

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

AREA AND POPULATION

The total population of the present Mahendragarh district, with an area of 2,983 square kilometres, worked out on the basis of 1971 Census, is 7,34,143. The details are given as under :

Area	Population			Persons per sq. km.	Females per 1000 Males
	Male	Female	Total		
2,983	3,83,197	3,50,946	7,34,143	246	916

The district ranked eighth according to population in the state. The district had 7.3 per cent of the total population of the state and the ratio of females per thousand males was 916, the highest in the state. The ratio of female population per thousand males for whole of the state was 867. The Scheduled Castes formed 16.42 per cent of the total population in the district in 1971, comprising 1,20,549 persons with 62,109 males and 58,440 females. The tahsil-wise area with population of the district worked out on 1971 Census is given below :

Tahsil-wise Population in 1971

Tahsil	Area (sq. km.)	Population	Population per sq. km.
Rewari	1013.36	2,77,863	274
Bawal	247.40	57,309	232
Narnaul	957.30	2,42,961	254
Mahendragarh	764.94	1,56,010	204

The district had a density of 246 persons per square kilometre in 1971 which made Mahendragarh the 6th most densely populated district in the state. The density of Haryana (in 1971) was 227 persons per square kilometre. Among the tahsils of the district, Rewari and Narnaul had the highest density.

Due to frequent territorial changes in the district boundaries, the figures of population in the district as such are not available. However, the population variation in 6 towns, Rewari, Narnaul, Mahendragarh, Bawal, Kanina

and Ateli for which census data are available, is shown below since 1901 :

Census Year	Population	Variation
Rewari		
1901	27,295	
1921	23,129	(—)4,166
1941	30,673	(+)7,544
1951	34,082	(+)3,409
1961	36,994	(+)2,912
1971	43,885	(+)6,891
Narnaul		
1901	19,489	
1921	20,410	(+)921
1941	23,063	(+)2,653
1951	18,180	(—)4,883
1961	23,959	(+)5,779
1971	31,875	(+)7,916
Mahendragarh		
1901	9,984	
1921	9,580	(—)404
1941	9,771	(+)191
1951	7,961	(—)1,810
1961	9,071	(+)1,110
1971	11,496	(+)2,425
Bawal		
1901	5,739	
1921	5,137	(—)602
1941	5,709	(+)572

1951	5,392	(—)317
1961	5,924	(+)532
1971	6,529	(+)605
Kanina		
1951	3,457	
1961	4,582	(+)1,125
1971	5,875	(+)1,293
Ateli		
1951	1,015	
1961	1,521	(+)506
1971	1,937	(+)416

The population of Rewari town declined from 27,295 in 1901 to 23,129 in 1921 due to epidemics and drought. The population thereafter steadily increased. However, it was in the decade 1961-1971 that the population increased substantially from 36,994 in 1961 to 43,885 in 1971. Narnaul town too showed a very gradual increase in population from 19,489 in 1901 to 31,875 in 1971. Thus in seventy years the town's population increased by 12,386, which shows a growth rate of 63 per cent over the 1901 population. However, the largest increase of population was in the decade 1961—1971. The population of Narnaul town increased from 23,959 in 1961 to 31,875 in 1971 depicting a net increase of 7,916. The growth of other towns in the district had been rather poor. Mahendragarh town had a population of 9,984 in 1901, which increased to 11,496 in 1971. Thus in seventy years the town's population showed an increase of 1,512 only which reflects a growth rate of 15 per cent between 1901—1971. The town's population decreased from 9,771 in 1941 to 7,961 in 1951 as a result of muslim migration. The growth rate for Bawal town from 1901 to 1971 was 14 per cent, showing an increase of population from 5,739 in 1901 to 6,529 in 1971. The population of Kanina in 1951 was 3,457, which increased to 5,875 in 1971. The growth rate of Kanina between 1951—1971 was 70 per cent. The population of Ateli had almost doubled between 1951—1971.

In 1947, large number of Muslims migrated to Pakistan and 3,945 displaced persons were resettled in the district. Thus the decade variation of population for Mahendragarh district can only be seen from 1961—1971.

Population in 1961	Population in 1971	Increase in population	Percentage increase 1961—1971
6,00,786	7,34,143	1,33,357	22.2

The district had the least growth rate of 22.2 per cent during the decade 1961—1971 among the districts of the state. This was far below the 32.23 per cent growth rate for whole of the state.

RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION

The total rural population in the district in 1971 was 6,32,546, while the urban population was 1,01,597. Thus 86.16 per cent of the district population lived in rural areas. The break-up of sex-wise rural and urban population is given below :—

Rural/Urban Population 1971

Rural			Urban			Percentage of rural population
Males	Females	Total	Male	Female	Total	
3,29,234	3,03,312	6,32,546	53,963	47,634	1,01,597	86.16

LANGUAGE

According to 1971 Census, Hindi is the mother tongue of 6,87,777 persons. The next important linguistic group is of those whose mother tongue is Punjabi. Their number is 3,435. Urdu is spoken by only 265 persons. The remaining 162 persons speak different languages. The majority of the people speak Ahirwati dialect in the district. People of some villages in Nizampur block bordering Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan speak both Bagri (Rajasthani) and Ahirwati dialects. Bangru dialect is spoken by the people of the areas adjoining Dadri tahsil of the Bhiwani district. Mewati dialect is also spoken by few people in villages of the Rewari tahsil.

Ahirwati¹ represents the connecting link between Mewati and three other dialects, Bangru, Bagri and Shekhawati. In its grammar it differs little from Mewati. It is the stepping stone between that dialect and Bangru, and the principle point of connection between it and Bangru is the use of the word 'sun' 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 'a', e.g. *kankar* for *Kankar*-modula limestone, *makhi* for *makhi*-fly.

1. For details of Ahirwati dialect see *Linguistic Survey of India* (by G.A. Grierson), Vol. IX, Part II, pp. 49-51, 233-41.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Hindus

The Hindus constitute overwhelming majority of the total population in the district and predominate both in the rural and urban areas. A majority of them follow traditional beliefs and practise Sanatan Dharma. Although they worship gods and goddesses, they believe in one God and regard Him as the creator of the universe. They worship Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Rama, Krishna, etc. Both Rama and Krishna are regarded as the incarnations of God who took birth for the preservation of dharma on earth. The *Vedas*, the *Upnishads*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are their sacred books. They worship in the temples and *shivallyas* where idols of gods and goddesses are kept. Local deities such as Bhumia or Khera, Pirs and saints including deities such as Pitras and Satis are also worshipped. The practice of observing *shraddhas* in commemoration of dead ancestors is very common. These are performed for 15 days before the commencement of *nauratri*. Brahmans are fed on the *tithi* (date) on which the ancestor died and *khir*, *halwa*, etc., are offered to them. No member of the family takes meals before the performance of *shraddha*. Some of the important deities worshipped by Hindus are detailed below :

Shiva.—Shiva is one of the principal gods to whom Hindus especially venerate throughout the state as in other parts of the country. Shiva temple or Shivalya is found almost in every village and provides glimpses of old architecture. People visit Shivalya, generally on Mondays, and worship the deity by pouring milk and water on the *linga*, (symbol of Shiva). The *jogis* (priests), generally of the Kanphara (pierced ears) class, take the offerings. Shiva's temple at village Bhagot (Mahendragarh tahsil), Shankar Bhagwan Mandir at village Kamania (Narnaul tahsil), the Shivalya (Modhawala) at Narnaul and the temple of Baba Rameshwar Dass at Bahmanwas deserve special mention.

