATION

As detailed in the 1st Chapter, the present Faridabad district was previously a part of Gurgaon and Delhi districts. The comparative analysis of population figures can not be made; as boundaries of the district changed frequently. The Palwal tahsil was a part of Gurgaon district in 1853. The earliest enumeration of population was made in 1853. The following statement gives the comparative figures of population during the next four enumerations :—

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Tahsil	Enumeration of figures				
1	2	3	4	5	6
Palwal	1868	1881	1891	1901	Increase per cent column 5 and column 2
	1,52,105	1,42,258	1,68,740	1,72,557	13
Palwal tahsil decreased between 1868 to 1881.					

The population of the tahsil decreased between 1868 to 1881. The causes for the decrease in population were many. The death in the two successive years 1878 and 1879 show an abnormal mortality (i.e. the loss of population). The mortality was due to the fatal epidemic of fever which in 1878 and 1879 followed the scarcity of 1877-78, just as a similar epidemic followed the famine of 1868-69 and previous famines. In 1878, the villages near the Agra Canal suffered most and there seemed some ground for ascribing the fever to the disturbance of long-established conditions by the introduction of canal-irrigation; but 1879 the whole of the area suffered much due to the fever caused by heavy rain-fall.

The town of Palwal lost 8,900 people out of 18,500 during 1878 and 1879; Hathin, Babin, Manpur and other large villages lost each one-fourth of its population. The *kharif* crop was an abundant one, but a great deal of grain was destroyed before it could be got in. Many proprietors offered half the crop for the labour of cutting it and still

failed to get labourers able to undertake the work. The villages, when the Deputy Commissioner passed through them in December, were a picture of misery, the houses in ruins, their inhabitants in the extremity of weakness and despair. The enormous consumption of wood for funeral piles led to a scarcity and consequent dearness.

The following para shows the position of birth-rate in those days :

“And not only has the death-rate been abnormally high during this period, but the birth-rate has, probably owing to the scarcity of food, the prevalence of fever and the consequent debility, been abnormally low; fewer children have been born to take the place of the people who have died.”

Another cause of loss of population was emigration. In 1877-78 and the years of trouble that followed, large numbers of people left their homes and wandered in all directions in search of food. Many persons went across the Jamuna or northwards to Delhi in search of work on the canals or in the towns. Many of these wanderers returned home when the worst of the distress was over.

The decrease of population was not an unmixed evil. There were many villages, especially perhaps among the Jat communities in the east of Gurgaon district (Faridabad area), which had been decidedly weakened by the loss of their labourers, and had to contract their cultivation and reduced the standard of excellence which abundance of skilled hands had enabled them to attain; but in many villages, especially in Meo Country, the population seemed almost too much for the land to support. The increase in the number of proprietors had led to such extreme subdivision of the land that many owners had great difficulty in supporting themselves and their families on their small holdings even in ordinary time. In such villages decrease of population meant fewer consumers without much diminution of the total produce—meant a large share to each of the survivors, who were thus individually better off than they were before; the average size of a holding being increased as there were fewer families to own the land and the average family having fewer mouths to feed from produce of its enlarged holdings.

The reductions of assessment granted in 1883 combined with a return of favourable seasons resulted in a substantial increase of population between 1881 and 1891. The seasons between 1891 and 1895 were exceptionally favourable, and in spite of poor harvests between 1895 and 1901, population steadily increased.

The normal conditions might have been disturbed by the famine of

1899-1900, but even so the very large preponderance of females over males clearly marked the type of migration as reciprocal. Sir James Wilson had given the position of migrations (1891) in the following para :

"There is of course reciprocal migration of an ordinary kind always going on between any two adjoining tracts, but the turn has been specially applied to that migration of women which is occasioned by the marriage customs obtaining in the east (Faridabad district) or most Hinduized part of province. According to these customs "the man must, of course, marry within his own caste, but he is forbidden to marry girls from any sub-division of the caste with which he is already through his father or mother closely connected, and as he generally is living in the midst of villages inhabited by the clan or tribe to which his father belongs, he must go further a field for his bride." Custom too forbids a marriage with a village which is in actual or close proximity to his own, so the bride may not come from any of them. And the idea has so far developed that the respectability of the marriage gauged more or less by the distance from which the bride is brought. And, speaking very roughly, for the purely administrative boundaries of the districts have no appreciable effect on the custom, the brides may be said to be sought not within but beyond the borders of the district in which the intruding bride-groom lives"<sup>1</sup>.

Another type of migration which affected the area was that which was termed "one-sided" in the *Census Report* of 1901. There was a rule, and apparently a stringent rule, among the Rajputs in the then Gurgaon district that a "daughter must always be given in marriage to the west, and a bride taken from the east". Thus the Rajputs of Rewari got wives from Ujina, Sangel and Hathin on the western side of the district, but did not give daughters to those in the above tracts. This custom was said to be an imitation of that followed in the portion of Rajputana which lay west of the then Gurgaon district and it appeared to have been followed for many generations.

In Hodal, there was a considerable drop in population since 1891 to 1901. The rise in population (1901) was satisfactory. In Hathin, the population had been almost stationary since 1881 to 1901.

#### BALLABGARH TAHSIL

Before examining the changing trends of population, it would be

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1. *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, 1910, p. 37.

proper to describe the territorial changes in the beginning of 20th century. The position of Delhi territory in those days was as follows :—

“The Delhi territory was first divided regularly into districts in 1819. The then district of Delhi consisted of two *paraganas*, “the northern and southern”. Between them they comprised the present Delhi tahsil, the northern portion of the present Ballabgarh tahsil and a small portion now included in the Rohtak district<sup>1</sup>. Greater part of the Ballabgarh tahsil was then independent<sup>1</sup>”.

In 1912, Ballabgarh tahsil became a part of Gurgaon district.

Writing in 1901, the Deputy Commissioner (Major M.W. Dunglas) did not consider the Delhi district over-populated. The population of Ballabgarh tahsil in 1911 was 1,16,302. At the Census of 1911, the Ballabgarh and Faridabad towns showed slight decreases. The population of Faridabad and Ballabgarh towns was 4,487 and 4,053, respectively.

The figures of population of Ballabgarh tahsil during 1881 to 1911 are as under :—

Population in				Percentage of increase or decrease		
1881	1891	1901	1911	1891 to 1881	1901 to 1891	1911 to 1901
1,38,575	1,19,652	1,36,696	1,16,302	—13.8	+5.9	+8.2

In his Census Report for 1881, the Deputy Commissioner wrote :

In Ballabgarh tahsil, where there was little or no canal irrigation, the population increased by 8.5 per cent. During 1901, in Ballabgarh tahsil, the *Khadar* circle showed decrease about 4 per cent, but diluvium of some 2,000 acres was assigned as the cause of this. The population of the Ballabgarh tahsil, as a whole, showed an increase of 5.9 per cent.

The decade (1901-1911) was a decrease one for the whole of the rural tracts. Plague was prevalent throughout the year in question and the stormy monsoons of 1908 and 1909 caused exceptional mortality. The *Bangar* tracts were affected seriously owing to the canal irrigation.

1. *Delhi District Gazetteer*, 1912, p. 42.

The variation in population of Ballabgarh tahsil during fifty years (1901-1951) is as under<sup>1</sup> :—

Rural tract			Ballabgarh tahsil		
Year	Persons	Variation	Year	Persons	Variation
1	2	3	4	5	6
1901	1,16,856	—	1901	1,26,672	—
1911	78,787	—38,369	1911	87,027	—39,645
1921	72,903	—5,584	1921	80,961	—6,066
1931	74,257	+1,354	1931	83,553	+25,092
1941	86,232	+11,975	1941	97,707	+14,154
1951	91,310	+5,078	1951	1,28,703	+30,996

#### POPULATION TRENDS IN THE THEN FARIDABAD AREA

The following two decades, i.e. 1921-31 and 1931-41, recorded a gradual increase in population except that during 1921-31, this increase had been somewhat checked by mortality caused by cholera, small-pox and fever. Malaria had also spread in an epidemic form in Ballabgarh tahsil. The population of Ballabgarh tahsil, was 87,027 in 1911 and 80,961 in 1921.

The shifting of population following the partition in 1947 affected the rate of growth during the decade (1941-51) very much. Outgoing Muslims from the then Gurgaon district were numerous than the incoming displaced persons.

During the decade (1951-61) the population increased in the whole of Punjab state. The population of this area also increased. The probable cause of this faster increase include *inter-alia* the development of industries and consequent immigration, particularly in Ballabgarh tahsil, the higher fertility rate and decline in death-rate. The details pertaining to the Ballabgarh and Palwal tahsils are as follows :—

Tahsil	Population in 1961	Population in 1971	Increase during the decade (1961-71)	
			Number	Percentage
Ballabgarh	1,79,834	3,23,376	1,43,542	79.81
Palwal	2,16,139	2,84,387	68,248	31.57

1. *Punjab District Census Handbook, Vol.-3 Gurgaon District, 1951, P. IV & VII.*

The Faridabad district was created on August 15, 1979. As per Census of 1981, the total population of the district was 10,00,859. The details are as follows :—

Tahsil/ District	Area (Sq. Km.)	Population		
		Rural	Urban	Total
District	2,150	5,92,265	4,08,594	10,00,859
Palwal (Tahsil)	1,406.99	4,05,033	77,730	4,82,763
Ballabgarh (Tahsil)	769.73	1,87,232	3,30,864	5,18,096

As per 1981 Census, the total number of households in the district was 1,68,514; rural-83,862 and urban-84,652.

According to 1991 Census, the total population of the district was 14,77,240 ruralites-7,59,727 (males 4,12,556 and females 3,47,171) and urbanites-7,17,513 (males 3,95,667 and females 3,21,846). As per this Census, it is observed that Haryana gives the impression of being a state with a strong rural bias but as far as this district is concerned, it is not so; the difference between rural and urban population is little. The Faridabad district accounts for 17.64 per cent of the urban population of the state; which is the highest while the Mahendragarh is the least urbanised district having only 2.09 per cent of the State's urban population. Faridabad tops the list even if the percentage of urban population to total population of each district is worked out and the same is true of Mahendragarh district as having the least urban population. The percentage of urban population of Faridabad district to total population is 48.57.

As per the latest Census (1991), the proportion of urban population to total population of the state is more than 30 per cent in the districts of Faridabad, Ambala and Yamuna Nagar. It is interesting to note that Faridabad has recorded the highest decadal growth rate of 47.60 per cent during 1981-91 while Rohtak district has registered the lowest growth rate of 17.41 per cent. The decennial growth rate of rural population during 1981-91 is 30.36 in the district which stands second in the state. Panipat district is placed at the highest rung of ladder with a growth rate of 31.80 per cent while Rohtak is at the lowest rung with the growth rate of 13.99 per cent. The decennial

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growth rate of urban population in the district during 1981-91 is 74.64. It is observed that Faridabad heads the list of all the 16 districts in the state with an urban growth rate of 74.64 per cent while Mahendragarh with an urban growth rate of 27.99 per cent is at the bottom.

**Sex-ratio.**—On the basis of 1991 Census, the total population in the district is 14,77,240 (males-8,08,225 and females-6,69,017). The district had a sex-ratio of 828 females per 1,000 males on the basis of 1991 Census, the comparative figure for the state being 865 females as against 1,000 males. The sex-ratio in the district is lowest while the sex-ratio in Rewari district (927) is the highest in the state.

**Literacy.**—The literacy rate for the state as a whole works out to 55.33 per cent. It may be mentioned here that all children below the age of 7 years have been treated as illiterate in 1991 Census while in 1971 and 1981 children below the age of 5 years were recorded as illiterate. It was in the deference to the wishes of the Department of Education in the Ministry of Human Resources Development and the Planning Commission that in the age-group of 0-6 were taken as illiterate even if such children were going to school and had picked up reading and writing a bit. It was felt that ability to read and write with understanding was not generally attained by children in the age-group of 0-6 especially in rural areas. The literacy position in the rural and urban areas as per 1991 Census is given below :

Areas	Persons	Males	Females
Rural	2,72,818	2,11,584	51,234
Urban	4,31,051	2,69,706	1,61,345

In the urban areas, Faridabad district has maximum number of literates (4,31,051) while the lowest number of literates has been found in Mahendragarh district (50,076).

**Density.**—The density of Faridabad district as per 1991 Census is 702 per square kilometre. This figure is the highest among all the districts of Haryana. The lowest density figures is 211 per square kilometres in Sirsa district. The reason for the high density in Faridabad district is industrial growth.

## LANGUAGE

The following account is taken from the *Gurgaon District*

Gazetteer, 1910<sup>1</sup> :—

"The language of the Meos is Mewati, a sub-dialect of north eastern Rajasthani. The language of the north and west of the Gurgaon district in which the Ahirs predominate is Ahirwati, another sub-dialect of the north-eastern Rajasthani, while the language in the east of the district in which the Jats predominate is the Braj Bhasha dialect of western Hindi.

"Mewati.—It is a border dialect<sup>2</sup>." It represents Rajasthani fading off into Braj Bhasha, and the form of Mewati in Gurgaon is, as might be expected, much mixed with Braj. The peculiarities of the dialect are given in the Linguistic Survey and it is unnecessary to detail them here. One curious form of the past participle active may be noted, namely, *Karhanni* for the usual Urdu *Kar* e.g. *Lekarhaani* for Urdu *lekar*, having taken.

