

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

THE ANCIENT PERIOD

There has never been any doubt regarding the antiquity of the district. This has been well established by A. Cunningham¹ and B.B. Lal² and the recent explorations conducted by the researchers of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Kurukshetra University, confirm it³. The region has yielded pottery of pre-Harappan, Harappan, late Harappan, Painted Grey Ware, Early historical, Northern Black polished Ware and Early medieval times⁴ showing thereby that parts of the district were inhabited by different people, some of these parts show continuity while in others there is a break⁵. The evidence so far available-archaeological as well as literary is quite meagre even to provide any clear outline of the historical growth of the district during the early phases.⁶

The Pre-Harappans were the earliest people inhabiting the district as can be gathered from the discovery of their pottery similar to that found at Kalibangan and remains of their mud-brick walls from the surface of a mound from the village Rindhana (in Gohana tahsil).⁷ The next phase of the material

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1. A. Cunningham, *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1872, p. 161.
 2. B.B. Lal, 'Archaeology and the two Indian Epics,' *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, LIV, 1973, pt. I—IV, pp. 1—8; *Ancient India*, Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, Nos. 10 & 11, 1954 ('Excavation at Hastinapura and other Exploration in the Upper-Ganga and Sutlej Basins, 1950—52', pp. 145, 148-9); 'The Indian Express 7th October, 1975 (for extract of Prof. B.B. Lal's lecture delivered at Delhi).
 3. Suraj Bhan, *Excavation of Mitathal (1968) as other Explorations in Sutlej-Yamuna Divide*, Kurukshetra, 1975, pp. 125-126; Silak Ram, *Archaeology of Rohtak & Hissar Districts (Haryana)*, Kurukshetra, Ph. D. Thesis (K.U.K.), 1972 (unpublished), pp. 32—63; Surender Singh Hooda, *Archaeology of Sonapat*, M. Phil. Dissertation, K.U.K. (unpublished), 1984, pp. 9—22; Brahma Datt, *Settlements of Painted Grey Ware in Haryana*, Ph. D. thesis, (K.U.K.), 1980 (unpublished).
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. Surender Singh Hooda, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
 6. Even in the field of art, the district has produced very little evidence. Only two pieces of sculpture have so far been discovered from the district. The first recovered from Dhatauri (in Sonapat tahsil, about 2 Kms. south-east of Larsoli on G. T. Road) is a head of a female figure, a master piece of Gupta terracotta art. Made of fine levigated clay, it presents a portrayal of a robust lady remarkable for her round face, broad eyes and prominent nose. Graphic and graceful the portrayal is enriched by magnificent hair style; the other is that of *Sessasyi Vishnu* from Faziipur, 4 Kms., east of Sonapat and which, on stylistic grounds, may be placed in 8th-9th century A. D. (Silak Ram, *op. cit* pp. 58-9, Pl. XIII).
 7. Silak Ram *op. cit.*, p. 32 f (No. 17).

culture of the district is marked by the discovery of the Harappan Ware from Chhapra and Gharwal¹ assignable to a time-bracket of C. 2300—1700 B.C. It is not possible to attempt any reconstruction of the culture of this phase on the basis of this evidence. These early settlers were perhaps followed in course of time by the late-Harappans (c. 1700)—1500 B.C.) whose pottery has been recovered from a number of places such as Butana, Ahulana, Nuran Khera and Lahrarha². The pottery largely comprises thick sturdy red ware with medium fabric. The pots are wheel made and treated with light red slip, some sherds are painted with black designs over red background.³ The main shapes include dish or basin-on-stand, bowls, jars and vases. The exterior shows incised decoration with horizontal grooves, multiple wavy lines and parallel finger marks resulting in ribs over rusticated surface.⁴ Faience bangles have been recovered from Lahrarha⁵. As the explored sites are few and nothing tangible can be inferred except that these late people, as known from the evidence of a number of excavated sites in the adjoining districts represented a degraded form of culture as suggested by their inferior pottery, rarity of art forms, and in the conspicuous absence of script, seals, clay bangles, steatite and weights.⁶

The next important phase in the pre-history of the region is marked by the advent of the people using painted Grey Ware and generally associated with the Aryans. The pottery of these people has been found from a number of places⁷-Bhawal, Chandi, Chhapra, Gharwal, Ahulana, Khanpur, Nuran Khera, Akbarpur Barota, Bulandpur Kheri, Gumar and Nakloi. The Vedic literature does not help in throwing any light on the history of the region, possible it was away from the main centre of Aryan cultural activity (i.e., the region between the Sarasvati and the Drisadvati). It might possibly have been included in the kingdom of the Pandavas who ruled from Indraprastha & later from Hastinapura, but there is absolutely no evidence in support of the belief that Sonipat was one of the villages asked for by Yudhisthira as a pre-condition for concluding peace with his cousins, the Kauravas.

1. *Ibid.*, (Nos. 5 & 7).

2. Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, (Numbers—38, 16) Surender Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 18-19, 46-8.

3. Surender Singh Hooda, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 56.

6. Suraj Bhan, *op. cit.*,

R.S. Bisht, 'Excavations at Banawali: 1974—77', *Proceedings of the Seminar on Harappan Culture in Indo-Pak Sub-Continent*, Srinagar, 1978;

S.P. Sen (ed.), *Sources of the History of India*, Vol. II, p. 112, (Suraj Bhan's paper 'Recent Archaeological Investigations and their contribution to the Cultural History of Haryana

Suraj Bhan, *Mitathal Report*, p. 126.

Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, pp. 32—63, Gohana Tahsil, Nos 2, 4, 5, 7, (II), 8, 11, 16; Sonipat Tahsil, Nos. 2, 7, 10, 14 (I); See also Brahma Datt, *op. cit.*

That the area was inhabited also seem to receive some support in the Buddhist literature particularly the *Nikayas*¹ which refer to a township of the kurus named Kammasadhamma, specially benefitted by the discourses of Buddha and where the latter often stayed during the course of his wanderings². The people of this town are described very wise³. The town was so named after Kalmashapada, the man-eating ogre, who was civilized here by the Bodhisatta⁴. The *Therigatha*⁵ refers to the renowned Buddhist nuns Mittakalika and Nanduttara as belonging to the Brahmin families of this village. The village has been identified with village Kamashpur situated on the G.T. Road in the Sonipat tahsil⁶. Discovery of a stone sculpture of Buddha from the area⁷ confirms close connection of the site with Buddhism. The settlement of this village is also referred to in the *Mahasutasoma* jataka which particularly mentions its shops, arches, gates and the lakes⁸. Kundi or Kundiya was yet another village wherein the nearby forest lived Anganika-Bharadvaja and close to it was Uggarama⁹. The place may be connected either with Kundli or Kundal, both places in Sonipat district¹⁰.

The earliest literary reference to Sonipat is, of course, in the *Paniniya Ashtadhyayi* where it has been mentioned along with other towns whose names end in prastha (Sonaprastha¹¹). The discovery of Early Historical and

1. *Digha Nikaya* (ed). Rhys Davids and Estlin Carpenter, (PTS), London, 1947, II, p. 55f; *Majjhima Nikaya*, Tr. I.B. Horner, London, 1954, I, p. 70f; 501—13; II, 261 f; *Samyutta Nikaya*, II, 107f (PTS), *Anguttara Nikaya*, V. 29f (PTS).
2. Ibid
3. Saratthapakasini, *Samyutta Commentary*, II, 89.
4. Sumangalavilasini (PTS), II, 483 (*Digha Commentary*); G.P. Malalasekera, II, p. 529; for the Puranic version of the story, see S. S. Chitrav (ed.), *Bharatavarshiya Prachina Charitra-kosa*, Poona, 1964, pp. 124-125.
5. *Therigatha Commentary* (PTS), Verses 87-96.
6. Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
8. *The Jatakas*, Eng. Tr. E.E.B. Cowell, London, 1957, V., p. 279 (No. 537).
9. *Therigatha Commentary* (SHB), I, 339; G.P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, London, 1960, I., p. 629.
10. Silak Rám; *op. cit.*, pp. 104-05; B.S. Upadhayaya, *Buddha Kulin Bharatya Bhngola*, Prayaga (S. 2018), p. 410.
11. V.S. Agrawala, *op. cit.*

Northern Black Polished Ware suggests that parts of the district were probably inhabited in the succeeding periods¹. But the obscurity hanging around the history of the district continues till the discovery of a hoard of Indo-Greek coins (about 1200 hemidrachms) from Sonipat². The legends on these coins bear the names of eleven Indo-Greek kings³-Heliocles, Apollodotus, Strato, Antimachus II, Antialcidas, Philoxenus, Lysias, Menander, Diomedes, Amyntas and Hermaeus. The normal standard weight of the coins is 37 grains⁴. The discovery leaves no doubt that the Greeks attacked the region during the second century B.C. and continued to rule there towards the last quarter of the first century B.C. or the beginning of the first century A.D.⁵.

