

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATIONS

Before the advent of the Mughals, the most important route, from North-West Frontier to Delhi was through Tulamba to Pak Pattan, Dipalpur, Fatehabad, Ahrwan and Tohana to Delhi.¹ This route passed through the areas now comprising Sirsa district.

ROADS

There were no pukka roads in the district except for a mile or two near Sirsa town during 19th century, but a wide unmetalled road from Delhi entered the district at Narel Khera from Hisar and ran by Sirsa, Dabwali to Fazilka. Another broad road ran to the west of this road, nearly whole length of the district from Sirsa by Abohar to Fazilka and was much used by Pawindah traders from the frontier, who annually passed through the district in the cold weather, with their long strings of camels laden with merchandise from Kabul and Kandhar, on their way to Delhi. Other broad roads ran from Sirsa, north-east to Rori, south-east to Darba, south to Jamal and west to Ellanabad. Except where here and there these roads crossed a sand-hill, or traversed an unusually sandy bit of country, or where sand had been blown on to the road, they for eight months in the year presented a hard smooth surface along which cart or camel moved without difficulty. Indeed the same could be said of every village-road in the district, and except where impeded by the sand which formed a serious obstruction only in comparatively few places, there was no difficulty for either carts or camels in getting from any one village to any other. In the four months of the rainy season traffic was not so easy, the roads got soft and muddy and easily cut up, and rain water stood on the lower parts of these for days, the Ghaggar spread over the country in their neighbourhood and some villages in their valleys became almost quite surrounded by water. Ferry-boats were maintained when necessary at Kharekan and Ghoranwali where the roads from Sirsa to Dabwali and Abohar respectively crossed the Ghaggar. The principal roads passing through the district had camping grounds with wells of drinkable water at regular stages, and few serais for travellers.²

With the opening of Rewari-Bathinda railway in 1883, the bulk of the grain trade and other trade was directed to it from Delhi-Sirsa road, which

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1. B.S. Nijjar, *Punjab Under the Great Mughals* (1526—1707 A.D.) p. 228.
 2. J. Wilson, *Final Report on the Revision of Settlement of the Sirsa District in the Punjab*, 1879-83, pp. 187-188.

has so far provided the main line of communication and trade. With the opening of railways, the road development was neglected and it may be of interest to know that in 1915, all the roads in the district were in very bad condition. In parts of Sirsa even the Delhi-Sirsa road had been completely covered with drifting hillocks of sand and the wayfarer found it easier to trudge across the neighbouring fields. As a consequence of the bad state of roads, wheeled traffic was only confined to the large towns and the ordinary means of transport was the camel.¹

No worth-while progress was made in the road development till the Independence except that the Delhi-Sirsa road (a section of Delhi-Multan road) was taken over by the Public Works Department from the District Board in 1924 and was metalled. In 1947, the Sirsa district had only 84.55 kilometres of metalled road length. The post-Independence period and particularly the period after the formation of Haryana in 1966 has a steady expansion in road construction. The table below clearly indicates the rapid expansion in road construction since 1947:

Period	Total Metalled Length (Kms.)	Length Per 100 Square Kilometres of Area (Kms.)	Length Per Lakh of Population (Kms.)
At the time of Independence (1947)	84.55	1.98	15.85
As on April 1, 1951	84.55	1.98	15.85
At the end of Third Five-Year Plan (March 1966)	306.71	7.18	57.84
At the time of formation of Sirsa district (September, 1975)	837.68	19.61	157.16
As on March 31, 1981	1,267.95	28.82	174.06

The above table vividly shows that during three Five-Year Plans (1951 to 1966) only 222.16 kilometres of roads were metalled, whereas after the formation of Haryana between 1966 to 1975 in a period of just 9 years 530.97 kilometres of roads were metalled. After the formation of Sirsa as a district, 430.27 kilometres of roads have been metalled between 1975 to March 1981. In 1970, the government embarked upon a crash programme of linking every village with a metalled road. In 1971, 101 villages

1. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, 1915, pp. 178-79.

had been linked with metalled roads but by March 31, 1981, 310 villages had been linked with metalled roads leaving only 13 villages to be provided with link roads.