Rama.—Rama is worshipped by all Hindus as the incarnation of Vishnu. The idols of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are placed in temples known as Thakurdvaras. Rama is especially worshipped on the occasion of Dussehra when Rama Lila, the story of the Ramayan, is staged in various parts of the district. Ram Lila keeps reverence for Rama and folk-theatre alive.

Krishna.—Krishna is worshipped throughout the district by all Hindus especially the Ahirs who claim themselves to be his descendants. They used to visit Mathura and Vrindaban, the sacred places connected with the life of Krishna even in those days when there were

no means of communication except carts or camels. Besides, the name of Krishna is very dear to every Hindu of the district as elsewhere in the country and temples dedicated to him are found everywhere in villages and towns of the district.

Hanumana.—Hanumana is worshipped throughout the district. There is a custom of constructing a Hanumana temple before digging a well to avert any accident as Hanumana is considered the god of strength. Any difficult work is started after saying 'Jai Bajrang Bali'. The deity is worshipped on Tuesday. In Rewari town, a big temple dedicated to Hanumana is situated near the Tej Singh Tank. At Bahmanawas a big statue of Hanuman stands installed in the precincts of the temple.

Devi or Durga.—Closely connected to Shiva is the worship of his consort Devi or Durga. The goddess goes by various names. The temple of Chamunda Devi and Naina Devi at Narnaul are worth mentioning. Besides, Devi fairs are also held at Tankri (Rewari tahsil), Khudana (Mahendragarh tahsil), Mahesar, Sarohi, Narnaul and Nangal Chaudhry (Narnaul tahsil). Sitla Mata is worshipped for protection against smallpox. An important shrine of one of the deities is at Garhi Mahasar (near Ateli) in the Narnaul tahsil. Sitla Mata is supposed to be most virulent and is worshipped here on 7th of *chaitra* which is called *sili satam* when the food cooked during the previous night is taken and no fresh food is served. Fairs are held on this day at many places. Besides this, *phag*, the day after the Holi festival and any Monday, especially in *Chaitra* or *Asadha*, are favourable days. Children and women participate in the worship.

Shani(Saturn).—On every Saturday, people worship the idol of Shani, riding an elephant, at Narnaul. Mustard oil is poured over the idol and *rewri*(preparation of sugar and til) is offered. The Dakaut Brahmins look after the temple and accept offerings.

Sun god.—He is a god whom the Hindus delight to honour. No shrine, however, has been dedicated to this god in the district. Sunday is the day sacred and more pious among his devotees keep the fast in his honour on this day. Water is offered to the Sun by raising both the hands holding a pot full of water and pouring water on the ground while concentrating on the deity. Besides, when the devotee first steps out of door in the morning, he salutes the Sun.

Bhumia or Khera.—Bhumia or the god of the homestead or the village itself, often called Khera, is worshipped on Sunday. People light a lamp and offer a bread at the shrine and feed Brahmins. This is

done twice a year after the harvests. Bhumia is also worshipped at marriages. The bridegroom, before proceeding to the bride's house, takes a round of his own village and worships Bhumia and again worships him before he enters his house along with his bride. When a woman has had a son, she lights lamps and affixes with cow dung five *culms* of the *panni* grass to the shrine. Likewise the first milk of a cow or buffalo is always offered to Bhumia.

Gugga Pir.—Gugga or Jahar Pir is supposed to be the greatest of the snake-kings. He was originally a Chauhan Rajput named Jahar but later embraced Islam. Gugga is worshipped everywhere. The 9th and the 15th of *Bhadra*, especially the former, considered as Gugga Naumi are dedicated to this Pir and generally the 9th of any month and usually Mondays are regarded as his days. His shrine usually consists of a small one-room building with a minaret on each corner and a grave inside. It is called a *mari* and is marked by a long bamboo with peacock plumes, a coconut, some coloured threads and some hand-*pankhas* with a blue flag on the top. On the 9th of *Bhadra*, the people of this district worship his symbol, a black snake painted on a wall and the worshippers take a fly-flap, known as *chhari*, round the village to the sound of *deroos* and the devotees salute it and offer *churmas*. The Balmikis sing devotional songs known as '*Pir ke Sôlle*' in his honour to the accompaniment of *deroos*. Beating of *deroos* is the exclusive privilege of the Balmiki community; others may take part in singing, dancing or simply offering *charhawa*. It is believed that the spirit of Gugga temporarily takes abode in the devotee dancer who proves this fact by beating himself occasionally with a bunch of iron chains called *chabuk*. Gugga Pir is also the subject of folk-songs.

Other Saints.—Guru Ravidas, a great saint born at Mandur village near Kashi (Varanasi), in Uttar Pradesh is revered throughout the district. Guru Ravidas was against the caste system. Temples dedicated to him have been erected in various towns. The birth anniversary of the Guru is celebrated on the *purnima* of Magh (February-March). On the occasion, *jhankies* from the life of the Guru are taken out in procession to the accompaniment of brass bands and *Bhajan Mandlis* singing devotional songs.

People also rever Rishi Balmiki, the composer of the *Ramayana*. His birth anniversary is celebrated with great enthusiasm in the month of October.

JAINS

They reside mostly in Narnaul and Rewari tahsils. They are of the Aggarwal community who have adopted the Jain faith. †They

worship Lord Mahavira and the images of Tirthankaras. They celebrate their *parvas*, i.e. the festivals connected with the life of Mahavira and Tirthankaras. Jains abstain from taking meat and are protectors of animal life.

Muslims

Muslims from the district migrated to Pakistan after the partition of the country in 1947. There are now very few Muslim families in the district and their number is negligible.

Christians

Like the Muslims, Christians are also small in number in the district. The Christians assemble in the Church at Rewari on every Sunday and on other Christian festivals.

Sikhs

Sikhs, a minority community in the district, have distinct places of worship. The area having been ruled by the Sikh rulers in the past, there is a Gurdwara in almost every town. In some villages too where there are some Sikh families, one finds a Gurdwara, howsoever, small it may be. There is a big Gurdwara at Narnaul where large number of Sikhs gather on *Gurpurbs* and Baisakhi.

SUPERSTITIONS

The masses generally cling to many traditional superstitions in performing ordinary acts of daily life. Some of the commonly known and practised superstitions are listed below :—

If a black cat crosses one's path, it is believed to be a sign of failure in work. Similarly, if some one sneezes, it is a bad omen for going out or commencing a work. A women with an empty pitcher, coming from an opposite direction is considered very inauspicious. If the pitcher is full of water, it is regarded as lucky sign. While going out, it is generally considered inauspicious to come across a Brahman (professional) or a person carrying a bundle of fire wood. However, if a sweeper with his basket and broom comes across, it is regarded as a good omen.

An astrologer is invariably consulted on every important occasion, e.g. on the birth of a child, for fixing up the date of marriage or any other auspicious occasion, for proceeding on a distant journey, on opening a factory or a new business, checking favourable stars in matters of litigation, examinations, career, etc.

The spread of education has had little influence in weaning away people from such practices and superstitions.

