

decrease is in the main due to plague, but to some extent to the development of new markets owing to the increasing network of railways both in the district and in the adjoining tracts. Further particulars will be found in Chapter IV, where each town is dealt with in detail.

Villages are therefore all important in this district. Of these there are 966, lying about two-and-a-half miles from each other, with an average population of 722 souls each. This figure is an increase on the corresponding figure for 1901, and shows that the tendency now is not to found new villages but to add to those already existing. This is easily explained by the gradually increasing value of agricultural land, and by the difficulty experienced in many parts of the district in getting good drinking water.

As to whether the people are overcrowded or not in their houses in towns or villages, statistics do not help us much: the question depends so largely on the nature of the unit regarded as a home. So far as the figures go, the Census of 1911 showed fewer persons per house both in towns and villages than did the figures of 1901. Of this again plague is undoubtedly the most important factor. All that can be said definitely is that, in comparison with other districts, and taking into consideration the conditions under which the people live, there is no over-crowding in the ordinary town or the ordinary village of the district.

Almost three-quarters of the population of the district are engaged in agricultural operations, and in occupations auxiliary thereto, or are dependent for their means of subsistence upon persons so engaged. Excluding the persons in the service of the State and of Railways, almost all the remaining quarter earn their livelihood by supplying the wants of the agricultural population.

E.—Religions.

Table 14 of Part B shows that, to merely enumerate the three most important of Indian religions, 67 per cent. of the total population of the district was found in 1911 to follow the Hindu religion, 27 per cent. the Muhammadan religion, and 4 per cent. that of the Sikhs. The proportion at previous enumerations of the people was approximately the same, though the followers of the Sikh religion have doubled in the last 30 years, an increase not approached by either of the other religions. The figures as

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Village population.

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Population by religions.

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Population by religions.

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to the followers of the Hindu religion are of course not entirely correct. The definition embraces all persons who did not return themselves at the census in 1911 as Musalmans, Christians, Sikhs, or Zoroastrians. Among those classed as Hindus are nearly 124,000 Baurias, Churhas, Chamars, Dhanaks and Sansis. These persons are really out-castes from Hinduism, and, though they may in a few cases call themselves Hindus, they are denied the right to that title by all orthodox believers in the Hindu faith.

Hinduism in Hissar does not differ in any material particular from the standard type prevalent in the south-eastern districts of the Punjab. The ordinary Hindu peasant, though as a general rule, he returned himself, or was returned, at the census, as a Hindu, is entirely ignorant of the more esoteric doctrines of the religion which he professes. He of course knows the names of Ram, Vishnu, Krishna and Narayan, and habitually repeats them in and out of season, but the deities with which he is practically concerned are the godlings or local saints and heroes, and in their worship it might almost be said that any idea which he may have of belonging to a distinct religious body or organization disappears, for many of the godlings of the countryside are revered equally by Hindus and Musalmans. Beyond an occasional visit to the local *shiwala* or *thakurdwara*, the principal concrete shape in which the idea of being included within the pale of Hinduism enforces itself on the mind of the peasant is the obligation which he is under, as much perhaps a social as a religious one, of feeding the Brahmans on every available opportunity. Beneath all the superstition by which he is trammelled the average Hindu peasant preserves in his own mind the idea of a supreme being, whether he be called Allah, Narayan or Parmeshar. But neither this belief nor the mass of superstitions which do duty for his every day religion have probably the least effect on his rural life. For him morality and religion are completely divorced, religious observances being for the most part but a set of expedients to escape from the often undeserved wrath of a superior order of beings. The sanctions of his moral system are far more social than religious, and as his social horizon includes only his village or at most his tribe, to the same extent is the scope of his moral obligations limited. The Hindu of the village is by natural temperament far more than by religion inert and peace-loving, his one object being to be allowed to enjoy in quiet the fruits of patient toil and industry.

The Hindu of the towns is, of course, slightly more acquainted with the inner doctrines of his religion, but viewed from a moral stand-point his position is much the same, if not lower, than that of the Hindu peasant.

The Hinduism of the rural tracts is far more a collection of the cults of national deities and local godlings (using local in a somewhat extended sense) than an organized system of theology; and the worship of the local godlings is a far more important element than that of the national deities. To the mind of the *zamindars* the former are much more nearly concerned with him and his affairs than the latter, who are far removed from him on the heights of the Hindu pantheon.