The district now has a fairly large network of roads. The total length of roads maintained by the P.W.D. (B&R) as on March 31, 1981, was as follows :—

<u>Particulars</u>	<u>Metalled</u>	<u>Unmetalled</u>
	(Kms.)	(Kms.)
National Highways	84.55	—
State Highways	68.18	0.10
Major District Roads	182.90	—
Other Roads	932.32	192.65
Total	1,267.95	192.75

A brief description of the more important roads is given below.—

National Highway

Delhi-Hisar-Sulemanki Road (N.H.10).—It is the only national highway passing through the district. It is the oldest road of the district and prior to Independence, it was known as Delhi-Multan road. It follows the alignment of the old trade route from North-West Frontier to Delhi. It was unmetalled up to 1924 and only a small portion near Sirsa was metalled. It was taken over by the Public works Department from the District Board in 1924 and was metalled.

The road enters the district from Hisar side at 231 kilometre and leaves the district at 315.55 kilometre and then enters the Bathinda district (Punjab). The total length of the road falling in the district is 84.55 kilometres. Initially, it was a single lane road of a metalled width of 9 feet but now it is 22 feet wide in its entire length falling in this district. This road passes through Sirsa, Odhan and Dabwali, and provides an important link with Hisar, Rohtak and Delhi.

State Highway

Sardulgarh-Sirsa-Ellanabad-Tibbi Road (S.H. 23).—The total length of this road in the district is 68.18 kilometres. It traverses the district from north-east to west, enters it at 10.28 kilometre near village Musahabwala and passes through Sirsa and Ellanabad and leaves at 78.56 kilometre near

village Talwara Khurd. It connects Barnala (Funjab) on the one side and Tibbi (Rajasthan) on the other. The road (except a small portion—0.10 km) is metalled and bitumen surfaced and is 12 to 18 feet wide.

Major District Roads

The major district roads provide important links with different towns and villages of the district. These roads are, State Border-Rori-Kalanwali road (23.52 kilometres), Kalanwali-Dabwali road (29.02 kilometres), Bhattu-Ludesar-Jamal road (27.20 kilometres), Sirsa-Ludesar-Bhadra road (32.73 kilometres) and Sirsa-Rania-Chichal Kotli (Jiwan Nagar) Bijuwala-Dabwali road (70.43 kilometres).

Other Roads¹

The other roads include other district roads and village link roads. The district is well provided with metalled roads and in March 1981, 310 villages of the district were connected with roads.

Canal Inspection Roads

There are well maintained unmetalled inspection roads along the banks of the canals. These roads are maintained by the Irrigation Department. These are not open to public. In 1980-81, the length of such roads in the district was 1,287 kilometres, out of which 1,028 kilometres was motorable and 259 kilometres was non-motorable.

ROAD TRANSPORT

Vehicles and Conveyances

In the absence of metalled roads in the district as late as in 1880, people travelled on rare occasions like visits to holy places, for marriages and other social occasions. Mostly journey was performed in groups, and often on foot. Camels were the popular means of communication, and paths suited to them ran from village to village. Country carts driven by camels, were used for moving from village to village and unmetalled roads were used by these country carts. During droughts and famines, which frequently visited the district, people moved *en masse* with their cattle, camels and carts. Better vehicular traffic was confined to larger towns like Sirsa and Dabwali. In most sandy areas of the district, the camel was the chief means of transport of merchandise.

With the passage of time, metalled roads were constructed and villages and towns were linked by metalled roads. Vast improvement in means of communication gradually resulted in use of better vehicles. First of all, rubber tyre tongas, drawn by a horse, became one of the swifter means of conveyance. Some people kept horses for their personal use. Later, appeared cycles, motor cars, trucks and jeeps. People of this district are now very fond of keeping jeeps for their personal use.

1. From March 1981 to March 1985, 166 Kilometres roads have been metalled.

There are now *thejas* and hand-carts, horses and donkeys, camels, tongas, cycles, rickshaws, motor-cycles and scooters, jeeps and station wagons, cars, buses, trucks, tractors and tempos. The tempo which appeared in this district only a few years ago has now become a popular means of public transport particularly in rural areas. These are also used for carrying goods.

