

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

POPULATION

According to Census 2011, Jhajjar district has a populace of 9,58,405 persons (5,14,667 males and 4,43,738 females), while at the Census 2001, its population was 8,80,072. It recorded an increase of 78,333 persons during the decade. The district occupied 17th position in population size among the 21 districts of Haryana at the Census 2011 as compared to 14th position at the Census 2001. Rural and urban population by sex according to Census 2001 and 2011 in the district is given as below:-

Year	Rural Population				Urban Population			
	Male	Female	Total	Percentage	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
2001	369,458	315,517	684,975	77.80	107,017	88,080	195,097	22.20
2011	384,219	330,847	715,066	74.61	130,448	112,891	243,339	25.39

The above table reflects a decadal decrease and increase by 3.19 percent in rural and urban populations, respectively, in 2011. Decadal variation (2001-2011) in the tehsils of the district is given below:-

Tehsil	Population						Percentage decadal Variation 2001-2011			Percentage urban population	
	2001			2011			Total	Rural	Urban	2001	2011
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban					
Beri	147263	131101	16162	155791	139857	15934	5.79	6.68	-1.41	10.97	10.23
Bahadurgarh	362224	222291	139933	403746	226074	177672	11.46	1.7	26.97	38.63	44.01
Jhajjar	248833	209831	39002	258595	208862	49733	3.92	-0.46	27.51	15.67	19.23
Matanhail	121752	121752	0	140273	140273	0	15.21	15.21	NA	0	0
Total	880072	684975	195097	958405	715066	243339	8.9	4.39	24.73	22.17	25.39

The decadal growth in Jhajjar district during 2001-2011 stood at 8.9 percent. Rural areas showed 4.39 percent decadal growth while urban areas touched 24.73 percent due to industrial growth around Bahadurgarh town, brick industries near Badli area and around power plants of Jharli area. The

highest urban growth of 96.2 percent was observed in the area during 1991-2001. The district experienced a fast change from agrarian economy to mixed economy. Highest decadal growth has been noted in Matanhail tehsil (15.21 percent) and lowest in Jhajjar tehsil (3.92 percent). Urban areas of Jhajjar and Bahadurgarh tehsils witnessed highest decadal growth of 27.51 percent and 26.97 percent respectively, while in rural areas, Jhajjar tehsil has the lowest negative decadal growth (-0.46 percent). The percentage of urban population was 13.9 in 1991 which increased to 22.17 percent and 25.39 percent in 2001 and 2011 respectively. Highest proportion (44.01 percent) of urban population was observed in Bahadurgarh tehsil as compared to 38.63 percent in 2001. Out of total rural population of 7,15,066 persons in the district, 3,84,219 were males and 3,30,847 were females. Out of six blocks, Nahar block had the minimum rural population i.e. only 1,826 persons (959 male and 867 female) as this block comprises of only one village. The total number of ruralities in Beri, Bahadurgarh, Jhajjar, Salhawas, Matanhail and Nahar is as under:-

Number of Villages and Rural Population in 2011

Name of C.D. block	Number of Villages		Rural population		
	Inhabited	Uninhabited	Persons	Males	Females
Beri	34	4	1,16,909	62,565	54,344
Bahadurgarh	60	3	2,26,074	1,22,895	1,03,179
Jhajjar	72	5	1,73,185	92,201	80,984
Salhawas	37	1	80,061	42,206	37,855
Matanhail	43	0	1,17,011	63,393	53,618
Nahar	1	-	1,826	959	867
District Total	247	13	7,15,066	3,84,219	3,30,847

At the Census 2011, out of total urban population of 2,43,339 persons (1,30,448 males and 1,12,891 females) in the district, Jhajjar urban agglomerations consisted of 48,424 persons (25,678 males and 22,746 females) which constituted about 20 percent of total urban population of the district. Bahadurgarh urban agglomerations consisted of 1,70,767 persons (91,721 males and 79,046 females) which was 70 percent of total urban population of the district. The detail of urbanities of the district at the Census

2011 is shown in the table below:-

Urban Agglomeration/Town Population			
Name of UA/Town	Population		
	Males	Females	Total
Beri	8,562	7,372	15,934
Bahadurgarh	91,721	79,046	1,70,767
Ladrawan	3,817	3,088	6,905
Jhajjar	25,678	22,746	48,424
Faizabad	670	639	1,309
District (Urban) Total	1,30,448	1,12,891	2,43,339

The population of the district urban agglomeration increased from 1,95,097 in 2001 to 2,43,339 in 2011. Bahadurgarh urban population has increased from 1,31,925 in 2001 to 1,70,767 in 2011, and similarly, Jhajjar urban population has also increased from 39,002 in 2001 to 48,424 in 2011.

Growth of Population.— The following table gives sex wise population and decadal variation at each census in the district from 1901 to 2011:-

Year	Population			Decadal variation	
	Males	Females	Total	Absolute	Percentage
1901	1,17,051	1,03,174	2,20,225	-	-
1911	1,02,336	87,643	1,89,979	- 30246	-13.73
1921	1,10,581	94,227	2,04,808	+ 14829	+ 7.81
1931	1,14,809	99,168	2,13,977	+ 9169	+ 4.48
1941	1,32,252	1,21,046	2,53,298	+ 39321	+18.38
1951	1,54,378	1,40,707	2,95,085	+ 41787	+16.50
1961	1,97,297	1,77,912	3,75,209	+ 80124	+27.15
1971	2,51,918	2,27,564	4,79,482	+104273	+27.79
1981	3,11,550	2,77,662	5,89,212	+109730	+22.89
1991	3,84,364	3,30,772	7,15,136	+125924	+21.37
2001	4,76,475	4,03,597	8,80,072	+164936	+23.06
2011	5,14,667	4,43,738	9,58,405	+ 78333	+ 8.90

The decade 1901-1911 was marked by severe ravages of various diseases and droughts which took a heavy toll of the population. Decadal variation from 1901 to 1911 declined by 13.73 percent. During decade 1911-1931, occurred the

great influenza epidemic, famine, and plague which resulted in high morality. Decade 1911-1921 and 1921-1931 showed slow decadal growth rate of 7.81 and 4.48 percent respectively. The major portion of the increase in population in pre-independence period occurred during the years 1931-1941. The decade 1931-1941 was generally healthy and population showed upward trend. Due to the partition in 1947 and migration of huge population of Muslims to Pakistan, a lower rate of population growth was recorded during the decade ended in 1951. The high growth rate of the population in the district was recorded during the period 1951-61 and 1961-71, which was 27.15 and 27.79 percent, respectively. During the next three decades i.e. 1971-1981, 1981-1991, and 1991-2001, there was a slight decline in the growth rate and it was recorded 22.89, 21.37 and 23.06 percent, respectively. In the decade 2001-2011, with a sharp decline, the growth rate was recorded at 8.90 percent which reflected the spread of education, increasing number of females in jobs, migration due to lack of opportunities and other economical factors. From 1901 to 2011, the population of the district has increased by nearly 4.3 times.

Density of Population.— Density of population conveys land-man ratio and is normally calculated as number of persons per square kilometre (persons per sq.km.). It depends upon the availability of natural resources, climate, topography and extent of use of technology to exploit the resources. At the Census 2011, population density of the district was 523 persons per sq.km., which was less than the State average of 573 persons per sq.km. The population density and ranking of the district in 1991, 2001 and 2011 was 390 persons per sq.km. (10th rank), 480 persons per sq.km. (11th rank) and 523 persons per sq.km. (14th rank), respectively. Jhajjar district was on the top in rural-urban disparity of density of population in Census 2001 due to maximum urban decadal growth and lowest rural decadal growth of density of population. Urban density that had increased to 4,154 persons per sq.km., at the Census 2001, from 1,824 persons per sq.km. in 1991, again decreased to 3,000 persons per sq.km. as per Census 2011. Rural density in the district was 346 persons per sq.km. in 1991 which increased to 383 persons per sq.km. at Census 2001 and again rose up to 408 persons per sq.km. at the Census 2011. Density of population was highest in the Bahadurgarh tehsil with 790 persons

per sq.km. followed by Beri tehsil (438 persons per sq.km.) and Jhajjar tehsil (251 persons per sq.km.) due to proximity to Delhi.

Distribution of Population by Villages/Towns.— According to Census 2011, there are 247 inhabited villages in the district. Out of these, 216 villages are of good size, housing more than 90% of the villagers, having the range of population between 1,000 and 9,999 persons. In 2001, highest number of villages i.e. 122 fell in population range of 301-500 persons, while in 2011, highest number of villages i.e. 109 fall in population range between 2,000-4,999 persons. Four villages are quite big and thickly populated with more than 9,999 persons. Twenty-seven villages are small in the population range of less than 999 persons, out of these 7 villages, with a total of 644 persons, are in the lowest population range of below 200. The village population can be grouped under different units as follows:—

Range of population	Number of villages	Total Population
Less than 200	7	644
Between 200 & 499	5	1,897
Between 500 & 999	15	11,993
Between 1,000 & 1,999	82	1,24,008
Between 2,000 & 4,999	109	3,56,691
Between 5,000 & 9,999	25	1,69,416
More than 9,999	4	50,417
Total	247	7,15,066

Dighal village of Beri sub-division has a population 14,146 and is most populated village in the district, followed by Chhara and Mandothi of Bahadurgarh sub-division having population of 12,989 and 10,612 persons, respectively. As per 2011 Census, Jhajjar and Beri towns did not qualify as a Class-I town, the population of these towns being less than one lakh thereby leaving Bahadurgarh, with the population of 1,70,767 persons, as the only town that qualified for the status of Class-I town. Jhajjar is a Class-III town with a population of 48,424 persons and Beri is Class-IV town with the 15,934 persons. Villages Ladrawan and Faizabad, with population of 6,905 and 1,309 persons, have been classified as Class V and Class VI census towns respectively. No

town in the district qualified as Class II Census town.

Trend of population in the towns of Jhajjar district from 1901 to 2011 can be seen in the following table:—

Town	1901	1951	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Bahadurgarh	5,974	11,170	25,812	37,488	57,235	1,31,925	1,70,767
Jhajjar	12,227	10,514	18,947	24,247	27,693	39,002	48,424
Beri	9,723	9,952	12,336	13,490	14,508	16,162	15,934
Ladrawan	-	-	-	-		8,008	6,905
Faizabad	-	-	-	-		-	1,309
Total	27,924	31,636	57,095	75,225	99,436	1,95,097	2,43,339

Bahadurgarh was less populated (5,974 persons) as compared to Jhajjar town (12,227 persons) in 1901. Thereafter, due to its proximity with Delhi, population in Bahadurgarh town has increased more rapidly in comparison to the Jhajjar town.

Household.— The district has 1,85,334 households (1,36,503 rural households and 48,831 urban households) occupied by 9,58,405 persons according to Census 2011. Among these households 1,84,455 are normal, 288 are institutional and 591 are houseless. The houseless households live without any roof cover in open spaces on roadside pavements, inhome pipes, under flyovers, etc., and their population is 2,764 persons. Bahadurgarh tehsil is having highest number of 79,101 households, followed by Jhajjar tehsil (48,705 households), Beri tehsil (29,774 households) and Matanhail tehsil (27,554 households). In 2001, the total 1,58,075 households were occupied by 8,80,072 persons in the district, thus there is an increase of 27,259 households in a decade.

Sex Ratio.— Sex ratio is one of the important “demographic traits” which have intimate relation to study of population. A knowledge of the pattern of sex ratio helps to explain the employment and consumption pattern, social need of the people and psychological characteristics of a community. However, the district is not well in sex ratio and occupies 19th place among 21 districts of the State. The following table shows the overall sex ratio of the State and the

district from 1901 to 2011:-

Year	State			District		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1901	867	861	908	881	859	1017
1911	835	834	842	856	838	997
1921	844	848	811	852	839	940
1931	844	851	792	864	854	932
1941	869	879	806	915	909	952
1951	871	877	845	911	912	904
1961	868	874	842	902	900	920
1971	867	870	853	903	907	876
1981	870	876	849	891	894	871
1991	865	864	868	861	859	871
2001	861	866	847	847	854	823
2011	879	882	873	862	861	865

The sex ratio in the district in 1901 was 881 females per thousand males. The sex ratio in district remained on higher side as compared to the sex ratio in the State up to 1981, but a lower sex ratio in district as compared to sex ratio in the State has been recorded during the Census 1991 onwards. It increased up to 915 in 1941 and declined since then till Census 2001. The sex ratios in 2001 in the State and district were 861 and 847 females per thousand males respectively. During Census 2011, the district showed improvement and recorded an increase of 15 points from 847 in 2001 to 862 females per thousand males. The sex ratio in the district (862), however, still remained less as compared to the ratio of the State (879). Sex ratio by tehsils for 2001 and 2011 is given below:-

Name of tehsil	Sex ratio in 2001			Sex ratio in 2011		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Beri	865	866	853	868	868	861
Bahadurgarh	821	827	810	848	840	860
Jhajjar	867	867	859	883	882	888
Matanhail	-	-	-	859	859	-
Total	847	854	823	862	861	865

The above table shows that the sex ratio has improved considerably at the Census 2011 to 861 in rural areas and 865 in urban areas as compared to 854 in rural areas and 823 in urban areas, respectively, in Census 2001. Jhajjar tehsil has highest sex ratio in rural areas (882) as well as in urban areas (888) while Bahadurgarh tehsil has lowest sex ratio in rural areas (840) as well as in urban areas (860).