"Ahirwati.—It represents the connecting link between Mewati and three other dialects, Bangaru, Bagri and Shekhawati. In its grammar it differs little from Mewati. It is the stepping stone between that dialect and Bangaru, and the principal point of connection between it and Bangaru is the use of the word 'su' instead of the Mewati 'hun' to mean "I am". Thus *hir sai*-he is an Ahir. The nominative of strong masculine nouns of the 'a' base ends in 'o' and the same rule is followed in adjectives and in the suffixes of the genitive. Short 'a' often becomes long 'aa' e.g. *kaankar* for *kankar*-nodula limestone, *maakhi* for *makhi*-a fly.

"Braj Bhasha.—One of the noticeable differences between Braj and the other two dialects is the use of cerebral 'r' for 'l' *baadar* for *baadal* - cloud; *bijri* for *bijli* - lightning; and *chaupar* for *chaupal*- the village club or guest house. Long 'a' is pronounced very broad and sounds more like 'au'. Long 'i' denoting the feminine generally become 'ia', e.g. a cat is *billia* in Braj and *billi* in Mewati and Ahirwati; a female jackal is *gadria* instead of *gadri*; and a female monkey *bandria* instead of *bandri*.

"One or other of these dialects is almost without exception the language of the villagers and lower classes. The better educated, especially in the towns and among the Muhammadans who claim a foreign origin such as the Sayads and Pathans<sup>3</sup>, speak the Urdu of Delhi, but they form a very small fraction of the population.

1. Ibid, pp. 58-9.

2. Mewati is written both in Devnagri and Persian scripts.

3. With the migration of these sections of Muslim population to Pakistan in 1947, this statement no longer holds good now.



"One of the most striking features of these dialects is that while the grammar is on the whole similar in all, the vocabulary is often quite different. Thus in many cases each dialect has a different word for the same thing. For instance, in Mewati "wind" is *baa*, in Ahirwati it is *Paun*, and in Braj it is *biyar*. A white-ant in Braj is *uksa*, in Mewati *dimak*; and in Ahirwati *diwal*. These instances might be multiplied, and they show how puzzling the language of the villagers is until the main differences between the three dialects have been mastered".

After the Partition in 1947, most of the displaced persons who settled here, had come from the districts of Dera Ghazi Khan, Mianwali, Bannu, Dara Ismail Khan and Muzaffargarh. They spoke different dialects of western Panjabi; but with the lapse of time they picked up local dialects also, though their own dialects have not influenced the local dialects to any appreciable degree.

#### RELIGIOUS LIFE

**Hindus.**—The majority of the population of the district thus consists of Hindus. They predominate both in the rural and urban areas. The number of Hindus as per 1991 Census was 8,65,845 in the district.

The Hindus mostly, follow traditional Hindu beliefs. The performance of *yajna* has been generally replaced in Hindu ritual by worship (*puja*) of Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Hanuman and various other minor deities, whose images are mostly found in the same temple. Flowers and fruits and other offerings are laid before the gods. Their images are bathed and dressed every day and *puja* is performed both in the morning and evening. The ruralites are, however, less observers of religion and it is their women-folk only who care more for rituals and ceremonies. They have their family priests or *purohits* on whom they depend for traditional observance of various auspicious days and ceremonies connected not only with important domestic occurrences but also with other matters like building a house, undertaking a journey or pilgrimage or starting ploughing of land.

The spiral of a *pucca* temple is noticeable in most towns and villages. Hinduism, however, also attaches a sacred character to certain wells, tanks, rivers, trees, etc. Thus on sacred days, pilgrimage to river Yamuna or to a canal or tank nearby may be undertaken for bathing in it. *Pipal* tree (*Ficus religiosa*) is looked upon with reverence in pursuance of an ancient tradition. Water is offered to it every day and sometimes, cotton threads may be wrapped around it. The cow is sacred to all Hindus and Nandi (Lord Shiva's bull) invariably appears in Shiva's temples in the form of a picture or a statue.

Practical religion often assumes the form of rituals, elaborate or simple, according to personal capabilities. Thus fasts are observed on holy days in a year or on particular days in a week accompanied sometimes, by performance of *havanas*, or recitation of devotional songs (*kirtan*) or reading from the religious texts (*katha*). Fasts may be observed either on pure devotional grounds or with a view to achieving some long cherished desire. Rituals are also practised in an effort to appease rain god to produce rain or to stop it when it is excessive, to protect one self against the evil eye; and to propitiate the deities. There is, in fact, an endless multiplicity of purposes and practices. To this may be added worship of the various symbols, the *shalagram* stone and *tulsi* plant. Small statues of Radha, Krishna, Sita, Rama, etc., are also kept in homes and worshipped.

In villages, they also pray to Bhumia, the god of the homestead often called *khera* (a village). Under some shade-giving tree on a small masonry platform stands the round shrine of Bhumia. It is dedicated to one of the founders of the village who is also sometimes attached to the name of Bhumia. The special day for making offerings is *chau-dash* or the fourteenth day of the lunar month. The temple of Bhumia faces the east. The first few drops of milk are sprinkled on earth in dedication to Bhumia while milking cattle. The bridegroom before proceeding to the bride's house takes a round of his own village shrine and worships Bhumia or some *dera*. The worship is repeated with his bride on return. Bhumia is also worshipped on the birth of a child. Women often take their children to the shrine on Sundays. The first milk of a cow or buffalo is always offered there.

A somewhat similar local deity who does not seem to be always clearly distinguished from Bhumia, but whose shrine is often found in addition to that of Bhumia in the same village, is the Chauwand or Khera Deota. Some say that it is the wife of Bhumia, other seem to put it in the place of Bhumia, but it is worshipped on Sunday.

Sitla Mata is worshipped by the people of villages and towns alike and there is a temple of Sitla Mata in almost every village or town. The most important among the Sitla Mata temple is the one located at village Gurgaon, a suburb of Gurgaon town. It is named after Masani, the goddess of smallpox. The people of surrounding districts come and worship the Mata.

**Muslims.**—The Muslims believe in one God (Prophet Mohammad) and their religion, enjoins five duties upon them. They are largely composed

of Meos who are found in Hathin and Palwal tahsils of this district. They observe *namaz*, five times in a day, preferably in a mosque. During the performance of *namaz*, they cover their heads with caps. Recitation of *kalma* and *roza* is also done by the Muslims.

Their religious beliefs are discussed in the section on 'Social Life' of this Chapter. The number of Muslims as per 1991 Census was 1,12,806 in the district.

**Jains.**—The Jains mostly belong to Digambar sect and they worship idols of 24 Tirthankars, the last of whom was Lord Mahavira and the last but one Parasnath or Parasva. Some of them belong to Sthanakvasi sect. They do not believe in idol worship but congregate at Sthanaks visited by Jain Munis. Five vows enjoined on men are : truth, *ahimsa*, celibacy, restraint of passions and non-stealing. The Jain priests are required to observe these vows strictly. They are often seen naked feet. The number of Jains in the district as per Census 1991 was 1,713.

**Sikhs.**—The Sikhs live mostly in urban areas. They visit *gurdwaras* where verses from the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* are recited. Besides observing some Hindu festivals, the Sikhs celebrate Gurburbs (birthdays and martyrdom days of the Sikh Gurus) and Baisakhi which marks the birth of the Khalsa. *Akhand Path* is some times organised either in thanks giving for the fulfilment of a desire or on the occasion of birth, marriage and death. No one is expected to appear bare-headed before the *Granth Sahib*. Now a days, the male people add '*singh*' and the female '*kaur*', with their names. The total number of Sikhs in the district was 17,616.

**Christians.**—The Christians are an insignificant minority in the district. They hold religious services in churches. Their number in the district as per 1991 Census was 2,621.

**Superstitions.**—Superstitions have come to mankind from the past as a part of cultural heritage. Still many people bind their minds with shackles of unreason and illogic and look upon simple material things as magical signs of the success or failure of the undertakings, or of the approach of good fortune or of calamity. These are known as omens. In fact, omens are merely signs not causes. These themselves exert no power, but show that there is some power at work which will produce good or bad result.

The people of this district were emotionally in the grip of superstitious beliefs in the early years of 20th century. Such instances are

reproduced from an old Gazetteer of 1910 in the following paras :—

"Tales of sorcery too are not unknown. There used to live in the district a famous Brahman sorcerer, who was said to steal the skulls of people who died young, and to hold the unfortunate spirits imprisoned in them. Then if any one offended him, he sent a spirit into the offender, who took the name of the dead man or woman in whose body the spirit formerly dwelt, and stated, when asked, that the Brahman had sent him. If something was given to the Brahman, the patient generally got better. This Brahman was also able to interpret the will of *pitars*, cause wells to fall in by throwing written charms down them, and secure a favourable result to a suit in the courts by the recital of other spells. Some wizards, Mr. Channing was told, if they cut off a lock of a woman's hair, could cause her to die; and then, when she had been burned, could bring her to life again, and thus secure her for their own enjoyment. But he was not told to this happening nearer than Lahore. There is, of course, the usual dread of the evil eye, the theory of which was thus described by some Jats;—when a child is born, an invisible spirit is some times, not always, born separately at the same time; and unless the mother takes the precaution of keeping one breast tied up for forty days while she feeds the child from the other, in which case the spirit dies of hunger, the child grows up with the endowment of the evil eye; and whenever a person so endowed looks at anything covetously, something evil will happen to it. Amulets worn for protection from the evil eye seem to be of two classes: the first, objects which apparently resist the influence by a superior innate strength, such as tiger's claws; and the second, objects of a worthless character, such as cowries, which may catch the eye of their beholder, and thus prevent the covetous look.

"Charms too are found very useful in times of cattle-disease. One practice which prevails in the south-east of the district arose in this way. Once upon a time a man whose descendants live at Tumora, in the Mathura district, was sleeping out in the fields, watching over his cattle with spear and shield, when he saw the cattle-disease creeping up towards his oxen in an animal shape; he watched his opportunity and got the disease under his shield, which he pressed firmly

down. The disease entreated to be released, but he would not let it go until it promised that it would never remain where he or his descendants were present. So still when a murrain visits the village, his descendants are summoned and walk round the village calling on the disease to fulfil its contract. Another and more widely-known method of protecting the cattle is to erect at the entrance of the village two poles between which a rope of *dab* grass is stretched. On this are suspended wooden models of a plough and a narrow *mez*, an unbaked earthen pot cover, an onion, and an iron spike. All of these are marked with oil and red lead, and on the earthen cover is written a charm by some holy man. Then on an appointed day all the cattle are driven out below the rope and charm, and on that day no fire is lit in the village, until the evening, and all the milk of the day is given to Brahmins".

Although scientific investigation today has proved beyond doubt that material phenomena cannot have non-material origins, such is the hold of superstitions on man's mind that it continues to remain an inherent part of our nature. The numerous superstitious beliefs of this district are mostly the same as found in other districts of the State. While starting on a journey, people avoid ill-omens. The sight of a person carrying cow-dung cakes or wood, a snake, donkey or a pig, on exit from the house on some business, is considered inauspicious. Sneezing at such a moment is also considered as a bad omen. Sitting of an owl or a crow on a house is considered bad. The farmers do not work their cattle till midday on Amavas even in an emergency. It is believed that there are lucky and unlucky days for undertaking a journey, sowing and harvesting. Saturday and Sunday are considered unlucky days for travelling and harvesting and Wednesday is regarded as inauspicious for sowing. Tuesday and Saturday are not proper for sale of cattle or even a haircut. The peg for tethering cattle is generally not inserted on a Tuesday.

Among the good omens are a buck or a dove crossing one's path from left to right : *dholi chiri* (grey shrike) crossing on one's left, meeting a woman carrying two pots of water on her head, and someone coming from an other village with grain or sweetmeat, or coming across a cow or a deer. Peacocks and pigeons are considered to be sacred. *Pipal*, *barh* and *ber* trees are regarded good and auspicious. If people meet with good omens, they feel happy and interpret these omens in their favour. Besides, at the start of a new enterprise, they take every

care to avoid ill omens, and wait for good omens or even create them so.

It has been observed that young people believe in omens much less than the older generation, men much less than women and literate people much less than illiterate. People whose earning is uncertain believe more in omens compared to those income is more or less certain.

The worst thing that superstition does is that it damages self-confidence and blunts the edge of dynamic thinking. This evil needs to be eradicated. Now-a-days traditional superstitions are disappearing only with the spread of education and cultivation of scientific attitude of questioning to find the truth. The people are now leaning towards actions with the help of their toil.

### FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

Festivals and fairs are an integral part of religious life. The common festivals celebrated by the Hindus are Holi, Janam Asthmi, Dussehra and Diwali. The minor festivals are Shivratri, Gugga Naumi, Solono (Raksha Bandhan) and Bhaiya Duj. Mela Masani Mata or Sitla Mata Ka Mela and Mela Chhat Bhadon or Baldev Chhat are more important fairs held in the district. Mela Pir, Mela Burha Baba or Mela Vankhandeshwar and Mela Suraj Kund are of local importance.

The more important festivals and fairs are celebrated by the Hindus here as in other parts of the State and country. It is, therefore, not necessary to give a detailed account of their observance except when there is something distinctive or peculiar to this district in the celebrations of any of them. For example, Holi is celebrated as Mela with gusto at village Bhaduki. People commemorate Lord Krishan's playing Holi with Gopikas by sprinkling of coloured water on one another. Full of ecstasy, they dance and sing to the beating of drums. The number of visitors on such occasions is estimated at ten thousand.