The Kushanas and the Yaudheyas also seem to have ruled over parts of the region. This is indicated by the discovery of a hoard of 10,000 copper coins by Silak Ram from Sonipat⁶. These are of four categories-Ramadatta, Kushana, Yaudheya and proto-type of Puri-Kushana coins. Of the first, there is only one coin and the ruler may possibly be identified with the one ruling over Mathura towards the end of 2nd century B.C. or the beginning of the first century B.C. The Kushana coins are those of Huvishka, Vasudeva I and the latter's imitation coins⁷. The coins have some differences with Puri-Kushana coins in form as well as in weight⁸. The proto-type Puri-Kushana coins on the basis of their variation in shape and distribution have been identified as belonging to the later-Kushanas of north-western India of the third-fourth centuries A.D.⁹ who are known to have established tributary relations with Samudragupta¹⁰. The Yaudheyas who were prominent republican people of the third-fourth century A.D. are known from their coins

1. Surender Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 11 ;
Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, pp. 32—63; Tahsil Gohana, Nos. 1, 2, 5, 7, (III), 9, 11, 16, 19; Tahsil Sonipat, Nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 12, (I), 13, 17, 19, 20, 22.
2. A. Cunningham, *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1872, p. 161;
District Gazetteer Rohtak, 1970, p. 332;
Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, p. 116f.
3. *Ibid* ; Surender Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
4. Surrender Singh, *op. cit.*
5. Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, pp. 115, 118; for the Chronological position of the Greek rulers see—V.A. Smith, *catalogue of the coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta*, Vol. I, 1972, Varanasi, pp. 3—34.
6. *Ibid*.
7. Surender Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 25—37 Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, pp. 262—66.
8. Surender Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 42, also 41—44 ; Silak Ram, *op. cit.*, pp. 254—55.
9. Surender Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
10. Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, line 23.

bearing the legend *Yaudheya Ganasya Jāhyah* (i.e. victory to the Yaudheya republic) along with their confederating units or administrative divisions¹. With the rise of Samudragupta, the Yaudheya domination ended. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription states that the Yaudheyas carried out his (Samudragupta's) furious commands by paying all tributes, obeying his orders and offering salutations². What happened to the region after the disappearance of the Yaudheyas from the political scene is not known. The region might possibly have come under the domination of the Guptas and thereafter of the Hunas till the rise of the Vardhanas in the Srikanthajanapada with their capital at Thanesar sometime in the second part of the 6th century A.D.³. During this time there comes across for the first time a historical document from this region namely the Sonipat Copper Seal of Harshavardhana. It was recovered by J.F. Fleet from the possession of Mohar Singh Ramrattan Mahajan, a merchant of Sonipat city⁴. At the top of the seal is a bull and below is the inscription. The language is Sanskrit and the composition is in prose throughout. It provides the genealogy of the dynasty from Rajyavardhana I to Harsha also providing their political status as well as their religious leanings⁵.

After the shifting of the Vardhana capital to Kanauj sometime in A.D. 606-607 the decline of the region began and continued to be so till the establishment of the Sultanate at Delhi in A.D. 1206.

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Before giving an account of the region, it is important to realise the geographical significance of its location. There were two routes from across the mountains in north-west by which foreign invaders came to India. The northern route through the Khyber pass followed the ancient Mauryan highway from Purushpura to Patliputra. It passed through a more politically alive, settled and fertile part of the Punjab. During the course of Indian history, this route was followed by invaders during the early winter months when the rivers of the Punjab were easily fordable. The southern route was from Khurasan to Delhi.

1. Silak Ram, *op. cit.* pp. 129, 130-131.

2. Allahabad Pillar Inscription, line 22.

3. R.C. Majumdar (ed), *The Classical Age*, p. 97; see also V.N. Datta and H.A. Phadke, *History of Kurukshetra*, 1984, pp. 56-8.

4. J.F. Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, Varanasi, 1963, p. 231 ff.

5. *Ibid*; Surender Singh, *op. cit.* pp 44-5.

The Tomra Rajputs ruled over 'Hariyana' from Delhi when the Ghaznavids invaded from the north-west. The kingdom of Lahore was annexed by the Ghaznavids by 1020. Sultan Masud, the successor of Sultan Mahmud, with the aim to extend his power and territory advanced towards Hansi (District Hisar) and invaded the fort. After the fall of Hansi, he marched to Sonipat and defeated its Governor, Dipal Har¹. From Sonipat he advanced towards the Kingdom of Ram Rai who saved himself from molestation by offering him valuable presents. While the Tomaras of Delhi succeeded in recovering these territories, they made no attempt to oust the Muslims from the kingdom of Lahore. The later Ghaznavids were not able to extend their power. Nor did the Tomaras attempt to oust them. Thus, for about 150 years the Muslims and Rajputs co-existed side by side. This position, however, changed with the fall of the Ghaznavids, when the kingdom of Lahore fell into the hands of the Ghuris and the Tomaras of Delhi were overpowered by the Chahamanas.

The Delhi Sultanate, established in 1206, depended on the support of Muslim nobles. On account of their nearness to Delhi, the Rohtak and Sonipat areas influenced the struggles among the aspirants for the throne of Delhi. The Haryana in general and the Rohtak and Sonipat areas with its population of Jats and Rajputs in particular could, therefore, be a source of strength or weakness to the Sultans depending on the political circumstances.

After ascending on the throne in 1206, Qutb-ud-din Aibak set up the military check-posts in the Haryana region. Sonipat was one of the very important military check posts².

When Balban (1266—87) acquired the throne, he devoted himself fully to improve the ill-managed administrative affairs in this region. He also set up military check posts at Sohna, Rewari, Narnaul, Kanaud, Sonipat, Hansi and Thanesar. These check-posts were manned by the army officers. The number of *Iqtas*, already introduced by Iltutmish, was increased. The newly created *Iqtas* were of Sonipat, Barwala, Kanaud (Present Mahendragarh), Kaithal and Shiwaliks.

Ghazi Malik of Tughlaq dynasty known as Gyasuddin Tughlaq was the first ruler of Tughlaq dynasty. Who paid special attention towards the administrative affairs of Haryana region. He divided the whole territory into *Iqtas* and *Shiqqas*.

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1. R.C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. V, 1974. *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 93.
 2. K.C. Yadav, *Haryana Ka Itihas* (Hindi), Vol. II, 1981, p. 32.

After Firuz Tughlaq, his successor Abruq (1389-90) did not affect the administrative changes on a major scale, but his successor Mahmud Nasiru Din (1394—1412) made some territorial adjustments. Besides other changes, some *Shiqqas*, i.e. Sonipat, Panipat, Jhajjar and Rohtak were placed under the control of a Commander Nushrat Shahnam.

From the Tughlaq dynasty to Mughal dynasty (1526), no major changes affected the present Sonipat district. But the social position of the Hindus was pitiable in these days.

The Hindus were relegated to an inferior position and were forbidden to observe their religious rites. They were also prohibited from building new temples and repairing old ones. In the words of Srivastava¹, "throughout the period of the Sultanate of Delhi and, in fact, for nearly forty years after its extinction, there existed in our country two grades of citizenship : the superior grade for the Muslims who were considered the privileged class, and the inferior grade for the Hindus who were treated as the depressed in their own homeland."