Child Sex Ratio.— The child sex ratio (0-6 age group) is one of major concerns in the district. It stood at 20th place among the 21 districts of the State at the Census 2011 as compared to 14th place in 2001. The tehsil-wise details of child sex ratio in 2001 and 2011 are shown below:-

Name of tehsil	2001			2011			Decadal variation during 2001-2011		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Beri	800	798	814	777	776	788	-23	-22	-26
Bahadurgarh	793	786	804	774	756	797	-19	-30	-48
Jhajjar	808	809	800	793	794	786	-15	-15	-14
Matanhail	-	-	-	789	789	-	-	-	-
Total	801	800	804	782	778	794	-19	-22	-10

At the Census 1991, rural areas of district had higher child sex ratio of 886 girls per thousand boys in than urban areas with 870 girls per thousand boys. However, at Census 2001 and 2011, urban areas had higher child sex ratio than rural areas as shown in table above. The decadal variation in the district was gravely negative by 19 points most probably due to preference for sons which is more prevalent in rural areas. It also reflects that practice of sex selective termination of pregnancy is rifer in rural areas than urban areas, thus contributing in declining child sex ratio. Reduction in urban child sex ratio by 48 points in Bahadurgarh tehsil, by 26 points in Beri and by 14 points in Jhajjar tehsil, as compared to Census 2001, rang the alarm bells. Jhajjar district has been made a part of the pilot project titled "Thematic Convergence Project" started in 2014 in collaboration with Panchayati Raj institutions for improving child sex ratio.

‘*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*’ (Save Daughter, Teach Daughter) programme was implemented in January, 2015 by Government of India through a national

campaign and focused multi-sectoral action in 100 low child sex ratio districts covering all States and Union Territories with the objective to improve in sex ratio. The project is a joint initiative of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource Development. The objectives of this initiative include prevention of gender biased sex selective elimination and ensuring survival, protection, education and participation of girl child. This campaign has been implemented in Jhajjar along with 11 other districts of the State. The district had dismal low child sex ratio in 2001 (801 girls per thousand boys) and in 2011 (782 girls per thousand boys). The village that succeeds in attaining a balanced sex ratio, would be awarded ₹ one crore. The data of civil registration scheme for the district shows some improvement in child sex ratio with registration of birth of 6,472 girls against 7,406 boys during 2016¹.

Population of Scheduled Castes.— The total population of Scheduled Castes in the district was 1,70,448 persons (90,856 males and 79,592 females) at the Census 2011. They constituted 17.78 percent of the total population of the district and the district stood at 16th position amongst the districts of the State in terms of percentage of scheduled castes population to total population in district. In rural areas, the district had 1,30,913 scheduled caste persons which constituted 18.31 percent of total rural population, and in urban areas, the district had 39,535 scheduled caste persons, which constituted 16.25 per cent of total urban population. The proportion of scheduled caste population to total scheduled caste population tehsil-wise in 2011 is given in the following table:-

Name of the tehsil	Total population	Total Scheduled Castes population	Percentage of Scheduled Castes population to total population
Beri	1,55,791	30,036	19.28
Bahadurgarh	4,03,746	65,835	16.31
Jhajjar	2,58,595	45,705	17.67
Matanhail	1,40,273	28,872	20.58
District total	9,58,405	1,70,448	17.78

¹ Statistical Abstract of Haryana 2016-17, p.96

Among the tehsils, highest proportion of scheduled caste population (20.58 per cent) live in Matanhail tehsil, followed by Beri tehsil (19.28 per cent), Jhajjar tehsil (17.67 per cent) and Bahadurgarh tehsil (16.31 per cent). Out of the total 1,70,448 scheduled caste population of the district, 1,07,861 persons (64,667 males and 43,194 females) were literate constituting 63.28 percent of their total population. The sex ratio among scheduled castes in urban towns, in 2011 was highest in Faizabad (1026), followed by Jhajjar (916), then Bahadurgarh (881), Beri (858) and Ladrawan (817). The sex ratio among scheduled castes in rural areas was highest in block Jhajjar (890), followed by Salhawas (882), then Beri (878), Matanhail (866), Bahadurgarh (856) and Nahar (820) blocks.

Literacy.— Literacy rate of the population is defined as the percentage of literates in the age group of 7 years or above. At the Census 2011, in the terms of literacy, the district stood at 6th place in the State. The literacy rate was 79.39 percent for the rural areas, 84.34 percent for the urban areas, and for the district as a whole it was 80.65 percent. The highest literacy rate was recorded in Bahadurgarh tehsil (82.84 per cent) and lowest in Matanhail tehsil (76.83 per cent). The following table illustrates the literacy rate in the district in 2001 and 2011:-

(all figures in percent)

Literacy Rate	2001				2011			
	Persons	Males	Females	Gap in male-female literacy rate	Persons	Males	Females	Gap in male-female literacy rate
Rural	70.4	82.1	56.7	25.4	79.39	88.94	68.46	20.48
Urban	79.4	87.1	70.1	17.0	84.34	90.41	77.41	13.00
Total	72.4	83.3	59.7	23.6	80.65	89.31	70.73	18.58

In comparison to 72.4 percent literacy rate in 2001, the district recorded 80.65 percent literacy rate in 2011. There were 89.31 percent male literates and 70.73 percent female literates in 2011 as compared to 83.3 percent male literates and 59.7 percent female literates in 2001. The decadal variation from 2001 to 2011 in literacy rate of the males and females in the district was 6.01 and 11.03, respectively. Thus, literacy rates for both males

and females have improved substantially in 2011 over those of 2001. Male literacy is higher than female literacy both in urban as well as rural areas, however, male-female literacy gap in the district which was 23.6 percent in 2001 has reduced to 18.58 percent in 2011. This gap is lower in urban areas 13.00 percent than rural areas 20.48 and its rate of reduction is higher in rural areas i.e. 4.92 percent as compared to 4 percent of urban areas.

Language.—Language is an important attribute of a population, and has great relevance and significance in a pluri-lingual and pluri-ethnic land like India. Mother tongue is defined as the language spoken in childhood by the person's mother to the person. As per Census 2011, Hindi is the most dominant language spoken in the district. It is most spoken of the scheduled languages spoken by 98.08 percent people, followed by Punjabi spoken by 0.96 percent, Urdu spoken by 0.085 percent and other languages spoken by 0.87 percent population of the district. In 2001, Hindi was spoken by 8,63,200 persons, Punjabi by 8,430 persons, Urdu by 752 persons, and other languages by 7,690 persons.

As far distribution of mother tongues and their proportion is concerned, pure or *theth haryanvi*, the major dialect, has many dialect varieties which are spoken in different parts of the district and it constituted 72.8 percent followed by Hindi (23.1 percent), Punjabi (1 percent) among all the mother tongues according to census 2001. *Ahirwati*, another dialect is spoken in the southern parts of the district, is a mixed product of *haryanvi* vocabulary and *mewati* structures. Depending on the nature of the mixture, it is sometimes considered as *haryanvi* influenced by *mewati*, and at other times *mewati* influenced by *haryanvi*. Devnagari script of Hindi is used for writing purposes by an ever-increasing number of people. Both the Hindi and the English languages are used in official work.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Hindus constitute the bulk of population in the district followed by Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Jains. The religion-wise detail of the population

of the district as per census 2011 is given below:-

Religion	Males	Females	Total Population
Hindus	5,07,499	4,38,194	9,45,693
Muslims	4,620	3,627	8,247
Sikhs	619	423	1,042
Christians	416	318	734
Jains	331	314	645
Buddhists	58	47	105
Others	12	10	22
Religion not stated	-	-	1,917

The percentage of Hindus to total population increased from 97.63 percent in 2001 to 98.67 percent in 2011. Similarly, the percentage of Christians to the total population increased from 0.012 percent in 2001 to 0.08 percent in 2011. The proportion of other religions like Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists to the total population, which was 0.94 percent, 0.15 percent, 0.09 percent and 0.016 percent at the Census 2001, has come down to 0.86 percent, 0.11 percent, 0.07 percent and 0.011 percent, respectively, in 2011.

HINDUS.— Majority of people in the district are Hindus by religion. The term 'Hindu' was derived from the river or river complex of the northwest, the Sindhu (Indus). Sindhu is a Sanskrit word used by the inhabitants of the region, the Aryans in the second millennium before Christ (BC). Later migrants and invaders, the Persians in the 6th century BC, the Greeks from the 4th century BC, and the Muslims from the 8th century, used the name of this river in their own languages for the land and its people¹. The term 'Hindu' was used by people to differentiate themselves from followers of other traditions, especially the Muslims. At that time the term may have simply indicated groups united by certain cultural practices such as cremation of the dead and styles of cuisine. The 'ism' was added to 'Hindu' only in the 19th century in the context of British Colonialism and missionary activity. Some Hindus define orthodoxy with the teachings of the Vedic texts i.e. *Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Ramayana, etc.* Although it is not easy to define Hinduism, we can say that it is rooted in India, most Hindus

¹ <http://worldhinduism.org/hindu-religion>

draw on a common system of values known as *dharma*, venerate a large body of texts as sacred scripture known as the *Vedas* and follow the principle of pantheism during the worship. The religious practices of the Hindus all over the State are almost identical. The varieties are due to peculiar customs of each caste and family. On the occasion of *greh pravesh*, child birth and marriage, the priest is invited for performing ritual worships. The practice of observing *shraaddh* during *pitru paksh* (fortnight of ancestors) in commemoration of the ancestors is also common. These are performed for 15 days before the beginning of Navratras. Brahmans are invited by a few families and are offered delicious food either on the important *tithi* or the last day of the *pitru paksh*, i.e. *Amavasya*. Some portion of the delicious food is offered to cows and crows. Most of the Hindus in the district follow traditional Hindu beliefs and practice Sanatan Dharm. The majority of Hindu homes have a shrine where prayers are said and offerings are made. A shrine can be anything: a room, a wall, an altar or a cabinet with statues or simply pictures of the deity. They worship the deities like Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, etc. Spirits of streams, Sun, Gugga, Small Pox Sisters, trees and other minor deities are also objects of worship. The popular deities and way of worship by the people of the district are as follows:-

Shiva.—The Hindus of the district have great faith in lord Shiva. Shiva, the destroyer, is the third God in the Hindu triumvirate which consists of three Gods responsible for the creation, preserver and destruction of the world, the other two Gods being Brahma-the creator, and Vishnu-the preserver. Shiva is also known as ‘Bholenath, ‘Bhole Mahadev’ or ‘Bhole Shankar’ amongst the people of the district as he is believed to please easily on clean hearted worship. Shiva is worshipped in the form of *Shivlinga*. The *Shivlinga*, in temples usually stands surrounded by idols of other members of family which include goddess Parvati (wife), Kartikeya (elder son), Ganesh (younger son) and the bull ; Nandi. People usually go to temple on Mondays and worship the *Shivalinga* by pouring milk and water, applying sandalwood paste, etc., on it, and making offerings of flowers and fruits. Some devotees also observe fast on this day. During

the month of *Sawan*, some Shiva followers bring *kawad* i.e. water of holy river Ganga from Haridwar in pots and pour it on *Shivalinga* on *Shivratri* day. Fast is observed on this auspicious day. *Shivalyas* are found in large number in villages and towns of the district. Dabra Mandir on Kaccha Badli Road, Jhajjar and Buddha Mahadev Mandir in Jhajjar are the famous temples where Shivratri is celebrated with enthusiasm.

Vishnu.— People in the district worship lord Vishnu either directly or in the form of his *avatara* (incarnations), most famous of whom are Krishna and Rama. Among Hindus, Vishnu is considered as one who protects and develops all elements to support, sustain and operate the Universe. He is worshipped as "Preserver of the Universe" being governor of the preservation and sustenance of the Universe.

Rama.— Rama or Ram is worshipped by all Hindus as the incarnation of lord Vishnu. Ram-temples are found in abundance in every village or town of the district. Every temple of Rama is adorned with the idols of Rama, Lakshman and Sita alongwith Hanuman. On the occasion of *Ramnaumi*, devotees keep fast, go to temples and worship Rama. They distribute sweets such as *kheer-puri* and *halwa* among other devotees. *Ramlila* is performed by artists in various parts of the district during *Navaratri*. Rama is worshipped on the occasion of 'Dussehra' for killing the 'adharm' (non-religion) and 'evil' in the form of 'Ravana' on the tenth day of 'Ashwin' month. *Ramlila* has also undergone a major change with the advancement of light and sound systems.