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

The people of the district celebrate major festivals with same enthusiasm as in other parts of Haryana. The most significant festivals are Diwali, Dussehra, Ram Naumi, Holi, Teej, Janam Ashtami, Shivaratri, Sankrat and Raksha Bandhan. Some festivals are celebrated only by women and these are Karva Chauth, Nirjala Ekadshi and Hooe. Three festivals, viz. Teej, Gugga Naumi and Dulhandi carry wider local significance in the district. Teej is celebrated on *sawan sudi* 3 (July-August), Gugga Naumi on *Bhadon Badi* 9 (August-September) and Dulhandi on *Chet Badi* 1 (March-April), the day following Holi.

Teej called Haryali Teej is a seasonal festival. To celebrate the change of season, the girls eagerly await for Teej. It is an occasion for newly married girls to go back to their parents for celebrating first Teej with their girl friends. On Teej bevy of young girls attired in their best clothes and wearing new multi-coloured glass bangles start pouring in some open space or a tree grove near the pond and it takes the form of a fair. Stout swings are hung from the trees for the girls to swing. They swing with agility and sing songs. The humour, pathos and passions contained in these songs are really touching. The in-laws of the girls send gifts, ornaments, clothes and sweets when they are with their parents and they also give gifts when married girls go back to their in-laws. Prominent Teej fairs are held at Bawal (Bawal Tahsil), Dharuhera, Khori, Rewari (Rewari Tahsil), Bawania, Dongra Ahir, Nautana, Kanina, Mahendragarh (Mahendragarh Tahsil) and Narnaul.

Gugga Naumi is a religious festival connected with snake worship observed on Bhadra 9 (August). To commemorate Gugga Naumi, fairs are held at his shrine. People who do not go to his shrine, pour *lassi* (diluted milk) and *sevan* (cooked vermicelli) in holes that might contain snakes. The important Gugga fairs are held at Bawal (Bawal Tahsil), Asadpur, Bikaner, Dharuhera, Darauli, Suruora, Jafusana, Rohria, Turkiawas (Rewari Tahsil), Nautana, Bawana, Kuksi, Kanina, Patherwa, Bawania, Maupura (Mahendragarh Tahsil), Hudiana, Kauwi, Nangal Chaudhry, Ateli and Narnaul (Narnaul Tahsil).

Dulhandi or Charandi is celebrated throughout the district on *Chet* 1 (March-April), the day following Holi. The festival is known as Phag in other parts of Haryana and is gayest among Hindu festivals. In Mahendragarh district, the tradition of beating the men with *Kolras* (twisted cloth strip) is not widely prevalent and men and women generally play Dulhandi

only by throwing coloured water on one another or smearing their faces with dry coloured powder. In urban areas, the Holi is played on *Phagun Purnamashi* but people in rural areas play on the following day. Fairs are also held on Dulhandi at Bharawas, Khor, Rewari (Rewari Tahsil), Dalanwas, Kharoli, Bawania, Behrawas, Nehlawas (Mahendragarh Tahsil), Rajpura, Bachhod, Mirzapur, Mosnota and Narnaul (Narnaul Tahsil).

Most of the fairs are of religious origin but they exhibit a bit commercial colour as thousands of people attend them and traders find an occasion to sell their goods. The fairs are held on festivals like Gugga Naumi, Teej, Dulhandi, Shivratri, Janam Ashtami, Dushehra, Sankrat and Ram Naumi but Gugga Naumi, Teej and Dulhandi fairs are more common.

Like Karnal and Ambala districts, the fairs to the reverence of Devis (goddesses) are also common in the district. These fairs are variously known as Tankriwali Devi, Budho Mata, Durga Mata, Mata Jawali Devi, Tati Mata, Bichhun Mata, Thawri Mata, Pathwari Mata, Chamunda Devi, Masani Mata and Sitla Mata. A few important Devi fairs which are attended by large number of people are Jawala Devi fair or Devi Ka Mela at Mahesar (Narnaul Tahsil), Sitla fair at Assanwas (Narnaul Tahsil), Doo Doo (Sitla Mata) fair at Nangal Chaudhry (Narnaul tahsil), Budho Mata fair at Shabazpur (Narnaul tahsil), Basaura fair and Chamunda Devi fair at Narnaul.

There are a few Sati fairs of Mahendragarh tahsil of this district held in memory of women who committed *Sati*. These fairs are held at Dalanwas, Balyash and Pali. The fair at Dalanwas is held in memory of a Mahajan women who committed *Sati* when her husband was killed by robbers.

About 40 fairs, associated with local saints or Sadhus are held in the district. These fairs are evenly distributed over the district and some of them attract visitors from far off places. Fairs associated with Bhairon are most common. About the Bhairon fair at Basduda (Rewari tahsil), it is said that people from Agra and Delhi come to this fair. Formerly girls of Mallah caste used to be married to the god at this festival but the practice has long been discontinued. The tradition is still followed by way of marrying an effigy of a girl made out of wheat flour to the god.

One of the important fairs of the district is Shaheedi Mela held in September for two days at Rampura (Rewari tahsil) to commemorate death anniversary of Rao Tula Ram, an Ahir hero of the Uprising of 1857.

SOCIAL LIFE

Social Groups

Significant social groups in the district are Ahirs, Jats, Brahmans, Rajputs, Banias, Gujjars, Aroras, Khattris, Rahbaris, Balmikis, Chamars, Dhanaks, Kumhars, Khatis and Lohars. Rahbaris have been mentioned because of their peculiar features but they are few. Aroras and Khattris comprise the displaced population who settled in the district as a consequence of the Partition in 1947. Ahirs, Jats, Rajputs, Gujjars and Brahmans form the agricultural backbone of the district.

Ahirs.—Ahirs are in majority in the district. The term Ahir may be variously explained. The Ahir, according to H.A. Rose, is derived from the Sanskrit Abhira, a milkman. The traditional view is, however, that Lord Krishna, was an Ahir and they are his descendants. Besides, Ahirs of the district call themselves Yadavs or Yaduvanshis, the clan to which Krishna belonged. They are good cultivators and are of the same social standing as the Jats and the Gujjars. A very large number of them are in defence services. They are good agriculturists and herdsmen of the first rank.

Jats.—Jats are scattered all over the district and a large number of them reside in Mahendragarh and Bawal tahsils. Besides, being fine soldiers, they are good cultivators. The Jats are a tough and sturdy community. Today they are more liberal in social relations than certain other communities. Though generally agriculturists, they now do not confine themselves to it and have turned to other professions and vocations with remarkable success. They are known for their robust physique, common sense, patient labour, liberal attitude and love for the land.

Brahmans.—People still regard Brahmans with reverence, based on the traditional belief of ages. In ancient times Buddhism and Jainism were the first to protest against the Brahmans for giving religious sanction to the caste system and performing rituals for their own advantage. Modern education, the influence of western thought, centralised administration and the rapid means of communications are some of the important factors which are breaking down the caste system signifying the superiority of Brahmans. Besides, the secular provisions laid down in the Constitution of India provide a legal basis for change in the same direction. Much that remains of the Brahmans former glory is now witnessed only at the time of ceremonies associated with birth, death and marriage. However, Bhargava Brahmans claim that their ancestor Chavan Rishi had performed *tapasya* at Dhosi hill about 5

kilometres from Narnaul. Now the Brahmans are not wholly dependent upon their *jajmans* and have taken to agriculture, trade and services.