In a very large proportion of cases, the sect of rural Hindus who could not be obviously classed as belonging to any well-known definitely distinct religious body was entered at the census as belonging to the Sanatan Dharm; but it must not be supposed that five in a hundred of the persons whose sect was so returned had the least idea that they were members of the Sanatan Dharm, or wherein the latter differed from any other sect or religious body. Judged by the standard of orthodox Hinduism, the classification was probably not incorrect, but its result was to obscure completely the statistics relating to the real and every day religious belief of the mass of the people. The Hissar peasant is in no sense an orthodox Hindu. He feeds and venerates, though he does not respect, the Brahman, he knows of the existence and acknowledges the power of the great gods of the Hindu pantheon—Siva, Vishnu, the incarnate Krishna, &c.,—and occasionally worships them, especially Siva or Shibji, and Krishna or Thakurji. The temples of the former are very common in the Jat villages, and have been generally built as an act of *pun* by Banias. The ceremony of temple worship is somewhat as follows. About once in two months or oftener, if he is getting on in years and has times on his hands, the *zamindar*, after bathing in the village tank, proceeds to the village *shiwala* or *thakurdwara* and makes an offering (*charhawa*) to the diety, which is, of course, appropriated by the officiating priest or *pujari*. The worshipper then receives some Ganges water (*Ganga jal*), a supply of which is kept in the temple, and some leaves of the *tulsi* plant which will be growing in the enclosure; the *tulsi* leaves are dipped in the water and then applied by the worshipper to his forehead, and if Siva is the deity

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who is being worshipped, some of the water is poured over the *linga* or symbol of the god which is invariably found in his temple. The worshipper also makes obeisance (*dhonk marna*) before the idol of the deity. The act of worship is called *darsan* or viewing, and, as it occupies a considerable time, is not to be entered upon unless one has ample leisure. Of the more strictly orthodox, but inferior gods, perhaps Suraj Narayan is the one who most commonly receives adoration from the Hindu peasant. He is worshipped mostly on Sunday; the more pious keep a fast (*barat*) in his honour on that day, which consists in eating only one meal with one sort of grain and abstaining from salt.

But although Siva and Suraj Narayan are the two most important personages in the Hindu peasant's pantheon, they are too great for every day use. He lives as it were in an atmosphere charged with the spirits of departed saints, heroes, demons and others who are in a position to, and as a matter of fact do, exercise a beneficent or malevolent influence on the affairs of mankind, and it is from them that he selects those who are to be the recipients of his every day devotion. It is not perhaps so much the case that he worships them with fixed ceremonies as he does Siva and Suraj Narayan, but they are always, unconsciously almost, present to him as the beings who have the most immediate connection with his destinies.

The more common objects of worship of this class are the Bhumia or god of the homestead, and Sitla, the goddess of small-pox, who is worshipped mostly by women who mix sugar with water and distribute it to children at her shrine. Fire is also venerated by some who drop *ghi* into it. The *pipal* tree is worshipped at dawn after bathing; a *lota* of water is poured out at the foot of the trees and adoration made. Khetrpai is another deity who lives in the *pipal* tree; he is worshipped by women when their children are ill.

A *tirbaini* or combination of the *nim*, *pipal* and *bar* trees growing together is specially sacred, and to plant such a combination is an act of *pun*. The *kair* tree is also worshipped by women in the hopes of thereby getting a child.

One of the important developments of Hinduism in this district is the Bishnoi sect, which is of Bagri or Marwari origin. The name Bishnoi is evidently derived from the prominence they give in their creed and worship to the god Vishnu, though they themselves say it is derived from the 29 (*Bis-nau*) articles of their creed as prescribed by

The Bishnoi re-
ligion.

the founder of the sect. It is said that any member of the higher Hindu castes can become a Bishnoi, but in this district at least they are almost all Jat or Khatri by tribe, and retain the language, dress and other characteristics of the Bagris; they try, however, to sink their tribe in their religion and give their caste as Bishnoi merely. The account they give of the founder of their sect is as follows:—At Pinpasar, a village south of Bikaner in the Jodhpur territory, there lived a Rajput Panwar, named Laut, who had attained the age of 60 years and had no son. One day a neighbour going out to sow his field met Laut, and, deeming it a bad omen to meet a childless man, turned back from his purpose. This cut Laut to the quick, and he went out to the jungle and bewailed his childlessness until evening, when a *fakir* appeared to him and told him that in nine months he should have a son, and, after showing his miraculous power by drawing milk from a calf, vanished from his sight. At the time named a child miraculously appeared in Laut's house, and was miraculously suckled by his wife Hansa. This happened in Sammat 1508 (A. D. 1451). For seven years the boy, who was an incarnation (*avatar*) of Vishnu, played with his fellows, and then for 27 years he tended cattle, but all this time he spoke no word. His miraculous powers were shown in various ways, such as producing sweets from nothing for the delectation of his companions, and he became known as *Achambha* (the wonder), whence his name of Jhamba by which he is generally known. After 34 years a Brahman was sent for to get him to speak, and on his confessing his failure Jhambaji again showed his power by lighting a lamp by simply snapping his fingers, and uttered his first word. He then adopted the life of a teacher and went to reside on a sandhill some 30 miles south of Bikaner, where after 51 years he died and was buried instead of being burnt like an ordinary Hindu. He did not marry but devoted himself to the life of an ascetic teacher. His sayings (*sabd*) (to the number of 120) were written down by his disciples, and have been handed down in a book (*pothi*) which is written in the Nagri character, and in a Hindu dialect similar to Bagri, seemingly a Marwari dialect. The "twenty-nine" precepts given by him for the guidance of his followers are as follows:—