Krishna.— Krishna is worshipped by Hindus throughout the district as the another incarnation of god Vishnu. Like *Ramlila*, *Raaslila* is also performed by artists. Devotees generally keep the idols of Krishna in their homes for worship. In the district, *Janmashmi* is celebrated with great fervour as Krishna was born on this auspicious day. Devotees read 'The Gita' which was discoursed by Krishna. Krishna Mandir located in Jhajjar town is a prominent one.

Hanuman.— Hanuman is worshipped by almost all Hindus as a powerful deity, and as the *Sankatmochan* (remover of problems). Hanuman is

considered to be and worshipped as eleventh reincarnation or avatar of God Shiva who fought, from the side of God Rama, in war against the Demon-King Ravana of Lanka. Devotees worship him daily but, especially on Tuesdays majority of them throng the temples, read 'Hanuman Chalisa', offer sweetmeats to the idols/images of the deity installed in the temples or in their respective homes, and distribute the sweetmeats as *prasad*. Some devotees even keep fast on Tuesdays and on Hanuman *Jayanti* to appease the deity. Hanuman Mandir, in Main Bazar, Jhajjar town is famous temple where *bhandara* is organised on every Hanuman *Jayanati*. Another prominent temple of the deity is in Dujana.

Small Pox Sisters or Sheetla Mata.— Goddess Sheetla or Sitla Mata is worshipped by the people of the district for protection against small pox. Sheetla Mata is worshipped on the 7th day of *Chaitra* (March-April) which is called *sili-satam*. Besides, *phag*-the day after Holi festival, and Mondays, especially of the *Chaitra* and *Ashadha* months are favourable days. Although, the small-pox disease has been completely eradicated, people still believe in the small-pox goddesses. Customarily, Kandi Mata is generally worshipped on the second Sunday after the recovery from an attack of small pox. Mata Masani is also worshipped with the hope that children may not be inflicted with a *masan*, a disease of emaciation or atrophy. People of the district also visit the Sheetla Mata temple in the neighbouring district of Gurugram.

Bhumia or the God of the Homestead.— Bhumia or the God of the Homestead, often called *Khera*, is the most important deity which is usually worshipped on Sunday by rural villagers. People light up earthen lamps and offer cake of bread at the shrine. Brahmans are served with delicious food. *Khera* is often worshipped on marriage occasions, birth of son, etc. The bridegroom before proceeding to the bride's house takes a round of the deity. *Bhumia* is also worshipped on the birth of a male child. Women often take their children to the shrine on Sundays, and the first milk of a cow or buffalo is always offered there.

Minor Deities.— The local gods and saints are worshipped by the people. Many malevolent deities are worshipped by women and children. Some

Muslim Pirs are also revered by all sections of society. It is felt if they are not propitiated, they may be troublesome.

Maharishi Balmiki.— Maharishi Balmiki is revered as the foremost *rishi* and author of epic Ramayana since vedic times. His birth anniversary is celebrated with enthusiasm in the month of October. The devotional songs are also sung on this occasion.

Guru Ravidas.— Ravidas was a mystic poet-saint social reformer and a spiritual leader during the *bhakti* movement of the 15th to 16th century in northern India. He preached against the caste-system. The birth anniversary of the Guru is celebrated on the *puṇnima* of *Magha* (January-February). On the occasion, a large procession is taken out in the district accompanied by groups of devotees singing devotional hymns.

Arya Samaj.—This Hindu movement was revivalist in form, and reformist in content. It played a significant role in the district in the promotion of Indian culture. It spoke out against idol worship, child marriage, female infanticide, favoured widow remarriage, etc. The Gurukul system of Arya Samaj attracted the people in rural areas of district. In 1916, Gurukul was founded by Mahatma Munshiram Jigyasu (Swami Shardhananda) on the 138 *Bigha* land donated by Pandit Vishambharnath 3 miles south of Jhajjar. It encouraged the readings of *vedas*, attacked *purans* and orthodox Hinduism. This created a feeling of self-reliance, faith and patriotism among the youth and in a way, it had a big impact on indian mind and prepared the ground for nationalism in India. In the district, it has exercised a deep influence on Jats, a unique feature of which is that Jat womenfolk are generally left free to adopt any religious ceremonies. Consequently the performance of *shraaddh* ceremony has in many communities been reduced to a formality or even abandoned.¹

There was another movement that began to spread in the district in the last decade of 19th century. In 1886 at Jhajjar, Sanatan Dharam Sabha was started by Pandit Din Dayalu Sharma². This movement promoted the use of Sanskrit and Hindi languages, keeping education and traditional values

¹ Rohtak District Gazetteer, 1970, p. 40

² Excel International Journal of Multidisciplinary Management Studies, Vol.2 Issue 2, February 2012

as the basis. Other significant names associated with the movement were Swami Shraddhanand, Chaudhary Matu Ram, Bhagat Phool, etc. A branch of Sanatan Dharam was opened in Beri. Pandit Harbans Lal Sharma of Jhajjar was one of its notable leaders. Both Arya and Sanatan Dharm movement made major contribution to the social values in the district.

SIKHS

The Sikhs are 1,042 in number out of which 619 are males and 423 are females (242 in rural and 800 in urban) as per Census 2011. Sikhs constitute only 0.11 percent of the total population. They believe in the teachings of ten Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib, which is their holy book. They attach great importance to the recitation of the Granth Sahib and visit *gurdwaras*. Besides observing some Hindu festivals, they celebrate *Guruparbs* (birth days and martyrdom days of Sikh Gurus) and Vaisakhi and processions are taken out in the district on these occasions. They organise *Akhand path* on the special occasions of birth of son, marriages and death. Gurudwaras located in Chhawani Mohalla, Jhajjar town and Chhara village are main places of worship of Sikhs in the district.

JAINS

The Jains are just 645 in number in the district as per Census 2011, out of which 331 are males and 314 are females. Majority of Jains (608) are urbanites, and out of these 591 persons reside only in Bahadurgarh tehsil. The Jain *sadhus/sadhvis* are required to observe the vows: truth, *ahimsa*, celibacy, restraint of passions and non-stealing. They are often seen naked feet. The members of Jain community worship Lord Mahavira and the *Tirathankras*. They celebrate Mahavir Jayanti which is birth anniversary of Lord Mahavira. Digambar Jain Mandir located in Bahadurgarh and Jhajjar are the famous Jain temples.

BUDDHISTS

As per Census 2011, in terms of population, Buddhists are the smallest community in the district with only 105 persons. The Buddhists follow “the Noble Eight Fold Path” i.e. right views, right aspirations, right speech, right

conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right contemplation. They believe in the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who was deemed a '*Buddha*' ('Awakened One')

MUSLIMS

The Muslims are 8,247 in number in the district out of which 4,620 are males and 3,627 are females (4,465 in rural and 3,782 in urban) as per Census 2011. Most of them (5,034) reside in Bahadurgarh tehsil. Muslims constitute only 0.86 percent of the total population of the district and form the second largest group after Hinduism. The Muslims believe in one God, and teachings of Prophet Mohammad. They observe *namaz* five times in a day, preferably in a mosque. During the performance of *namaz*, they cover their heads with caps. They observe *Roza* (fast) during the month of Ramadan (*Ramzan*) which is the ninth month of Islamic calendar. The months in Islamic calendar, it being a lunar calendar, begin when the first crescent of a new moon is sighted. Since the Islamic lunar calendar year is 10 to 11 days shorter than the solar year and contains no intercalation, Ramadan migrates throughout the seasons, and each year, Ramadan begins about eleven days earlier than in the previous year. All Eids are also celebrated and pilgrimage (*Haj*) is also performed by the Muslims of the district.

CHRISTIANS

The Christians are an insignificant minority in the district and are only 734 in number out of which 416 are males and 318 are females. As per Census 2011, amongst these Christians 471 reside in rural areas and 263 are urbanites. Most of the Christian population of the district resides in Bahadurgarh tehsil. The Christians consider 'Bible' as their holy book. They observe Easter, Good Friday, Christmas and New Year's Day. Church located on Jhajjar-Kosli Road is famous one.

SUPERSTITIONS

Superstitions have come to mankind from the past as a part of cultural heritage. Still many people bind their minds with shackles of unreason and

illogic and look upon simple material things as magical signs of the success or failure of the undertakings, or of the approach of good fortune or of calamity. Superstitions are innumerable in the district. A cat crossing one's path or a person sneezing at the outset of a special undertaking are commonly shared as bad omens. A woman with an empty pitcher crossing one's path is considered as an inauspicious sign, however, two pitchers filled with water are considered auspicious sign. A house with a broad front and narrow back is considered inauspicious. The reverse is auspicious. A dog howling at night is thought to be an omen of approaching death. Matching of *gunas* based on the horoscopes of prospective bride and groom for marriage is considered auspicious. People consider it inauspicious to get hair-cut on Tuesday. Ladies avoid washing their hair on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and *Amavsya*. In fact, nothing of any importance like, laying the foundation of a house, occupying a new house, digging a well or opening a new shop happens without consulting an astrologer about the auspicious time of commencement. On the birth and death of a member, *sutak* and *patak*, respectively, are observed for stipulated periods, and restrictions are observed by the concerned family for few days. Visiting of temples during these days is avoided. While these types of beliefs or superstitions are old practice but even today lots of people follow such thinking. Young people believe in omens much less than the older generation, men much less than women, and literates much less than illiterates. The worst thing that superstition does is that it damages self-confidence and blunts the edge of dynamic thinking. These evils need to be eradicated. But the traditional superstitions will disappear only with the spread of education and cultivation of scientific and rational attitude for finding the truth.

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

Festivals and fairs are an integral part of religious life of the people of a region. The major festivals celebrated in the district include Holi, Janam Ashtami, Dussehra Diwali, Shivratri, Gugga Naumi, Raksha Bandhan and Bhaiya Dooj, Eids, Guruparbs, Christmas, etc. Maa Bhimeshwari Devi Mela, Baba Prasad Giri Fair, Saint Shah Ghazi Kamal Fair, etc., are some important fairs held in the district. A brief description of some important festivals and

fairs is given below:-

Holi.— This festival falls on the *puṛnima* of month of *Phalguna* (March). Literally "*Holi*" signifies "burning" in Indian language but, how it came to be associated with 'burning', is a story. The reference is found only in ancient Indian mythology. And It is the legend of Hiranyakashipu, to whom the celebration of *Holi* is associated. There lived a demon king named Hiranyakashipu in ancient India, who wanted to avenge the death of his younger brother. The brother, also a demon, had been killed by God Vishnu. He performed severe penance and prayer for many years to gain enough power, and finally was granted a boon. Powered by the boon, he could become invincible. Arrogant, he ordered all in his kingdom to worship him, instead of God. Despite his father's order, Prahlad continued to pray to Vishnu. He asked the favour of his sister Holika who, because of a boon, was immune to fire. A pyre was lit up and Holika sat on it, clutching Prahlad. Yet, at the end Prahlad emerged unscathed by the fire, whereas his aunt Holika, was burned to ashes. This was the triumph of Prahlad, the representative of good spirits and the defeat of Holika, the representative of evil. Later, even Hiranyakashipu was killed by Narasimha avatar of God Vishnu. People celebrate this occasion.

People in rural areas celebrate Holi in a different way than urban areas. On *Dhulendi* (phag), the day following Holi, the menfolk take their turn and throw water on the women who reply by beating the men with sticks or *kordas* (twisted cloth strips). These men act as if they are powerless, and their inability to defend themselves leads to much fun and frolic. In urban areas, people use *gulal*, dry colours (abeer) and children use water *pichkaris*. Bonfire is lighted to represent the end of Holika, threads are wrapped around it and a small *puja* is performed before lighting it.

Navratri.— *Navratri* is one of the most important Hindu festival. The literal meaning of 'Navratri' is 'nine auspicious nights'. The festival is celebrated twice in a year i.e. *Chaitra Navratri* (March-April) and *Ashwin Navratri* (Sept.-Oct), and generally coincides with the harvest seasons. This auspicious festival is celebrated with great zeal and devotion throughout the

district. *Chaitra Navratri* also known as *Vasant* or *Rama navratri* is celebrated from 1st day of bright fortnight of *Chaitra* onwards and culminates on the 9th day that happens to be *Rama Navmi*. The *Ashwin* or *Sharadiya* or *Maha Navratri* is considered more auspicious. It is generally celebrated from 1st day of bright fortnight of lunar month of *Ashwin* and festivities culminate in Durga Puja and Dussehra. Navratri is a pious festival celebrated in the honour of nine different forms of the Goddess Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati for nine continuous days. Shailputri, Brahmcharini, Chandra Ghanta, Kushmanda, Skanda Mata, Katyayani, Kaal Ratri, Maha Gauri, Siddhidatri are nine manifestations of Goddesses. It is believed that these goddesses have the supremacy over the creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe. The Goddesses are worshipped during these days in order to seek their blessings, protection, peace and prosperity. Some devotees also observe fast. Worshipping of girls (*kanya poojan* or *kumari poojan*) aged below 12 years is done treating them as living replicas of goddesses on days 8 (*Durga Ashtmi*) and 9 (*Navmi*) during Navratri.