**Gugga Naumi.**—It is a religious festival connected with snake worship observed on Bhadra 9 (August-September). A number of legends have clustered around Gugga. He is also called Gugga Pir, Zahir Pir (the Saint Apparent). Some refer to him as Baggarwala (He of the Bagar) because of his grave near Dadrewa (Ganganagar district of Rajasthan) in the Bagar tract which he is said to have ruled over. He is believed to have flourished about the middle of the 12th century. He was a Hindu and his proper name was Gugga Bir (Gugga, the Hero). The

Muslims also flock to his shrine and his name has been altered to Gugga Pir (Gugga Saint); while in the opinion of many, he himself became a Muslim. Gugga had a peculiar power of curing snake bite. Monday is his day, the 9th is his date and Bhadra 9th the date on which Gugga descended into earth. To commemorate this event, fairs are held at his shrine every year on this date. Those who do not attend the fair go out in search of holes that might contain some snakes and pour on it *Kachhi lassi* (diluted milk) and *sewian* (cooked vermicelli).

Gugga Pir's shrine is distinguished by its square shape with minarets and domed roof and is always known as a *mari*. Some of the places where the festival is celebrated are in Hathin tahsil of this district.

**Mela Masani Mata or Sitla Mata Ka Mela.**—Chief among the fairs of the area is that of the goddess of smallpox. Masani. Popularly known as *Sitla Mata ka Mela*, it is held in village Gurgaon, suburb of Gurgaon town, at the temple of Sitla Mata. This goddess is believed to help her devotees to ward off smallpox. There is a temple of another goddess in the village. She is called Choganan Mata on account of her temple being located near the main crossing (Chogan) of the village. It is believed by some people that she is the younger sister of the goddess Masani. This temple is stated to have been built by the sweepers of the village when they were not allowed access to the temple of Masani Mata. It is, however, now visited by all shades of visitors without any distinction of caste or sub-caste.

Tradition has it that Kirpai or Lalita, the wife of Dronacharya used to live in Keshopur, a village in the Union Territory of Delhi. He visited the village daily to see his wife, where she busied herself in attending to the children, especially the diseased ones. People called her Mata (mother) out of affection and respect. Once Dronacharya, detained by circumstances, could not go to see her for some time. The ideal wife, unable to bear the separation, ended her life. A temple was built in her honour by the villagers and she began to be remembered as Mata Sitla or Mata Masani, i.e. the goddess of smallpox.

It is said that more than three centuries ago, Masani Mother appeared in a dream to Chaudhri Singh Ram alias Singha, a fief holder of village Gurgaon. She expressed her desire to leave Keshopur and come to Gurgaon. She bade him build a place for her and authorised him to appropriate all the offerings made to her.

To the south of the village, lies a pond near the temple of Dronacharya. It is said that Singha selected this spot as the site for installing the statue of goddess Masani but the goddess urged him in one way or

the other not to trespass on the territory belonging to the Guru. Therefore, Singha built the shrine to the north of the village. The village was divided into two portions known as 8 *biswas* and 12 *biswas*. Singha lived in the portion of 8 *biswas* whereas the shrine was set up in the portion falling under 12 *biswas*.

The legend goes that even after Singha had brought and installed the goddess Masani, after her own heart's desire, at village Gurgaon, the residents of Keshopur continued to dispute the claims of Gurgaon folk. This controversy was put at rest during the time of Begum Samru, the Governor of Jharsa under the Mughals. Her child who had contracted smallpox was cured after being consecrated in the prescribed manner before the goddess Masani at Gurgaon. It was thence finally established that the goddess had begun to live at village Gurgaon.

The present temple building is said to have been built by Jawahar Singh, the chieftain of Bharatpur, in memory of his victory over Delhi for which he invoked the blessings of the goddess. A pond is attached to the temple now. A few people cite the name of Suraj Mal of Bharatpur in place of Jawahar Singh.

The image of the goddess is of mixed metal with gold polish and weight about 4 kilograms. It is kept in a wooden casket which is placed on a small marble platform in the temple. The statue remained in the possession of the *pujari* (priest) who moved it to the shrine only when it is needed.<sup>1</sup> The main purpose for which the devotees come to pay homage and make offerings is to entreat the goddess to help them ward off smallpox. This purpose is achieved by requiring the people to visit the temple for the performance of important ceremonies. This is done by a ceremony known as *jal dena*; the devotees spend a sleepless night at the temple chanting hymns and songs in honour of the goddess. The people of other districts including Faridabad come for the *mundan* ceremony (the first hair-cutting ceremony) of their children and offer the crop of hair at the altar of the goddess. Among other visitors married couples also come to invoke the blessings of the goddess for a happy married life. The people of the surrounding areas come here frequently to have *darshan*.

The fair is held on two days in a week i.e. Monday and Tuesday. The fame of the shrine has spread to distant places. The pilgrims now come from all over India. Men and women are almost equal in number. The attendance is at its peak during the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) when all the roads leading to the village and the village site are found full of bustling

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1. Now the temple has been acquired by the Government.



humanity. More than one lakh people are estimated to visit the fair on this occasion. It bespeaks of the faith that people, especially the simple country folk, still repose in traditional fairs and miraculous cures. The railways and the Haryana Roadways authorities provide special trains and buses from Delhi to Gurgaon and back for the convenience of the pilgrims. The attendance is considerable during the three succeeding months, and then again in the *Asuj navratras*. However, in the month of *Srawans* (July-August), members of the Scheduled Castes like Saperas and Sansis alone come to attend the fair, other castes generally do not attend in that month.

In addition to this fair being celebrated in village Gurgaon, it is also held for one day at Tihara in the Gurgaon tahsil and at Tigaon (as Sitla Devi Fair) in the Ballabgarh tahsil.

**Mela Chhat Bhadon or Baldev Chhat.**—This is another important religious fair of the district which is held to celebrate the birth anniversary of Balram or Baldeva, elder brother of Lord Krishna and to commemorate the killing by him (Baldeva) of the demon Pralambasur whereupon he founded Palwal town. The legend goes that near about, 1857, the Maharaja of Bharatpur was bringing an image of Baldeva from Delhi. The wheels of the chariot got jammed at Palwal and would not move despite the chariot being dragged by a hundred horses tied to it. The Maharaja then declared that if it be the will of the Lord that the image should remain there, then let it be so; but the chariot should move with the usual complement of two horses only. The remaining horses were unfastened and only two horses drove away the chariot. So a temple was erected at the place and the image was installed in it. It is estimated that about one lakh visitors attend this fair which is held for three days in the month of *Bhadon* (August-September). People worship Baldeva in the temple. *Jhankis* are taken out in procession and the effigy of Kansa, the demon king, is burnt.

The fair is also held for four days in Hodal town and for three days in Ballabgarh town and is attended by about 15,000 and 70,000 people, respectively. The fair is also held at villages Chhapraula and Bhandari (for two days) in the Palwal tahsil and at village Pali. Dhauj and Fatehpur Tigga (for one day) in the Ballabgarh tahsil.

**Mela Pir.**—This religious fair is held on Baisakh Puranmashi (full moon of April-May) for two days at village Kaushal in the Palwal tahsil. According to the legend, the *ilaga* was once ruled by Raja Rod. He wanted to relieve the Gujars, one of his subject tribes, of their cows and buffaloes. They went to a Sidh Mahatma living near the bank of the Yamuna. He gave them a bow and an arrow and asked them to shoot the arrow at the Raja's army. They did likewise; and the result was that the soldiers of the

Raja's army began to fight among themselves and perished. After this, the Sidh Mahatma threw a rod and said "*Jaham parega katak, Vahan basega kashak*" (Kushak would be inhabited at the place where the rod would fall). Kushak village came up at the place where the rod fell. The Gujars brought the Sidh to Kushak, but after a few days, he left his mortal frame while in *samadhi* (meditation). Both Hindus and Muslims became his followers and the Muslims called him a Pir. The fair is held in his honour. It is attended by about 5,000 people. People celebrate the occasion by taking a holy dip in the Yamuna.

**Mela Burha Baba or Mela Vankhadeshwar.**—This religious fair is held at Palwal town for one day in the month of *Magha* (January-February). It is attended by about 2,000 persons mostly women and children. They worship at the temple which is without an image. According to legend, Palwal was formerly surrounded by deep woods, and people, before passing through the woods, used to worship a statue of Lord Shiva. The Vankhadeshwar, Lord of Jungles sought his protection. Later, the Muslims destroyed the image and converted the priests to Islam and they are still Muslims. The general belief is that the ashes of the place cure skin disease. Another story is that a trader of this place got huge profits and constructed the temple and the tank.

**Mela Suraj Kund.**—As religious fair, it is held on every Sunday in the month of *Sravana* (July-August) at village Lakarpur in the Ballabgarh tahsil. About 2,000 visitors are estimated to attend the fair which is celebrated by taking a holy dip in the tank. According to one legend, Suraj, Commander of Raja Anang Pal, ruling over a small state became a victim of leprosy. Following the instructions of Sadhu, he took bath in the rainy water standing here and was cured. He constructed a tank at the spot and the fair began to be held. Another legend is that Raja Anang Pal had no male issue. He arranged a big *yajna* at which all *devtas* (gods) were invoked. Suraj, the sun god, also came but he had to be requested to return because nobody could stand his heat. The tank, Suraj Kund, was used as Havan Kund for the *yajna*.

**Surajkund Craft Mela.**—The Surajkund crafts mela has attained national importance as it is one of the two festivals of Haryana which are mentioned on the national calendar of fair and festivals of India. The second is Gita Jayanti celebrations held at Kurukshetra.

The crafts mela, held every year from February 1 to 15, is providing not only an opportunity to craftsmen and artisans to display their articles and skills to metropolis Delhi but also a chance to them to interact among themselves to have emotional bonds with each other. This also encourages cultural tourism.

The popularity of the *mela*, which has an added advantage of being just 8 km. from Delhi, can be gauged from the fact that about five lakh persons, including 50,000 foreign tourists, visited the *mela* in the fortnight last year. About 200 schools also sponsored visits of their students in groups to have a glimpse of the rich Indian culture and also to have a look at the Indian traditional crafts. The sponsored groups of students are provided free entry into the *mela*.

The *mela* is organised by the Surajkund Mela Authority which comprises the Development Commissioners of Handlooms and Handicrafts, Crafts Museum (New Delhi) and the Haryana Tourism Corporation as members under the apex agency of the Union Ministry of Tourism.

The *mela*, the eighth this year, is planned, to highlight outstanding handicraft and handloom traditions, creating an environment of rural ambience of India, presenting and displaying handicrafts and handloom techniques practices in the country through demonstrations at the *mela*, introduce crafts persons and weavers directly to the patrons and help them sell their crafts without the presence of a mediator and identify and preserve languishing crafts of the country.

Its theme highlights Karnataka with the elaborately decorated Hoysala welcome gate. The Hoysala *mela* gate is a replica depicting the emblem of Hoysala at the top flanked by "Shardula", the mythical animal. Two "*dwarapalakas*" in typical Hoysala style guard the Hoysala Gate with "*mantapa*" intervening in between the lower portion of the pillar. The top of the gate is shaped in the Vijayanagar style.

The Surajkund crafts *mela* movement began in 1987. Surajkund was chosen as the ideal venue since it lay close to Delhi. It not only has an open countryside setting but also has scope of expansion. This year the *mela* area has been expanded and huts are being made for 300 artists as compared to 250 last year. Middlemen are discouraged to come to the *mela*.

The scheme to have one state as the *mela* theme was launched in 1989. Since then Shekhawt Gate of Rajasthan, Vishnupur of West Bengal, Kottayambalam Gate of Kerala, Danteshwari Gate of Madhya Pradesh and Muktesvara Gate of Orissa were the themes of the *mela*.

The special food of the theme state is also arranged at the site. Dosa and other dishes of Karnataka are different from other state of the south. odipi village, situated on the western ghat, has typical quality

food. The theme state of Karnataka takes ones imagination to a Karnataka music, Bangalore silk sarees, sandalwood articles and coffee plants.

The Surajkund *mela* is also unique in this respect that it also provides an opportunity to witness some of the most fascinating aspects of folk theatre. All through the *mela* period, day performers entertain the crowds within the *mela* grounds. At the specially designed open air theatre named Natyashala, classical artists entertain visitors. Artists from seven zonal cultural centres would also perform there.

Craftsmen are provided with T.A. and D.A. and also compensation for the loss they might have suffered for coming there. Bank and postal facilities and regional newspapers are provided feedback about *mela* preparations is solicited in specially prepared forms. These are available at the ticket booths.

On the last night of the *mela* a bonfire is arranged where craftsmen give their performance in music, dance, etc.