Tís din sutak—páñch roz ratwanti nári

Será karo shanáñ—síl-santokh-suchh pyári

Pání-bání-ídhñí-itná líjyo chhán

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Dayá-dharm hirde dharo-garu batái ján
 Chorí-nindya-jhúth-barjya bád na kariyo koe
 Amal-tamáku-bhang-líl dúr hí tyágo
 Mad-más se dekhke dúr hí bhágo
 Amar rakháo thát-bail tani ná báho
 Amáshya barat-rúnkh lilo ná gháo
 Hom jap samádh pújá-básh baikunthí páo
 Untís dharm ki ákhri garu batái soe
 Páhal deo par chávya jísko nám Bishnoi hoe

which is thus interpreted :—“ For thirty days after child-
 “ birth and five days after a menstrual discharge a woman
 “ must not cook food. Bathe in the morning. Commit not
 “ adultery. Be content. Be abstemious and pure. Strain
 “ your drinking-water. Be careful of your speech. Examine
 “ your fuel in case any living creature be burnt with it. Show
 “ pity to living creatures. Keep duty present to your mind
 “ as the Teacher bade. Do not steal. Do not speak evil of
 “ others. Do not tell lies. Never quarrel. Avoid opium,
 “ tobacco, *bhang* and blue clothing. Flee from spirits and
 “ flesh. See that your goats are kept alive (not sold to Musal-
 “ mans who will kill them for food). Do not plough with
 “ bullocks. Keep a fast on the day before the new moon.
 “ Do not cut green trees. Sacrifice with fire. Say prayers.
 “ Meditate. Perform worship and attain heaven. And the
 “ last of the twenty-nine duties prescribed by the Teacher—
 “ Baptize your children, if you would be called a true Bishnoi.”

Some of these precepts are not strictly obeyed ; for instance, although ordinarily they allow no blue in their clothing, yet a Bishnoi, if he is a servant of the British Government, is allowed to wear a blue uniform ; and Bishnois do use bullocks, though most of their farming is done with camels. They also are unusually quarrelsome and given to use bad language. But they abstain from tobacco, drugs, and spirits, and are noted for their regard for animal life which is such that not only will they not themselves kill any living creature, but they do their utmost to prevent others from doing so. Consequently their villages are generally swarming with antelope and other animals, and they forbid their Musalman neighbours to kill them and try to dissuade European sportsmen from interfering with them. It is regrettable that they do not equally abstain from taking human life : murders and riots resulting in murders are not uncommon in Bishnoi villages.

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They consider it a good deed to scatter grain (chiefly *bajra* and *moth*) to pigeons and other birds, and often have a large number of half-tame birds about their villages. The day before the new moon they observe as a Sabbath and fast-day, doing no work in the fields or in the house. They bathe and pray three times a day, in the morning, afternoon and in the evening, saying "Bishno Bishno," instead of the ordinary Hindu "Ram Ram." Their clothing is the same as that of other Bagris, except that their women do not allow the waist to be seen, and are fond of wearing black woollen clothing. They are more particular about ceremonial purity than ordinary Hindus are, and it is a common saying that if a Bishnoi's food is on the first of a string of 20 camels and a man of another caste touches the last camel of the string, the Bishnoi will consider his food defiled and throw it away. The ceremony of initiation (*pahal*) is as follows:—A number of representative Bishnois assemble and before them a Sadh or Bishnoi priest, after lighting a sacrificial fire (*hom*), instructs the novice in the duties of the faith. He then takes some water in a new earthen vessel, over which he prays in a set form (*Bishnogayatri*) stirring it the while with his string of beads (*mala*), and after asking the consent of the assembled Bishnois, he pours the water three times into the hands of the novice who drinks it off. The novice's scalp-lock (*choti*) is then cut off and his head shaved, for the Bishnois shave the whole head and do not leave a scalp-lock like the Hindus; but they allow the beard to grow, only shaving the chin on the father's death. Infant baptism is also practised, and 30 days after birth the child, whether boy or girl, is baptised by the priest (*sadh*) in much the same way as an adult; only the set form of prayer is different and the priest pours a few drops of water into the child's mouth, and gives the child's relatives each three handfuls of the consecrated water to drink; at the same time the barber clips off the child's hair. This baptismal ceremony also has the effect of purifying the house which has been made impure by the birth (*sutak*). The Bishnois intermarry among themselves only, and by a ceremony of their own, in which the circumambulation of the sacred fire, which is the binding ceremony among the Hindus generally, is omitted. They do not revere Brahmans, but have priests (*sadh*) of their own chosen from among the laity. They do not burn their dead, but bury them below the cattle-stall or in a place frequented by cattle, such as a cattle-pen. Bishnois go