Janamashtmi.— This festival falls in the month of August. According to the Hindu calendar, this religious festival is celebrated on the *Ashtami* of *krishna paksh* or the 8th day of the dark fortnight in the month of *Bhadrapada*. On the occasion of Janamashtmi, people of the district take out God Krishna's image in *dolas* and decorated palanquins. The devotees throng to the temples in large number and sweets or *prashad* is also distributed. Temples are decorated with lights and new clothes are worn by idols. Discourses on Geeta are organised by the temples.

Gugga Naumi.— Gugga Naumi is a religious festival connected with snake worship observed as birthday of Gogaji on 9th day of dark fortnight of *Bhadrapada* (August-Sept.). Gogaji, considered as a very brave saint and is very popular deity which is worshipped by Hindus and Muslims alike. He is famous amongst his devotees under various names Gogaji Chauhan, Gugga, Zahir Veer or Zaher Pir. He was born, in 1003 Bikrami Samvat in Dadreva village of Churu district of Rajasthan to ruler Jaiber Singh Chauhan and Rani Bachhal with the blessings of Guru Gorakshnath who gave blessed '*guggal*'

to Rani Bachhal and hence the name Gogaji. He is considered as the prime disciple of Guru Gorakshnath. He is also worshipped as the Snake God and efficacy of prayers to him in cases of snake bite is much believed in.¹ He is usually portrayed as a warrior riding a blue horse with a lance in his hand and a snake around his neck.

In Jhajjar, Gugga Naumi is particularly celebrated at Kanodah, Gurawar, Sewana, Salhawas, Chhapar, Patauda, Silana, Gubhana villages, Bahadurgarh and Jhajjar tehsil. Fairs are held on Gugga Naumi at his shrines popularly known as '*Mari*', which are distinguished by square shape with minarets and domed roof. These are usually indigo in colour. Gatherings held in the honour of Gugga Pir are of special character and are marked by devotees carrying long bamboo sticks decorated with colourful clothes and peacock feathers as insignia of Gugga Pir. These sticks are carried about adoringly, and to these offerings are made. The main shrine of Gogaji is near Bhadra in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan.

Dussehra.—Dussehra (Vijaya Dashmi, Dushhara, or Dashain) is a Hindu festival that celebrates the victory of good over evil. It is a gazetted holiday in India, which is marked on the 10th day of the bright half (*Shukla Paksha*) of the month of *Ashwin*, according to the Hindu calendar. The burning of effigies at the end of Dussehra is not customary in rural areas, the village girls observe *Sanjhi* for a period of 10 days. They move out at night with earthen pots on their heads. These pots have holes all around and are lighted with *diyas* (earthen lamps) placed in them. This presents a lovely sight. The boys try to break the earthen pots which the girls protect. On the Dussehra evening these earthen pots with a lighted *diya* inside are floated in ponds. The lighted *diya* symbolises Sita (purity) while the boys represent *rakshasas* (evil powers) from whose custody Sita is released. On this occasion, while the Brahmans offer tender barley shoots to their patrons, the sisters do the same to their brothers and both receive monetary gifts in return. This function is known as *Naurte* (navratri).²

Deepawali or Diwali. — Diwali falls in either October or November each

¹ Rohtak District Gazetteer, 1883-84, pp. 53-54

² *Ibid.*, 1970, p. 41

year, depending on the cycle of the moon. It is observed on the 15th day of *Kartika*, the holiest month in the Hindu lunar calendar. Diwali is celebrated in the district with great enthusiasm. Diwali or *Divali* is a contraction of 'Deepawali' which means 'row of lamps'. It is celebrated due to return of God Rama, along with Sita and Laxman from his 14 years exile and killing of demon Ravana. So Diwali also signify the triumph of good over evil. In fact the celebration of Diwali starts from Dussehra, 20 days before Diwali, when effigies of Ravana, Meghdoot and Kumbhakaran are burnt on this day. The festival starts with *Dhanteras* when Hindus start their financial year (*bahi-khata*). People clean, white-wash, paint their houses and decorate them with earthen lamps and colourful lights. Shopkeepers earn huge profits by selling their products. Markets are decorated and there remain much hustle-bustle these days. Goddess Laxmi is worshipped on the night of Diwali. People wear new clothes, exchange sweets or gifts and children burst fire crackers during the night.

On the third day, i.e. the day following Diwali, early in the morning *gosas* (cow dung cakes) are made to observe Govardhan Puja. This is done for the first time after the rainy season which indicates the end of the fermentation stage of cow dung.

Basora.—*Basora* is festival of stale food and is usually celebrated for a day, as per family traditions, in the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) within seven days after Holi. On the eve of festival, *dalia* or sweet rice is prepared and set it aside uneaten. Next morning, women rise early, perform puja at *chabutras* (bandstand) dedicated to *Matas* (goddesses), and offer stale sweetmeat. Thereafter, the stale food is offered to all the members of family. *Basora* marks the end of eating stale food in the season.

Teej.—*Teej* is mainly considered to be the festival of women and is celebrated in the month of *Shravana* or *Sawan* (July-August). Women of all ages right from young girls to old ladies celebrate this festival with enthusiasm. The festival is special for newlywed women who usually return to their parental home especially for their first *Teej*, as it is considered inauspicious to stay with mother-in-law during first *Sawan* after marriage, to return with their husbands after the festival. Swings are hung on the trees

with the start of the month and especially on the eve of *Teej*. On the day of festival, women and children attired in their best clothes, proceed to the swings. At some places swings made of *Charpoy* (a light bedstead) can be seen whereon many women hilariously enjoy at the same time. Usually the festival meals are prepared earlier in the day so as to facilitate them enjoy till late in the evening. The spectacular experience of watching their competitions for the highest swings, amidst the songs of *Teej*, has become a rare treat due to the decline in zeal towards the celebrations of this festival owing to increased involvement of females in educational and job activities, inculcation of individualism, and coming of other modes of personal and mass entertainment leading to decrease of bonding in community and its activities.

Karva Chauth.— This important festival of Karva Chauth falls on the fourth day after the full moon, in the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of *Kartika* (October-November), and is observed by married women only. They keep fast on this day and pray so that their husbands may be blessed with long life. Sometimes, unmarried women also join ‘the fast’ seeking blessings for their fiancés or desired husbands. The *puja* is performed by the women sitting together in the afternoon; the fast is, however, broken after looking at, praying and *ardhya* (offering) water to the moon at night. Being a symbol of love and increase in the mass media, especially in urban areas, the festival is gaining popularity amongst women of other religion also, who though do not keep fast but take part in other celebrations with their friends.

Shivratri.— Shivratri literally means the night consecrated to Shiva who is one of the three Gods of Hindu Trinity. Shivratri is a special occasion that falls on 14th day of the dark fortnight of the lunar month or the day before the new moon. Among all Shivratis that occur in a calendar year the one that occurs in *Phalgun* (February-March) is considered to be of the most spiritual and religious significance and is hence celebrated with much zeal and enthusiasm as Mahashivratri. Devotees worship Shiva by pouring milk, water, curd, honey on *Shivlinga* and offer leaves and fruits of *bel* tree, *dhatura*, *bhang*, etc. They also observe fast on this day and hold gatherings

in the honour of Shiva in the *Shivalas*. Cultural fairs and wrestling matches are also organised.

Sikhs in the district celebrate festivals of Maghi (14th January), Vaisakhi (14th April) and *Guruparbs* in reverence of their Gurus, and *Prakash Utsav* of the holy book Guru Granth Sahib. Jains celebrate the birth and *nirvana* anniversaries of lord Parsvanath and lord Mahavira. The principal festival of Buddhists is Buddha Purnima or Vesakha which is celebrated on full moon day of *Vesakha* (April-May) month, the day on which Buddha is believed to have been born, and to have attained enlightenment as well *nirvana*.

The celebrations of festivals like Eid-ul-Fitr, Muharram, Eid-e-Milad-ul-Nabi, Eid-ul-Zuha and Shab-e-Barat are popular among the Muslims in the district. Sweet dishes and boiled sweet rice are prepared in their homes on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr as it is forbidden to fast on the day of Eid. They give away money or grains to the poor and the needy before performing the Eid prayer, as an obligatory act of charity. They wear new clothes. On the occasion of Eid-ul-Zuha, they sacrifice goats and distribute their raw or cooked meat among friends and relatives. Feasts are held on this day and daughters and sisters are presented with gifts and new clothes. Besides, Muharram is celebrated on the 10th of Muharram month of Hijri era to commemorate the martyrdom of Ali and his two sons. Christmas and Easter are two principal festivals of the Christians; the former is celebrated in the honour of the Jesus Christ, while the latter commemorates his resurrection. The Christians go to churches, exchange presents, and hold festivities.

Maa Bhimeshwari Devi Mela.—This festival is celebrated at Beri town in the district twice in a year on *Chaitra Sudi 8* (March-April) and *Ashwin Sudi 8* (September-October) during Navratri. This fair is a biggest religious event in the district. According to a legend, the idol of the goddess was installed by Bhima, one of the Pandavas. Before Mahabharata battle, Bhima wanted to have blessings of *Kuldevi*. He along with Yudhishtira went to Hinglay Mountain (now in Pakistan) and prayed *Kuldevi* to move to the battle field and bless them with victory. The *Kuldevi* accepted the plea with the condition that Bhima will not put her down on the way from his lap and if he does so, she

will go no further from that place. While on way, Bhima placed the idol of Goddess under the Beri tree and as per the condition, *Kuldevi* remained there. Unfortunately, Bhima had to go to Kurukshetra battle only with blessings of *Kuldevi*. After 18 days of the war, a marvellous temple was built here¹. Newly married couples come here to pay homage. The famous folk-lore² of Mata is here:-

पीली केसर पहरैगी, हे म्हारी आज भवानी माता,
 धोले गढ आली, जोबण आली हे माता,
 हरा-2 चुंडला पहरैगी हे, आज भवानी माता,
 बेरी की हे राणी,
 लाल-2 चुन्दडी हे माता औढे बेरी की हे राणी,
 धोले गढ आली, बेरी की हे राणी।

{Goddess Bhawani will wear in yellow saffron cloth today. She resides in white fort and is the goddess of youth. The queen goddess of Beri will get a green coloured hair-braid and clad herself in red coloured *chunar*}

Baba Prasad Giri Fair.— Baba Giri Prasad temple is located near Shankaracharya Chowk and Mata Gate on Jhajjar-Bahadurgarh road. Baba Prasad lived here in the ancient times observing austerity. During that time, a female disciple of Baba often came at his *dhuna* (place of worship). One Monday, her husband died, people started to ridicule her. On seeing this, Baba touched the dead body of her husband with his *chimta* (tongs) and the man became alive. After that, Baba gave up his body. Baba's mausoleum and temple were constructed in his memory. Later on, temples of other gods and goddesses were added. On the occasion of Holi, a fair and *bhandara* (community feast) are organised at the temple.

Saint Shah Ghazi Kamal Fair.—The shrine of Shah Ghazi Kamal is at Bahu village. Shah Ghazi Kamal is said to have come from Arabia with Miran Shayyid Husan, whose tomb is at Ajmer. He was killed at Jhajjar in the battle with the rulers of Delhi. His head was struck off and remained on the battlefield, while his body was carried by his horse twenty-six miles to Bahu.

¹ <http://haryanaturism.gov.in/showpage.aspx>

² Om Parkash Kadian, *Haryana Ke Lok Geet*, Vol.-2, p. 120

The body was buried here by the Biloch rulers of that time, who erected a masonry tomb over the grave¹. The tomb is revered as that of the saint by the people of the neighbouring villages, and *charaghi* and other offerings are brought to it every Thursday.

A list of festivals and fairs celebrated in the district can be seen at Table VIII of Appendix.

SOCIAL GROUPS

The caste system with all its ramifications is observed among the Hindus but its social influence is diminishing. It must, however, be realised that caste or tribal groups have shown a strong tendency to act unitedly in political campaigns. The important social groups are Jats, Scheduled Castes, Brahmans, Ahirs, Rajputs, Aggarwals, Khattris and Aroras. The Jats, Brahmans and Scheduled Castes are scattered throughout the district. While Aggarwals, Khattris and Aroras are settled in the urban area in the district. The Ahirs and Rajputs are chiefly in the villages of boundary area which touch with the Rewari District.