#### MUSLIM FESTIVALS

Muslims (Meos) used to celebrate Hindu festivals and fairs; they now turned to orthodox Islam, it has been noticed that they still enjoy a particular group dancing on the occasion of the Holi festival- a festivity shared in common with the Hindu communities of the region. In this performance the village boys and girls married to them form into two separate parties, one facing the other with a large drum known as the Naggara in the centre. "The male party advances towards the drum while keeping the tune with the Holi songs sung in unison. Meanwhile the female group recedes in the same manner until the boys have struck the Naggara and begin to recede. Then the girls advance while the tune continues and they beat the Naggara in turn. This ebb and flow goes on being repeated long into the moon-lit night and on rare occasions light drinks are also served." "Such festivities had ceased altogether after the Partition (1947) and particularly so in the Nuh region including Hathin area but reports indicate that they are coming into their own again".<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, significant that the women-folk among the Meos, or the Meonies as they are called, participate in equal proportion to their men in the fairs held at places associated with Sheikh Musa, Shah Chokha, Bhartiri Hari and Lal Das. Even near Nuh, a large fair assembles on the occasion of Teej festival. The people of the district particularly of Hathin area attend to such occasions. The majority of the

1. Hashim Amir Ali, *The Meos of Meawal*, 1970, p. 73.

participants consist of the Meos in their best clothing and with their traditional turbans and lathis. The Meo women also participate freely in this fair and come from far off villages in bevvies of lightly coloured femininity and singing songs reverberating through the hills of Mewat.

However, the celebration of Muslim festivals like Id-ul-Fitr, Id-Ul-Zuha and Shabi-i-Barat, is gaining more popularity among the Meos. Sweet dishes and boiled sweet rice are prepared in Muslim homes on the occasion of Id-Ul-Fitr and people wear new clothes. On the occasion of Id-Ul-Zuha they sacrifice goats and distribute their raw or cooked meat among friends and relatives. Feasts are held on this day and daughters and sisters are presented with gifts and new clothes. Besides, Muharram is celebrated on the 10th of Muharram month of Hijri era to commemorate the martyrdom of Ali and his two sons.

Besides these, other fairs are also held in this district at some places of worship or of tourist interest. These have been mentioned in the Chapter on '*Places of Interest*'.

Some festivals of local importance are described here :—

Teej, which falls in *Sawan* (July-August) is mainly the festival of women. Swings are hung on the trees the previous day. On the day of festival, women and children attired in their best clothes, proceed to the swings. Alongwith the swinging, they sing song of Teej and return late in the evening to eat the festival meals prepared earlier in the day.

The other important festival of Karva Chauth falls in the month of *Kartik* (October-November) and is observed by married women only. They keep fast on the day in order that their husbands may live long. The *pūja* is performed by the women sitting together in the afternoon, the fast is, however, broken after looking at and offering water to the moon at night.

The festival of Holi is celebrated in rural areas in a different manner. At the time of festival, married women play Holi with men by the throwing coloured water on them. On Dhulendi (*Phag*) the men with a degree of relationship throw water on women who beat them with sticks or *Koraras* (twisted cloth of strips). The men act as if they are powerless, and their inability to defend themselves leads to much fun and frolic.

The festival of Basora falls in the month of *Chait* (March-April) and literally means festival of stale bread. On the eve of festival, all households in the villages prepare *dalia* or sweet rice and set it aside

uneaten. Next morning, women rise early and after ablution they perform *puja* at *Chabutras* dedicated to *matas*. Then the stale food (*pangiri*) is offered to all the members of family.

The *Devuthani Giras*, celebrated in the month of *Kartik*, is mainly a festival of women. This is observed in order to awaken the gods who are supposed to be asleep from the ninth day in *Asadh* (June-July). The women keep fast on the day and in the evening they assemble at a selected place and beat upon brass utensils to wake up the gods. After this, they break the fast and special dishes made at this occasion are eaten.

Besides the celebration of Hindu festivals, the Sikhs celebrate the Gurburabs (The birthdays and martyrdom days of Gurus). On the occasions of these Gurburabs processions are taken out and congregational prayers and recitations from the *Granth Sahib* are held.

The Jains celebrate the birth and nirvan anniversaries of Parsva-nath and Mahavira. The principal festivals of Buddhists is Buddha Purnima, the day on which Buddha is believed to have been born and to have attained enlightenment as well *nirwana*.

Christmas and Easter are two principal festivals of the Christians; the former is celebrated in honour of the Jesus Christ, while the latter commemorates his resurrection. The Christians go to churches, exchange presents and hold festivities.

Other Muslim rituals are Id-Ul-Fitr and Ramzan. During the month of Ramzan, the devout keep fast during the day time throughout the month. Id-Ul-Zuha commonly called Bakrid as goats are butchered in the name of Allah. Shab-a-Barat is celebrated with fire works and presents of sweetmeats.

Some fairs which are held in the rural areas have been given below :—

Name of the fair	Remarks
1. <i>Barahi Fair</i>	This fair is held on <i>Chatra Sudi Purnima</i> to worship the goddess. At this occasion, some cultural programmes such as singing of <i>ragnis</i> , <i>Bhajans</i> and some sports activities are organized. The first hair of the babies is also shaved here.

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2. *Baldev Chhat fair*

This fair is held at *Bhado Sudi naymi* to commemorate the birthday of Baldev. Some cultural activities such as *ragnis*, *swang*, and *Nautankis* are also organised here.

3. *Mata Kalka fair*

The fair is held at village Mohna to commemorate the goddess Kalka.

4. *Udas Nath Baba Mela*

The fair is held at village Allalwal on *Aama-vashya* of *Phagun badi*. At this place there is a Samadhi of Baba Udas Nath. People from surrounding areas participate in this fair and enjoy the cultural programme and other wrestling activities.

5. *Phuldoor fair*

This fair is held at the Samadhi of Baba Bakshi Nath on *Chaitra Badi duj*. Some cultural programmes such as *Chopai*, *Bhajans* are also organised here.

6. *Kanuaka fair*

This fair is held at village Garhhots on *Bhado Ekadashi* in the memory of Kanuaka Bhagat.

7. *Chhoti Ekadashi*

This fair is held in the temple of Hodal on *duj*. Besides cultural programmes, some sports activities are also organized at this occasion. It is also said that Lord Krishna was sighted here by the people. In this connection, this fair is held.

8. *Dada Kanha Rawat fair*

This fair is held to commemorate the Dada Kanha Rawat Pal, who defied the orders of Aurangzeb to adopt Islam. As per hearsay the king ordered to bury him alive for the refusal of the firman of the king. People come to participate in the cultural programmes.

9. *Swami Dayal Baba*

This fair is held at the temple of Baba Swami Dayal Baba. Here is a pond, It is also said that all types of skin ailments are cured by bathing here in the pond.

## SOCIAL GROUPS

The population of the district as stated earlier is predominantly Hindu and its important traditional social groups are Ahirs, Jats, Rajputs, Gujars, Brahmans, Bañias and the members of the Scheduled Castes and backward classes. The Kambos, Khattris and Aroras came to the district after the Independence. Ahirs, Jats, Gujars, Brahmans, Kambos and Meos being the chief agricultural communities of the district preponderate in the rural area.

According to the *Delhi District Gazetteer*, 1883-84<sup>1</sup>, "Their (Ahirs') tradition claims for them a Rajput origin, and the story goes that, when the in-carnation of Lord Krishan (Krishna) took place in Bindraban (Vrindavan), some demon carried off the cattle of an ancestor of the tribe and also the man himself who was tending them. Krishna by his omnipotence, created a man for the purpose of tending the cattle and brought back the cattle for him to take care of, and his descendants were henceforth to be called Ahirs. This is curiously *Irish* story, and does not deal well with the original herdsman; but another tradition steps in to add that the defeated and disappointed demon, when he saw his evil intentions thwarted, brought back the abducted cattle-driver, so that he and Krishna's men have between them to account for the tribe."

The Ahirs are divided into three *Khanps* or sub-castes, viz., Nandbansi, Jadubansi and Gualbansi. The Jadubansi Ahirs, who claim to be descendants of the Yadu, a nomadic race. They were probably by origin a pastoral caste, but in Haryana they are now exclusively agricultural, and stand in quite the first rank as husbandmen. They are also supposed to have given their name to the Ahirwati dialect. Nowadays, the Ahirs besides being good cultivators join Government service particularly army.

The Jats are stout and hard-working cultivators. They predominate in the Palwal tahsil. They are politically very much conscious. Now they prefer to join service.

The historians do not agree on a single theory about the origin of the Jats. But on the other hand they are indeed a bold peasantry. Their country's pride; accustomed to guide the ploughshare and wield the sword with equal readiness and success-second to no other Indian race in industry and courage.

1. *Ibid*, p. 75.



The Rajputs, who are found all over the district, largely depend on service in the army. They also do cultivation.

The Gujars are chiefly in the villages of Ballabgarh, tahsil adjoining the hills and were mostly a pastoral rather than an agricultural tribe. Lately, they have, however, settled down in agriculture in the Ballabgarh and Palwal tahsils. The young men are joining Government service preferably.

The Brahmans are chiefly of the Gaur clan and are scattered in the Palwal and Ballabgarh tahsils. They generally live on agriculture and Government service. The displaced agricultural people have settled mostly in Hathin, Pingor, Rasulpur, Seoli, Gudhrahs, Likhi and Hasanpur (Palwal tahsil); and Gaunchhi, Fatehpur Biloch and Mohena (Ballabgarh tahsil).

The Kambos are an agricultural tribe unmatched for their hard work. Due to their tenacity and persistence, they have succeeded in getting the best land in the district allotted to them.

The Vaish community, which is concentrated in urban areas, is mostly engaged in business.

The Khattris and Aroras settled here after the Partition of India. They are excellent traders and shop-keepers.

Kumhar, *Nai*, *Dhobi*, and *Chhipi* and *Khati* form a sizable section of Backward Classes. Besides their traditional avocation, they join government service. Now a days, the members of these classes are making progress in every sphere of life with the financial help of the Government.

A large section forms the members of Scheduled Castes. Under this group, there are more than 35 castes and classes. Popularly the members of Scheduled Castes are known as Harijans. Among them the chamars are politically and educationally more progressive and conscious. Now they depend on their traditional profession and Government service. Jatia chamars are also found in the district. They are mostly engaged in hides work.

The Balmikis are also making efforts to raise their standard. The Government is also helping to make them educationally conscious.

The Dhanks are directly and indirectly gaining consciousness to the new strides of life.

#### MUSLIMS (MEOS)

Muslims by religion, the Meos claim to be Rajputs by descent although this claim cannot be considered to have been definitely establi-

shed. Many Meos believe that they are descendents of Chandravanshi, the Suryavanshi and Agnikula Rajput nobility of old times. As such they connect themselves with one or the other clan, the Tomaras, the Yadavs, the Chauhans (Chahamanas) and the Rathors<sup>1</sup>. It has been suggested that they might be descendants of some primitive Indian tribes who also became Rajputs. In any case, in spite of being converted to Islam they followed the customs and cultural practices of both Hinduism and Islam<sup>2</sup>. Many Meos were "Muslims by name only" and they followed about 50 per cent of their old Hindu customs<sup>3</sup>. Several Meos had Hindu names such as Dhan Singh, Chand Singh, Sammu Singh<sup>4</sup>. But in the past years the Meos turned to orthodox Islam<sup>5</sup>. Hindu festivals and fairs, are not celebrated any more by them. Hindu gods and goddesses are now losing attraction for them. They have also changed their names from 'Singh' to 'Khan'. Most of them now offer their daily prayers (*nimaz*) five times a day in mosque or at home. Women say *nimaz* in their houses. The Mullah is respected and is given customary offerings on various occasions like births, deaths and festivals. *Jumma Nimaz* is held on every Friday and the Muslims assemble in Idgahs, mosque or some other scheduled places.

"Each Meo is aware of the *Pal* or the *Gotra* to which he belongs as also the Pals and the Gotras to which most of his acquaintances belong. This geographical segregation of the people of one *Pal* or *Gotra* from those of another, even if nominal and indistinct, is sufficient to give the inhabitants of each Meo Kheda, village, or each Pada,

1. "In spite of living a pastoral life and burdened with poverty, they (the Meo people) still regard themselves highborn and descended from the most renowned among the earliest inhabitants of the country. Pride is expensive to maintain in poverty and the Meos pay the price for hugging on to one and unable to discard the others." (Hashim Amir Ali, *The Meos of Mewat*, 1970, P. 109).

2. \*Although the Meos were converted from Hinduism to Islam about four centuries back, their adoption of Islamic cultural practices even the religious injunctions prescribed in the Koran, remained until 1947 at best nominal and did not advance beyond male circumcision and burial of the dead. "Partap C. Aggarwal, *Caste, Religion and Power*, 1971, P. 1.

3. \*The Customs of the Meos were predominately Hindu. Their religious rituals were Hindu and were performed under the guidance of Brahman priests. There were Mewati versions of the Ramayan<sup>2</sup> and Mahabharata, the two great epics of the Hindus. The Meos regarded the Hindu mythological heroes as their ancestors, Ibid, P. 41.

4. *An Economic Survey of Bhadas*, 1936, P. 18.

5. "...the Meos began abandoning Hindu customs with a vengeance and by 1964 ....they had adopted a good many of the Muslim practices" Partap C. Aggarwal *Caste, Religion and Power*, 1971, P. 1.

section in a village, a distinct identification. Each Meo recognises every other Meo to belong to his own community, but each Meo also knows the Pal and Gotra distinctions which separate him from or attach him to, other Meos."