Firoz Tughlaq was fanatic and a puritanical Muslim and rode roughshod over the little liberties that the Hindus enjoyed in the matter of religion. Afif says that he burnt alive in open court a Brahman who had converted a Muslim lady, and imposed *Jizya* on the Brahmans, not caring even for their fast unto death in protest. He himself writes that he imposed ban on the construction of new temples and got the newly-built temple at Gohana demolished and their priests, who spread idolatry, killed. Side by side, he also suppressed the shias and panthaists enforced *purdah* system and suppressed the customs and ceremonies which smacked of Hindu influence. The people, tired and tortured with the excesses of the former times, were in no mood to rise in revolt².

Bounded by the Shiwaliks in the north, the river Yamuna in the east, the Aravalli ranges and a part of Thar desert in the south, the river Sutlej in the West, Haryana comprised the *sarkars* of Delhi, Rewari, Hisar Firoza and Sirhind during the Mughal period. Owing to its geographical situation, this region occupied a very important position in the history of that period. It was here at the battle field of Panipat, Babar laid the foundations of his Indian empire³

Taking advantage of the chaotic conditions, Babar made a forceful attack on India in the last day of the year 1525 A.D. He passed through the Punjab without meeting any opposition and reached Ambala in the early part of 1526⁴. From this place Babar marched via Shahbad along the river

1. *The Mughal Indian Culture*, p. 5.

2. *History of the Punjab* (A.D. 1000-1526) by Fauja Singh, 1972, IIIrd Vol. p. 219.

3. Dr. Buddha Prakash, *Glimpses of Haryana*, 1967 p. 50.

4. *Ibid.*

Yamuna to Karnal. There he heard that Ala-ud-din, whom he had sent on towards Delhi had been defeated by Ibrahim Lodhi and that the latter had advanced to Ganaur. After a short stay at Gharaunda, Babar led his army to Panipat, which he selected for the battle field. The historic battle of Panipat was fought here on 21st April, 1526. In the battle, Ibrahim Lodhi was slain and his forces were utterly routed.

Then Babar left for Sonipat where the unsettled conditions were prevailing. When Babar arrived at Sonpat (Sonipat), the Chiefs and Chaudharis of the city, together with the soldiers and bankers and other class, went to visit him; and they were treated with honour and kindness¹. After settling the chaotic conditions at Sonipat, Babar proceeded towards Delhi.

Probably owing to the opposition offered by the people of Haryana, Akbar did not like them throughout his life. As a matter of fact, he took delight in seeing them suffering. During his time the present Sonipat district was a part of *Subah* Delhi. Sonipat and Ganaur the then *paraganas* formed part of Delhi *Sarkar*; and Gohana was part of *sarkar* of Hisar-Firoza.

With the death of Aurengzeb in 1707, the Mughal rule in India ceased to exist to be an effective force. None of his successors proved to be worthy of great responsibility and Delhi, soon turned into a mere cockpit of warring powers. The then Haryana suffered a lot during this period owing to the *gardis* (hurly-burly) of the Jats, Rohillas, Sikhs and Marathas.

After the death of Aurangzeb his successors could not check the chaotic conditions here and there. The Sonipat-Rohtak-Panipat-Karnal areas were outwardly under the Mughals but, in fact, no body cared for the authority of the Government (King).

The chaotic conditions were already prevailing in the Gohana-Sonipat areas but the invasion of Banda added much more to the deteriorating affairs. The Governors of Delhi, Sirhind and Jammu acted independently and had no co-operation among themselves. Banda directed his attention to the east towards Delhi. There were two motives behind this move. He wanted to leave Mata Sahib Devi in Delhi and plunder the Government officials and rich muslims of the fertile areas of Haryana. From Kharkhauda about north-west of Delhi, Mata Sahib Devi, widow of Guru Gobind Singh was sent to Delhi under proper escort, to join Mata Sundari, widow of Guru Gobind Singh, who was acting as head of the *Khalsa*.

1. *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. V, by Elliot and Dowson, p. 34.

At Sonipat, 50 Km. of Delhi, early in November, 1709 Banda Commanded about 500 followers. He attacked the government treasury, plundered it and distributed the booty among his retinue. This was his second success against the Government and it considerably raised his prestige. By slow marches he advanced towards Sirhind¹.

Banda Bahadur established his headquarters at Sehri-Khanda villages of Sonipat district in 1709-10. During a very short period, many people became his followers. He made an abortive attempt to end the Mughal empire.

In May, 1710, emperor Bahadur Shah got the news of Sikh rebellion in Panjab; he hurriedly settled terms with the Rajputs of Rajasthan and left for Panjab towards the close of June, 1710.

In July, 1710, the emperor appointed Jain-ud-Ahmad Khan Governor of Sirhind. In August, 1710, Firoz Khan Mewati was placed in command of the advanced-guard. Muhammad Amin Khan with his son Qamar-ud-din Khan joined the emperor in Haryana. By a proclamation, ingress into and egress from Delhi was strictly forbidden. Kokaltash Khan was given charge of Sonipat.

Early in September, 1710, all the Hindus in the camp were clean-shaved to avoid any resemblance with the Sikhs. Muslim Chiefs and Jagirdars joined the imperial forces on their way. Churaman Jat of Bharatpur reported himself on duty in the royal camp near Delhi.

The emperor was so much worried that he did not enter the capital while returning from Rajasthan and marched straight to Sonipat in the last week of October, 1710. Here he learnt the news of a couple of engagements with the Sikhs. Firoz Khan Mewati had fought an action with Binod Singh at Amin, 24 Km. North of Karnal, and he presented 300 Sikhs heads to the emperor at Sonipat². He was given one lakh rupees and appointed Governor of Sirhind in supersession of his previous orders for the appointment of Zain-ud-din Khan.

After the death of Banda in 1716, Farrukh Siyar settled the chaotic situation in the Sonipat area in particular and Haryana in general.

Towards the close of 1738 and at the time of Nadir Shah's invasion, the Mughal empire had lost its vigour and energy. There were internal turmoils and conspiracies. The distant Governors and frequent irruptions

1. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol-II, 1937, p. 8.

2. *Ibid* p. 17.

of foreign hordes were fostering the pursuit of selfish interest and general slackening of allegiance.

The news that Nadir Shah intended to invade India was received at first with ridicule, but when it became known that he had taken Kabul, incredulity gave way to panic, which increased with every stage of the invader's advance.

Even at this moment of peril the great nobles of the empire could not lay aside their personal quarrels and with scarcely an exception, entered, either to assure their fortunes or to steal a march on their fellows, into teasonable correspondence with the invader.

Muhammad Shah and his army reached out of Sonipat¹ and in the later half of February reached Karnal, where it had been decided to meet the invader (Nadir Shah) in 1739.

In 1753, Marathas assumed the role of the Chief Power in India. Their assistance was often sought by the emperors and their wazirs in maintaining their position ; with the result that the politics of Delhi came to be dominated by them.

Peshwa's younger brother, Raghunath Rao, arrived at Delhi on 1st June, 1754. He helped Imad-ul-mulk in getting prime ministership, and then in changing the emperor. The Maratha general their upon demanded the tribute by Imad-ul-mulk. As no money was forthcoming, Raghunath Rao stayed in the capital for seven months, changing his camp from place to place around Delhi. Entire supply of food, fodder and fuel became exhausted.

In this region the Maratha soldiers exercised oppression on the neighbouring Jat villages, mostly of Dahiya clain. The freedom loving jats would seize in revenge Mratha mares grazing in their fields. Malhar Rao attacked their villages including Nahra, Nahri and many others. He plundered their property and sold it cheap in Delhi. The people complained to the emperor and his *Wazir*, but nothing came out of it.

After the battle of Taraori, Dattaji wound up his camp at Kunjpura on 27th December, 1759, and reached Sonipat on 29th December, 1759. He stayed at Sonipat for five days to get exact information about the Durrani movements.