Jats.— The Jats consist of 12 chief clans or *gotra* and 137 minor ones. The Jats of the district are mainly Hindu Jats, who supply large numbers of recruits to the regiments of the Indian Army. They care much for the physical well-being of their children. They are clannish and cherish the memories of ancient feuds. The different clans of Jats found in the district are Jakhar, Golia, Kadian, Sewag, Dalal, Ahlawat, Hudah, Dhankar, Deswal, Dahiya, etc. The tradition of soldiership has become hereditary in many families which take pride if all their adult male members join the army. Apart from their fighting qualities, Jats have endurance as agriculturist and have also excelled in the Government services.

Ahirs.—The Ahirs are mostly in the Bhur circle of Jhajjar (south) adjoining Rewari district. Though various other folk etymologies are current, the name Ahir, is derived from the Sanskrit *abhira*, a milkman. The Ahirs do not differ

¹ Dujana State Gazetteer, 1904, p. 8

much from the Jat in appearance¹, and claim Rajput origin. Ahirs settled in the district are said to have come from Delhi, but most came from Rewari. Like the Jats, Ahirs are keen on joining the armed services and also make good farmers.

Brahmans.—The Brahmans are considered the most respected caste in the society and they are generally addressed as *Panditji* or *Purohitji*. With the spread of the teachings of the Arya Samaj and education amongst other castes and tribes, respect for Brahmans has decreased. Mass of Brahmins in the district are Gaur. Their settlements are mostly found in and around Badli village where many families even possess agricultural lands and practice agriculture. Brahmans have diversified to other professions and services, and among them there are advocates, bureaucrats, noted businessmen, good agriculturists, doctors, engineers, and politicians.

Rajputs.—The Rajputs in the district retain chivalry, feudal and military instincts of their forefather's and a considerable number of them joins the armed services. The Bachas dominate with some Chauhans, Tunwars and Bud-gujars in the district². Muslim Rajputs are called *Ranghers*. Besides military officers, they are in every branch of profession.

Aggarwals or Banias.— They are said to have come from Agroha (Hissar), and settled in different places in the district. Known as *Mahajans*, they formed the economic backbone of the community. Their money lending capacity enabled them to monopolize the village economy and obtained a hold on the agricultural land. When the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1900, made this impossible, they began to shift to towns. Whether in villages or towns, the position of the Aggarwals was relegated to the background by the skill and adventure of the more progressive displaced persons from West Pakistan. A good many young Aggarwals were obliged to switch over to service and industry from their traditional family pursuits.

Khatri and Aroras.—These came as displaced persons, mostly from Jhang and Muzzafarpur districts of West Pakistan at the time of partition

¹ Delhi District Gazetteers, 1883-84, p. 75

² Haryana State Gazetteer Volume 1, 2004, p. 508

and established themselves as trading communities. The Aroras in particular, who came in a large number after the partition, are noted for their capacity for hard work as well as their thrift and business acumen. They are well settled in urban areas in the district. They are energetic and enterprising by nature and turn their hands to anything without feeling shy. They engage freely in banking, shop-keeping, trade, government service, agriculture, etc.

Gujjars.— Gujjars claim to have their descent from Rajputs. Like Ahirs and Jats, Gujjar is a martial community with brave persons and known for its patriotism. The main clans of Gujjars in the district are Kalsan, Chamain, Chokar and Rawal. They are tall having good physique. They are good cultivators, and keeping cattle is their main occupation. Majority of them are devotees of Krishna. Besides agriculture, they are good officers in the army and civil services. A few of them are politicians, and people of the community are fully aware of their rights.

Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes.— Scheduled Castes of the district comprise of Balmiki, Chamar, Dhanak, Khatik, etc., and Backward Classes comprise of Khati, Saini, Kumhar, Lohar, Sunar, Nai, etc. Prior to Independence, people belonging to these castes were subjected to economic and social disabilities. After independence, Government has taken ameliorative measures for the welfare of these classes and castes. In earlier times, these castes/classes were engaged only in their respective traditional menial works and did not marry in other groups, but with the passage of time and spread of education, this stiffness has declined considerably. Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes have made much struggle to eke out their livelihood by engaging in any available avocations besides their traditional ones. Illiterates of these communities are still engaged in agriculture labour or their traditional craft whereas the hardworking and literate persons of these communities have made much progress and are engaged in trade, commerce, industry, private and government services including the armed forces and teaching. Lists of Backward classes and Scheduled Castes are given in Chapter XVII-Other Social Services.

SOCIAL LIFE

JOINT FAMILY SYSTEM

The family is locally known as *kunba*. A group of families having common ancestors is called a *thola*. Two or more *tholas* are jointly called *pana*. Brothers, and occasionally cousins, farm the land jointly, but they do not always live together. The income of the whole family is spent for the benefit of all its members, earning or non-earning. Widows and children, whether their parents are dead or alive, elderly and decrepit or physically handicapped members of the family, all receive the attention of the head of family and are supported and maintained out of the joint family funds. The joint family system, which has been a distinguishing feature of Hindu society since time immemorial in the district, is showing signs of breaking up under the stress of the changed economic and social conditions in recent times. Factors such as competition for earning a living, the increased cost of living, the tax-structure, the mobility resulting from the requirements of service, the growing spirit of individualism, and above all, the trend of the recent legislation on inheritance, contribute to the waning of this ancient institution.

Another factor which is hastening the dissolution of the system is that boys and girls, marry at a comparatively advanced age, prefer to live independently. This new pattern of living with an individualistic bias is steadily emerging. Usually the branch of the family which earns more money separates from the poorer branch. Those who enter some kind of regular service, have to leave the family home and move from place to place wherever they are posted. It becomes more and more difficult for them to function effectively as members of a joint family. The recent legislation passed by the Government, whereby even women are entitled to their share in the family property, has hastened the tendency to break up the family. While this position is more marked in urban areas, the joint family system is declining even in the villages, where people depend almost entirely on farming. The average holding is too small even in the villages, where people depend almost entirely on farming. It is, therefore, unavoidable that some members of the

family should move out in search of job to the towns or elsewhere to enhance the meagre family income. In this way, the migration of rural population to the cities in search of a living, whether in business, industry, service or other forms of labour, has significantly affected the structure of the joint family. Those who migrate to the towns get used to modern amenities of life and try to settle down there with their families, leaving the care of the agricultural lands to those members of the family who stay behind in the village. This kind of situation generates discontentment at home and often leads to the break-up of the family. A village youth moving to town, after a while becomes so absorbed in urban life that going back to live in his village becomes impossible, in spite of his native roots there.

INHERITANCE

Before the enforcement of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, which governs the inheritance among the Hindus, the Sikhs, the Jains and the Buddhists, the intestate property i.e. the property of a person who dies without making a valid will, was inherited by the sons after the death of the father, and if there was no son, the widow of the deceased inherited it. A major amendment has been brought in the Act, in 2005 according to which now, daughter, if any, of the deceased inherit the intestate property simultaneously along with other heirs such as son, widow, mother, etc. A daughter has as good a claim in her father's property as a son, provided the father does not debar her by law. In spite of the right conferred by law, however, it appears to have become a general practice for the girls not to claim any part of the intestate property. In the absence of a brother, a girl may sometimes give her land to her near relatives, though in such cases she usually retains her right to property. In a few cases, daughters who are denied their share in the intestate property also file suits in the court of law.

Muslims and Christians are governed by Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 and the Indian Succession Act, 1925, respectively.

RITUAL AND CUSTOMS

The people of the district are still conservative and they continue to follow

the old practices as a matter of routine and custom. The rituals at the time of marriage, birth and death are still prevalent, without much change.

MARRIAGE

As far as the marital status is concerned, according to Census 2011, there are 4,78,010 persons in the district who are currently married. The number of currently married females (2,40,291) is higher than currently married males (2,37,719). Amongst age groups of currently married persons, the age group of 25-29 years is the biggest with 69,954 persons.

Dominant forms of marriage, viz., *Vivah* (Hindu marriage) and *Nikah* (Muslim marriage) and *Anand Karaj* are the systems of marriage which prevail among the Sikhs. Monogamy is observed as a rule. Apart from the restrictions imposed by law and the economic necessities involved in having more than one wife at a time, the institution based on monogamy always had social sanction. According to Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, polygamy is illegal. A Christian is invariably monogamous. On the other hand, a Muslim, according to the Muslim Personal Law, may take four wives at a time. A government employee is liable to be dismissed from service if he marries second time without the permission of Government.

In a Hindu marriage, certain rules and restrictions are observed before contracting a matrimonial alliance. The caste restrictions on marriage alliances, however, still apply though not as rigidly as before. On the whole, old system is weakening under the impact of present day social forces and inter-caste marriages, though not common, are accepted. The general rule is that marriage should take place within one's own caste, but not in the same *gotra*, the same *gotra* implies *gotra* of father, of mother and grandmother. Besides the above, marriage with maternal uncle's son or daughter is also prohibited among the Hindus of northern India. Marriage among the Hindus is sacrament; its rites being prescribed in the scriptures and to some extent by custom and tradition. Hindu sacraments are called *sanskars* and the sacraments performed at the time of a wedding are called *vivah sanskar*. The customs and rituals relating to betrothal (*nata*) and leading to

rokna or *tikka* and *sagai* are the same as elsewhere in the State. The same applies to the preliminaries of marriage and the wedding ceremony itself.

Sagai.—Various rituals and ceremonies are performed on the occasion of marriage. The most important is *sagai* (betrothal). In the past, *sagai* among Hindus was settled through the institution of family barber but now it is settled either through relatives or other dears and nears. Generally, proposal for betrothal comes from bride's side. If the proposal is accepted, *rishta* is settled by putting some money in to the hands of boy's hand. This is called *rokna*. *Sagai* is performed at boy's home by girl's father, before the village panchayat and relatives, who applies *tilak* on the forehead of the boy with turmeric and rice. Generally, sweets, fruits and cash are given by girl's father on this occasion. Similarly, a make-up kit having *bindi*, *sindoor*, mirror, comb, bangles etc with sweets are sent for the girl as a token of *sagai*.

After that, various rituals for the marriage are observed on both sides. In Hindus, weddings are generally not celebrated from *Dev Shayani Giyas* (11th day of brighter fortnight of *Ashadh*) to *Dev Uthani Giyas* (11th day of brighter fortnight of *Kartika*).

Once the date of marriage is finalised, the girl's father sends a letter on paper stained yellow with turmeric to boy's father, which announces to him the date fixed for wedding. This is called *lagan*. Thereafter, the mother of the bride or groom visits her family for inviting her brothers and their families to her child's wedding where she is welcomed with *bhaat* songs. The invitation ceremony is called *bhaat nyutna*. The maternal uncles of bride or groom with their families (called *bhaati*) usually reach one day in advance, where they are welcomed by their sister (mother of bride or groom) her in laws. The welcome starts with the eldest brother and his family, followed by the younger ones. They are made to stand on a *patra* (raised wooden pedestal), along with their respective families. The mother of the bride/groom applies *tilak* on the forehead of each and performs *aarti* as a welcome gesture. The brothers return the sisters favour and love by showering her with gifts that generally comprise of clothes, jewellery for the bride or the groom, as the case may be, for their sister, and her in-laws

family. This ritual is called *bhaat bharna*. Thereafter, the priest gets the *manda bandhna* ritual performed by the oldest *bhaati* which marks the onset of other marriage ceremonies.

Nyonda (contribution) is given (return and fresh addition) by the *nyundharis* (close relatives) at the time of wedding, but *nyonda* is in wane, and is taking the form of gifts and presents. In case of girl, *kanyadaan*, in the form of cash and gifts, is given by all nears and dears at the time of wedding.

Wedding.— A day earlier or on the wedding day, friends and relatives join feast hosted by boy's parents. Before the marriage party leaves for bride's house, the *ghurchari* is performed. The bridegroom, dressed in his wedding suit brought by his maternal uncle, *kangna* or seven knotted sacred thread tied on his right wrist and head dress consisting of a crown or crest over the turban and sometimes a *sehra* and *kalgee* is made to sit on the mare's back. Among the Hindus, the barber leads the decorated mare with bridegroom on its back. The women follow the *ghurchari* and boy's aunt or an elderly woman carries a utensil of water. One of his married sisters puts her wrap over the right hand and on it places rice which she flings at his crown as the bridegroom goes along for worship to the temple or the place of the God of homestead.

The *baraat* is received by the bride's side and is taken sometimes in procession with the bridegroom on the mare to a place where arrangements have been made for their stay or towards the bride's house. The elders of the family invite bridegroom family for *barothi* or *milni*, and to receive from them the clothings and ornaments (*rang-lena*) brought for the bride. The *baraatis* are served with delicious feast with merriment and festivity.