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The Bishnoi religion.

on pilgrimage to the place where Jhambaji is buried south of Bikaner, where there is a tomb (*mat*) over his remains and a temple (*mandir*) with regular attendants (*pujaris*). A festival takes place here every six months in Asauj and Phagan, when the pilgrims go to the sandhill on which Jhambaji lived and there light scarificial fires (*hom*) of *jandi* wood in vessels of stone and offer a burnt-offering of barley, *til*, *ghi* and sugar, at the same time muttering set prayers. They also make presents to the attendants of the temple and distribute *moth* and other grain for the peacocks and pigeons which live there in numbers. Should any one have committed an offence, such as having killed an animal, or sold a cow or goat to a Musalman, or allowed an animal to be killed when he could have prevented it, he is fined by the assembled Bishnois for the good of the temple. Another place of pilgrimage is a tomb called Chambola in the Jodhpur country, where a festival is held once a year in Chait. There the pilgrims bathe in the tank and help to deepen it, and sing and play musical instruments and scatter grain to peacocks and pigeons.

Sultanis.

Another Hindu sect is that of the Sultanis, or votaries of Sakhi Sarwar Sultan of Nigahaya, in the Dera Ghazi Khan District. He is extensively worshipped by Jats as well as by Musalmans and Sikhs. His followers will not eat the flesh of animals killed by *jhatka* or decapitation but only that killed in the usual manner by *hallal*. The saint has a shrine at Nangthala in the Hissar Tahsil. The offerings are taken by the guardians of the shrine who are called *pirahis* or *Bharais*. Images of the saint's tomb are to be found in the village, and offerings of sweetmeats, either $1\frac{1}{2}$ or $5\frac{1}{2}$ maunds, are made thereat.

Nanak-panthis.

Nanak-panthis are often regarded as a sub-division of the Sikhs, but are more properly a Hindu sect. They venerate Baba Nanak, the first Guru, and are supposed to follow his teachings. They differ from the true Sikhs, the followers of Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, in shaving the head with the exception of the *choti*, in venerating Brahmans and using tobacco, and they differ from the ordinary Hindu only in being more lax in regard to caste rules and ceremonial observances. They are often called *Munna* or shaven Sikhs, in contradistinction to the *Pahuliya* or true Sikhs.

Sikhs.

The Sikhs of the district are confined entirely to the Sirsa Tahsil and the northern part of the Fatehabad Tahsil.

The true Sikhs are followers of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh and are distinguished by the five Kakkas : (i) the *kes* or long hair and unshaven head ; (ii) the *kachh* or short drawers in place of the *dhoti* of the Hindus and the *tahmat* of the Musalmans, (iii) the *kara* or iron bangle ; (iv) the *kanga* or comb, and (v) the *kard* or knife. They are initiated by *pahul*, or baptism and are hence called *pahulia*. The true Sikhs follow the Granth, venerate the cow perhaps even more than do the orthodox Hindus, are forbidden the use of tobacco, but are allowed to indulge in spirits and drugs.

They eat the flesh of animals killed by *jhatka* or decapitation. The true Sikhs of the district are not strict observers of the precepts of Gobind Singh. The *kes* is invariably worn, but the *dhoti* is often substituted for the *kachh* and the *kard*, *kara* and *kanga* are commonly discarded. They reverence the Brahmans to a certain extent, and have no particular objection to the killing of cows by their Musalman neighbours. Many of them smoke tobacco. The manly and stalwart Sikh contrasts strongly with his neighbours, the puny Bagri Jat and the lazy Pachada. He is far less trammelled by the web of caste restrictions than the Hindu, but it by no means follows that he will mingle with the lower castes.

In Sirsa the Sikh religion seems to be making some progress among the Bagri Jats, upon whom the example of their Sikh neighbours seems to be making an impression in matters other than religion.

The Jains in point of wealth and education are a not unimportant class of the population, especially in the towns. Jainism is certainly a development of Hinduism. The Jains appear to revere the gods of the Hindu pantheon, but reject the divine origin of the Vedas. Their supreme deity is Nirankar, corresponding apparently to the Hindu Narain, but their immediate objects of worship and reverence are the 24 *arhats* or saints who have obtained final *nirvan* (*mukti*) with Nirankar. They do not appear to reverence or feed the Brahmans, but they have Sadhus or priests of their own, and their *pun*, or meritorious conduct, consists to a large extent in worshipping Nirankar and in feeding the Sadhus. They do not wear the *janeo* or sacred thread ; they have a certain amount of reverence for the cow, bathing is not considered any part of their worship, nor do they appear to reverence the *ling*, the symbol of Siva. Their scriptures consist of the 32 *Sutras* written by Mahavira, the last *arhat*. The

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leading principle of conduct inculcated by their religion is abstinence, not alone from taking animal life but from causing harm of any kind to any living creature (*jio*).