"The Meos living in each such geographical units whether it be a village or only a section of a village—thus constitute a single family the boys and girls of which are taught to regard themselves as brothers and sisters. Marriage between a boy and a girl belonging to the same Gotra—which has thus become both a lineal and geographical unit—comes to be regarded as incest.<sup>1</sup>"

Socially, the Meos are a well-knit community, capable of united action in an emergency. Being a poor, backward and unsophisticated people, they can be easily led. They are able to eke out their living by sheer dint of hardwork.

The poverty of the Meos is accentuated by their unthrifty habits. They are so lavish in expenditure that the failure of one harvest plunges them irretrievable into debt.

Early marriage is another bane of the Meos. This is considered as a safeguard against sexual laxity. Further, the strong community feeling leads to much waste on ceremonies; the whole sub-tribe may have to be invited to a wedding or a funeral feast. Known as *kaj*, this feast is an expensive affair as its size denotes the prosperity of the host. The custom fortunately is on the decline under the inexorable pressure of economic circumstances.

The Meo women do not observe *purdah*. It is said that the Meos owe, more than any other tribe of the district, a great deal to the energy ploughing and clod-crushing. Now a days the youth of this community are joining Government service. Hathin of this district is Meo belt.

#### FAMILY LIFE

The size of the living together depends largely on custom and circumstances. Some families are very large and include under one roof, more in rural than in urban areas, grandmother and grandfather, sons with their wives, and sometimes even daughters with their husbands, and many grand children. Broadly speaking, this joint-family system though traditionally prevalent, is slowly breaking up under the stress

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1. Hashim Amir Ali, *The Meos of Mewat*, 1970, pp. 53-4.

of social and economic pressure. Transfer of property, acquired by individuals, by making a will, is becoming common in urban areas. Town-folk belonging to rural areas, often partition and neglect their properties in the villages; they hardly ever go back to rural areas. Thus the tendency to shift from rural to urban areas is helping to liquidate the joint family system in the villages. Family life is becoming more and more individualistic.

### INHERITANCE

The traditional type of inheritance among Hindus prevailed before the enforcement of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 when sons used to inherit the intestate property 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*, a woman was not supposed to be the last owner of 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 other heirs<sup>1</sup> of the deceased, inherit the intestate property simultaneously. A daughter has as good a claim to her father's as a son, provided the father does not debar her by law (in case of his self-acquired property only). However, in spite of the right conferred by law, 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 some time give her land to her near relations though in such cases she usually retains her right to property.

### MARRIAGE CUSTOMS AND MORALS

There are two predominant forms of marriage, viz., *Vivah* (Hindu marriage) and *Nikah* (Muslim marriage). *Anand Karaj* is the system of marriage which prevails among the Sikhs, *Karewa*, another form of widow-marriage is also prevalent. Early marriage was the rule in the district in the past and there was no age limit at which the marriage could take place; but with the enforcement of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1930, there is a marked tendency to defer the age of marriage beyond the age specified in the Act<sup>2</sup>. However, early marriage is prevalent among the Meos.

1. Specified in Clause I of the Schedule vide Section 8 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

2. The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1978, has now provided 21 and 18 years as marriage age for boys and girls respectively.

Marriage is negotiated by the parents of the boy and the girl. After the settlement, the parents of the girl offer *teeka* (saffron powder) to the boy and the ceremony marks the settlement of marriage which is announced. Betrothal follows the *teeka* ceremony. In the case of Meos, no *teeka* or betrothal ceremony takes place. Someone goes to boy's house with a small earthen pot containing sarson oil, a piece of turmeric and a coin and the wedding date is fixed finally. Among Hindus, *peeli chitthi* (a letter smeared over with turmeric) is sent from the girl's side proposing the date of marriage, which is confirmed by the boy's side. Negotiations in respect of the time of the *lagan* (auspicious moment), number of persons in the marriage party and other details regarding marriage are settled directly or through some common friend or relative. Prior to the marriage party proceedings to the bride's house, the ceremony of *ghurchari* takes place. The bridegroom rides a mare and takes a round of his locality and worships Bhumia or other gods in a temple. The marriage party arrives with the bridegroom and is accorded a reception by the bride's parents and taken in a procession to a *dharmasala* where arrangements for the stay of the marriage party are made. According to the Hindu marriage ritual, the wedding couple goes round four to seven times around the sacred fire; in the first three rounds of the fire the bride leads and in the next the bridegroom. During the course of the wedding, the tenets of married life are read out to the wedding couple, the main principles being chastity, sincerity, faithfulness to each other and promises to stick together through thick and thin. In the case of *anand karaj*, the wedding couple goes round the holy Guru Granth Sahib instead of the sacred fire. Besides, some extracts from the holy Granth are read which sanctify the union.

A Meo marries early. The wedding is a prolonged affair. It is preceded by year-long preparations. Although polygamy is permissible, a Meo usually has one wife. As widow marriage is allowed in Islam, a young widow is generally married to the brother of the deceased husband. This is done so that the family property is not divided or does not go out of the family. "In spite of rigid rules of sanguinity-custom defining who can marry who, elopements are not rare. But they are not taken lightly either."

Meo marriages are generally held in the month of May and June after the crops have been harvested. The ceremonies begin with *lagan*, followed by *chak nauts*, and *ban nauta*. Dinners are served to the groom and his people by relatives and the residents of the village.

Mustard oil is sent to the bride's people a week before the marriage. During *bendi-ka-nag* four days before the marriage, *laddus* are distributed in the village by the groom's family. *Batna* and *banvara* involve giving an oil bath to the groom two days before the wedding. The *baraat* is received by the bride's people on the outskirts of the village. Money gift (*Man tan*) is distributed by the bride's people among the *baraat*.

The *nikah* is performed in the village mosque according to the Islamic custom. The Maulvi recites some verses from the Koran and asks for the consent of the girl. As soon as the girl's consent is received, the Maulvi asks the boy's consent, and the *nikah-nama* is signed. The legal ceremony does not take more than ten minutes. After this, dried dates (*chhoharas*) are distributed among the guests.

The *baraat* is served rice in earthen ware with sugar and pure ghee sprinkled on it. After the feast, the guests carry a spare dish called *kotal* and present it to any householder of the village who provides them the necessary facilities for the stay. The *kotal* signifies that the person is a *baraati*. Satisfactory arrangements for the stay of the *baraat* is a matter of respect and dignity for the whole village. The *baraat* leaves after two days. The bride's relatives go to the groom's village and bring her back after a couple of days. Sometimes the girl remains in her parent's home for a year or two till she attains maturity. Her departure to her husband's house is called *gauna*.

Every year a colossal amount of money is poured into weddings. The surprising thing is that people spend lavishly though not all of them have money. Some take a loan from rapacious money-lenders at exorbitant rates of interest and then spend a lifetime in paying back the money. They indulge in this showy and wasteful overspending lest their relatives should snigger and gossip.

Rich and poor both take marriage parties in taxies and tractor trollies. Private cars which are used as taxies charge exorbitantly. It is felt that the social status of bride-groom is judged from the number of taxies hired for taking the marriage party. The bride is given various gifts by her parents and relatives so as to set up a new home. Besides jewellery and money too, a bride often brings her trousseau and articles of utility, e.g. furniture, mattresses, cooking utensils, etc. The dowry (though it is prevented by law) is presented according to the status of the family. Among Meos, dowry is known as *dan* which includes some cash, cattle and carts. The dowry system has become a tyranny for poor parents who cannot afford it. Radical changes in the marriage custom have, therefore, become vitally necessary. It is a happy sign that

the Meos are awakening to all this avoidable and wasteful expenditure and there is an under-current to simplify the ceremonies, lessen the duration of the stay of *baraat* and reduce the dowry.

**Restrictions on marriage alliance.**—Every clan in the district is exogamous, i.e. while every man must marry into his own tribe, no person can marry into his own clan (*got*). The restrictions on the marriage alliance are described in the *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, 1910, as follows :—

“Among the Ahir, Brahman, Taga, Jat (Hindu and Musalman), Hindu Gaurwa, Agri, and probably the Mallah tribes, as well as among some Musalman Gaurwas, a man may not marry a woman belonging to any of the following *gots* :—

1. his own *got*;
2. his mother's *got*;
3. his father's/mother's *got*;
4. mother's mother's *got*.<sup>1</sup>

And the same prohibition applies to women.

“Among the Gujars and Kaisths only the three *gots* first enumerated are forbidden. A man may marry in his mother's mother's *got*. Among the Rajputs, both Hindu and Musalman, a man may not marry a women—

1. of his own *got*;
2. of his mother's *thamba*;
3. of his father's mother's family, or grandfather's mother's family, so far as the relationship is traceable;
4. descended from his father's sister or father's father's sister, & so far as the relationship is traceable.

“Among the Meos a man may not marry—

1. a woman of his own *got* or *pal*;
2. a woman of the village his mother belonged to, even though of a different *got*;
3. a woman of the village his father's mother belonged to;
4. any woman whose relationship with him is close enough to be traceable;
5. the daughter or descendant through males for two generations only of a woman of his own *got*.

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1. Now a day's the *nani's* is oversighted.

“Among the Agarwal Baniyas a man may marry in any *got* except his own, even in his mother's *got* and even in his mother's family provided the relationship be not very close. There is no distinct limit fixed”.

These restrictions are now giving way to some extent and the suitability of a match becomes sometimes the criterion for the marriage/alliance. This tendency is visible more among the educated and advanced families though the rural population is still in the grip of caste rigidity. The Meos do not marry with non-Muslims because they do not want to lose their distinctiveness as a religious and cultural group. The Hindus also follow the caste hierarchy and a person is not ready to go beyond the caste barriers.

The marriages within the *gotra* or with cousins (maternal's) or inter-caste are also not approved by society and hence are rare among Aroras and Khatrias. There has been occasional relaxation among the Hindu displaced persons migrated from Pakistan who may marry the daughters of maternal uncle and aunt probably due to the earlier Muslim influence. Though endogamy is permitted in Islam, Meos do not marry women of their mother or father's *gotras*.

With regard to widow marriage, Jats, Ahirs, Meos, Gujars and Harijans are more advanced as compared with the other castes. A woman of marriageable age seldom remains a widow and she is readily accepted as a wife by one of the brothers of the deceased husband. This type of marriage is called *Karewa* which is not accompanied by any ceremony. The woman merely resumes her jewels, bracelets and coloured clothes which she ceased to wear on her husband's death. A widow cannot be compelled to marry but the influence of the family is strong enough to make her yield to their wishes.

In case the husband dies shortly after the marriage and the girl has not lived with him or has no issue, she is re-married with all the ceremonies of the usual marriage. This is called *punar vivah*.

Sometimes widows do not marry but adopt some profession. In urban areas, they usually engage themselves in teaching, nursing, social work or doing some Government or private service but in rural areas they live only on the property left behind by their husbands or under the protection of their families.

#### **Inter-Caste Marriage**

The caste endogamy is rigid and inter-communal marriage do not take place. In the rural areas inter-caste marriages are strictly tabooed.



## PEOPLE

Any violation would lead to an expulsion from the caste. However, to diminish caste considerations, the State government has introduced a scheme under which a Scheduled Caste boy/girl marrying a non-scheduled caste girl/boy would be given Rs. 5,000 as an incentive. Of this, Rs. 2,000 would be given in cash and Rs. 3,000 in the form of fixed deposit for a minimum period of six years.

**Civil Marriage**

Civil marriages in India are regulated by the Special Marriage Act, of 1954. It provides a secular code of marriage irrespective of caste, religion or race. The only condition stipulated by the Act is that a man should be over 21 years, a woman over 18, and that neither should have a spouse living at the time of marriage. A marriage Registrar, normally a Deputy Commissioner is appointed under this Act, who registers such marriages and issues certificates. The solemnisation does not include any religious ceremony. The procedure for a civil marriage is very simple, either of the two parties to the marriage can give notice to the Registrar of their intention to marry. The notice must be given 15 days before the date of proposed marriage. The notice is then exhibited on the notice board in the office of Deputy Commissioner for any objections. If no objection is raised within 15 days, the marriage is performed; the parties sign the register and a marriage certificate duly signed by the Registrar is issued.

**Divorce.**—Divorce is not much prevalent. There is a general tendency to suffer hardship resulting from ill-matched marriages. This is particularly true of uneducated and conservative people. They prefer to lead a miserable life rather than to dissolve the marriage. Another 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, 1955, cases of divorce are being instituted now and then in law courts.

**Birth and Death customs.**—Ritual impurity continues for 13 days in the case of a child birth in the family. The mother and the child are bathed on 3rd, 5th, 7th and 13th day. For 40 days the mother is considered to be impure and is not allowed to cook meals. Normally people welcome the birth of a male child<sup>1</sup> and distribute sweets to celebrate the occasion. The parents of the mother send *chhoochak* which comprises some ornaments and clothes for the mother and the child. Feasts are held and sisters and daughters of the family are offered gifts. Under the economic pressure, people believe in small family consisting a

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1. Now a days, the educated persons do not give weight to [the birth of male child. They take it a matter of happiness if they get a female child.

couple of babies, under these circumstances they give better education and life to their children.

Among the Meos the *soonat* (circumcision) ceremony takes place in the case of a male child when he attains the age of about 5 years. This is considered to be one of the religious ceremonies and is a must according to Islam. On the occasion, friends and relatives are invited and feasted.

Among the Hindus, the *mundan* ceremony is performed and relatives and friends are invited and feasts are held. The ceremony is performed when either the child is one year or when he is of three years. The child is shorn of all his hair and this is the first hair-cut in his life. Some orthodox families take the child to a temple of Sitala Mata at Gurgaon district.