After welcome snacks and drinks, the *baraat*, in procession, proceeds dancing and singing towards the place of marriage i.e. house of bride or decided venue. These days, marriage parties are held in resorts, banquet halls or community centre in urban areas. On reaching the place of marriage, *milni* ceremony is held between prominent relatives of both sides and gifts are offered to groom's relatives. The ceremonies of *dhukav*, *neem-jharai*, *ribbon-katai*, etc., are performed before the *jaimala*, and those

of *jutti-chhupai*, *jhuaari*, *thapa-lagwai* etc., are performed after the *phera* ceremony. In *jaimala*, the bride puts floral garland around the neck of the bridegroom and *vice-versa* amidst enchanting of sacred texts. The mother of bride usually observes fast on the wedding day. The *baraat* is entertained with music and loads of sweets, snacks, cuisines, and drinks.

After these ceremonies, the bridegroom is taken to the *mandap*, a pavilion structure decorated with flowers. For actual, marriage ceremony the Brahman lights the sacred fire in the *mandap* and calls upon the bride's father to perform *kanyadaan* (formal bride-giving). The ritual of *phas* before the sacred fire is performed which is the binding ceremony. The *phas* in the district are performed in accordance with Arya Samaj or Sanatan Dharma traditions, wherein usually the couple is made to take four rounds (*phera*) around the sacred fire. The bridegroom leads in the first three *phera* and the bride in last. During *phera* ceremony the bride sits on the right of the groom. After the fourth *phera*, the groom and the bride sit down with their positions exchanged, and the bride is made to sit on left of the groom.

Sapta-Padi is the main and the legal part of the ceremony. The couple walk seven steps reciting a prayer at each step. These are the seven vows which are exchanged. The first for food, the second for strength, the third for prosperity, the fourth for wisdom, the fifth for progeny, the sixth for health and the seventh for friendship. The husband fills the parting in his wife's hair with red kumkum powder called '*sindoor*', which is a distinctive mark of a married Hindu woman.

The departure of *baraat* is ceremonised with *vidai thape* (hand-marks of *heena*) on the chest and back of noted male relatives of groom's family which make them remember and feel proud, for many days, of the new relation. At departure, the bride usually weeps due to the pain of parting from her home and close relatives and whole environment becomes sorrowful at the time of her departure. She still wishes to the god for the prosperity and welfare of all in her parental home which is signified by flinging some cereals (rice, wheat or puffed rice) towards back with both

her hand while leaving. Parents and relatives send their beloved daughter with her husband with lots of gifts for her and her new (in-laws) family. The parents, thus, give away their daughter in marriage with their blessings into the new world of *grihastha*. One very important social aspect, which is now generally accepted, is that the *baraat* does not stay for three days as before, but it returns the same day or night.

On reaching the bridegroom's house, his mother performs the *bahu ka utarna* ceremony. She sprinkles some water from the vessel and drinks a few drops from it also. Oil is put on the two frames of the entrance door. The bridegroom and bride are restricted for entering into the house for the ceremony of *bar-rukai*, and only allowed to enter with his wife if he pays a good amount of money or gift (*neg*) to his sister/sisters. Thereafter, *kangna kholna* and *angoothi khilai* ceremonies take place which are quite playful. In the *munh-dikhai* (face-showing) ceremony, the bride is offered some gifts, usually cash, on showing her face to the female relatives and friends of groom's family. The bride also shows respect for them by touching the feet of elder females, seeking their blessings and giving them due *neg* (usually cash or gift). After these rituals signifying acceptance of bride in the new family the couple visits the bride's house for *pag-phera*.

In the old days, consummation of marriage used to take place after a long time after marriage, as girls were married at an early age before they attained puberty, and so they were sent to their in-laws after attaining puberty. This custom was called *muklawā* or *dussar* (it being the second visit of bride to her in-laws). In these days, since the boy and girl are married at a fairly mature age, the *muklawā* ceremony is performed on the day or next following the marriage. The return of bride with groom to her home for *muklawā* is termed as *pag-phera* or *patra pher*. Thus the whole episode of Hindu marriage ceremonies are highly colourful, picturesque, elegant and musical.

In the case of Sikhs, the wedding ceremony is called *Anand Karaj* (literally, the ceremony of bliss). The wedding couple goes round the holy Guru Granth Sahib instead of the scared fire amidst recital of *lawan* (four

couplets) followed by recital of Anand Sahib which solemnizes the marriage. It is generally done in the morning. Among Muslims, marriage is a mutual contract and is called *nikah*. It is generally arranged by the parents of the girl and the boy. After the betrothal which usually takes place at the girl's place, the date of *nikah* is fixed. Marriage party proceeds to the bride's house where it is treated with special feast and *nikah* is performed. At the time of *nikah*, the bridegroom offers *mehr* to the bride, which is explicitly the property of the bride. *Nikah* which is read and on acceptance by both the parties, the marriage is contracted.

Marriage among Christians is performed in church by the priest. Before marriage, both bride and bridegroom are baptized by the priest and after ceremony, friends and relatives are served with a delicious feast.

Dowry System.— Although, a rotten social evil, the dowry system still prevails in the district. It is prevalent among all the communities of the district. The amount of dowry generally depends upon the economic and social status of the person concerned. Sometimes it may result in quarrels and even ill treatment of the bride by her husband as well as her in laws.

The practice of giving, taking and demanding dowry has been declared illegal with the passing of the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1961. Any person violating the laws can be sentenced to imprisonment up to six months or to a fine ₹5,000 or both. Even the dowry legislation of 1961 has not fully succeeded in achieving this object as people find ways and means of by-passing the laws because their ideas have not been reformed.

Marital Age.— Early marriages were a usual feature in the district in the past. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, popularly known as the Sarda Act, enforced from April 1, 1930, provided penalties for the celebration of Child marriages. For the monitoring of child marriages and save the child rights, one Women Protection Officer has been posted in the district. Consequently, there has been a tendency for postponing marriages beyond the age specified by law. Marital age has been prescribed as 21 years for males and 18 years for females by law.

Civil Marriages.— Civil marriages are regulated by the Special Marriage Act, 1954. It provides a secular code of marriage irrespective of caste, religion or race. Solemnisation of a civil marriage under the Act does not require any religious ceremony. The only conditions stipulated by the Act are that a man should be 21 years and a woman should be 18 years old. Neither should they be within the degree of prohibited relationship or insane, nor they have a spouse living at the time of marriage. Marriage Registrars are appointed under this Act, who register such marriages and issue certificates. The procedure for a civil marriage is very simple; either of the two parties can give notice to the Registrar of their intention to marry. The notice must be given 15 days before the date of the proposed marriage. The notice is then exhibited on the notice board for any objection, if no objection is raised within 15 days, the marriage is performed, the parties sign the register, and a marriage certificate duly signed by the registrar is issued. These marriages are on increase in the district. In 2012-13, 269 marriages were registered in the district, whereas within half a decade, the number of such marriages has increased by nearly 3.8 times with 1029 civil marriages registered in 2017-18 which indicates improved religious harmony and legal awareness amongst youth of district.

Inter-Caste Marriages.—Inter-caste and inter-religion marriages are also taking place among the younger generation especially in the urban areas. Normally, people accept it without much fuss, if it is not within the village or the *gotra*. This type of inter-caste marriages and inter-religion marriages are on the increase due to love and marriages from status families. Mainly, it is confined to educated families whose children have settled either in other states or countries.

Widow-Marriage.— Widow remarriage is practiced amongst all the communities in the district under different names and forms. It is considered as a mode of social reformation. In case, the husband dies shortly after marriage and the girl has not lived with him or if she has no issue, she is remarried with all the usual ceremonies performed at the

marriage. This is called *punarvivah*. The widow remarried is considered legitimate wife in all respects among all Hindu communities.

The old customs regarding widow remarriage like *karewa*, *kara* or *krepa*, without any ceremonies or social formalities are seldom observed. The main reason for *karewa* was to retain the control of the deceased person's land in the family.

The *Muhmmandans*, of course, are free to marry again. The remarriage of a woman in Islam is called *Nikah shani* (a second marriage). The system of widow marriage is also prevalent among Sikhs and Christians.

These days, women have become aware about their legal and property rights. Instead of *karewa* or becoming second wife of a person in the family of in-laws, they usually prefer to live single or marry a person of their choice outside the family of the in-laws.

DIVORCE

Though not unknown in the past, cases of divorce were rare. Instead of having recourse to court of law, the general practice had been to leave the girl with her parents and never recall her. However, with the coming into force of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 cases of divorce are being instituted in the law courts and divorce is no more a taboo amongst Hindus. Besides family courts, there are various institutions like Pariwar Pramarsk Kendra, Women Cell of Police, Women Protection Office, etc., formed by government, which work for saving the rights of women and settlement of the marital disputes amongst couples.

With the passage of time, divorce is on increase. Total divorcees in the district according to Census 2011 are 544 out of which 324 are males and 220 are females. Divorce in the district is more prevalent in rural areas with 399 cases (256 males and 143 females) than in urban areas with only 145 cases (68 males and 77 females).

Desertion, cruelty, adultery, impotency and lunacy are the grounds for

judicial separation. Interference of girl's parents in her married life, conventional '*saas-bahu*' conflicts, marriage against the wishes of man or woman, etc., are some of the reasons for divorce.

The marriage is treated as purely social and contractual obligation by the Islam religion. A Muslim husband divorces his wife by simply pronouncing the word *talak* three times. A divorced Muslim woman cannot claim any maintenance from her husband as she has been provided *mehr* at the time of her marriage. In order to mitigate the unequal position of the Muslim wife, the Government enacted the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, under which the wife could claim a divorce from her husband under certain conditions enumerated in the Act. But unlike the husband, she is required to establish her case in the court before she can obtain a divorce.

The divorce among the Christians is governed by the Indian Divorce Act of 1869. If a Christian can prove that his wife has committed adultery only then he can obtain a divorce from his wife. On the other hand, a wife has to prove that her husband's conduct is not merely adulterous but also cruel or he has committed incestuous adultery or adultery with desertion for two or more years.

The provisions for divorce as provided under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 are among the most progressive in the world. These allow for divorce by mutual consent without imputation of misconduct against any of parties to divorce. Either party gets the right of remarriage after the expiry of time for appeal or dismissal of appeal.

POSITION OF WOMEN

The Census of 2011 showed 4,43,738 women in the district against 4,03,597 women in Census 2001. In the district, 2,76,611 women are literate out of which 1,99,622 are rural literate and 76,989 are urban literates. Rural female literacy rate is 68.46 per cent and urban literacy rate is 77.41 per cent in the district. Thus mindset of parents is changing in the district to educate their girls. Literacy rate of females in 1991 was 46.27 percent which increased to 59.65 per cent and 70.73 per cent in census 2001 and 2011

respectively. Besides working in other respected professions, many daughters from the district had served the Indian army in the past, and some are still serving in the army. In the rural area, women play a major role in the field of agriculture and other related professions. There are some challenges for the positions of women like poverty, domestic violence which relates with dominancy and addiction of liquors, etc.

Purdah or *Gunghat* is not popular but still in vogue in some form in the district. Daughters-in-law cover their faces or do *gunghat* when they see old person in the house or out in the village. This position is different in urban areas where girls/daughters in law wear jeans, *suit-salwar*, *saree* or other modern outfits. With the spread of education, social barriers against the employment of women are collapsing rapidly. Women are increasingly replacing men in many fields or participating with them in parallel fields of social work of many kinds including education, child welfare, community work, arts and crafts, etc. Working-women, though economically active, still occupy a subordinate position in social life but they do not observe *purdah* any more.

Prostitution.— Earning a living by sex or flesh trade is punishable under the Suppression of Immoral Traffic 1956. Trafficking in women for immoral purpose does not exist, nor is there any organised gang of traffickers of women in the district.

BIRTH

The birth ceremony is accompanied by feasting, the scale of celebration depending on the economic position of the house holder. In the case of a son, it is elaborate with much show of rejoicing. The girls in reality are seldom welcomed. Once the child enters the world, *Jatakarma* is performed to welcome the child into the family, by putting some honey in the child's mouth and whispering the name of God in the child's ear. Other rituals include a naming ceremony (*Namakarna*), the *Nishkarmana* (the child's first trip out) and the *Annaprāsana*, (the child's first taste of solid food). The ear-piercing ceremony (*Karnavedha*) and first haircut (*Mundan*)

ceremonies are also considered highly significant. These sacraments are performed on both the sexes. Hindus believe that the piercing of a hole in the lower lobes of the ear have benefits of acupuncture. Head shaving is connected to the removal of impurities. Among Sikhs, on the 10th day, *path* of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is performed and the newborn and the mother are presented before it after bathing. Sikhs do not perform *mundan* ceremony. They instead perform *Kesi dahi* ceremony.