At the close of the rainy season of 1760, the Marathas under Sadashiv Rao Bhau marched upon Kunjpura (Karnal district). The fort of Kunjpura was well-stocked with money and provisions, of which the Marathas were in

1. *The Cambridge History of India*, Volume IV, by wolscley Haig, p. 359.

sore need. It was held by Nijabat Khan with 10,000 picked Rohillas. It was seized by the Marathas after a fierce bombardment. The garrison was put to the sword on the pretext that Nijabat Khan had been responsible for the death of Datta Ji Sindtia.

The Yamuna being in floods, Ahmad Shah who was in the Doab, was unable to cross the river to prevent this disaster while the Marathas proceeded unchecked to encamp near Panipat. At last Ahmad Shah crossed the river on October 25, 1760 and entered his tents in the garden of Fakhru at Sonipat, 2 Kilometres north of the city. Near the western bank, it was extremely marshy and muddy. Ahmad Shah ordered everyone including Shah Valikhan to break a branch or pull out reeds and grass and throw it on the mud. There was thick overgrowth of *Jhau* bushes. The Wazir got down from his horse and cut off a handful of the branches of *Jhau*. His eight thousand troops followed his example. In a while two metres high heap was piled up. Not to speak of men and horses, even elephants carrying cannon tied to their waist passed over it easily¹. The entire army crossed over in three days on 25, 26 and 27 October. Some boats were also captured on the western bank. These were used to carry heavy baggage across the river by numerous trips. About a thousand men were drowned.

At Sonipat on 27th October, Ahmed Shah enquired of Najib : "Where are the troops posted by the Marathas with naked backs to guard the bank of the river ?" Najib replied that they were a few kilometres northward. Ahmad Shah ordered Shah Pasand Khan, the leader of all the skirmishing parties, to march at once, and not to allow even a single man to escape. Shah Pasand Khan at the head of his 4,000 chosen troops and guided by Najib's men rushed upon him. Bhau had posted nearly a thousand militia men under Baji Hari Deshpande at the upper ferry of Sonipat. Shejwalkar writes that they were sleeping "soundly on the plains, allowing their horses to roam in the green fields for grazing". They were all cut to pieces.

On 28th October, a body of advanced patrols of the Marathas was overtaken by the Afghans near Sambhalka (Karnal district), 28 kilometres north of Sonipat. A sharp action took place in which about 1½ thousand Marathas and one thousand Afghans lost their lives. On this day Ahmad Shah reached Ganaur, 17 Kilometres north of Sonipat and 30 Kilometres South of Panipat and stayed there on 28, 29 and 30 October². The Marathas were utterly routed and many of them were driven into the town of Panipat, where

1. *Marathas and Panipat* by Hari Ram Gupta, 1961, pp. 168-169.

2. *Ibid.*

next morning the Conqueror brought them out, distributed the women and children among his troops and massacred the men in cold blood. The fugitives were followed all over the country and killed whenever they were overtaken.

It is said that the Bhau finding his armies defeated started towards Gohana. Taking shelter among the villagers on his way in the guise of *Sadhu*, he went south of Gohana. Acute scarcity of fodder had prevailed in the region in that winter. The people had cut down even the branches of trees to feed their cattle.

The impact of the third battle of Panipat was far-reaching on the people of Haryana in particular and on the whole country in general. Historians' assessment about the consequences of the battle is as follows :

"The Third Battle of Panipat (1761) decided the fate of India. The Maratha and Muhammadans weakened each other in that deadly conflict, facilitating the aims of the British for Indian supremacy. The rising power got thereby the opportunity it needed so much to strengthen and consolidate its authority in India. If Plassey had sown the seeds of British supremacy in India, Panipat offered time for their maturing and striking roots."

In September, 1765, the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar and decided to plunder Haryana. In consequence they marched thither and after passing through Sirhind divided themselves into two bodies; *Tarana Dal* and *Budha Dal*. After the battle of Shamli, the *Tarana Dal* advanced towards Delhi and joined the *Budha Dal* in the neighbourhood of Kharkhoda, east of Rohtak.

The Sikhs invaded the territories of Najib-ud-Daula in 1767. When he became aware about their activities, he came forward, then Sikh plunderers turned back. Some Sikh soldiers under the leadership of Jassa Singh invaded the Sonipat areas. Many skirmishes took place and ultimately the Sikhs won the day.

Taking advantage of the illness of Najib-ud-Daula, who held the charge of Haryana then, the Sikhs launched their raids again into this territory in January, 1770. They arrived near Panipat on the 4th January plundering and ravaging the country as they went. Najib-ud-Daula's son Zabita Khan, however, tried to oppose them, but he could not carry out his plans properly. The Sikhs plundered every village between Panipat and Delhi.

No sooner was the news of the removal of the strong hand of Najub-ud-Daula known to the Sikhs, than they carried several plundering raids into the neighbouring district of Panipat. This tract, in which were situated the cities of Sonipat, Panipat and Karnal, had become a prey to complete anarchy in the third quarter of the 18 century. It formed a sort of no man's land between the Sikh and Maratha powers, coveted by both but protected by neither. It fell a victim to every free booter who happened to come that way¹.

Nawab Abdul Ahad Khan (alias Majd-ud-daulah) and the prince Jahan Shah Farkhunda Bakht left Delhi on the 18th June, 1779 to attack on Patiala Chief. The Nawab marched along the western bank of the Jamuna so that the soldiers might not suffer from want of water, and the prince being very fond of fishing could enjoy this pastime. The first halt was made at Barari Ghat on the 26th June; they were at Bakhtawarpur in *Paraganah* Haveli. At Barota in *paraganah* Sonipat, the Prince caught a lot of fish which he presented to his nobles. On the 29th July, they encamped 6 kilometres from Panipat.

After the surrender of widow queen of Nawal Jat King on March 17, 1780, Najaf Quli Khan turned towards the areas of Sonipat-Rohtak and Bhiwani. These areas were under the control of Baluchs. He wrested these areas without any stiff opposition.

A complete anarchy was prevailing in the Cis-Satluj country, and internecine warfare was going on among the Sikhs. So momentous was the effect of the civil war among the Sikhs on the imperial court that the Mughal nobles now considered it practicable to take charge of crownlands in the then Karnal district. They wanted to achieve success by playing off one party against the other.

On the 16th September, 1780 Najaf Quli Khan attended a feast given by Raja Himmat Bahadur. The Khan told the Raja that he intended to take a body of the Sikhs in his service. The same day Najaf Quli requested Najaf Khan to grant him the areas of Karnal, Panipat, Jind and Gohana in *Jagir*². The Wazir replied that after consulting Opat astrologer he would inform him.

Mahadji Sindhia deputed Amba Ji Ingle, faujdar, to join over the Sikhs during February-March, 1785. Ingle proceeded to Barari Ghat to meet the Sikhs who in a body of about 12,000 men under the leadership of nine chiefs lay encamped near Sonipat. Some Sikhs approached Ingle's camp and carried away a number of his camels. Ingle opened negotiations with them, and

1. Dr. Buddha Prakash, *Glimpses Of Haryana*, 1967, p. 64.

2. *History Of the Sikhs* by Hari Ram Gupta, *Second Revised Edition*, 1980, Vol.- III, pp. 124-125.

met the Sikh leaders on the bank of the Jamuna. He fixed his camp at Bakhtawarpur (21 Kms north of Delhi), while the Sikhs were halting at Ganaur (40 Kms north of Delhi). He tried his level best to attract the Sikhs to Sindhia's interest, but to little effect.

The Sindhia concluded a treaty with the Sikhs on 9th May, 1785. The particulars of the treaty were as follows:—

“The chief of the Khalsa with a force of 5,000 horse being united in connection with the *sarcar* and the victorious army, shall receive allowances and a *Jagir* of 10 *lacs* of rupees. Of this *Jagir* $7\frac{1}{2}$ *lacs* of rupees are in the neighbourhood of Karnal and $2\frac{1}{2}$ *lacs* from the country of the *Sarcar*. Four paraganas of Gohana, Kharkhoda, Tosham¹ and Maham, worth 2.5 lakhs of rupees were granted on this occasion.”