### Death rites

In case of death, the dead body is bathed and wrapped in a piece of new unwashed cloth. The Hindus cremate the dead body. They collect ashes (remaining bones) of the deceased and immerse these in the Ganga. The family mourning continues for 13 or 17 days. In the end, the family priest is served with meals in the name of the deceased. Among the Meos, the corpse is buried in a graveyard and the *Mullah* recites verses from the Koran for about 3 days in the name of the departed soul<sup>1</sup>.

### Position of Women

The women folk of the district were mostly engaged in outdoor and indoor activities of agriculture which is the mainstay of the people of this area. Since Independence, the condition of women has undergone a vital change. The education of women has received a new impetus and numerous academic and technical institutions have been set up. The spread of education has jerked the social barriers against their employment. Women are now found serving as Lady Health Visitors, Auxiliary Nurses, Midwives, Staff Nurses, Trained Dais, Teachers, Craft Mistresses, Gram Sewikas, Social Education Organisers, Physical Instructors, Sewing Mistresses, etc. On the other hand, they are replacing men in many other

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1. The celebration of *kaj* is vanishing among Meos. It is a feast which is held sometime between the third and the fourth day after the death of a person. The most ordinary *kaj* involves relatives and friends and entertaining them for three days. In a few cases, a whole circle of villages constituting *pai* was invited and thousands of rupees were spent on entertainment.

fields such as social education, child welfare and community work, arts and crafts and social work. This is more true of the urban areas.

In rural areas, the division of work between man and woman is, however, still very rigid. The women participate in nearly all agricultural operations except ploughing. They take care of cattle and assist men even in sowing operations. Their work in the fields is in addition to what they have to do within the households. Darling, therefore, rightly remarked that the Jatni was an economic treasure<sup>1</sup>. This equally applies to the Meoni. The life of the housewife is, on the whole, a hard one. She goes to the village well with *gharas* (earthen water pots) on her head, draws water twice a day, cooks the morning meal and when the men are at work in the fields, carries the food to them. On returns home, she has to cook the evening meal. In addition to this, she spins cotton and collect cow dung from the field for making *oplas*. The list of odd jobs attended to by the women is inexhaustible.

Women have not attained equality with men despite the best efforts of the Arya Samaj and other reformist organisations. One reason is that, in rural areas in particular, they have remained illiterate, largely on account of the attitude of their parents. Even at places where girl schools exist, people are not usually as keen to send their girls to school as they send the boys. Being conservative by nature, they are afraid of modernising influences. Some feel that they cannot allow their daughters to do other outdoor jobs since the daughters help them in field work all day long. Thus women, by and large, are neither educated nor economically independent. Recently the people in rural areas are conscious about girls education.

### HOME LIFE

Although it may appear to a casual observer that the home life of villagers is patterned on traditional lines, yet a closer view at once indicates the directions in which changes in this pattern are percolating from the more modernised urban localities.

**Dwellings (Rural and Urban).** —The usual types of dwellings in rural areas consist of a few rooms which are constructed around a courtyard. One of the rooms near the courtyard is meant for tethering of cattle. In poor families, the cattle and members of the family share the place. The number of rooms depends upon the status of the family. Generally, the farmers have houses which consist of two to three rooms;

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1. Malcolm Lyall Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 1925, p. 38.

poor persons possess houses which have only one or two rooms. Many of the houses in the villages have roofs thatched with straw and grass. In recent years, some villagers have constructed houses with *pakka* roofs. But, houses are generally constructed without any plan. There is hardly any provision for ventilation and proper lighting. The walls and floors are plastered with mud. Provision for bathrooms and latrines hardly exist in the houses and members of the family go out in the fields to answer the call of nature. With the rise in the standard of living, rural people are also realising the need of bathrooms, latrines and proper sanitary arrangements. Now the new colonies have sprung up. In urban areas all these facilities are available.

Faridabad is a modern city which has many sectors with modern facilities. In other cities and towns, people live in modern way.

The business community in urban areas have constructed *pakka* houses and these houses are generally double-storied. Where such houses are located in the market, the shops are constructed on the ground floor and living quarters are placed behind the shops or on the first floor. They have also arrangements for the latrines and bathrooms and their roofs are *pakka* and walls and floors are made of burnt bricks and sometimes plastered with cement.

With the construction of model towns and new colonies in various urban areas of the district, modern houses, a courtyard and lawns are also coming up. In such localities, there are arrangements for piped water-supply and proper drainage.

**Furniture and Decorations .—**The villagers generally possess articles of utility and not of beauty and these generally include *charpoy*s, *peeras* and *moorahs*. Few houses have chairs or tables. Well-to-do land-owners have, however, big *niwar* or fine string beds.

The houses in the towns are provided with chairs and tables. Houses of well-to-do persons are furnished with sofas, wardrobes and dinning tables.

In towns, pictures, curtains and some other curio articles form interior decoration of the houses; but interior decoration as such is hardly known in the villages. They decorate their houses with some calendars or pictures of some national leaders or prophets. Now a days T.V's are seen in rural areas and urban areas alike. The standard in rural areas has also undergone a change.

*Handi*, *degehi*, *katora* and metal tumbler are common utensils used by the people in rural areas. The Hindus use utensils made of brass

or bronze, and the Meos usually make do with a *degehi* of copper, *katora* of brass, and aluminium tumblers. Patromax lamps, torches and sewing machines are becoming common in rural areas. In towns, the brass and bronze utensils are getting replaced by porcelain crockery; however, the cooking utensils are still of brass and bronze. Utensils of stainless steel are used rarely being more expensive. Kerosene stoves, gas *chulas*, radio sets, transistor radios, T.V. sets and sewing machines are generally found not only in urban houses but are common sight in rural areas also. Bicycles, scooters and cars are now ubiquitous both in towns and villages. Recently difference between rural and urban areas is narrowing.

**Dress and ornaments.**—The common dress worn by men of the district is a shortshirt, a *dhoti* round the waist and turban or a cap on the head. The Meos wear a loose kurta, a wrap *tahmat* and a turban. The turban is usually made of coarse cloth and is called *phainta* among the Meos and *safa*, *dupatta* and *patka* among others. In many parts of the district, quilted trousers are also used in winter. The most common type of shoes is the village made *panta*, which has a design common throughout the rural areas in north India. In urban areas, people wear modern shoes.

Women usually wear *ghagra* (a loose skirt or petticoat), a full sleeved shirt, and *orhna*. On festive and ceremonial occasions, they wear multi-coloured new clothes. Ahir women generally put on blue *petticoat* and red *orhna* worked on the hem in white and usually studded with circular pieces of tiny mirrors. These too are frequently decorated with bosses and fringes. The common dress of a Muslim woman is a *churidar pyjama*, a full sleeved shirt, and an *orhna* (known as *lagra* among Meos) to cover the shoulders and the head. Invariably these are of different colours—red, green, yellow and black being most common. These colours are fast and deep.<sup>1</sup>

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1. \*Above the thick triangular [scarf, with two of its corners framing the face and falling on the shoulders the Meo women, when going out to their houses, are often found to carry rectangular wicker baskets on their heads. Being seen outside their homes without these encumbrances appears to be looked upon almost as brazen impropriety; Custom makes them always carry a little grain in these baskets and this no doubt, is remnant of the days when barter was the mode of exchange and these baskets served the same purpose as the purpose of the women do in the cities, of our own day.

"But the Meo eve has inculcated charm and picture sequences even to these encumbrances. Beneath these basket is generally kept a soft ring, with coloured strings falling from it on the shoulders and reaching up to the waists. The ends of these strings are adorned with shells or beads and a sudden movement of the head makes soft music."

(Hashim Amir Ali, *The Meos of Mewat*, 1970, pp. 51-52.)

Married women whose husbands are alive, display a number of ornaments, the commonest among these are the gold rings, *pachheli* (silver bangles) round the wrists, *baankara*, *haansli*, and *kara* and *naivri* about the ankles. Glass bangles are also worn by younger women, never by widows. *Bali bunda* and chained buttons to shirts are common among Meo girls. Poor women cannot afford many ornaments and they wear silver *kara* on the wrist and *naivri* about the ankles. Men do not generally wear ornaments. *Baankara* and *murki* are used by bridegrooms among Meos on the occasion of marriage. Now a days all the modern ornaments are given weight and preference by all sections of the people.

The modern change is coming to dress also. Now a days *salwar* and *kamiz* are being increasingly adopted by young girls studying in schools, and even some of the grown up women have started discarding the old graceful *ghagri* in favour of the *salwar*. They have also almost given up the use of their heavy silver ornaments. The tall and well-built women appear very graceful in their *ghagris* and their bright clothes lend charm and colour to the countryside. The gradual disappearance of the *ghagri* with its bright colours is perhaps not altogether a welcome feature.

The western style of dress in some form or other is gaining favour in urban as well as rural areas. People belonging to the learned professions, officials, college students in particular irrespective of their origin (whether rural or urban), caste and creed have generally adopted this style of dress.

**Food.**—Food of the people in rural areas is simple and there is little variety except slight seasonal variations that depend upon the nature and kind of harvest they get. The number of daily meals is according to the season of the year and the work to be done. The staple food is *bajra* mixed with wheat, gram and barley. *Bajra* is taken during the winter whereas barley, gram and wheat constitute staple food during the summer. Rice is taken only on ceremonial occasions. The people also consume vegetables which are available and pulses like *moong* and *mash*. The people have started taking meat and eggs; even Meos take these occasionally. Curd and milk is consumed in great quantities besides *ghee* and *makhan*.

There are no fixed meal times but generally the first meal is taken in the fields before 10 A.M. Lunch consists of loaves besmeared with purified butter and pulses or vegetables. In the evening, tea is taken. In recent years tea has become quite popular in towns as well as in

villages. The dinner consists of *chapatis*, some vegetables, onion and chillies. During winter, large quantities of milk, butter-milk are consumed daily. *Kheer*, *halwa* and sweet rice puddings are common. Normally, they are prepared once a week; but are also prepared on festive occasions and for entertainment of guests.

In urban areas during the past few years, the use of vegetables oil and refined oil has become common because due to sedantry habits a large number of persons are under the torture of blood-pressure and heart ailments. The consumption of vegetables and fruits has increased. Now a days the hotels and *dhabas* have sprung up. Faridabad city is very near to Delhi. Sometimes wealthy people taste drink, meat and delicious diets at famous restaurants and standard hotels in Delhi.

So far as drink is concerned, tea as a stimulating drink has become very popular with both urban and rural people. Tea stalls are found in every town and big villages. In summer months, some people prefer to drink a glass of *sharbat* or *lassi*. The aerated soft drinks are becoming popular with younger people. The country-made liquor is consumed practically in every village. The use of liquor is unfortunately increasing more and more everywhere.

Men are much addicted to the use of tobacco-cigarett and bidi smoking in towns and hookah in villages. As a rule, women do not indulge in smoking. Some youths have also come under the grip of the harmful drugs.

#### COMMUNITY LIFE

As everywhere else, community life is somewhat more effectively organised 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 even when scattered. 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. This is more true of an expanding town which is sprawled over a large area. There is a growing tendency of voluntary social agencies to establish themselves in local areas or small towns and organise community life in some form or other. They also organise 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

The folk culture of the district is expressed in folk-songs, dances and theatre. With fast changing conditions urban culture is slowly but surely making an inroad into folk life. The gramophone-record is an onslaught on the songs of the village *rāgi* and the radio seeks to replace the group festivals of folk-songs and dances. Despite all this, folk culture continues to enliven the countryside which hums with dances, folk-songs sung on various occasions and festivals. Of late, All India Radio is giving good attention to the revival of folk culture and broadcasts '*Lok Manas*' featuring programme on Haryana culture, besides the special programmes telecast by the Delhi Television Centre.

**Folk-songs.**—With their burden of love and labour, folk-songs have a peculiar charm of their own. In these songs, the heart-beats of the rural people vibrate with their hopes, aspirations, love longings, joys and sorrow. We also hear about the changing season, tinkling of bells of the cattle returning home at sunset., waving of fields of green wheat speckled with yellow *sarson* and the emotional outbursts of married couples at the time of their union and separation.

There is a variety of folk-songs, connected with particular occasions. A good number of these are nature songs in particular months. The months of *Sravana* (July-August) brings ecstasy in its wake. The impact of the season on the emotional life is obvious. With the onset of black clouds of the monsoon and the raging torrential rains, love longings are evoked. When the sky is overcast with the hanging clouds, young women come out of their homes and get lost in the raptures and ecstasies of nature. Their hearts echo in songs and they sing while they swing :

O Mother ! torrential rains have come,  
All the tanks and ponds are full of water,

O Mother ! the month of *Sravana* has come,  
Swings are seen on every tree,

O Mother ! *bajra* and *jawar* have sprouted,  
The landscape has turned green,

O Mother ! plants are growing speedily  
Like a newly wedded girl.