Of the 24 *arhats* worshipped by the Jains, the most famous are Rikabdas, the first *arhat*, and Parasnath and Mahavir, the last two.

Jain sects.

Of the Jains there are two main sections, the Mandirpanthis and the Dhundiapanthis. The distinction between them consists in this, that Mandirpanthis worship images of the 24 *arhats* in temples, while the Dhundiapanthis worship no idols and have no temples. The present Mandirpanthis are the successors and representatives of the original Jains, while the Dhundiapanthis are a schismatic offshoot.

Arya Samaj.

A complete account of the Arya Samaj is to be found in recent Punjab Census Reports. A branch of the Samaj was established at Hissar in 1889, and a Mandir was built there in 1893. In 1899 an orphanage was established at Bhiwani which has been the means of saving the lives of some 1,000 children. Handicrafts are taught there in addition to reading, writing, etc. The movement is flourishing, particularly in the Hansi Tahsil.

Musalman and
their sects.

Islam, looked at as a religious organization and as embodying a system of religious belief, presents itself to its followers in a much more definite and tangible shape than is the case with Hinduism, and, in so far as it does this, it would be expected to have a greater effect on the moral and social life of its adherents.

As a fact, the Musalman is a far more staunch defender of his faith and far less tolerant of adverse criticism than the Hindu. As often as not the Hindu *samindar* when asked to explain points in his own professed religious belief will laugh with scarcely concealed incredulity in that belief, remarking that his religion is a *kacha* one, made only for the profit and advantage of the Brahman, but will generally end by saying that after all "Narayan is the only one." To the Musalman Islam is thus a far more living reality than is Hinduism to the Hindu, but its effects on morality are much the same. Without much reference to a religious standard the Musalman regulates his conduct by the standard of social morality existing around him. In many cases the social customs of the present have not been affected much by Muhammadanism. Those tribes who were originally Hindu and were converted whether forcibly or not

to Islam, still retain their primitive social customs as to marriage, &c. But conversion to Muhammadanism has certainly had an effect on the character and temperament of the peasant which cannot be regarded as other than hurtful ; in place of work carried on with contented thrift and industry, as in the case of the Hindu Jats, we find among the Musalman agriculturists a disinclination for hard labour at the plough, careless cultivation, prodigality and a finely marked propensity to appropriate other people's cattle.

There is little to be said in regard to Musalman sects as far as Hissar is concerned. The Musalmans of the district almost without exception belong to the Sunni section, and Shiahs are almost entirely absent. But although the orthodox sect is so predominant, it must not be supposed that the Musalman peasant is in any sense a strictly orthodox follower of the Prophet. A mosque, it is true, varying from a pretentious three-domed structure to a mud cottage with three mud pinnacles and three entrance doors, is to be found in most villages. A *fakir*, often of the Kureshi sect, is entertained by the village as a Mullah. He proclaims the *azan*, warms the water for the *wuzu* or ablution, teaches the village boys to read or repeat passages of the Kuran in Arabic and reads the *nikkah* at weddings. For these services he receives a share of grain at the harvest and fees at ceremonies. The mass of the population do not, however, often go near the mosque, and it is uncommon to see a peasant saying his prayers in his field at any of the prescribed times.

In spite of verbal admissions of the unity of Allah, the Musalman agriculturist is to no small extent affected by the superstitious reverence for local saints, heroes and demons which is so common among his Hindu neighbours, and, in spite of his being included within the fold of Islam, he still preserves almost intact the ancient customs of his tribe in regard to restrictions on marriage, rules of inheritance, &c. The ancestors of the mass of the present Musalman rural population of the district were converted in all probability in the time of the Mughal Empire : as a general rule, if their statements are to be believed, of their own free will, but more probably in order to propitiate their rulers, and to save themselves from confiscation of property and other disabilities.

The Chamars as a rule worship Ramdas, Rahdas or Rehadas, said to have been a Chamar, who became an ascetic (Bhagat) at Benares. Many of them appear to

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menial caste.

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regard him as an ancestor. Another special object of veneration with them is Guga Pir, and his *jhand* or pole, surrounded by a tuft of peacock's feathers, is often to be seen in the Chamars' quarter and is also carried in procession by Chamars in August and September. Chamars also worship Devi and Mata and reverence Guru Nanak, probably without any very definite idea as to who he was.