In December, 1789, the Sikhs made preparations to accompany the Rohilla lady and her son to the Doab. In February, 1790, the Sikhs assembled in large number of Sindhia's territory ready to invade the Doab. In March they ravaged the country lying between Karnal and Sonipat.

When the Dallewalia Sikhs attacked Patiala territory in May, 1790, Nanu Mal had to seek assistance from Sindhia, and sent his son to wait upon him. Sindhia despatched Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar at the head of a force. About the end of May, they reached Sonipat where they plundered a few villages and realized fifty thousand rupees as tribute. The Maratha generals halted at Panipat and refrained from marching into the heart of the Sikh country.

The contingents of Begam Samru was ordered to march to Kanaud to reinforce Appa Khade Rao. Gopal Rao Raghunath called upon Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala to help Appa Khade Rao. The Raja at once made preparations to leave at the head of a force. The Sikhs who had just returned did not like this policy. On the 7th March Gopal Rao encamped near Delhi. Shah Nizam-ud-din deputed Chimaji Pant to Gopal Rao to represent to him that his halt in the neighbourhood of the city was causing great inconvenience to the people, as his troops were destroying the crops. On the 13th April, 1792 Gopal Rao and De Boigne halted at Kharkhoda (32 Kms north of Rohtak). Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar who were the leaders of the Maratha advance-guard invested the village Sanghi (Rohtak district), for having declined to pay tribute. The village which had a population of 10,000 offered resistance and in the fight nearly 700 persons were killed and wounded. Gopal Rao marched to the village. The Zamindars, finding resistance useless, sought the intervention of De Boigne and paid a tribute of twenty thousand rupees. On the 17th April, 1792, Gopal Rao marched from Sanghi to Sonipat and he stayed there for a week.

1. Now Tosham is a part of Bhiwani district and Meham that of Rohtak district.

Among the most notorious adventurers in the northern India towards the end of the 18th century, was George Thomas, an Irish, known in Haryana as *Jahaz Sahib*. After facing many ups and downs in life, George Thomas became the protege of a Maratha leader, Appa Khandi Rao.

Lakhwa Dada, the Maratha Commander of Saharanpur, sought the assistance from Appa Khande Rao Hari to check the plundering activities of the Sikhs in October, 1795. He despatched George Thomas to help him. George Thomas crushed the Sikhs. Lakhwa Dada, "a man of some what imbued with the spirit of chivalry", was so deeply impressed with the achievement of George Thomas that he borrowed his services from Appa Khande Rao, and appointed him to the charge of Sonipat, Panipat and Karnal districts with 2,000 infantry, 200 cavalry and 16 pieces of field artillery. Thus George became 'warden of the marches' for Sindhia's dominions. Babu Ji Malhar who was at that time the Officer in charge of Sonipat-Panipat district was transferred to Saharanpur¹. George Thomas who granted the revenues of Sonipat-Panipat and Karnal districts for the maintenance of his force.

Appa Khande Rao committed suicide by drowning himself in the Jamuna in 1797. His death was a severe blow to George. Thomas who was then left without a patron. Soon afterwards he was taken in service by Babu ji Malhar, Governor of Saharanpur. After employment of about a year or so, differences arose between him and his master. Babu ji dismissed him and areas including (Sonipat) already granted to him were resumed. George Thomas was again left without a master and without the means to feed and pay his troops numbering 3,000. He took to the profession of a free-booter and began plundering towns and cities in the neighbourhood of Delhi. These constant efforts gave him an idea of setting himself up as a Sovereign over some territory.

Consequently, before the close of 1798, George Thomas carved out an independent principality for himself in a tract always covered with green grass, and for that reason called Haryana. Gradually he extended his sway over the areas of Gurgaon, Rohtak, Sonipat, Hissar and Bhiwani districts.

After making his position somewhat stable, Thomas took a marauding expedition into the Sikh territory. He was opposed by a superior body of the Sikhs and, therefore, he returned to George-garh through Kaithal, Jind, Sonipat and Panipat. Meanwhile, there were some disturbances in his territory but they were soon brought under control.

Thomas's growing power was a cause of jealousy and apprehension to Sindhia and his General Perron. George Thomas was asked to subject

1. *Memoirs of George Thomas*, p. 267.

himself to the authority of Sindhia, but he declined to do so. The refusal ultimately resulted in a quarrel between two powers. An account of the last battle of Thomas with the British is as follows:—

“Thomas could not have hoped to have held out long against such a force in case; but treachery was at work within his camp and he was also deserted by several of his Chief Officers, and compelled to fly away by night to Hansi. His enemies speedily followed him there; much the same scene of baseness was re-enacted; and in February, 1802, Thomas abandoned claims to power and agreed to pass over into the British territory where he died shortly afterwards on his way to Calcutta. He is still spoken of admiringly by the people, whose affections he gained by his gallantry and kindness; and he seems never to have tarnished the name of his country by the gross actions that most military adventurers in India have been guilty of¹.”

THE BRITISH PERIOD

Within two years of the abandonment of his dominion by George Thomas, the rising power of Sindhia in northern India was completely broken by the British forces under General Lake in the second Maratha War. The Gohana areas of Sonipat district passed on to the British East India Company by the treaty of Surji Arjungaon in 1803.

General Lake was of the view that the British should not hold large territories beyond the Yamuna. Accordingly a number of chiefs and leaders who had done good military service against the Marathas or had at least remained neutral, were settled to form a barrier of independent outposts between the British border and Cis-Sutlej Sikh estates as well as the trans Sutlej rising kingdom of Ranjit Singh.

The new Masters—the British East India Company—exercised direct control only over the ‘assigned territory’ which comprised the *paraganas* of Sonipat, Ganaur and other parts of this district. The reasons for taking this territory under direct control were three-fold. In the first place the co-operation and occupation of this territory was very essential for an effective hold over the historic city of Delhi. In the second place, this territory would provide financial provision for the royal household; and in the third place, since its situation was of utmost strategic importance, it would provide military basis for security of company’s possessions from the Sikhs and others in the north-west and the Rajputs, etc. from the side of Rajasthan².

1. *Gazetteer of the Rohrak District, 1883-84*, p. 20-21.
 2. *Journal of Haryana Studies*, Vol. XII 1980, P.47.

To conduct the administration of this territory, a Resident was appointed. He was assisted by few assistants. The senior-most was called head assistant and he was to officiate as Collector of revenue under the supervision of the Resident.

Gohana and Kharkhauda-Mandothi areas were given to Raja Bhag Singh of Jind and Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal as life *jagirs*.

The Gohana and Kharkhauda-Mandothi estates lapsed to the British Government on the deaths of Lal Singh in A.D. 1818 and Bhag Singh in 1820.

In 1824, Gohana and Kharkhauda-Mandothi units were included in Rohtak district.

By the Charter Act of 1833, the North-Western Provinces was formed. The headquarters of N.W.P. was at Agra. Under the new arrangements, the Haryana region was made one of the six divisions of the new province under the name of Delhi Division. Its headquarters was placed at Delhi. It comprised the districts of Panipat, *Hariyana*, Delhi, Rohtak and Gurgaon¹. Each district was placed under a Magistrate-Collector. The district was further divided into tahsils. In the villages, there were *Tholas* which were called panas of different Communities.

The communities in Haryana were remarkable institutions. By their wonderful proceedings they had been preserving their old culture from time immemorial. How they worked is graphically described by Metcalf in these words:

“The village communities are like little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Marathas, Sikh are masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves; a hostile army passes through the country; the village community collect their cattle within their walls and let the army pass unprovoked; if plunder and devastation be directed against themselves and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance, but when the storm has passed over, they return and resume their occupation. If a country remains for a series of years the scene of continual pillage and massacre, so that the villages cannot be inhabited, the villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceable possession revives. A generation may pass away but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the place of their forefathers, the same site for the village, the same position

1. Dr. Buddha Prakash, *Glimpses of Hariyana*, 1967, p. 80.

for the houses, the same lands will be reoccupied; and it is not the triffling matter that will drive them out, for they will often maintain their post through times of disturbance and convulsion, and acquire strength sufficient to resist pillage and oppression with success¹.