Rajputs.—They represent the ancient Kashtrya Varna and are known for their valour, chivalry, loyalty, horsemanship, swordmanship and faithfulness. Rajputs in the district retain the martial instinct of their ancestors and prefer an army career to agriculture. A large number of them are in the armed forces and have proved their traditional worth of fine soldiers.

Banias.—Bania is a derivation of a Sanskrit word, Vanij, a term applied to traders and businessmen. They are mostly Aggarwals and are said to have come from Agroha (Hisar district). The Banias constitute the backbone of the village economy and industry. They control commerce and trade and operate most of the privately managed public utility projects. Many of the Banias in the past left their villages and established business in other parts of the country, particularly at Calcutta, Bombay, etc. They have also shifted towards service.

Gujjars.—Gujjars in the district are efficient cultivators. They are of good physique and have equal social status with Jats and Ahirs. Cattle-keeping was their main profession in the past but now they have turned to agriculture. They are also keen to join the army. They are the devotees of Lord Krishna. Their main concentration is around Narnaul town.

Aroras and Khatries.—They came to this district from Pakistan mostly from Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan districts after the partition in 1947. They have largely settled in the urban areas, i.e. Narnaul, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Bawal and Ateli. They are hard working, energetic and enterprising people and are engaged in business, trade, government services and agriculture. Their outlook has influenced the local people of the district. They have liberalised the traditional custom of *pardah* and other rituals. They have a progressive outlook and are known for modern trends in dress and dwellings.

Rahbaris.—Rahbaris are believed to have come from Rajasthan. They had left their homes during famines and settled in various parts of Haryana. In this district they reside in village Nimbi (Mahendragarh tahsil). They claim Rajput origin and believe that they had socially sunk due to their poverty. The influence of Rajasthan is still noticed in their dress and dialect. Their main occupation is the camel trade. They are distinguished from others by long beards and moustaches.

Balmikis.—Balmikis were scavengers and even now they follow this profession. They reside both in rural and urban areas. However, in

the rural areas they rear pigs, goats and sheep. They claim that they are descendants of Maharishi Balmiki, the celebrated author of the *Ramayana*. Younger generation among them now prefer government service.

Chamars.—Chamars of the district are divided into 2 sections; Chamars and Jatia or Jatav Chamars. Though chamars are scattered throughout the district. Yet Jatia or Jatav Chamars are found mostly in Rewari tahsil. They do not mix socially and inter-marriages do not take place. The term Chamar is, in fact, an occupational one. Besides their old profession of leather and shoe-making, they have shifted to services and agriculture. This community being politically conscious has progressed much after Independence and its members now occupy important positions in the services.

Jatia or Jatav Chamars deal in hide and skin.

Dhanaks.—Dhanaks are scattered in villages and towns of the district. Weaving is their hereditary profession. In addition to government service a large number of them have now shifted to cultivation as agricultural labourers.

Kumhars.—Kumhar is an occupational term connected with pottery. Besides traditional occupation, they have taken to agriculture. In towns, they keep donkeys for carrying soil for house construction. They have their own customs and worship Sitla Devi in particular.

Khatis.—The term Khati is the name of an occupation and developed into caste later. They trace their origin to Brahmans and call themselves Jangir Brahmans. Khatis prepare wooden implements for agriculture. The village Khatis are not technically trained in their occupation and they are only capable of making furniture for villagers. They have also taken to agriculture in addition to carpentry.

Lohars.—Lohar is also an occupational term and denotes a caste now. They are scattered in the rural areas. Lohars have not confined themselves to blacksmith's work and have also adopted agricultural profession.

Gadiya Lohars are so called because of their cart of peculiar shape in which they carry their belongings. They claim Rajput origin and wander from village to village in search of blacksmith's work. They pitch up their tents on the fringe of villages. These are gypsy type people.

The caste system is losing its rigidity under the pressure of economic and social forces.

JOINT FAMILY SYSTEM

The family is locally known as *kunba* or *kutumb*. A group of families having common ancestors is called *thola*. Two or more *tholas* are jointly called *pana* or *patti*. It is common for several brothers, and occasionally for cousins to live together and cultivate the land jointly. More often the land is managed jointly while the owners live separately. The most important characteristic of the joint family system is that the income of all its members is pooled and spent for the benefit of all its members whether or not they have actually earned any part of it. The basis for the system is to ensure the maintenance of all descendants from a common ancestor/father. The orphans, the children, young boys and girls and elderly or physically incapacitated members of the family receive due attention of the head of the family and are supported and maintained out of the joint family funds.

The joint family system which has been a distinguishing feature of the Hindu Society since time immemorial, is breaking up under the stress of the changed economic and social conditions. Various factors are responsible for this change. The competition for earning a living, the tax-structure, the increased cost of living, the mobility resulting from the requirements of service and above all, the growing spirit of individualism, spell the doom of this ancient institution. It is no longer possible for one earning member of a family to feed and support a host of relations and dependents. Even in the family where every member now is earning, it is difficult to make both ends meet. Another factor which has contributed to the dissolution of the system is the growing tendency of late marriages both among the boys and girls. When boys and girls marry at a comparatively advanced age, they prefer to live independently. Those who enter service, have naturally to go wherever they are posted and this loosens the hold of the joint family.

While these changes are more marked in urban areas, joint family system is disappearing even in the villages where people depend almost entirely on agriculture. The average holding is too small to support a joint family. It is, therefore, inevitable that some members of the family should move out in search of service to the towns or elsewhere to supplement the family income. In this way, the migration of rural population to the towns in search of a living—whether in business, industry, service or some form of labour—has vitally effected the structure of the joint family. Those who migrate to the towns get allured to modern amenities and try to settle down there with their families.

Inheritance.—The intestate property, before the enforcement of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, was inherited by the sons after the death

of the father, and if there was no son, the widow of the deceased inherited it. The widow had, however, only life interest in the property and she was not legally entitled to dispose it of as she liked. Except *stridhana*¹, a woman was not supposed to be the absolute owner of the property nor could a married daughter claim share in her father's property. Now, according to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, sons and daughters, the mother and the widow alongwith other heirs² of the deceased, if any, inherit the intestate property simultaneously. A daughter has as good a claim in her father's property as a son, provided the father does not debar her by law. In spite of the right conferred by law, however, it appears to have become a general practice for the girls not to claim any part of the intestate property. In the absence of a brother, a girl may sometime give her land to her near relative though in such cases she usually retains her right to property. In a few cases, suits were instituted by daughters who were denied their share in the intestate property.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Wedding.—The preliminary ceremony of the wedding is *sagai* or betrothal which is made by parents. As per custom, a Hindu may not marry a woman belonging to his own *gotra*, his mother's *gotra* and his grand mother's *gotra*. Among Banias, a man may marry in any *gotra* except his own, even in his mother's family, provided the relationship be not very close. There is no distinct limit fixed. After the *sagai* or betrothal, the *sawa*, i.e. an auspicious date for the wedding is agreed upon by both the parties after consulting the Brahman. The bride's father sends a letter written on paper stained yellow to the boy's father suggesting to him the date of marriage. The *lagan* is sent 9 or 11 days before the date fixed for wedding and is accompanied by cash and other presents or symbols such as betelnuts, a coconut, a coloured thread, etc., for the boy and his relations. These presents are delivered to the boy and his assembled relations. A day before marriage, the maternal uncle of the boy or girl bring the *bhat* which consists of monetary and other presents and necessarily include a wedding suit.