*Teej* or *Haryali Teej* is the main festival of *Sravana*, falling on Sudi 3 (third of the lunar month). It is observed throughout Haryana. By this time the rainy season starts gathering momentum replacing the scorching 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. 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 *Sarvana*,  
 Let us to our father's home proceed !  
 O my bride ! who the accompaniers 've come ?  
 With whose permission will you 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 month of *Phalguna* (February-March) is a pleasant period which inspires the women to sing and dance. It announces the advent of spring; the wintery veil of fog and mist is lifted from the face of the earth and the whisper of spring is in the air. In moonlit nights after they are free from daily chores, the women congregate and sing songs :

Two daughters-in-law in a house,  
 Both go for water,  
 O dear ! colourful *phalguna* has come,  
 The scorpioid ring slipped from a daughter-in-law's foot-finger,  
 And the daughter-in-law behind picked it up,  
 O dear ! colourful *Phalguna* has come....

The villagers sing *russia* on Holi in *Phalguna*. The song is in conversation form and is accompanied by the beats of kettle-drums, *harmonium*, *chimta*, etc.;

Who is one in this universe and who are two ?  
 Who is awake and who is asleep ?  
 God is one and the sun and the moon are two;  
 The sin, in the universe, is awake and the goodness asleep.

Ceremonial songs, marriage songs and songs on married life are essentially lyrics sung by women. Indispensable to the various rituals and ceremonies, these cover a wide range of subjects. The following lines,

reminiscent of a forgotten social past, are from a marriage song sung by women :—

O beloved daughter ! don't go to the pond,  
Your husband's party is coming.  
They are riding the horses,  
armed with shields and swords,  
Covering their heads with round caps  
and dressed in pendant waist-clothes.

O beloved daughter ! don't go to the garden....,

The folk-songs are essentially lyrics giving a glimpse into the woman's heart. These describe a girl's longing for love and marriage, her initial inhibitions, her usual apprehensions, her emotional reaction to the dreary lot in a strange house, complaints from the young wife regarding the monotony of domestic life and various types of odd work which she is compelled to do, pangs of child birth, etc. Love songs are the most common since love in its varied forms provides numerous themes. The socio-economic aspects too sometimes find expression. Indeed, it is the village woman who has preserved the tradition of folk lore.

**Folk-dances.**—Folk-dancing, an outburst of surging emotions, at times accompanies folk-singing. The celebration of *Phag* is a significant festival and its celebration continues for a month. Locally it is also called *Dhuhlaindi* because it is celebrated in a season when dust storms blow. In March, after their daily chores, women congregate in the village in an open space and sing and dance till late at night. Their melodious sound spreads through the village and resounds in gaiety. The dance usually starts with the lines which have a distinct poetical flavour :

O dyer's son ! beat the *daph* rhythmically,  
Beat it so beautifully that  
The Yamuna water may hear  
And turn more charming.

The women sit in a circle and sing to the sound of drum beats or pitcher-beats. Two women, or sometimes four, dance in a circle to the tune of the song. Though the congregation is only of women, they sometimes dance with their faces covered. The style of the dance on this occasion resembles *gidda* of Punjabi :—

*Dhiraj Dhar Sukumari Tero Piya lena Aabago,  
Der Kara Na Jaldi Aabe, Piyari Keyo Rova Moha Rubave  
Chateragi Sewa labego.*

*Sunder Samal Gaura Sarira, Sajke Aamega Doonu Bira,  
Lanka Pas Youdh Machawago.*

*Ris Karke Khunan Ki Hori, Khele Ram Lakhan Ki Jori,  
Ravana Ki Red Udevego.*

*Lanka Khali Karke Pivari, Jab Toha Lehja Avad Bihari,  
Hans Hans Ke Kanth Lagivego.*

*Aanchi Keha Suno Bhayali, Samja Rahi Trijata Aakeli,  
Tero Sabro Dukh Mitavego.*

### 2nd (Geet)

*Unchi Si Aatariya so Behana Meri Gagan Ma Ji  
Aeri Jhuk Chi Ha Ghata Ghangor,  
Thandi-Thandi Pawan Chakore Behna Leh Rahi Ji,  
Aaji Koi Chai Na Hariyali Charoo Aur,  
Nanhi-Nanhi Bundia Parat Man Bhamni Ji,  
Aaji Koi Bola Ha Dadur Mor  
Rat Endihari So Behna Meri Dar Lega Ri,  
Aari Koi Karat Papiha Shor,  
Tikeh Tikeh Ban Lege Ri Tan Kam Ka ji,  
Aaji sera Aaya Na Bhamar Chit Choor.*

### 3rd (Geet)

*Gai Raa Chhori Phagun Ki Veh Gav Mahina Cha,  
Soch Kera Maa Bap Bichara,  
Aab Kera Kon Paa Pivar,  
Chhori Lan Bhan Dijoo Bahman,*

*Koi Tijan Kaa Tiohar  
Manga Ram Rail Pay Aayo  
Jaha Gari Mil Gai Tiyar  
Brahman Charyo Sumir Raghurai,  
Ou Bethyo Aasan Mar  
Aikay Pohach Gayo Patuiyala,  
Ari Ou Satpal Kan Dawar,  
Pandit Sang Bhag Gai Chhori  
Unchi Kaa Khushi Aapaar.*

**Folk tales.**—Folk-tales are enchanting and people love to hear them at leisure. The characters of folk-tales form the motifs of the facades of houses and *chaupals*. Sorath, Hira Mal Jaimal, Nautanki, Bharri Hari, Gopi Chand and Nihal Dey are popular subjects among such characters.

Folk-tales preserve our cultural heritage. Through folk-tales man has exercised his imagination. People love to retain that 'practice even when they grow-up. Haryana like Punjab has a legacy of rich and varied folk-tales. Even the animal and plant kingdom, weather and climate occupy certain roles in such tales.

#### GAMES AND RECREATIONS

Wrestling, *kabaddi*, *gindo tora* or *gindo khul* and *gulli danda* (tip cat) are popular indigenous games in the district, the last two being usually played by children. *Gindo tora* or *gindo khul* is the indigenous version of the game of hockey and is played with a stick and a ball made of rags and twigs. *Gulli danda* is played in the streets and in a ground outside the village. Wrestling and *kabaddi* are, however, popular sports among the young and the middle-aged men. *Kabaddi* is often played in the moonlit nights during the months of *Phalguna* and *Chaitra* (February-March). *Kabaddi* matches are enthusiastically arranged during the festivals, particularly *Teej* and *Raksha Bandhan*. Two teams take part in this game, of a number of varieties in which the game is played, the two types popular in this district are Haryana style and National style. Haryana style *kabaddi* is played in a circular field with a periphery of about 23 metres with 10 players on each side while the field for National style *kabaddi* is marked as a rectangle of 13 metres by 10 metres. In Haryana type, a player of one team goes to the court of the other team repeating the words *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 the words *kaudi kaudi* in the same breath, the particular player of opposite team is considered to be out and that team loses one point. In case the player is not able to return to his side by crossing the boundary line in one breath, he is considered to be out and his team loses one point. In the National style, the player going to the court of the opposite team may be encountered by any number of players of the other team. If he does not return to the boundary line dividing the court, his team loses one point but if he reaches the boundary line in one breath the other team loses points corresponding to the number of players who encountered him. The playing time for the game in both the types is the same, viz. 45 minutes including an interval of 5 minutes. The team securing more points wins.

To encourage sports in the rural areas, the State Government gives grant for the construction of playgrounds and also provides coaching facilities. The State Government awards scholarships to promising young players from schools and colleges. Modern games like hockey, cricket, football, volleyball and basketball are popular among students of urban areas where there are facilities of playgrounds while games like *kho kho*, netball, skipping, etc., are popular among girls.

Chess, cards and *chopar* are some of the indoor games which are played in urban as well as rural areas. The villagers enjoy these games in panchayat *ghars*, *chopals* or wherever convenient along with a puff of *hookah* or while inhaling *bidi*. Having no other engagement, the *baraatis* accompanying the *barrat* to the bride's village eagerly indulge in these games to while away their time.

The State Public Relations Department has provided radio sets to panchayats, cooperatives and schools under the 'Community Listening Scheme'. In addition to the occasional drama shows, this department frequently exhibits films, mostly documentaries, with the help of a mobile cinema unit both in the urban and rural areas. The contiguity of Delhi has bestowed a great boon on the areas of the district which come within the range of the Delhi Television Centre. People, both in urban and rural areas, are taking full advantage of this fortunate situation. While many in urban areas, particularly in Faridabad old, Faridabad and Ballabgarh towns enjoy television programmes, the Government and other agencies have installed television sets at various places in the district. The items shown on the television include agricultural and animal husbandry, development programmes, rural programmes, educational programmes, films, dramas, folk-songs, news bulletins, etc. *Krishi Darshan* programme relayed on Monday, Wednesday and Friday is very popular among the farmers. Gossiping and listening to the radio are common pastimes. The portable transistor has become a fashion of the day with everybody without distinction.

The universal media of mass entertainment, particularly in the towns, is the cinema. It suits the pocket of the rich and the poor alike and by and large is the only place of public entertainment. There are cinema houses and touring talkies in the district. The cinema houses are located at Faridabad (4), Palwal (1) Hodal (1) and Ballabgarh (1), Recorded film songs and music are freely played on marriages and other festive occasions.

## REHABILITATION

Following the Independence of the country on August, 15, 1947, the Punjab Province was bifurcated into the East Punjab, and West Punjab. The former formed a part of India and the latter of Pakistan.

The Partition triggered off communal disturbances of great magnitude. Members of the minority communities on either side had to flee for their life in large numbers leaving every-thing behind; their lands, houses, cattle, house-hold goods and even valuables.

Lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs moved from Pakistan to the East Punjab and almost the same number of Muslims travelled from the East Punjab,

Delhi and Uttar Pradesh to Pakistan. This tragic movement was one of the most massive in history involving inevitable hardships and miseries. Mostly, the refugees wandered their weary way in long caravans on foot and in bullock carts. Others came crammed in trucks or clinging at great risk to the sides and roofs of trains. A few fortunate ones managed to come by air. The movement of all of them was regulated under the protection of the Military Evacuation Organisation. Despite official efforts to protect the migrating population, lawless elements on both sides played havoc with many convoys. Communal feelings running high in those days made human beings behave barbarously towards their victims. The Government of India and the East Punjab Government rose equal to the needs of the time. They took all possible steps to alleviate the sufferings of these distressed people. It was a tremendous task requiring a heroic effort. The fact that this challenge was met so successfully within a decade speaks volumes in favour of the administration. The following pages will show how the Government proceeded comprehensively on all fronts.

**Refugee camps.**—Refugee camps were set up in the district; one each at Palwal and Faridabad. All available buildings, including educational institutions, were utilised for sheltering refugees and even tented camps had to be set up. The services of teachers and students were utilised in the management of these relief camps. In lieu of the recognised services, students were given certificates/degrees by the newly set-up Punjab University, entitling them to have qualified in their respective examinations (without actually undergoing examination).

Camp life was made reasonably agreeable by the provision of a number of facilities. Free ration was distributed in these camps. Fruits, multi-vitamin tablets and other special items of diet were issued to refugees on medical advice. Blankets, quilts and clothes were supplied during the winter. Dispensaries were opened in tents for immediate medical relief. These camps provided much needed relief to the displaced persons and gave breathing time to all concerned to plan their future.

Though by the summer of 1948, the routine of camp life and administration of relief was well organised, the stage had arrived for the Government to take the next step of enabling displaced persons to find independent means of existence. To achieve this the grant of free rations was limited to those families which had no adult male member and could not, therefore, maintain themselves. All able bodied male adults between ages of 16 to 60 years, began to work and those who refused to work when they got the opportunity, were derationed along with their dependents although they were allowed to live in the camps. Those entitled to allot-

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ment of land were obliged to leave soon after temporary allotment of the evacuee land had been made to them.

The population in the camps started decreasing gradually as a result of the steps taken for the speedy re-settlement of the displaced persons. Displaced persons from rural areas moved into villages evacuated by Muslims while those from urban areas were sent to towns where they took to various avocations to earn their livelihood. For the destitutes, one infirmary was set up at Palwal in 1951. It was closed in 1961 and its inmates were transferred to the infirmary at Rewari.

Other facilities included three training-cum-production centres (for tailoring, hand embroidery and weaving craft) and a hostel for bed-ridden inmates where arrangements existed for cooked meals. As soon as a family started earning more than Rs. 150 a month, it was given one year cash dole in advance and discharged from the infirmary.

The displaced persons from Dera Ghazi Khan, Mianwali, Muzaffargarh and other parts of Pakistan were selected in the then district of Faridabad.

The following table shows the displaced persons settled in the urban and rural areas of the district as per 1951 Census :—

District of origin	Number of persons settled in rural areas	
	Ballabgarh tahsil	Palwal tahsil
Dera Ghazi Khan	340	1,782
Mian Wali	1,252	9
Muzaffargarh	418	30
Others	226	184
Total :	2,236	2,005

## RURAL REHABILITATION

The aim of the Government at that time was to ensure quick distribution of land with the object of giving employment to all displaced farmers who could start cultivation immediately. Possession was not to be delayed as the *kharif* crop was standing and *rabi* of 1948 was to be sown. All refugees who had either owned land or held land by virtue of grant and were cultivating it in Pakistan were declared eligible for temporary allotments. Allotments of lands abandoned by Muslims were accordingly made, preference being given to groups of cultivators who were bound by ties of kinship or friendships. This was done to maintain the social homogeneity

of such settlements. Under this scheme, each family was given a plough unit (about 10 acres or 4 hectares) of land regardless of its holding in the West Punjab (Pakistan) and financial assistance in the form of food and *taccavi* loans. The measure not only provided work and the means of livelihood to a very large number of displaced persons but also had a very salutary effect on agricultural production in the state. That is why, despite its shattered economy during the post partition years, agricultural production in the State did not remain low for very long.