UPRISING OF 1857

The majority of the people in this area showed sympathy with the uprising of 1857. The soldiers, particularly *Rangaers* and Jats, who had been serving in the army of East India Company were discontented with the British. The Sepoys of the regiments coming home on leave instigated the villagers against the British. Thus, they spread disaffection in the rural areas. Noticing these symptoms, John Adam. Loch, Collector of Rohtak, took steps to preserve order by calling into headquarters of all sepoys who were on leave in the district.

Although seething with the fire of revolt in their hearts, the people did not rise in revolt until May 23, 1857 when Tazul Hussain an emissary of emperor Bahadur Shah came to Rohtak with a small force. The Tahsildar of Rohtak, Bakhtawar Singh, who had been sent there to meet him, was unequal to the task of encountering the rebels and fled to Rohtak. The Deputy Commissioner, Loch, at first wished to stay at his post and fight the enemy, who were not strong in numbers; but ultimately despairing of success, he left the place by night, accompanied only by the Thanedar, Bhurekhan and made his way by early on the morning of the 24th to Gohana. He passed to Karnal without stopping at Gohana and the tahsildar Bakhtawar Singh of the latter place deserted his charge and fled. The Thanedar Bhure Khan, also behaved in the same way. But Chaudri Rustum Ali Khan of Gohana took charge of the tahsil buildings and preserved them with the records and money, and kept together some prisoners who were engaged on the new works there until the order was again restored in the autumn.

During the 1st war of Independence (1857), the tahsildar of Sonipat ordered the inhabitants to vacate the city. But the people defied his orders. Then an action took place and many persons were killed. Ultimately, the tahsildar Fazle-Hussain was hanged at Ganj Bazar of the old town of Sonipat by the rebels².

Not only these officials, but all the Europeans and "Loyal Officers" fled from the district. The rebels burnt the office and *Bunglows* of the British Officials. They destroyed the records, plundered the Mahajans and Banias and set the prisoners free from the jail.

1. C.T. Metcalf, *Minutes of the Board of Revenue*, Nov. 17, 1830.

1. *Newspaper-Aftase-Alam*, (Urdu), February, 2, 1859; this extract has been taken from the *Diary of Bahadur Shah Jafar*, Dt. August 21, 1857.

The Rohtak district being abandoned by all its officers, the old feuds and quarrels of the people, which till then had been long buried, at once broke out anew and all outwards signs of order and rule disappeared for a time. The officers with their wives and children became wanderers on the face of the country¹.

All the vestiges of the British Government disappeared like snow in thaw. The mutineers (rebels) killed Bhurekhan, the thanedar, and after trying unsuccessfully to plunder these areas went off to Delhi. "The Ranghars and butchers set up the Muhammeden green flag and around it all the revolutionaries of the area collected and the lawlessness ruled supreme here till the middle of September².

As already explained, Chaudri Rustum Ali alone maintained himself at Gohana tahsil headquarters, nowhere else was there any sign left of the authority of the late rulers of the country. The villagers of Kharkhoda were long in possession of a gun which they seized from Hisar rebels. The gun was taken away from them by the other rebels. The lawlessness continued for many days.

The whole of the district plunged into a flood of rebellion. The Rangars, Rajputs, Jats and even low caste people played a prominent role in the freedom movement of 1857. In the words of Kaye and Malleson: "There can be little doubt that the sympathy of the people, from noble to peasant, was enlisted on behalf of the representative of Moghuls". Even the *mafidars* of the British government, who enjoyed rent free tenures and several other privileges, stood against their master (The British).

By and by, all the areas came in the grip of lawlessness. The villages of Rohan, Bukeor, Karawari, Shah Partik, Rulowdh, Malik Sunderlal, Malik Kheri, Fazilpur, Kuberpur, Sullanpur and Pattee Musalmanari in the then Sonipat tahsil refused to pay land revenue and defied the British authority. The people of villages, namely; Kundli (of present Sonipat tahsil) and Shamri (of present Gohana tahsil) revolted against the British in the uprising of 1857. They attacked and murdered some Englishmen who passed through these villages.

The civil population rose in almost every big village. Commenting on the State of the affairs, Cap. Marcandew informed the Government of India, "I find the country.....considerably disorganized; the revenue and police officers are in the state of flight; many of the zamindars and big villages are quite refractory."

1. *Land Revenue Settlement Report of Rohtak District, 1878-79*, p. 37.

2. *Gazetteer of the Rohtak District, 1883-84*, p. 27.

As already mentioned, the Rangaris rose *en masse* against the British. Their struggle was very intense for two reasons; first, a large number of Ranghar soldiers whose regiments had mutinied came and joined them. Secondly, they found good leaders like Bisarat Ali and Babar Khan. The former was a peasant from Kharkhoda. He had joined the army and was thus quite familiar with the principles of military organization and warfare¹.

The Ranghars led by Bisarat Ali freed the major portion of the area from the British control. But despite their best efforts, they could not free Rohtak entirely from the clutches of the British.

The British authorities took a very serious view of these incidents in Gohana area. Since the Grand Trunk Road passed through the district of Sonipat, the rebels could greatly impede the passage of men and material from Punjab to Delhi. It was, therefore, considered very essential from the military point of view that the district be recovered without any loss of time. Accordingly, Major General Wilson commanding the Delhi-Field force sent Lt. Hodson with a force comprising 6 European Officers, 103 men of the Guides, 233 of Hodson's Irregular Horse and 25 of the Jind Horse (361 in all) in the early hours of 15 August, 1857.

Hodson was checked at Kharkhoda on August 15, 1857. The villagers and especially the 'leave men' of the irregular corps who had taken position in one of the strong buildings belonging to a lambardar of the village opposed Hodson bravely. Under the inspiring leadership of Risaldar Bisarat Ali, the villagers fought gallantly. Even Hodson admitted: "They fought like devils". Because of their large numbers and superior fire power, the British soon overpowered the rebels. Risaldar Bisarat Ali fell fighting along with twenty-five of his men. The British also suffered a number of casualties on their side.

Hardly had Hodson finished this encounter when the intelligence reached him that a large number of rebels under a new peasant leader Sabar Khan were preparing their schemes. He at once left for Kharkhoda and after a short halt and respite in a village moved forwards to meet the challenge of the rebels.

In the early hours of July 17, 1857, Hodson was attacked by about 300 Ranghar horsemen belonging to different irregular cavalry regiments and a mass of foot men certainly not less than 900 or 1000 in number. A fierce fight took place. After sometime the rebels left the open field and retired in bushy hides.

As the situation warranted, the Indian force made a retreat. Hodson did not follow them. In the end, Hodson left for Delhi, leaving the towns of Kharkhoda, Sonipat and Gohana under the care and watch of the Raja of Jind and some local *chaudhris*.

1. K.C. Yadev, *the Revolt of 1857 in Haryana*, 1977, p. 61.

The authority of the government was not restored permanently until twelve days after the memorable 14th of September, 1857, when Delhi fell. After restoring the control and order in the area, the authorities paid their attention towards the rebels in the movement. Many rebels were shot and hanged; property stolen was as far as possible recovered; the area was actually disarmed throughout; the outstanding revenue was promptly collected, the villages which had been most prominent in the revolution were heavily fined; rewards were given to the loyal people and the lands of the guilty were confiscated.

As per a list found in the *File R/131*, there were many local *chaudhris* who extended all sorts of help to Lt. Hodson with money and material and later-on held their local places for the British. They were after wards handsomely rewarded for these services. These loyal persons did not belong to one or two particular castes or communities, but to many.

As already explained, the people of two villages, namely, Kundli and Shamri murdered the English Officials while passing through the territory of Sonipat district. The British after the uprising, confiscated the lands of the villagers of the above villages as a measure of punishment.