Before the departure of the *baraat*, the boy is dressed in his wedding suit brought by his maternal uncle. The *kangna* or seven-knotted sacred thread is tied on his right wrist. His head-dress consists of a crown or crest over the turban and a *sehra* covering the face. After receiving blessings from mother and aunts, the bridegroom is

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

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

made to sit on mare's back. This ceremony is popularly known as *ghurchari*. Women follow along singing songs peculiar to the occasion and the mother or aunt or an elderly woman carries a utensil containing water. His sister puts her wrap over her right hand and places on it rice which she showers at the crown of bridegroom as he goes along. He goes and worships the god of the homestead. *Bag pakrai*, *kajal ghalai* and *chuchi pilai* are some of the peculiar ceremonies which are performed at the time of *ghurchari* before the marriage party proceeds for the home of the bride. Thereafter the *baraat*, usually comprising the relatives and friends, sets out amidst music. In some cases, *ghurchari* is performed a day earlier.

If both the parties reside in the same town or place, no arrangements for the lodging of the *baraat* are necessary. If, on the other hand, the *baraat* comes from out station, it is received by the bride's side usually at the railway station. If it comes by road, it is received at some pre-agreed spot on the outskirts of the town or village and from there the party is then usually taken in procession to some *jandal-wasa*, *dharmasala*, *chopal* or any other place where arrangements are made for the stay and entertainment of the *baraat*. Thereafter, the *milni* ceremony takes place where boy's father and girl's father embrace each other and the latter gives some money as gift to the boy's father. Among the Aroras and Khatris, *milni* is also performed by other near relatives of both sides and cash gifts are given by each participant of the girl's side to his counterpart. In the evening, the *baraat* proceeds in procession with bridegroom on the mare towards the bride's house with pomp and show. The groom's friends and relatives dance before the mare to the accompaniment of the band. Such dancing in a marriage procession is a new feature of recent origin. The marriage party is received by the relatives and friends on the bride's side. The first ceremony to be performed here is called *barothi*—the threshold ceremony. The boy is taken to the threshold of the girl's house mounted on the mare where he strikes the *toran* (a small wooden frame suspended over the door) with a branch of tree. At the door of the house women stand singing and *jai mala* is put by the bride around the neck of the bridegroom and vice versa. After this colourful ceremony the bridegroom is taken inside the house of the bride and the *baratis* are then entertained to delicious and sumptuous dinner amidst merriment and festivity.

The actual marriage ceremony takes place after nightfall in the *angan* of bride's house where a canopy is erected. Sometimes *purohits* or *pandits* of both the parties are present. Sacred fire for *havan* is lighted and the *purohit* then calls upon her father to perform the *kanyadan*, i.e. formal bride-giving. The latter then puts some money or a

gold ring into the boy's hand and the *pandit* pours water on them. The father then says that he gives his daughter to the bridegroom. The *purohit* then knots her *ornā* to the boy's *chaddar* and the *phera* ceremony then takes place. The girl and the boy both circle slowly four times round the sacred fire keeping their right sides towards it, the boy leads in the first three and the girl in the last. This practice is followed by all communities belonging to Hindu religion. After the fourth *phera* the boy and the girl sit down, their positions, however, being changed, the bridegroom now sitting on the girl's right. The ceremony is highly colourful, picturesque, and at some times interesting also. There may, however, be noticed minor variations among certain castes in the performance and observance of these ceremonies.

Social mores and folkways change like fashions. There was a time when dancing girls were invited to the wedding; their songs and dances provided fun and frolic to the guests, especially in rural areas where there was no other source of entertainment. The practice of inviting dancing parties has virtually vanished.

Previously, the *baraat* used to stay at the bride's place for 3 or even more days but due to economic stress the *baraat* now returns the same or the next morning. The bride's maternal uncle escorts the girl, followed by singing women, to the car or bus in which she is to travel. Small coins are thrown over the heads of the couple as a mark of good wishes and the *baraat* starts back for home.

Anand karaj is performed among the Sikhs. The distinction between *anand karaj* and the Vedic marriage is that in the former the bride and bridegroom instead of going round the sacred fire, go round the holy *Granth*.

Civil marriages can be performed by the marriage officer of the district who is the Deputy Commissioner. Marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act are also performed by registration in the office of the *Tahsildar* who is the registrar for marriages under this Act. Such marriages are, however, rare.

Dowry System.—The evil of dowry system has found its place in all communities. In the past the girl's father, out of love and affection for her, used to give some daily necessities of life, i.e. *palang*, utensils, beddings, clothes and some ornaments as presents. But now this evil has greatly enlarged its scope and dowry is demanded. The evil has so crept into the society that it has become increasingly difficult for a poor father to marry even an able daughter without money. Even the dowry legislation has not succeeded in achieving its objects.

Widow Marriage.—Karewa is a simple sort of marriage for widows. It is contracted with the younger brother of the husband, who might take his brother's widow as his wife. This practice is prevalent among all the communities except Rajputs, Brahamans, Banias, Aroras and Khatris. Such a marriage generally does not take place within a year of the husband's death. Among Rajputs, Brahmans and Banias, the karewa has also made its appearance recently.

Kara.—Kara is another form of widow marriage. It is the marriage of a widow outside her husband's clan. There is no ceremony attached to *kara* and a mediator helps in the marriage.

Widows who do not wish to marry live on the property left by their husbands. In urban areas, however, the educated ones take up employment or engage themselves in some kind of paid or honorary social work.

Divorce.—Divorce is rare in the district. There is a general tendency to suffer hardship resulting from ill-matched marriages. Some couples prefer to lead a miserable life rather than to dissolve the marriage. Another way out has been to leave the girl with her parents for good. Earlier, divorce was possible through a Panchayat. But divorce is looked down upon in almost all the castes. However, with the coming into force of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, a few cases of divorce are being instituted in law courts.

OTHER RITUALS AND CUSTOMS

The daily life of the people, their inter communication and their general behaviour are some of the deciding factors for rituals and customs. The birth of a child, particularly that of a son, is an occasion to celebrate. To announce the birth of an infant, a *kansi* plate (*thali*) is rung when the delivery takes place. The anxious relatives waiting outside consider it auspicious and congratulate each other. The mother and the infant are kept in separate room for 21 days. In rural areas a small dung cake fire is kept smouldering outside the room as protection against evil spirit. A branch of the margosa tree is hung on each side of the room as an auspicious sign. On *chhati* (sixth day) the members of the family and their close relatives do not sleep throughout the night and celebrate the occasion by singing folk songs and playing cards. It is believed that during this night the goddess of fate (Beh Mata) would visit the house and write the fate of the child. On the tenth day, the whole house is cleaned. The Brahman comes to the house for performing *hom* ceremony. He sprinkles Ganga water in whole of the house. After *hom*, the father or grand father of the son gives small presents to the Brahman and asks him to select a name. The Brahman opens the *patra* and having

regard to the time of birth selects the initial letter for the child's name. The elder man of the family chooses a name beginning with that letter, avoiding any name already given to any elder (genealogically) member of the family, whether alive or dead. Within these limits the selection of a name is arbitrary. The child may be named after a god or goddess as Kanhaya (Krishna), Sheoji (after Shiv), Raja Ram (Ram Chandra), Devi Sahai (protected by Devi), or after a holy place as Mathura or a holy object as Tulsi. Sometimes the names are selected with the object of averting the jealousy of an evil spirit. This is the explanation of such names as Molar (bought), Mangtu (borrowed), Ghasita (dragged), Budhu (stupid), and Badlu (exchanged-for rice given by the mother in charity). On the day of *nam karan* the Brahman, relatives and friends are entertained to feast. The parents of the mother of the new born baby offer valuable gifts and presents consisting of cash, ornaments and clothes for their daughter, son-in-law, new born child and their relatives. This custom is known as *chhuchhak*. In rural areas, during the evening of the tenth day the new born baby and his mother are taken to a well, accompanied by singing women for well worship which is known as *kuan dhokna* ceremony.