The Chamars have a special class of Brahmans who are called Chamarwa Brahmans or Sadhs. No other Brahmans will hold any intercourse with them, nor indeed are they generally regarded as Brahmans at all. The Chamars sometimes burn and sometimes bury their dead.

Chuhras.

The special object of worship of the Chuhras (sweepers), or lowest caste of Hindu, is Lalbeg or Lalguru, whom they regard as an incarnation of the deity. His shrine is to be seen in almost every village in the Chuhras' quarter, and consists of a mud platform (*chauntra* or *chabutra*) with a *ghara* sunk therein and a pole planted in it as a symbol. Some of the Chuhras also reverence Balmik, who they say was a *chela* or disciple of Lalguru or Lalbeg.

Village deities and
saints.

As noticed above the worship of village deities and saints makes up the largest portion of the religious life of the peasants of the district. An account of some of the principal ones is given below :—

Perhaps the one most widely venerated is Guga Pir, the saint of the Bagar, whose votaries include both Hindus and Musalmans of all castes and tribes among the agricultural population of Hissar and the adjoining districts. Musalmans do not, perhaps, worship him, but at any rate they regard him as a fit object for reverence. The Bishnois are probably the only agriculturist caste who do not worship him.

An account of the saint is given at page 256 of volume I of Sir H. Elliot's Supplementary Glossary. The local tradition about him is as follows :—

Guga was a Chauhan Rajput of Garh Dadera in Bikaner. His father's name was Jeoji, his grandfather's Amarji and his mother's Bachal. She was a daughter of Kamarpal, Seroha Rajput of Sirsa. He was miraculously conceived by the intervention of Gorakhnath; Guga's famous horse was born in the same way. When Guga grew up he had a dispute about lands with his cousins Arjan and Surjan, sons of Kachal, sister of Bachal, who had also been miraculously

born. The cousins wished for a share of Guga's possessions but Guga refused, and they then induced the King of Delhi to attack him. In the course of the struggle Guga killed his two nephews. His sister, their mother, refused ever to let him see her again. Guga left his country and wandered off; near Bahadara in Bikaner he wished that the earth might swallow him up; this could not be till he became a Musalman. He thereupon repeated the Musalman "Kalma" and the earth forthwith opened and swallowed him.

His symbol or standard is a pole with a tuft of peacock feathers at its summit (*jhandā, chhari*). This is carried about in Sawan and Bhadon by Chuhra's begging for alms. In these two months fairs are held at his shrine in Bikaner, and a considerable part of the countryside turns out to be present at them.

Another very favourite object of veneration in this district is Shamji. Like that of many others of the rural deities his worship has been introduced into the district from the Native States of Rajputana. The account which local tradition gives of Shamji is as follows. Like Guga he was Chauhan Raja of Garh Dadera at the time of the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas. Krishna told the Pandavas that the Kauravas would conquer them if Shamji joined the latter; thereupon Arjan and Krishna, disguised as Brahmans, went to Shamji and asked him to give them whatever they asked for. He was famous for his generosity and consented. They at once asked for his head, which he gave on condition that he should witness the struggle between Pandava and Kaurava. This was agreed to and Shamji's trunkless head, suspended on a pole, lived on and saw the battle. Shamji's shrine is at Katla in Jaipur. His worship is even more prevalent in Bikaner and Loharu than in this district. *Melas* are held at his shrine on the 12th Chet and 12th Asauj.

Ramdei is another saint of Rajputana and the Bagar whose worship is prevalent in the district. His father was a Tunwar Rajput, who went on a pilgrimage to Dwarka so slowly that it took him a century to accomplish. On reaching Dwarka he worshipped the image of Krishna, but, not satisfied with this, wished to make the god's personal acquaintance. He was told that Krishna lived in a tank, upon which he jumped in and obtained the interview which he sought. Krishna then expostulated with the man about the risk of drowning which he was incurring; this had,

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however, no effect, and he replied that he preferred drowning to leaving the god's presence, whereupon Krishna promised to give the man his heart's desire; he replied that he wanted a son like Krishna. The result was that Ramdei was born as an incarnation of Krishna. Ramdei's shrine is at Runicha in Bikaner. In the course of the year one blind person and one leper are said to be cured at the shrine; many are said to go there in the hope of being the favoured ones. Baniyas, Jats and Chamars often wear images of Ramdei suspended round the neck. There is a shrine of his at Rawatsar in Bikaner. He is a special deity of the Chamars and they take the offerings made at his shrine.

Bhairon or Khetrpal is a village deity, whose chief shrine is at Ahror near Rewari in the Gurgaon district. He is the chief object of worship with the Hindu Gujars of the district. Their tradition is that he was born of a virgin. Many of the Gujars of the district attend a great festival held in his honour at Ahror in the month of February.