GROWTH OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE

Due to anti-British activities of the people in the war of Independence of 1857, Gohana tahsil being a part of Rohtak district alongwith the south-east Punjab, roughly comprising Haryana, which had been a part of the North-western provinces, was tagged to the Punjab by the Government of India notification No. 606 of the 13th April, 1858. After the abolition of Hisar division in 1884, the Rohtak district was transferred to the Delhi division. Sonipat tahsil, which had remained attached to the Delhi district since the year 1861, was added to the Rohtak district in September, 1912.

No development programmes were started by the government. Hence these areas remained backward. The government used the martial spirit of the people by recruiting many young persons in the army. The ex-service men and others realised that their lot could be improved only through political awakening and by and by this feeling was shared by a large number of people.

The Arya Samaj movement accelerated the desire for reform. It laid great stress on starting educational institutions and removing untouchability. The programme, creating a new social consciousness, spread gradually from urban to rural areas.

Arya Samaj became suspect in the eyes of the British Government soon after it was formed in 1875. The government became hostile to the Arya Samaj on account of the following activities :—

1. Arya Samaj was a new movement, seeking to disturb the old order of things and affairs of social and religious importance.

2. The Arya Samaj not only vigorously defended the ancient Hindu religion but also decided to fight the aggressors with their own weapons.
3. Arya Samaj took up cudgels on behalf of the Hindus in every trouble arising out of the question of cow killing or conversion of Hindus to an alien faith. Government became anxious on account of the activities of Arya Samaj in these days.

Besides the *Gurukul* at Kangri, a number of *Gurukuls* were established in different parts of the country during the period (1875—1918). In Haryana there were *Gurukuls* at Bhainswal and Matindu (Sonipat district). All these institutions (*Gurukuls*) were being run on the Kangri lines and served the same purpose, namely; to build first-rate citizens imbued with immense patriotic fervid and national zeal¹.

In these *Gurukuls* students received education at very nominal rates of tuition fees. In these institutions, besides their academic curriculum, the students were given lessons in patriotism, and service to their fellow countrymen. The importance of such virtues as *Swarajya*, self-help, dignity of labour, and individual and national self-respect was explained to them. As a result, there emerged a large number of young men with patriotic fervour and national zeal from the portals of these institutions. The *gurukuls* at Bhainswal and Matindu in Sonipat district were also following the life-pattern of Arya Samaj. They prepared their students for freedom struggle.

The teachers at *Gurukuls* in these days were well-known for academic excellence and patriotic feelings. Many of them had pledged their life to the institutions. Thus all the *gurukuls* played a very important role in the freedom struggle of the country by preparing their pupils for self-sacrifice for the country.

Ch. Chhotu Ram came on the scene and he served the interests of rural masses. He began to take a leading share in the welfare of Zamindars, judging in terms of the provisions of government of India Act, 1919, which gave a distinct political advantage to the rural areas by creating special constituencies of great landlords and giving a commanding majority of rural seats in the Provincial Council.

The Government introduced the bill on February 6, 1919 to give effect to the recommendations of Rowlatt Committee. Gandhi Ji urged the countrymen to resist this wicked legislation. He also called upon the people to observe

¹ *Arya Samaj and the Freedom Movement* by K. C. Yadav & K. S. Arya, Volume—1, (1875—1918), 1983, P. 66.

fast and hartal on a fixed day all over the country. His call received a favourable response in Haryana. A *hartal* was observed at Sonipat on 6th April, 1919. As a result, postal telegraph lines at Gohana were damaged. A mass meeting was to be convened at Sonipat had been abandoned under the Government pressure. On account of these activities, this area (Sonipat) was declared as a disturbed area under the Police Act on April, 21, 1919. The publication of news in *Jat Gazette* pertaining to the disturbances was forbidden. The Tahsildars of Sonipat and Gohana who were found to be sympathetic to the Arya Samagist leaders were transferred.

On learning the news of massacre of Jallianwala Bagh on April, 13, 1919, the people rose against the British. Government property was damaged and the post office at Gohana was destroyed and telegraph lines were cut off. The Government strengthened the executive authorities with greater powers to suppress the disturbances with strong hand. The Seditious Meeting Act 1907 was introduced in the Gohana area. Aeroplane-demonstrations were carried out over Ganaur to cow down the people.

Muslims were also active in the Non-Co-operation Movement. Two religious divines, Maulvi Baqaullah and Sufi Iqbal were arrested in 1920 for delivering anti-British speeches at Sonipat mosque. They were sent to Rohtak jail. Muslim sentiment was against the British in many areas of Haryana.

In 1920, Gandhi Ji in alliance with Ali brothers, the khilafat leaders, launched an all India campaign of non-violent non-co-operation to bring the British administration to a standstill. In response to Gandhi's call to do away with government-sponsored institutions, Hindu High School, Sonipat disaffiliated itself from the University of Punjab. Abdul Aziz of Gohana was one of the prominent leaders of khilafat movement. Gandhi Ji and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad addressed a large public meeting at Kalanaur (Rohtak district) after an attempt to hold khilafat meeting at Sonipat was thwarted.

To conduct non-co-operation movement successfully, the Congress committees were established at district and tahsil level. Pt. Shri Ram Sharma, staunch freedom-fighter, toured the Sonipat district and propagated in favour of the movement. The non-Cooperation movement had not made much headway but the Congress party tried to keep up the public morale by organising the public conferences. The government dampened the Spirits of the people by arresting their leaders.

Sonipat town was also agog with political activity due to its close proximity to Delhi. On January 2, 1921, a procession was arranged by Sonipat Congress Committee. The leaders spoke against *begar* and put some people of Sonipat to shame for helping the government officials. They instigated the people to observe hartal on the eve of the visit of Duke of Connaught to India.

On 13th May, 1921, a joint meeting of Hindus and Muslims was organised in which leather workers were specially invited. The leaders drew the attention of the people towards the Jallianwala Bagh atrocities. Another meeting was arranged at Sonipat on May, 18, 1921. At 8.00 P.M. a meeting was held at Anaj Mandi (Sonipat) where the leaders exhorted the lower classes not to offer *begar*. They also spoke against the loyalists who were helping in the running of British administration.

After that incident, Congress organizational work was started at Gohana. People resorted to wear *khaddar*. Many political meetings were held in Jain temple compound. A handsome amount was donated for the Tilak Swaraj Fund by many communities of Gohana area.

When the Khilafat movement was over, many Muslims left the Congress Party in despair. They stood against the Hindu leaders. The British tried their level best to inflame the feelings of anti-party among the Hindus and Muslims. The government favoured the Muslims with the view to dividing both communities and the Muslims were instigated against their Hindu brethren to a great extent. In 1923, the Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak, obstructed the 'Nagar Kirtan' procession of Arya Samaj at Kharkhoda. The Muslims also obstructed the Ram Lila procession at Kharkhoda. The situation became tense. Due to the efforts of the common leaders, communal harmony prevailed again.

At Sonipat, there was a bonfire of foreign cloth on 11th April and national week was celebrated on April, 15, 1929. The people went about daily in *Perbhat Pheris* early in the morning singing national and patriotic songs and poems.

In June, 1929, a *Jatha* of volunteers left Rohtak for Peshawar. The police arrested them near Karnal. Most of the active and youthful volunteers came from village *Pathsalas* in Gohana tahsil. The 'Mutiny Week' was celebrated and public meetings were held almost every day. The people attended these meetings in large number. Women also participated in these meetings.

The annual session of the Indian National Congress held in Lahore reached a momentous decision. It was resolved that the goal of India henceforth would not be dominion status but complete independence. The District committees, in pursuance of the resolution of the Congress, issued a circular to all their units with regard to the celebration of Independence day on January 26, 1930 by taking the following pledge¹:

"We pledge ourselves afresh to this great cause of India's freedom and to end the exploitation of our people and resolve to work to this end till success comes to our people. The British

1. Majundar, R.C. , *History of the freedom movement in India*, Calcutta, 1963, Vol. -III, p. 331.

Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever its connection with the British and attain complete independence *poori Azadi*."