Among Aroras, the *chhati* (sixth day) is also celebrated. The *chola* is an important ceremony which is celebrated on the 15th or 17th day of the newly born son when clothes consecrated by their own Brahman are worn. A feast is arranged for the friends and relatives.

Almost all Hindus perform the *mundan* ceremony when the boy is a few years old. On this occasion, his hair is cut and head shaved for the first time and friends and relatives are entertained to a feast. The people of the district generally go to Sitla Mata temple at Gurgaon or Bhumia temple at Jhagroli (Mahendragarh tahsil) for first hair-cutting ceremony of their children (Mundan).

Yagyopveet (thread) ceremony is observed by the Khatris and Aroras, wherein the boys are made to wear *janeoo* amidst religious rituals. This Ceremony is observed when the boy is above five years of age. Now the boys of these communities are made to wear *yagyopveet* just immediately before the marriage ceremony.

Hindus and Sikhs cremate their dead. On the third day, the knuckle-bones and other small fragments of bones (*phul*) are collected and taken to be immersed in the Ganga. Children below 8 years are buried without rites. Other post-cremation rites include 12-day (*bahra*) or 13-day (*tehra*) mourning. Muslims and Christians bury their dead.

POSITION OF WOMEN

The Arya Samaj took up the cause of women's emancipation by preaching against purda, propagating the importance of women's education and

widow marriage. Mahatma Gandhi also championed the cause of women's emancipation. Our Constitution provides equal rights to women. Numerous rights like the right to property, divorce etc., have been granted to Indian women through various enactments. Women are now by law required to be treated with equality and have been given equal status with men in almost every sphere.

Despite all the efforts to dispel the prejudice against women, people feel more happy on the birth of a boy than a girl. People in rural areas are now in favour of imparting higher education to their girls although they hold that ultimately the girls have to set up their homes after marriage and it is not necessary for them to earn their livelihood.

Purda is still practised but not so rigidly. Married women cover their faces when moving among the elderly persons in the house or out in the village or to the fields.

The status of women in the urban areas is comparatively much better. Education has received a new impetus with the opening of numerous academic and various technical institutions. With the spread of education, social barriers against their employment are gradually collapsing. Women are gradually taking to employment in various fields.

HOME LIFE

Villages.—Every village has its *johar* or pond in which the rain water is collected for domestic and other uses. Women folk had to trudge long distances to get drinking water from the wells. Attired in multi-coloured *lehngas* and *cholis* women were commonly seen moving about among the sand dunes balancing on their heads two to three pitchers full of water. With the implementation of the rural water supply schemes, piped water-supply has been made available in several villages and it is proposed to cover all the villages.

As a result of consolidation of holdings, enough vacant land has been left around the villages. It is locally called *phirni*. In this open space, the villagers gather their cattle before taking them out for grazing. The roads leading to the villages are now generally broad enough for their carts to move.

Dwelling, furniture and utensils.—The houses in rural areas are mostly of identical pattern. Some houses are built of stone slabs and have thatched roofs called *chhands*. With the change in economic condition of the people, the thatched houses are being replaced by pucca houses. One can now see some pucca houses of modern specifications in the villages along the road side.

Immediately after the entrance to a house, there is usually a room called *poli* or a big hall called *darwaza*. It is used as a drawing or meeting room. Then follows an open space or yard, variously called *angan* or *sahan*. Behind this are inner rooms for sleeping and living, called *kothas*. The *hara* or oven on which milk is warmed, is generally within the outer wall of the house. The houses are generally single storeyed. Roofs are used for sleeping in summer. The houses usually lack latrines in rural areas. In the past there was no special designing of houses except a few *havelis* which had been built by well-to-do families. The doors of these *havelis* were generally carved with flower decorations in brass.

There are also some receptacles (*kuthlas*) for storing grain. Each *kuthla* has a small hole at the bottom from which grain is taken as and when required. Another place of storing grain is called *bukhari*. *Kothi* is another construction within the house. It is rectangular in shape and besides food-grains, articles of daily use are also stored in it. This has a *taki* (small window for the storing or removing the articles).

With the spread of education and a growing demand for better sanitary and health facilities, the villagers are now changing the pattern of their houses. They now often have a separate cattle shed and also take care for the provision of proper light and ventilation. The availability of electricity in the villages has also changed the look of the houses.

Dwellings in urban areas are always pucca. There are some houses of old style in the towns of Rewari, Narnaul and Mahendragarh. Many buildings are well designed with exterior or interior decoration with murals of legendary gods. New colonies on modern lines have also come up. The houses in these localities have been provided with modern amenities.

There are generally few articles of furniture in a village house. These consist of bedsteads (*khat*) made of wooden frames covered with netted string, *moorhas* of different sizes, a few small stools (*pida*) of identical construction and a few small low wooden stools (*patras*). In some houses a strong bedstead made of a wooden frame and netted with thin string of *sunny* in different colours, is also seen. Articles of modern furniture like chairs and tables have also started finding a place in village houses. In urban areas chairs and tables and other articles of furniture are commonly seen. The houses of well-to-do people are tastefully furnished and decorated in modern style. Sofas, wardrobes, *palangs*, *moorhas*, tables and chairs of different descriptions and other items of modern furniture are used.

The vessels in use include *banta* and *tokni*, flat iron plates for baking *chapatis* called *tawa*, *prat* for kneading dough, *degchies* of brass, *handi* (earthware kettle), *kavahi* (iron frying pan), *bhartias* (brass vessels for boiling *dal*, etc.), *chamcha* (spoon of steel or brass), etc. Other utensils are *chimta* (iron

tongs), *kadhawani* (earthen vessel for boiling milk), *jamawani* (earthen vessel for curdling milk), iron buckets and pitchers of various sizes.

Utensils and decorations have undergone a change particularly in urban areas. Side by side with the copper and brass utensils, porcelain, glass wares and stainless steel utensils are finding favour. The use of electrical appliances like heaters and table lamps are gaining popularity. Radios and transistors have come to be regarded as a necessity and a large number of people, both in towns and villages, are using these articles. Many people have also installed television sets in towns and rural areas of the district. Community listening sets have also been installed in many villages.