The worship of the Bhumia, or presiding deity of the village site, is of course common, and his small masonry shrine with its domed roof is often seen within the village site.

In addition to the above, there are many purely local heroes or saints, whose worship is confined to one tribe or a few adjacent villages, such as Kalapir, who is said to have been a Sidhu Jat, and is now worshipped by the tribe. He has a shrine at Khot Kalan, a Sidhu Jat village in the Hansi Tahsil.

Another good instance of a tribal deity is that of Dahdada worshipped by the Lohan Jats. Lohan, the progenitor of the *got*, had four sons—Mela, Tula, Ula and Chula. Mela and Tula founded Narnaund, the chief settlement of Lohans in the district, and Ula founded Bhaini, and adjacent village. Chula lived at Narnaund as an ascetic and became a *bhagat* or worker of miracles, and was thus converted into a village godling. He is worshipped under the form of an oblong stone kept in a shrine at Narnaund. His Brahmans are Gaurs of the Indauria *got*. They are fed on the 11th Sudi of each month. He is also venerated by the distribution of ten *sers* of sweetmeats and the digging and carrying of 101 baskets of earth from his tank.

Superstitions.

The subject of superstitions is intimately connected and in fact merges, as shown above, in the entire religious

system of the Hindu. Religion and superstition are to a great extent the same thing in this case.

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A few superstitions connected with agriculture may be noted here :—

Superstitions.

Mangal (Tuesday) is a bad day for the commencement of ploughing (*halotia*); Wednesday, on the other hand, is an especially good day. During the first 15 days of Asauj the *sraddh* or ceremonies for the repose of the spirits of ancestors are celebrated. The period is called *kanagat* and it is considered unlucky to sow in that interval. On the day of *Sukhrant*, in the month Mah, no wells are worked, nor is any cart nor plough driven. The Brahmans are fed on that day, and cattle are better fed than ordinarily.

When cattle disease breaks out in a village a rope is stretched across the *palsa* (village gate), and an earthen saucer with a charm written on it is fixed to the middle of the rope through which are stuck wooden pegs. The cattle after being driven under it enjoy immunity from the disease.

When a well is being dug, a small shrine to Hanuman is erected near, in order to avert accidents during the construction, especially the sinking or dislocation of the well cylinder, and to ensure that the water shall be sweet.

The Hindus of Sirsa, as a precaution against theft of grain when stacked in the fields, trace a circle of ashes round the heap.

Odd numbers are considered unlucky. A woman must not mention her husband's name, nor should a man mention his wife's name. One should not mention one's father-in-law (*susra*), but should call him uncle. Should a Hindu be so unlucky as to kill a cow, he must take her tail to the Ganges, there to be purified at considerable expense, and on the way he bears the tail aloft tied to a stick in order that all may know that he is impure.

When a *pakka* house is being built the *mistri* suspends the figure of a parrot over the door; this is supposed to bring good luck, and when it is first inhabited a string of *nim* leaves is tied over the doorway for the same reason.

Hissar falls within the Protestant Diocese of Lahore. There are churches at Hissar and Sirsa. The former is visited monthly by the Chaplain of Delhi, and the latter at the same intervals by the Chaplain of Ferozepore. At Sirsa there is also a Roman Catholic Chaplain. Of Chris-

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Ecclesiastical Administration : the Baptist at Bhiwani.

tian Missions, there are two in the district : the most important is the Zenana Baptist Mission at Bhiwani. Regarding it Miss Theobald, the Senior worker, writes as follows :—

“The mission began its work at Bhiwani in 1887. For over a year Miss I. M. Angus worked alone at a home in the city, with a staff of only two or three Indian women teachers. The English staff now includes two doctors, one nurse, and two general workers. All are ladies. In addition, the following native staff is employed : ten nurses, a hospital female evangelist, a children's nurse, and a male evangelist who is also pastor of the Church. The work falls into the following branches :—

- (1) *The Church*.—This was organized in 1903 with twelve members. There are now forty-one communicants, and nineteen Christian children.
- (2) *Evangelistic work*.—Between forty and fifty women are regularly taught in their homes in the city, and over forty villages round are visited for Gospel teaching.

Medical work commenced first in 1891 in the city in a native house which is now used as an out-patient dispensary with a total attendance in 1911 of 15,700. The present hospital, opened in 1899, has since been enlarged : the work is increasing daily. In-patients in 1911 numbered 851, some coming from great distances. The local Municipality contributes Rs. 400 per annum to the funds of the hospital.

Educational.—One day school for Hindu and Mohammadan girls is carried on in the city, with an average of thirty names on the register.

Orphanage.—Both boy and girl orphans are received and cared for from any age up to eight, when they are passed on to boarding schools in Delhi : in September 1912 there were three orphans in the home.