In almost, all the cities, towns and big villages 'Independence Day' was celebrated¹. At Sonipat a big procession was led by prominent Congress men, speeches delivered and pledge taken².

The Civil disobedience Movement was started on March 12, 1930. The Government tried to curb the movement by resorting to repressive measures. During the movement, national week was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Shops selling the foreign goods and liquor were picketed. Vigorous propaganda dissuaded large number of students from attending local educational institutions and many students gave up their studies.

A Rural Conference was held at village Nahri³. Some shops selling foreign cloth were picketed on April 12, 1931 but the picketeers were beaten up mercilessly on the next day. Jatha (group of protesters) of women under the patronage of Smt. Kasturi Bai of Rohtak went to Sonipat and organised a hunger strike and staged dharnas before those shops. A meeting of cloth merchants was called on July 14, 1931 and they were persuaded to boycott the foreign cloth. They agreed to the proposal. All the bales of the cloth were stamped with Congress Committee Sonipat. On 15th July, the sale of all foreign cloth was stopped. Sonipat city was on the forefront in boycotting the foreign cloth and other things.

The Government of India considered that the Congress by launching the Civil Disobedience Movement wanted to embarrass the authorities in their efforts to achieve victory in the war. So it resorted to repressive measures to crush it. The Government passed an Emergency Power Ordinance which gave very wide powers to the Government and their officers. Believing that the purpose of Civil Disobedience Movement was to create a public opinion hostile to the rulers by giving publicity in the press, the Government of India banned publication of any information in the newspapers regarding the movement which had not been approved by the press authorities in New Delhi. The Deputy Commissioners were asked to keep a watch over the newspapers

1. Sharma, Shri Ram, *Haryana Ka Itihas*, 1929.

2. J.N. Singh Yadav, *Haryana (Studies in History and Politics* 1976, p. 111.

3. *Civil Disobedience Movement in the Punjab (1930---34)* by D.R. Grover, 1987, p. 167.

in their respective districts and to make use of the different agencies at their disposal particularly with a view to correcting or contradicting of false rumours set afloat by the freedom fighters.

Keeping in view these instructions, publication of *Haryana Tilak*, an Urdu weekly of Rohtak (brought out by Shri Ram Sharma) which then was the chief spokesman of people in Sonipat and Rohtak areas was stopped. This paper was widely read in the Haryana *prant*.

On receipt of the directions, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak asked the other newspapers to follow instructions. *The Chaministan* (Kharkhoda); *The Dehat Sudhar* (Rohtak), *The Jat Gazette* (Rohtak), *The Muslim Gazette* (Rohtak), etc. were ordered to comply with the instructions.

After the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Congress decided to participate in the elections to the legislatures and local bodies which were held after the passing of the Government of India Act, 1935.

In the then Punjab, the Unionist Party after winning majority in the General Election held in 1937 came to power. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan became the premier. In 1937, from Haryana Prant the party won 16 out of 29 seats whereas the Congress secured only 4 seats. Ch. Chhotu Ram and Tikka Ram, prominent unionists from this area, were included in Sikander Hayat Khan's Cabinet. In rural areas especially among the *Zamindars* and the farming communities of this region, the Unionist Party was more popular.

The Government showed confidence in its relations with the landlords. They (landlords), according to the government estimate, were loyal and "would stand by the Empire against barbarity. Early in July, 1938, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan came to Sonipat. In a large gathering of about 30,000 peasants, he appealed to them to join army and defend India against foreign invasion¹."

Between November 7, 1940 and November 15, 1940, Mian Iftikar Uddin toured some districts of Haryana extensively to create enthusiasm for the coming session of the Indian National Congress and to prepare Congressmen to meet the prevailing political crisis. On November 15, 1940, he went to Karnal and later to Sonipat. The Tribune reported that after the meeting at Sonipat Mian Sahib proceeded towards Rohtak.

According to the records of the Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak, the number of *Satyagrahi* prisoners convicted in the Rohtak district (of which the present Sonipat district was apart) from May, 1941 to September, 1941 for symbolic breaches of the Defence of India Rules, was 73. It is not possible to list them individually here. However, the lists reveal that the prisoners

1. *The National Front*, July 3, 1938

belonged to various castes such as Brahman, Jat, Jhiwar, Harijan, Rajput, Bania, etc. and hailed from both urban and rural areas.

The arrest of Gandhi Ji in August, 1942, was followed by hartals and processions in nearly the whole of the district. The repressive measures of the Government provoked arson and violence at many places. Telephone wires were cut, fish-plates were removed from railway lines and letter boxes were burnt by the reactionary elements in the Quit India Movement.

The arrest of the leaders during Quit India Movement led to spontaneous hartals, demonstrations and strikes at Sonipat and Murthal. At Sonipat the leaders appealed to the students to go on strike. Amar Nath of Sonipat who was connected with sabotage in Sonipat tahsil was arrested on October 27, 1942 for writing and sending threatening letters to the officers.

The popular slogan of the movement, *Karenge Ya Marenge* (Do or die) enthused the people of the area. The main targets of attack were means of communications. To keep up the momentum of the movement, efforts were made to arouse enthusiasm in the public by widespread distribution of pamphlets and posters.

When the intensity of the Quit India Movement showed signs of abatement towards the end of 1943, many political detainees were released from prisons. However, before their release, they were served with restriction orders, i.e. they could not leave the municipal limits of particular towns and villages without the permission of the district authorities. The restrictions adversely affected many internees and restrictees, especially the pleaders and doctors, whose source of livelihood was their professional practice. Due to these restrictions, the lawyers could not attend the courts of the neighbouring cities and towns. Their professional practice received a set-back. As a result, a doctor from Murthal and a pleader from Sonipat suffered financially very much.

Besides many individual Satyagrahi, a sizeable number of people courted arrest. Rati Ram belonging to chamar caste of Bohar village (Rohtak district) worked for the freedom of the country in Sonipat and Rohtak areas. He died as martyr in the Borstal Jail, Lahore in 1942, where he was under going imprisonment on account of the anti-British activities. Pt. Devi Singh of Sonipat who was the driver of Neta Ji Subhash Chander Bose, is known as Swantrata Sainani in the history of India. Chaudhry Tika Ram, close associate of Sir Chhotu Ram, belonging to Jat Community was an important figure in the National

1. Chopra, P.N. Chief Editor, All India Gazetteer, *Who's who of Indian Martyrs*, Vol.-I, p. 302.

Movement. Due to his utmost and inspiring work in the sphere of education, he is still known as Mahatma Hansraj in the Sonipat district.

Some singers and *bhajanis* played a very important role in the freedom struggle of the country. A typical *bhajan*¹ was sung by the *bhajanis* in the pre-Independence days in the rural areas.

India achieved independence on August 15, 1947. One of the most significant changes has been the formation of Haryana as a separate State on November 1, 1966. The present Sonipat District comprising the tahsils of Gohana and Sonipat was created in 1972².

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- (1) *Madre Hind ki tasvir sene Pe bani,
Beria peron me hon aur gale me kafni,
Aaj se dekhenge vafa ka yahi johar hoga,
Faras katon ka hame fuloon ka bestorhoga,
Ful ho jahega chhati pe jo patar hoga,
Kedkhana Kahte han vahi ghar hoga,
Santari dekhhar Aus jos ko sarmainge,
Geet janjir ki jhankar par ham gayenga,
Dil tarfata he ki savraj ka paigam mile,
Kal mile Aaj mile, subah mile, sham mile,
Hukam hakim ka hai faryade jawani ruk jaya,
Par yah mumkin mahin, yah joshe jawamni ruk jaya,
Hon Khabardar jinhone yaih ajimat di,
Kuchh tamasha nahiyeh, kom ne karvat li hai.*

- (2) *Vide*, Haryana Government, Revenue Department Notification: No. 6050-E (IV)-72/45723, dated December 22, 1972.