Dress and Ornaments.—The dress of rural people is simple. The everyday clothes are usually made from coarse cloth, whether mill-made or handi-craft. The male dress consists of a *pagari* (turban), a shirt or *kurta*, a *dhoti* and a pair of shoes. The usual wrap is the *chadar*, and in cold weather a thick blanket or a *razai* or a cotton quilt is substituted. The *khes* is another type of wrap. An *angocha* (handkerchief) is used occasionally. Men in service wear pants or pyjamas. Due to economic prosperity and spread of education, almost all castes have been affected by the change in fashion. The new generation wears pants, bushirts, shirts, coats, sweaters, leather shoes or *chappals*. This change is almost universal in urban and the rural areas. Although in the past men used to wear *murkis* (small plain ear-rings), this is not in vogue now. However, a gold finger-ring is worn in urban as well as in rural areas.

A full set of women's clothes is called *teel*. The village women generally wear *lehnga*, *choli* and blouse of cotton. *Peelia* a sort of headwear, the central part of which is yellow coloured and the rest printed multi-coloured is an important item of dress. The younger women have changed to salwar, *jumper*, *dupatta*, sari and blouse.

The ornaments worn by women are usually made of gold and silver. As far as poor women are concerned, the emphasis is on silver ornaments. Ornaments used here include *singar patti* (worn on head), *haar*, *gulubandh*, *jaimala*, *kanthimala* (all worn round the neck), *karnaphool*, small *bujni*, *dandee*, *kantey*, *bundey*, *tops*, *bali* (all worn on ears), *koka*, *purli*, *nath* (all for the nose), *kangani*, *chura*, bracelets (all worn in arms) and *anguthi* (finger ring), *tagri* (made of silver) is worn on waist around the *lahanga* or *sari*. *Ramjhol* (jhanjhar) *kari*, *chhailkare*, *neveri*, *tati* and *pati*, *pajeb* and *churi* (all made of silver) are worn on legs. Silver rings are also worn on the toes.

Officials, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, college students, etc., irrespective of their origin (whether rural or urban), caste or creed, generally dress up in western style.

Food.—The flour for preparing *rotis* (loaves) is of bajra, wheat and barley. Gram flour is also mixed with wheat or barley flour. The *rotis* are

eaten with pulses, *karhi* and vegetables. *Karhi* is prepared with gram flour mixed with butter milk and is the special dish of the area throughout the year. *Rabri* is made by mixing bajra flour in the cold weather and barley flour in the hot weather with water and whey or buttermilk, and leaving the mixture in the sun until it ferments. Some salt and more buttermilk are then added and the whole is put over a smouldering fire. It is eaten at night with milk, and in the morning with buttermilk. The *kacharas* and *matiras* are the wild fruits which grow in abundance in October/November in this area and are consumed by the people with pleasure.

People in villages and towns are by and large vegetarian but meat eating is common among ex-servicemen and the new generation. Some villagers on a visit to a town enjoy meat dish at the *dhabas*. Menfolk are addicted to the use of tobacco, cigarette, *biddi* and hookah.

So far as drink is concerned, tea as a stimulating drink has become popular with both urban and rural folk. Tea stalls are found in every town and all big villages. In summer months some people prefer to drink a glass of *sherbat*, *lassi* and *sattu*. Soft drinks are becoming popular with younger people and are often served to guests.

Folk-Culture.—Community life is expressed through folk-songs, dances and theatre. With fast changing conditions, urban life is gradually making an inroad into rural life taking away some of its inherent beauty and cultural wealth. However, the village *gavayia* (*bhajni*) still holds an important position in the village. Despite increasing urban influence, folk culture still continues to enliven the countryside which hums with songs and dances on festivals and other numerous occasions. Of late, the government through Public Relations Department and All India Radio is paying attention to the revival of folk culture.

Folk Songs.—Folk culture is preserved by women through folk-songs. Folk-songs with their burden of love and labour have a peculiar charm of their own. These songs express hopes, aspirations, love, joys and sorrows of the rural people. We also hear about the changing seasons, the tinkling of bells of the cattle returning home at sun set and the emotional outbursts of married couples at their union and separation.

There is a variety of folk-songs each connected with a particular occasion. A good number of these are nature songs sung in particular months. The month of *sravana* (July-August) brings ecstasy in its wake. Teej or Haryali Teej is the main festival of *Sravana* falling on *Sravana Sudi 3* (third of the lunar month). It is observed throughout Haryana. By this time the rains have started. On the day of Teej women come out of their homes in

colourful costumes for enjoying a swing. While swinging they sing :—

Aee Ree man Sawan teej,

jhulo to ghalade,

ree man champa bagg men.....

(Oh mother : the festival of *teej* has come. Please get me a swing installed in the *champa* garden). Love of brothers and sisters also becomes a key note of the songs of Teej :

Neem ke nimoli lagi sawan kad awaga,

Awe ri meri ma ka jaya,

ke ke chiji lyavega.

(Neem tree has started bearing fruits, when Sawan will come ? I wait my brother to come and bring different things for me).

At marriage, when a girl is taking *phas*, her married friends remind her of their own experiences and advise to walk slowly round the sacred fire otherwise she will become a laughing stock among her friends by revealing her impatience. The following few lines of a song beautifully depict this situation :

Halwe halwe chal lado mahari,

Tane hansengi sahalariyan,

Ye moth se mat pare lado mahari.....

(Dear : walk slowly otherwise friends will laugh at you. You must not be in hurry like a farmer who cuts *moth* hurriedly).

After marriage when the girl departs for her in-laws, all her friends and village women gather to give her a hearty send off through a song :

Saathan chal pari ree,

Mere dab dab bhar aye nain,

Apni sathan ka main kurta simadyun,

Bataana ki do do laar,

Aapni sathan ka main daman simadyun,

Gotyan ki la down dungl laar.....

(My friend is going to her in-laws, tears flow from eyes. I will stitch a shirt with two parallel lines of buttons for her. I will prepare *daman* embroidered with golden threads for her.

The following stanza contains feelings of a spell bound lady after hearing flute (*been*) of a snake charmer :

*Spele been baja de, chalungi tere saath,
Mehla ke rehan aali, re tane jhopri lage udas,
Jhopri men guzar karungi, ho chalungi tere saath,
Palang pe sovan aali, re tane gudri lage udas,
Gudri men guzar karungi, ho chalungi tere saath.....*

(Oh snake-charmer ! play with your *been* (flute) and I will accompany you. The snake-charmer taunts her with the remarks that she is accustomed to live in a palace and will be sad to live in a hut. She replies that she would happily live in the hut. The snake-charmer again taunts her that she is accustomed to sleep on soft bed and she would feel uncomfortable in rags. She, however, again asserts that she would live happily even in rags and will go with him).

A folk song having patriotic feeling reads as under :

*Bare bare nuksan kare apas ki foot bimari ne,
Nau so saal gulami bhogi ya murkhta hamari ne,
Foot ke karan Kaurav Pandav apas men larke marge,
Kurukshetra men hui larai nash kutam ka karge.....*

(Disunity has played havoc with our country. Due to our own foolishness we remained slaves for 900 years. On account of mutual rivalry, *Kaurava* and *Pandava* fought at Kurukshetra and destroyed their own families.