Among muslims, a *Qazi* is summoned on the birth of a male child who visits the house on any of the first three days and recites the *bang* (holy words) in the infant's right ear and the *takbir* in its left ear. On the sixth day, the mother is bathed, her clothes are changed and sweet rice is distributed. *Khatna* (circumcision) is performed at any time before the child acquires an age of 12 years.

A child born in a Christian family is baptized by the church priest. The Christians also rejoice at the birth of a son but the birth of a daughter is not disliked by them. The mother observes no period of impurity.

DEATH

In Hindus, the dead are cremated as a rule. The dead body, after giving a final bath and wrapping in a white cloth called *kafan*, is placed on the bier. Relatives and friends pay tribute to the deceased by putting thereon *dushalas*, shawls or sarees. The bier is then carried away to the cremation ground. In case of death of a very old person, the bier is tastefully decorated and taken to the cremation ground without any usual mourning, and is sometimes accompanied by a band. This follows the belief that a person who has lived a full life and has left behind a full and prosperous family is not to be mourned. At the cremation ground, the dead body is placed on the pyre, ghee and odoriferous articles are also added to the fire. A small piece of gold is put in the mouth of the dead person. Amid chanting of hymns, the pyre is usually lit by the eldest son. The post-cremation rites include *chautha* (4th day), *Dasahi* (10th day) *Tehravi* (13th day) or *Starvi* (17th day) relating to final mourning and *pugree* ceremony. Sikhs also cremate the dead body. Most of

their customs are almost the same as observed by Hindus. Cremation is performed by a *Granthi*. Sikhs end the mourning with *Bhog* ceremony.

The Christians take the dead body to the cemetery, where it is buried in a coffin. Sometimes, an epitaph is fixed on the grave indicating particulars of the dead. The *Muhammadans*, after bathing the dead body and wrapping it into white cloth, take the bier to the graveyard. The *maulvi* reads the *namaz-e-zanaja*, everyone present there puts handful of clay on the dead body and then it is buried in the graveyard.

HOME LIFE

The home life in the district runs on traditional lines in which customs play an important part, though changes are taking place in the pattern of living due to the spread of education and impact of modern means of mass communication and technology, the pace of which is certainly more in urban areas than in rural. This is due to subsistence of joint family system at a larger scale in rural areas as compared to the urbanities.

Dwellings.— The agricultural design and quality of residential houses of an area are indicative of the standard of living and pattern of life in the district. Most-of the homes in the villages used to be *kachcha* up to the last quarter of 20th century. The ordinary types of dwellings in the district consisted of a few rooms which were constructed around a courtyard. The walls of these houses were generally made of unburnt bricks and roofs were made of right beams of wood, commonly called *karian*, and mud plastered. The houses were single storeyed but lofty, clean and spacious and there was hardly any provision for separate kitchen, bath room or latrine. The *verandah* was used for cooking and in the rains for sleeping. Cattle were tethered in the courtyard. During winters and rains, one room near the courtyard used serve for tethering of cattle.

Housing pattern in the district has undergone changes in the last few decades. The percentage of *kachcha* houses in the district has considerably decreased with only 2,368 *kachcha* houses remaining as per Census 2011 as these are being consistently replaced by *pucca* houses. In the villages, multi-

storeyed houses are being built and these are devoid of any uniformity in the architectural design. All houses in the villages are electrified and most of the houses also have the facility of piped water supply. In the past, the rural dwelling units did not have provision for toilet facilities, but majority of them have acquired the facility for defecation. Government is also consistently encouraging the inhabitants to improve sanitary conditions and it also provides material and financial assistance for construction of toilets. Most rural houses have provision for separate cattle shed. Well-to-do families in the rural areas have large houses with all facilities like modern kitchens, attached bathrooms and toilets.

The houses in the urban areas are all *pucca* and have mostly two storeys or more. Apartment culture is also gaining popularity in the bigger towns of the district and even in the areas adjoining the national capital. New houses have been built as per modern architecture and are well designed with proper ventilation and lighting. In urban areas, all houses have separate kitchen, bathroom and toilet. The modern type of houses have a drawing-cum-dining room, a kitchen, bed rooms with attached bathrooms and toilets, a store/*pooja* room, and *verandah*. The houses also have a courtyard in the back and open space in the front with the facility of parking for vehicles. According to 2011 census, total number of *pucca* houses in the district are 1,60,074 (1,15,599 in rural and 44,475 in urban areas).

Furniture and Utensils.— In the past, bedsteads (*manji or khat*) made of wooden frames covered with netted string, a few small stools (*pira, pida, khatola, mudha* and a few small low wooden tables (*patra*), etc., were the only furniture in the ordinary houses. Some well-to-do families would also decorate their house with picture of national heroes, gods and goddesses. With the passage of time, the style of decorating the house has undergone sea change due to the influence of western ideas and improvement in the economic condition of the people in general which has brought about a revolutionary change in the concept of furniture. Sofa-sets, decorative chairs, dining table, sleek centre-tables and well designed beds have become a common sight in the houses in the urban areas of the district. Tasteful decoration, with the help of

carpets, curtains, decorative wall hangings, paintings, decoration pieces, and portraits of their fore-fathers, can also be seen in the houses of certain well-to-do families.

Modern electrical and electronic gadgets like fans, televisions, coolers, refrigerators, washing machines, mixer-grinders, etc., are becoming popular with the people in general in the district. One can also come across electric motorised *rai* (milk churning machines), *gandasa* (fodder-choppers) and portable flour mill, in addition in rural houses. Plasma, LCD, LED, and HD televisions have also gained entry in the villages. Smart and big LED, HD and 3-D televisions with multiple connectivity facilities are more popular in wealthy and urban families. Cable TV, and satellite based dish antenna connections are a common sight even in the rural areas. Computer systems with internet facility and microwaves are also cherished by members of wealthy families in rural as well as urban areas. Majority of the business class and wealthy families have the air conditioners installed in their business premises and houses respectively.

The general name for household vessels is *bartan*. During the beginning of the 20th century the domestic utensils in use were vessels made of brass and bell metal (*kansi*), iron vessels, earthen vessels and wooden articles. The traditional metal vessels like large narrow mouthed cauldrons (*tokna, tokni*) for storing water in and cooking at feasts, *degchi* and *jhakari*, smaller vessels of similar shape, used for ordinary cooking and carrying water to the fields, still smaller ones (*lota, gadwa, banta*) for dipping into water and drinking, some cups (*sarda*) without handles, some tumbler shaped vessels (*gilaas*) for drinking cold liquids, brood shallow bowl or *saucer* (*bela, katora, katori*) for drinking hot liquids, large tray (*thali*) for serving chapatis and cooked vegetables, larger tray (*parat*) for kneading dough in, a ladle (*karchi*), a spatula for turning bread (*palta, khurchana khoncha*), a thick iron plate (*tawa*) for baking chapatis (*roti*), and pair of iron tongs (*chimta*), fry-pan (*karai*) and sieve (*chalni*) both of iron, and iron bucket (*dol*) for drawing water from the well and some wooden kitchenware *chakla* and *belan* (for shaping chapati) are still in common use. The utensils of glass, stainless steel, aluminium, and

plastic have gained acceptance and are preferred in comparison to those of iron, brass or copper both in urban as well as the rural areas of the district.

Pressure cookers, non-stick cook wares, and electric cookers made of aluminum and its alloys are now used extensively. People use dinner sets made of bone china, bakelite sheets and unbreakable sets. In cooking, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) stove has changed the lives of rural as well as the urban people. It has limited the use of kerosene oil stoves. Electric induction plates are also gaining popularity even in the rural areas. Besides traditional *chulha*, *haara* (round clay oven) and tandoor, based on traditional fuel such as wood, cow-dung-cakes, are still in use in rural areas, *dhabas*, restaurants and ceremonial functions. Use of solar cookers, however, is limited amongst educated urban families. Modernization and economic conditions of the people have brought a welcome change in the use of utensils and other kitchen articles.

Economically weaker sections of the society are still not capable of enjoying modern furniture, or costly utensils like glass crockery, or luxury items like refrigerators, microwaves and air-conditioners. However, the general prosperity has brought rural and urban life closer in respect of facilities.

Dress.— Traditionally, the male dress consisted of a *dhoti* (loincloth), a *kurta* (shirt), a *khandwa* (turban) and a pair of *jutti* (shoes). A *chadara* or *chadar* (thin sheet) in hot weather and a *khes* (thick woven cotton sheet), *dohar* (double woven thick sheet), *kambal* (blanket) and *razai* (quilt) in moderate to cold weather were used as a wrapper. The dress as well as the *khandwa* was worn by the different community in their own styles. Traditional male dress usually generally used to be white.

The women, traditionally, wore *woyal* or *odhni* to cover the head, *kameez*-shirt of gents style with or without *angi* or *angia* (a bodice to support the breast) for the upper body, *ghagra*, *daman* or *lehnga* to cover the lower part of the body, and *jutti* (handmade shoes) for the feet. They wore different kinds of ornamental accessories with the dress. A complete set of female clothes is called *teel* or *tiwal* which is often brightly coloured. Among Brahman

and Aggarwal women, *dhotis* and sarees are the popular dresses. While the Ahirwal women wear *lehenga*, *kurta* (*choli*, blouse) and *orhni*. Her *orhni* is broader than that of *Jatni* since she employs it to cover her abdomen. It is usually red or yellow and is decorated with bosses and fringes of silver with a fall. The dress of Rajput woman is similar to that of an Ahir woman except for her *orhni* which is usually plain and of white colour with silver fringes but without a fall.

There is a marked difference in the dressing sense of modern days. With the spread of education, the younger generation has almost discarded the old sense of dressing and only a handful people of old generation wear old fashioned *dhoti-kurta*. People in urban areas spend much on the formal dresses. Well-designed ready-made garments find favour amongst both urbanites and ruralites. Most of men wear pants-shirts, jeans or *kurta-payjama*. Young people wear jeans, pants, shirts, t-shirt, etc., irrespective of caste or community. Children are seldom seen in home stitched clothes due to easy availability of better quality of readymade clothing for children in the markets at lesser cost.

Women in the district generally wear suits comprising long *kameez* or *jumpher* and *salwar* with *dupatta*, or saree and blouse. On special occasions and functions, women prefer the use of designer ladies suits, *sarees* and traditional outfits with ornamental accessories. Women of the district, in general, avoid wearing any pure white dress as white dress is considered inauspicious, it being indicative of widowhood.

In winter, woollen sweaters are used by men and women alike where the former prefers coats and latter shawls on special occasions. In footwear, shoes are common as formal wear for men, and chappals or sandals for casual purposes. Females generally wear chappals, heeled sandals and seldom shoes. Sports shoes are primary choice of adolescents or older boys, and girls active in sports. With the reach of teleshopping and facility of online shopping, the thin line of demarcation of urban and rural dressing sense of men and women is diminishing. The hairstyles of both men and women also bear influence of

movies and television's soap operas due to the increased penetration and number of channels of television.

Ornaments.—Silver, gold and diamond ornaments are considered as insurance against economic problems. Investment of spare capital in buying jewellery for one's wife is preferred traditionally as the money could always be realized on requirement of an occasion. Ornaments undergo changes from time to time according to prevailing fashion not only in their design, but also in size, shape, weight, and content.

In the district, females of all communities are fond of ornaments. The gold, silver or diamond ornaments are worn by rural and urban women alike. They include *singar-patti* for fore-head; *jaumala*, *kanthimala*, *kanthi*, *gulubandh*, *hansli*, *galsari*, *haar*, *jhalra* (long hanging string of gold mohars or silver rupee) and necklace with *pandels* (pendants) all for neck; and *chura* (heavy bangles) and *churi* (light bangles) for wrists; *karanpool*, *bujni*, *dandee*, *kantey*, *bunday*, *bali* and tops all for ears; *koka* (nose-pin) and *nath* (large ring) for nose; variety of *anguthi* (finger-ring) for fingers; *tagri* for waist; and *kari* (anklet), *chhailkare*, *ramjhol* (jhanjhar), *neori*, *pajeb*, *tati* and *pati* all for legs. Out of these, *koka*, tops and *bali*, *anguthi*, *churi* and *pandel* are worn by women in routine and rest on special occasions and functions. Silver rings are also usually worn on toes.

Men generally do not wear jewellery except ring or chain in routine. Bracelets or gold chains of several strings are worn by rich persons on special occasions like marriage.

Food.— The district is no exception regarding food habits including beverages, and cooking modes to that of neighbouring districts in particular and other parts of the State in general. The diet of people in the district is simple and lacks variety. It generally comprises of three meals. Wheat flour is used during the whole year. *Bajra* (millet) flour is used during the winter months as the staple food in the rural areas of the district. *Besan* (gram flour) is sometimes added to the main staple wheat flour.