**Allocation.**—The bulk of the population from the Dera Ghazi Khan and Mianwali districts, including colonists, was settled in the then Gurgaon district including Faridabad area. In addition, provision was made for those displaced persons from Muzaffargarh who had already settled in the district and did not wish to be settled elsewhere.

**Allocation to the displaced persons from Dera Ghazi Khan.**—The grade I area left behind in the Dera Ghazi Khan district was much more than the areas classed as grade I and even as grade II available in the district. The lands of the Palwal and Ballabgarh tahsils were relatively more fertile. It was, therefore, decided that the entire area available in the Ballabgarh tahsil and 7,500 standard acres<sup>1</sup> in the Palwal tahsil be allotted to displaced persons from *chahi nehri* circle of the Dera Ghazi Khan tahsil of Pakistan.

For *Chak Qutab* and *Chak Qadra* of the Rajanpur tahsil, 2,814 standard acres were provided in the Palwal tahsil. For *Chak Sind* of the Jampur tahsil, 5,000 standard acres were provided in the Palwal tahsil.

In parts of the then district, earmarked for the Dera Ghazi Khan or Mianwali districts or where Muzaffargarh refugees were already settled, displaced persons to whom allotment had already been made and whose settlement was consistent with the rules of grading, were allowed to remain there. Thus, a displaced person from *pucka circle* of the Bhakkar tahsil could remain in Palwal or Ballabgarh if he was already settled temporarily and wished to remain there.

**Quasi-permanent allotment.**—The scheme of temporary allotments, no doubt, provided some relief but no development could take place until uncertainty was dispelled and the allottees were assured to their proprietary right to the land which they were cultivating. In the absence of such assurances, all financial help in the shape of *taccavi* loans, etc., instead of being properly utilised was being squandered away by the recipients. To meet the situation, the State Government evolved a scheme of converting tempo-

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1. It is a measure of area convertible into ordinary acres of any class of land according to one prescribed scale with references to the quantity of yield and quality of soil.



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rary allotments into quasi-permanent. The allottees were thus encouraged to improve the lands allotted to them.

This was a preliminary step towards the resettlement of displaced persons. Claims were invited from them and orally verified at tahsil headquarters. Unfortunately, in spite of their sufferings, many unscrupulous displaced persons made exaggerated claims, and obtained excessive allotments. To defeat these tactics, the Government obtained original revenue records from Pakistan and verified the claims of the displaced persons. These also showed that there was substantial difference between the land left behind in Pakistan by the incoming displaced persons and that abandoned by Muslims in the East Punjab. The latter was less. To overcome this problem the available land was converted into standard acre, and graded cuts were in proportion to the size of the claim were allowed. Bigger claimants lost more in comparison with the smaller claimants.

The tahsil-wise distribution of this land was as follows :—

Tahsil	Area available (Standard acres)
Ballabgarh	5, 717
Palwal	15,314
Total :	21,031

**Agricultural loans.**—Allotment of land on a quasi-permanent basis could not, by itself, be sufficient for the rehabilitation of displaced persons. They were, therefore, given assistance by way of agricultural loans for purchasing bullocks, agricultural implements, fodder, seeds, and repairing wells and houses. To minimise chances of misuse, a general policy was devised to advance these loans in kind.

The disbursement of such loans was terminated after 1953-54.

**Conferment of proprietary rights.**—The quasi-permanent allotments were followed by the conferment of proprietary rights. This was taken up in 1955 after the enforcement of Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Act, 1954. Bogus and excessive allotments were cancelled. Only the genuine claims of displaced persons, verified from the revenue records received from Pakistan, were admitted. This resulted in the return to the evacuee pool of lakhs of acres of evacuee lands usurped by unscrupulous dis-

placed persons. The following table gives tahsil-wise data about the conferment of proprietary rights in the district :—

Name of tahsil	Number of allottees on whom proprietary rights had been conferred	Area (Acres)
1	2	3
Ballabgarh	1,777	6,439—7½
Palwal	3,570	14,502—9½

**Rural housing.**—Like allotment of land, houses were allotted on a temporary basis in the first instance and later quasi-permanently and finally *senads* of proprietary rights were issued. After reserving some houses for common purposes, the allottees were given a choice according to their seniority on the merit list, which was based on the size of their holding. The bigger allottee was given a better house and the smaller one a less favoured one. Those who could not get a house were given cash compensation instead.

#### URBAN REHABILITATION

The rehabilitation of displaced persons coming from urban areas had three aims; (i) to provide residential accommodation, (ii) to offer financial assistance by way of loans and grants, and (iii) to create opportunities for gainful employment. These were stupendous tasks in themselves but the general trend of shift towards urban areas after Independence made them more formidable. The gloomy situation was indeed a challenge which called for various well-considered schemes of urban re-settlement.

**Utilisation of evacuee properties.**—All Muslim abandoned properties were taken over as evacuee properties and were governed by the Punjab Evacuee Ordinance IV of 1947. This Ordinance was superseded by the East Punjab Evacuee (Administration of Property) Act XIV of 1947 which came into force on December 12, 1947. This Act was further amended and repealed in part from time to time. All previous Acts and Ordinances were repealed by the administration of Evacuee Ordinance XXVII of 1949. This Ordinance was replaced by the administration of Evacuee Property Act, 1950 which came into force on April 17, 1950. This Act was amended by the amending Acts LXVI of 1950, XXII of 1951, XI of 1953, XLII of 1954, XCI of 1956 and I of 1960. Such properties comprising houses, shops, vacant sites, *kholas* (dilapidated houses) and industrial establishments were temporarily

allotted to displaced persons on a rental basis. Their permanent disposal started in 1953-54. All evacuee properties were acquired by the Central Government under Section 12 of the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Act, 1954. Properties valued below Rs. 10,000 (below Rs. 50,000 for industrial establishment) were declared allotable while those assessed above these properties were sold by open auction. Subsequently the limit of allotable properties was raised to Rs. 15,000. Properties lying vacant or in unauthorised possession were similarly auctioned.

The evacuee properties were disposed of in the following manner :—

Town	Total number of properties			
	Available	Sold by auction	Disposed of by way of allotment/transfer	Sold by negotiation
1	2	3	4	5
1. Palwal	597	342	208	—
2. Ballabgarh	241	168	61	—
3. Hodal	298	91	188	—
4. Faridabad	347	72	257	—

**Housing Schemes.**—The properties abandoned by the Muslim emigrants were not sufficient to provide shelter to all the displaced persons settled in the then district. To cope with the shortage of residential accommodation, the Government formulated three housing schemes, viz. New Townships, 8—Marla (Cheap) Housing Colonies and 4—Marlas (Cheap) Tenements to cater to the requirements of various groups of displaced population. The New Townships accommodated the rich and upper-middle classes whereas the housing colonies and tenements helped the lower-middle and poorer sections. The houses and plots in the New Townships and 8—Marla (Cheap) Housing Colonies were sold at a reserved price under the East Punjab Refugees Rehabilitation (Buildings and Building Sites) Act, 1948. The price was recovered as loan in 30 half-yearly instalments. Later they were allowed to adjust these loans against their verified claims. The disposal of 4—Marla (Cheap) Tenements was made under executive instructions in consultation with the Government of India. Details of the houses and shops constructed and

plots laid out under these schemes in the then Faridabad area are given below :

Name of the Scheme	Houses constructed	Shops constructed	Shop sites	Plots
1	2	3	4	5
(i) New Township, Palwal	200	—	—	121
(ii) 8-Marla (Cheap) Housing Colony, Palwal	96	—	—	34
(iii) 4-Marla (Cheap) Tene- ments, Faridabad	80 tenements			
(iv) 4-Marla (Cheap) Tenements, Palwal	86 tenements			

In all these colonies satisfactory arrangements were made for drainage, water supply and electricity. Provision was also made for school buildings, public parks, hospitals, clubs, libraries and places of worship. Most of the plots earmarked for such special purposes were sold to private registered bodies at half the reserved sale price, on the condition that the plots sold would be utilised for the purpose for which they were earmarked.

**Mud-hut colonies.**—Mud-hut colonies were constructed in 1950 at Palwal to provide accommodation to the residual population in refugee camps comprising members of the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes and landless and destitute persons. A total of 1,450 mud-huts were constructed at Palwal. The claimants were required to pay the cost of the land and the super-structure. The non-claimants were charged only the cost of the land and the cost of the super-structure was treated as a grant. Nothing was charged from the destitute widows and disabled persons.

**Small urban and house building loans.**—The scheme of advancing loans and grants to help the poor and middle class displaced persons to re-start their business, trade or other vocations was introduced in February, 1948. Under the East Punjab Refugees Rehabilitation (Loans and Grants) Act, 1948, the loan was limited to Rs. 5,000 to an individual, Rs. 20,000 to a group of 4 or more displaced persons and Rs. 25,000 to a cooperative society. Grants were also given to unattached women, widows and others for their re-settlement. The maximum grant to an individual was limited to Rs. 500.

**Small urban loans.**—These loans were advanced to displaced persons to

enable them to establish themselves in different vocations. All classes of displaced persons (traders, shopkeepers, artisans, industrialists, students, lawyers and medical practitioners) were helped under the scheme. The loans carried an interest of 3 per cent per annum. Their recovery was to start after two years of disbursement and they were repayable together with interest in equal yearly instalments spread over a period of six years. The scheme of small urban loans was discontinued after 1956-57 onwards.

**Housing-building loans.**—Housing-building loans were advanced to purchasers of plots sold out by the State Government in model towns and new colonies set up after the Partition. These loans enabled displaced persons to build their own houses on easy terms of repayment. No loans were given after 1955-56.

**Financial Assistance to displaced students and trainees.**—The students suffered much due to the weakening of financial position of their parents and guardians. The student community constituted a valuable national asset. Their education was upset by the Partition of the country. In order to enable them to pursue their studies, a scheme to give grants and loans to students was sanctioned by the Government in January, 1948. Under this scheme, relief to the students of colleges and technical institutions took the form of loans. Relief to school students was in form of grants for the purchase of books, apparatus, stationery and exemption from school and examination fees. The loans carried a nominal interest of 2 per cent annum and were repayable within four years (in deserving cases up to six years) of the date of the payment of the last instalment. However, these were later treated as grants.

**Opportunities for gainful employment.**—The next important step toward effecting rehabilitation was the provision of business premises where the displaced persons could pursue their avocations, industry or other professional work. The Government decided that evacuee shops, factories and industrial establishment would be allotted only to the displaced persons. An essential condition of eligibility, however, was that a displaced person who claimed allotment of a shop or factory should have been carrying on similar business or industry in the West Punjab (Pakistan).

**Compensation.**—The number of evacuee shops, factories and industrial establishments in the East Punjab were far too inadequate to meet the requirements of the displaced persons who were to be rehabilitated. Interim compensation was sanctioned for certain categories of displaced persons who were in urgent need of relief. The interim scheme was later replaced by the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Act, 1954, under which a scale of compensation was prescribed. It gave more to smaller claimants, and less to the bigger claim-

ants. This compensation was paid out of the compensation pool to which the Central Government had contributed.

**Residual work.**—The rehabilitation of refugees was completed by 1958 and only minor residuary problems remained, e.g. correction of clerical mistakes in allotments or rectification of deficiencies, if any. The State Government entered into an administrative and financial agreement with the Government of India from March 1, 1970, whereby all the available urban evacuee lands and properties were transferred to the State Government. These were sold by the Tehsildar (Sales).

**Progress made by the Refugees.**—It is an interesting feature of the displaced persons coming to this district that a majority of them had settled in urban areas. Even the allottees of agricultural land had shown a preference to come to urban areas. However, the displaced persons integrated themselves culturally with the new environment. They greatly helped in the development of trade and industry. In order to meet this situation and to create additional employment at important refugee centres, the Government formed a scheme of developing industrial townships in areas having substantial industrial potential or areas which were expected to gain this potential once industries were established. In this district, such a township was established at Faridabad which has now emerged as an industrial hub of North India.

Shopping centre was set up at Palwal for displaced persons who were doing business in temporarily installed wooden structures on pavements. An amount of Rs. 500 was advanced as loan for the construction of this type of shop. This facility served as an incentive and consequently 45 shops in Mud-hut Colony, Palwal were constructed.

**Vocational Training.**—To adjust the displaced persons in the economy of the State and to make up for the acute shortage of skilled labour, a number of vocational training centres were opened by the Government. One such centre was opened at Palwal in 1948-49. The aim was to impart technical training so that displaced persons could be able to secure suitable employment after getting such training. Tools, equipment and machinery were provided mostly by the Government of India. Expenses for contingencies and establishment were met by the State Government.

The centres were closed in 1963. The staff was adjusted in the industrial training institutes and the equipment and machinery were auctioned.

**Payment of compensation.**—Compensation was paid to displaced persons who had abandoned immovable property in Pakistan, after their claims had been verified under the Displaced Persons (claims) Act, 1950. The interim compensation was sanctioned for certain categories of displaced persons who were in urgent need of relief. In fact, it was they who initiated the industrial economy of the district. To begin with they took a leading share in the industrial units at Faridabad and Ballabgarh.