Folk Dances.—Folk-dancing, an outburst of surging emotions at times accompanies folk-singing. Among the male folk-dances, *daphi* dance and *dhumal* dance are prevalent in the district. After harvesting, young persons gather at night at the outskirts of the village and enjoy loud singing with *dhumal* and *daphi* dance. *Daphi* dance is known for its vigour and fast movement. The dancing continues till late at night.

Folk-tales.—The region is rich in legends and folk-tales, many of which form the theme of folk-theatre and the songs of village bards. The impact of folk-tales on the social life of the people is manifest in the characters from the tales forming the motifs of the facades of houses and *chopals*. Popular folk-tales of the area are Gopi Chand-Bharthri, Nal-Damayanti, Nihaldeh Rani, Satyawan-Savitri, Puran Bhagat, Alha Udai and the like.

GAMES AND RECREATIONS

The popular games of the area are wrestling, *kabaddi*, *gindo khuli* and *gulli danda* (tipcat), the last two being usually played by children. *Gindo khuli*

is the indigenous version of the game of hockey. It is played with a stick and a ball made of rags and twigs. *Guli danda* is played in a ground outside the village in many forms. Wrestling and *kabaddi* are, however, popular sports among the young and the middle-aged.

Regular tournaments at block and district level are held to discover promising talent for national events.

Cards and *chopar* are some of the indoor games which are played and enjoyed in urban as well as rural areas. Villagers playing these games in *chopal* are a familiar sight. Modern games like hockey, cricket, football, volleyball and basketball are popular among students. Games like *kho kho*, netball, etc. are popular in girls schools. Lately, panchayats and private associations have started organising games and holding terminal and annual tournaments. Government gives grants for the construction of playgrounds and also provides coaching facilities.

The Public Relations Department has supplied radio sets to panchayats, co-operatives 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. Gossiping and listening to the radio are common past-times. The portable transistor has become a fashion with everybody without distinction. In the Rewari sub-division, which falls within the television¹ transmission range, over a dozen television sets have been supplied to the village panchayats by the Public Relations Department. However, some people in this sub-division have also installed television sets in their homes.

REHABILITATION

A large-scale communal disturbances that followed the partition of the country in 1947 inflicted vast sufferings and lakhs of people were forced to migrate from Pakistan to India and vice-versa. Lakhs of homeless Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan entered what was then called East Punjab (India). This immigration created innumerable problems which the government faced and overcame with great courage. In order to settle the refugees, camps were established in Mahendragarh district also. Free ration was distributed in these camps. Fruits, multivitamin tablets and other special items of diet were issued to refugees on medical advice. Dispensaries were opened for providing immediate medical relief. The refugee camps were of great help to the immigrants who after residing there for sometime tried to find out work to rehabilitate themselves. The immigrants from Pakistan who settled in the

1. A T.V. relay centre was established at Rewari in 1984.

areas of the Mahendragarh district were from Mianwali, Muzafargarh, Dera Gazi Khan and Bahawalpur as is evident from the statement below :—

District of Origin (in Pakistan)	Number of Displaced Persons settled in the District		
	Rural Areas	Urban Areas	Total
Mianwali	1,900	139	2,039
Dera Gazi Khan	232	817	1,049
Muzafargarh	39	60	99
Bahawalpur	18	74	758
	2,189	1,756	3,945

Rural Rehabilitation

It was necessary to hasten the resettlement of rural displaced persons living in camps to facilitate the sowing of rabi crop of 1947-48. Each group consisting of persons who were near relatives or were bound by ties of friendship, was allotted land on temporary basis. All displaced persons who owned and held land and were cultivating it in Pakistan were considered eligible for such allotments which were converted into quasi-permanent allotment in April, 1948. The claims of displaced persons were verified from the original revenue records obtained from Pakistan. As the land left by displaced persons in West Punjab (Pakistan) was larger than the land left by the Muslims in East Punjab; the available land was converted into standard acres, and graded cuts were applied in making allotments to displaced claimants. Likewise rural houses available in rural areas were also allotted to displaced persons by March, 1978. More than 50 per cent of the 210 standard acres of evacuee agricultural land available in the district was allotted on permanent basis. Similarly, out of 79 houses and 68 sites available in rural areas, 10 houses and 19 sites were disposed of by 1977-78.

Allottees of land were given assistance by way of agricultural loans for purchasing bullocks, implements, fodder, seed and repair of wells and houses. In order to minimise misuse, loans were advanced in kind. A sum of Rs. 7,13,013 was advanced as agricultural loan in rural areas of the district.

Urban Rehabilitation

The problem of providing residential accommodation became more acute with the tendency of immigrants to settle largely in urban areas. Consequently, a number of schemes to utilize the available properties left by Muslims and to develop more houses were devised. The evacuee property became

a part of the evacuee pool for compensating displaced persons with verified claims. There were 5,660 urban evacuee properties in the towns of Mahendragarh, Narnaul, Bawal and Rewari. Out of which 5,138 were disposed of by 1977-78. Besides these, 1,349 kanals of urban agricultural land and most of it was disposed of by 1977-78.

— The urban housing problem was acute because most of the urban Muslim evacuees were manual labourers and artisans and therefore their houses were unpretentious, whereas the incoming urban displaced persons mostly businessmen and shopkeepers, used to live in better dwellings. To meet this situation, a new township at Rewari was set up. The township had 298 built up houses, 4 shops and 92 plots. Initially the houses and sites were sold at reserved prices but later these properties were disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Rules, 1955. By 1977-78, all the houses and sites were disposed of but 4 shops were converted into civil courts. Besides 100 additional plots were demarcated out of the surplus land in the township, out of which 99 were disposed of by 1977-78.

Shopping centre known as Panjabi Market was also set up at Rewari. In this market 48 shops were constructed by the displaced persons who were advanced Rs. 500 each for the construction of the shops.

Besides a new township and shopping centre, a mudhut colony was also set up at Rewari in 1951. In this colony 150 huts were constructed and these mud-huts were offered to the occupants of the refugee camps who belonged to the Scheduled Castes and other Backward Classes and to persons who were resourceless and landless. The reserved price of these mud-huts was fixed at Rs. 265 per hut. The claimants were given these huts against adjustment in their claims and others were charged only the cost of land which was Rs. 80 only and it was to be recovered in three annual instalments. It was also decided that nothing should be charged from destitute widows and disabled persons.

Urban Loans.—The refugees were encouraged to re-start their business, trade or other professions. They were advanced loans at the rate of 3 per cent per annum interest and the recovery was to be started after three years of disbursement. The loan together with the interest was repayable in equal instalments spread over a period of six years. An amount of Rs. 2,54,025 was advanced during 1949-50 to 1956-57 whereafter the scheme was discontinued.

House Building Loans.—House buildings loans were advanced to purchasers of plots in new township during 1949-50 to 1955-56. Thereafter, these loans were also discontinued.

Socio-Economic Blend

The rehabilitation of displaced persons in the district had a long term beneficial effect in a variety of ways. It has influenced the socio-economic

pattern of the people of this district particularly those residing in the urban areas. However, the small number which settled in the rural areas of the district gave evidence of superior skill in cultivation and hard work.

The culture of West Punjab too had a liberating influence on the women of the district. Displaced persons are now almost completely identified with their new habitat in the district. The process of an inter-mixture of dialects is also a fact and the displaced persons from West Punjab can often fluently speak the local dialect.