The people of the rural areas take simple and nutritious food. An average

villager takes *roti* (loaf) of *bajra* (millet) with *sag* (usually of spinach or mustard leaves) or *rabri* in winter, and wheat and wheat mixed gram in summer with *dahi* (curd), *makhan* (home made butter), *lassi* (butter milk) or tea. *Rabri* is a special traditional dish of the area prepared by fermenting flour in butter-milk before cooking it. *Dalia* (porridge of broken wheat) is usually eaten in the rainy season, and *kheechri* (a porridge of *bajra* and *moth* or *moong*) in winter. Mid-day meal (lunch) and the evening meal (dinner) consists of *roti* with some *dal* (cooked pulse) and vegetables or *kari* (prepared from gram flour) besides onions and pickles.

The diet of urban people is changing fast and contains a little more variety. People in urban areas take *paratha* (stuffed or plain) or bread and butter in the morning with tea, curd or milk. In lunch and dinner, besides normal *roti*, *dal* and vegetable, variety of fruits and salad are usual additions in educated and well-to-do families.

On festivals and social gatherings, *paneer* (Cheese) dishes are relished by all besides *kheer*, *halwa*, other sweet dishes and ice-cream. The abundance of variety of vegetable oils in the market have resulted in replacement to a great extent of ghee and traditional mustard oil for cooking. Consumption of rice and confectionery including biscuits, bread, etc., is increasing.

In drinks, tea and coffee have largely replaced milk as a beverage of choice. People of all ages consume tea with equal delight and it is usually the first beverage to be taken in the morning. Tea stalls are found in every market place in towns and big villages of the district. Sugarcane juice is used by the people during the summer season. In summer, older people generally take *lassi* (butter milk), *sharbat* (syrup), *shikanjvi* (lemon juice mixed with sweetened water), whereas young and children prefer aerated soft drinks. The use of ice is common during summers.

Fast food stalls along road sides and in the towns of the district are of recent origin where young generation relishes the tastes of noodles, burgers, pizzas and momos besides the traditional south Indian dishes like *sambhar*, *vada* and *dosa*. Some people are also non-vegetarians. The consumption of

non-vegetarian food is increasing in the district due to the development of poultry, fisheries and so directed animal husbandry activities. It is finding favour with the younger generations of all communities.

COMMUNITY LIFE

In the district, the community life is better organised in the villages as compared to the towns. Except for bigger villages, a village largely happens to be the nucleus of a single community. Big and small land owners, agricultural labourers and other workers all are inseparable from each other and share their joys and sorrows. The limited amenities and amusements of village life are equally cherished and shared by all of them and seek their major attention. Panchayats have also become hubs of community activities in villages due to various community development programmes.

The social situation in towns is a little different. A growing town generally holds multiple communities. Its various social and economic groups are less inclusive and more exclusive. They hardly come into contact with one another. Civic responsibilities no doubt, are applicable to all, but these are not cohesive in their nature. The voluntary social agencies establish themselves in local areas or small towns and endeavour in the direction of organising community life in one manner or other. Organising cultural events, mass gatherings for common purposes and celebration of important festivals by such organisations are aimed at development of community life of a place.

Community life of a place is reflected in its folk culture, which in turn is reflected in its folk-songs, dances and theatre. With fast changing circumstances, urban life is slowly but surely making an inroad into rural life taking away some of its inherent beauty and cultural wealth. The folk culture, however, still continues to enliven the country side which hums with songs and dances on festivals and other numerous occasions.

Community life is also expressed through folk-songs and dances. This enriched cultural heritage has been preserved down the ages through folklore. The legends, ballads, folk-tales and thousands of folk songs prevalent in the region truly represent its cultural heritage. All India Radio and Regional

Doordarshan Centre at Rohtak are paying great attention to the revival of folk culture. Various programmes on traditional folk songs and folk dances showing the folk culture preserved by village women are aired by these institutes with this objective, thereby providing a binding medium for the community life of the district. The vicinity of the district to the National Capital Delhi, and Millennium City, Gurugram, both of which are having a fast changing modern lifestyle, has also effected its community life as well as the cultural life in many ways.

Folk Songs.— Community life of an area is also expressed through its folk songs which not only throw light on various aspects of general life but also on the setup of the communities of the area in general. Songs are poetical expressions of love, longings, hopes, aspirations, joys, and sorrows of the people bound in the limits of communities and time. The song below depicting the longing, hope, aspiration and believes of a married women at the onset of *Sawan* month is an example:

*Baagan mein papeeha bolya, samaniya kad lyavaig?
Neeman kay nibolee lagyee, samaniya ka aavaiga?
Mareeyo ree basanta nai, kothlee kad lyavaiga?
Aavaiga ree aavaiga, meri maa ka jaya aavaiga.
Maa kee teel, baahann ka joda, bahu ki jhaanjhan lyavaiga.*

{O lord! the Brainfever Bird (*papeeha*) has started singing in the gardens, when will the gifts of *sawan* month be brought? The neem trees are laden with fruits, when will my brother come? When will the barber (may he die, if he delays), who is to bring my bag of gifts, come? It is definite that the one who has taken birth from my mother (brother) will come. He will bring the set of clothes for mother, sister and ornaments for wife.}

The women folk, especially rural, have played the lead role in preservation of folk songs. They can be heard singing folk songs at all places including fields, while doing their daily chores and even on their journey to fields and to the water-wells. Various shades of life and emotions such as affection, satire, beauty, nature, faith, nationalism, and heroism are found intricately woven poetically for preservation in the folk songs of an area.

The folk songs are connected with almost every aspect of the life ceremonies of marriage, birth of child, crops and agriculture, religious festivals, rituals and customs, and contain teachings from previous generation to their progenies and are sung on such special events. A good number of folk-songs are nature songs, which are sung in the particular months like the one below, wherein a girl is seeking permission, from her father who is sitting in the community center (*paras*), for taking morning bathing in the stream in the month of *Kartika*. Though she is invariably allowed, but with a warning about the cold water, and a teaching that it would be better if she endeavours for planting trees instead:

“*Paras baithanta babul bujhiya, kaho to kaatak nha lyun ho ram,
Kaattak nahanna beti bara-e-duhella, laiyo baag-bageechay ho ram...*”

Folk Dances.— Folk dances are outburst of surging emotions generally accompanied with folk-singing. Like the folk songs, folk dances are connected with religious festivals, harvest and ceremonies of marriage, birth of child, etc. The main folk dances, which are popular in the district, are *dhamaal*, *phag*, *loor*, *jhoomer*, *khodia*, *chaupaiya*, etc. *Dhamal* dance, which is prominent among other dances in the district, is performed on moonlit nights of *Phalguna*, when the winter veil of the fog and mist is lifted from the face of the earth and whisper of spring is in the air; an exotic sight. The dancers assemble in an open space and form themselves into a circle. They start with a song to the sound of *dhamal* beats:-

*Daph madhur bajai/chhora lil-gara ka, daph madhur..../
aiso bajai jal jamuna munir, jamuna ka nir, madhur ho jai.*

(Oh son of the dyer, play the *daph* with such a beautiful rhythm that the waters of Yamuna may hear and become intoxicated.)

Phag dance is a seasonal dance of the farmers usually performed in the month of '*Phalguna*'. This is a mixed dance but sometimes performed by men only. Women wear colourful traditional clothes and men display colourful turbans. The dance is accompanied by the beats of '*Tasha*', '*Nagada*', and '*Dhol*'. Women after their daily chores congregate in the village in an open

space and sing and dance till late at night during month of *Phag* (*Phalguna*, February-March). Two, sometimes four, women dance in a circle to the tune of songs and drum beats or pitcher-beats, sometimes with their faces covered. *Loor*, exclusively a girls' dance, is performed in the month of *Phalguna* around the Holi festival, and is very popular in the district. Girls usually participate in this dance wearing their traditional dress consisting of *Ghagra*, *Kurti*, *Chundri* and *Chunda*. *Jhumar* dance is performed exclusively by women to the beats of *dholak* and *thali*. *Khoria* dance is performed by women at the house of the bridegroom during night when the *barat* (marriage party) has gone to the bride's house. By this dance the women ask for the safe and sound return of the marriage party along with the newlywed couple. By staying awake whole night for this dance, they also protect their house since the men folk are all away to the bride's house. Due to the bawdy nature of this dance, children are generally kept away. *Chaupaiya* dance is a harvest dance based on songs having four lines and is, therefore, called *Chaupaiya*. Men wearing 'Dhoti', 'Kurtas' and colorful turbans dance to the beats of *Manjiras*, *Chimta* and *Nagadas*.

Besides the folk dances which are fast losing their charm and need active protection, some parents also teach their children the classical dances of the nation through private tutors. The normal dancing behaviour to the tune of modern songs played through disc jockey (DJ) systems can usually be witnessed in the marriage ceremonies. The modern disc jockey (DJ) systems have nearly replaced the musicians in the marriage, household parties and other community events.

Folk Theatre.— 'Sang' or 'Swang' the popular form of folk theatre is popular in the district like elsewhere in the State. *Swang* means a disguise or 'to impersonate'. *Swang* is a form of open-air theatre wherein the formalities of the drama like costumes, curtains and make-up are hardly observed. The stage is in the midst of the audience which sits on all four sides whereas orchestra takes its seat in the middle of the stage. *Swang* is performed by a group of ten or twelve persons. Women are not allowed to perform in the *swang*. Generally, the leader of the *swang* party plays the role of hero and other actors

play different roles including that of females. In summer, it is played late at night and continues till early hours of the morning, while it is performed at noon in the winter. The mythological stories and folk tales generally provide the themes. This form of folk theatre has experienced some apathy in the last few decades. The Government and other voluntary organisations are making efforts to revitalize this form of traditional folk-theatre.

Games and Recreation.—The popular indigenous games are wrestling, kabaddi, *rassa-khichna* (tug-of-war), *gindo-tora or gindo-khuli* (indigenous version of hockey), *gulli-danda* (tip-cat) and *lukkam-lukka* (hide and seek). The first three games were usually played by boys and middle aged people while the latter are popular among children, traditionally. However, in the era of internet or mobile, some of the traditional games have lost their importance in the district.

Wrestling and *kabaddi* continue to be popular sports among the young and middle aged. Village has an *akhara* (arena) where the young men and children go regularly for wrestling exercises. *Kabaddi* is played by two teams. The dimensions of the field, the number of players on a side and the duration of the game are undefined. *Kabaddi* matches are enthusiastically arranged during festivals, particularly in rural areas. Few villagers enjoy playing cards in panchayat ghars, *chaupals* or where ever convenient.

Modern outdoor games like hockey, cricket, badminton, tennis, football, volley-ball, basket-ball, *kho-kho*, net-ball, skipping, etc., are popular among people of district where there are facilities of play grounds. Some of the indoor games like table-tennis, chess, carom board, etc., are also played and enjoyed by people of the district. Children prefer to play games on computers and cellular phones.

To encourage sports right from the childhood and also in the rural areas, the State Government is taking special initiatives by providing coaching facilities and allowing grants for the development of play grounds. The Department of Sports and Youth Affairs has constructed play grounds in some villages of the district. Sports & Physical Aptitude Test (SPAT) programme

for boosting activity in games launched by the Government has produced many national level wrestlers, hockey players, etc., in the district.

Department of Information and Public Relation, Jhajjar, organises programmes of folk songs/dance/theatre in village *choupals* and documentaries are shown through projector in video van. Nowadays, large LCD/LED television screens are installed at busy market places to enjoy the national or international level game or match of special attraction. Cinema is another mode of recreation. The traditional cinemas are now converting to multiplexes with better audio-visual systems and seating quality. The villagers also enjoy visiting cinemas and multiplexes in towns. Besides Hindi films, Haryanvi films are also popular due to the propinquity with the social environment and cultural life of the people. English films are usually watched by school and college students and well-to-do families in urban areas. The recorded music is available in Compact Disc (CD), Digital Video Disc (DVD), pen-drives and memory-cards in various formats like MP3 and MP4. Television with cable or digital dish antenna, internet, and radio are major sources of entertainment. With development in mobile smart-phones and in internet facilities, the high definition videos and music content is generally available for download, viewing and listening round the clock, and this facility is primarily used by youth of the district.

Social Media.—In modern era, another medium to connect people is social media. Social media has become an important part of life for people of all ages and professions. The applications like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., have a tossup impact on the social life of people of the district.

People, irrespective of the physical distance, are now more easily accessible through social media which has resulted in strengthening of relationships and friendships. Social media have provided a platform for the writers and bloggers and tech savvy persons to share their articles and expertise. It is also providing opportunities for marketing, jobs and business opportunities, etc. People are able to explore and discuss various topics in real

time, share news live. Paradoxically, the social media sites can make us not only more capable but also more inept. It leads to addiction and spending countless hours on the social media can not only divert one's focus but can have some disadvantages on physical health.

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