Finances.—Only a very small proportion of the expenses of the Mission are met by local contributions. The school is not now under Government inspection, and neither that nor the orphanage receives any municipal grants. Most of the expenses of the Mission are met by funds raised in England.

The attitude of the people has been friendly from the first.”

As to the last point there is no doubt but that the excellent work done by the ladies of the Mission in times of famine and plague — Miss Theobald was decorated with the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal in connection with the noble work she did in the famine of 1899-1900 and Miss Farrer has recently been given the same decoration for her medical work — has done much to win the goodwill of the people, not to use a stronger term. The medical work of these ladies has earned more than a merely local reputation.

An American Methodist Mission has recently been established at Hissar.

The language or rather dialects of the district may be properly placed into three broad classes : the Hindi (Hindustani) dialect of dialects, the Bagri, and the Punjabi.

Hindustani includes Urdu, which is, of course, nowhere a rural dialect, but confined to the more educated classes in towns, and it is needless to dwell on its characteristics here.

The Hindi, in which is comprised a large portion of the dialects of the district, may be taken to mean the common speech of the peasantry of the south-eastern Punjab, the original standard type of which is or perhaps rather was, the Brij dialect of Mathra. It is, of course, not the case that the Hindi of the district conforms entirely to that standard, but it does so sufficiently to be differentiated thereby from the neighbouring Bagri and Punjabi dialects. Hindi.

The most important characteristics of the rural Hindi are perhaps too well known to require detailed treatment here.

The boundaries of the tract in which a more or less pure Hindi is spoken in this district may probably be defined as follows, *viz.*, all that portion of the district south of a line drawn from Fatehabad to Tohana and east of a line through Fatehabad, Hissar and Kairu. This includes considerably more than half the area of the four southern tahsils of the district.

Across the northern boundary of this tract, we come to the Punjabi-speaking Pachhadas of the Nali tract, and to the north-west of Fatehabad lies the Sirsa Tahsil in which pure Hindi is practically unknown.

Across the western boundary of the Hindi-speaking Bagri. tract we come to what may be regarded as debateable ground between Hindi and Bagri. There is no hard-and-fast line at which Hindi ends and Bagri begins. The change takes the form of an even broader pronunciation of the vowels than in Hindi, and then a gradual change in the vocabulary, but within the limits of tahsils of Fatehabad, Hissar and Bhiwani the change is so slight that it is doubtful whether it can be said that true Bagri is spoken anywhere in these tahsils. A considerable part of the debateable tract is held by Bagri immigrants, and the effect of the immigration has been to introduce a decided Hindi element into their Bagri rather than the reverse.

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Language—

Bagri.

True Bagri, as distinguished from Hindi, is probably spoken in the south-west of the Sirsa Tahsil.

The original or standard type of Bagri, the language of the Bagar, appears to be the dialect of Marwar or Jodhpur which is prevalent through Western Rajputana. It is sometimes said to be a dialect of Hindi, and this is true if Hindi is taken to mean the language of Northern India; in the sense however in which Hindi has been used above, the fact is not so much that Bagri is a dialect of Hindi as that Hindi and Bagri are sister dialects which fade away into each other at their point of junction.

Punjabi.

On crossing the northern boundary of the tract defined above we first meet with Punjabi among the Pachhadas of the Ghaggar valley; the same language is found all the way down the length of the valley into the Sirsa Tahsil, and nearly to the point where it crosses the Bikaner border. In the portion of the Sirsa Tahsil south of the Ghaggar valley, Bagri is the ordinary speech which changes to Punjabi on the north of the Ghaggar. Thus the Punjabi-speaking tract embraces the valley of the Ghaggar and the portion of the district to the north of it.

Pachhadi.

In Tahsil Fatehabad, Punjabi, as spoken by the Pachhadas, and Hindi are brought into contact, while in Sirsa this same form of Punjabi and the true Bagri meet each other. The Punjabi of the district may be divided into two dialects, Punjabi properly so called, the natural tongue of the Sikh Jat, and the speech of the Musalman Pachhada from the west, which is known as Pachhadi.

Both the real Punjabi and the Pachhadi are characterised by shortness of the vowels; but Pachhadi is distinguished from true Punjabi by the still greater prevalence of nasal sounds, and by slight admixture of Hindi and Bagri words. The true Punjabi is spoken by the Sikh Jats in the Sirsa Tahsil, north of the Ghaggar, in Budhlada, and by the colonies of Patiala Sikh Jats found here and there along the Ghaggar in the Fatehabad Tahsil. Pachhadi, is however, the common form of speech on the Ghaggar along the whole of its course in this district, and is found in villages at considerable distances to the south of that stream.

Punjabi and Bagri are not different languages, but different dialects of what has been called the Western Gaudian group of the Indic Languages, both closely connected with Sanskrit. The most striking difference between the two dialects is perhaps the difference in accent and in