The total number of registered vehicles in the district during 1975-76 to 1980-81 is given below:

Vehicles	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
Cars	157	174	207	239	257
Jeeps	261	279	298	304	337
Station Wagons	—	—	—	—	4
Buses	—	—	—	10	98
Scooters	390	511	625	757	1,103
Motor Cycles	1,264	1,493	1,653	1,820	2,106
Trucks	293	381	458	504	545
Tractors	2,704	3,553	4,392	5,587	6,564

It clearly indicates that there has been a significant increase in the number of vehicles in the district in the past few years. This increase is indicative of the progress the district has made in road transport, passenger as well as goods.

Goods Transport

Goods traffic is handled by private operators. It is largely run by single vehicle owners and is mostly unorganised. Nevertheless, the system of booking agencies has developed which cater to the needs of both the operators and the traders. The operators are provided with parking godowns and warehousing facilities and traders with a regular satisfactory service. Private operators have organised themselves in the district to reduce competition, to regulate traffic and to share profits. The trend now is to prefer goods transport by road even for long distances because it is prompt, quick and provides door-to-door delivery. The trolley fitted tractors are also used by farmers for transporting their produce to the market towns. In March 1981, there were 545 trucks registered in the district.

The private owners are members of the Truck Union, Dabwali Road, Sirsa. The trucks required by the traders and goods companies are supplied by the union at fixed rates. Three other truck unions in the district are at Dabwali, Kalanwali and Rania. There are private goods transport companies in all major towns and grain markets in the district.

Passenger Transport

Before the formation of Haryana, there was satisfactory bus service only on the Dabwali-Sirsa-Delhi route. In other parts of the district, particularly in the west and south, the bus service both private and nationalised was inadequate and unsatisfactory. Travel facilities for passengers were lacking. There was no bus stand worth the name even at Sirsa and Dabwali. There were no weather shelters along the roads, and passengers often had to wait for buses for hours in the blistering heat, sand storms and in the cold.

A sub-depot existed at Dabwali before the formation of Haryana in 1966. Another sub-depot at Sirsa was opened in 1971 with a fleet strength of 30 vehicles to cater to the passengers traffic requirements of the area. Nationalisation of passengers transport in November 1972, led to the expansion and improvement in the frequency of the bus service. A full-fledged depot was established at Sirsa in April 1978, with a fleet strength of 89 buses and Dabwali sub-depot was merged into it. Haryana Roadways, Sirsa with a fleet strength of 135 buses on March 31, 1981, catered to the bus routes in the district and inter-state routes extending to Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh and Delhi.

The bus routes passing/touching the district are given in Table X of Appendix.

There is no luxury or air-conditioned coach under operation in Sirsa depot.

Local/shuttle services.—No local city service is at present under operation in Sirsa district. However, some shuttle services are running to serve the rural population of the district. The routes on which these buses ply are:

1. Sirsa—Kussar
2. Sirsa—Kamal
3. Sirsa—Kharekan
4. Sirsa—Ding Mandi
5. Sirsa—Rania
6. Sirsa—Bhupp

7. Sirsa—Modia Khera
8. Sirsa—Darbi
9. Sirsa—Phoolkan
10. Dabwali—Banwala
11. Dabwali—Nuhian Wali (Nahiyawali)
12. Dabwali—Odhan
13. Dabwali—Panniwala Mota
14. Dabwali—Jattan Wali (Jandwala Jatan)
15. Dabwali—Bijuwali
16. Dabwali—Kaluana
17. Sirsa—Arnian Wali
18. Sirsa—Ali Mohmad
19. Sirsa—Nirwan
20. Sirsa—Sahuwala

Station wagons, tempos, cars and three wheeler scooters which have been registered as taxis, provide transport in urban areas and from convenient points in rural areas.

Temporary bus stand existed at Sirsa and Dabwali with amenities such as tea-stalls, newspaper vendors and fruit shops. Facilities like drinking water and toilets have been provided at both the bus stands. Modern bus stands are likely to come up at both these places shortly. There is also a proposal to establish bus stands at Ellanabad, Kalanwali and Rania and bus shelters at different places such as Ding Sikanderpur, Nathusari (Chopta), Kuranganwali, Odhan and Bijuwali.

RAILWAYS

Three railway lines of the Northern Railway pass through the district. Rewari-Fazilka and Sadulpur-Hunumangarh lines are metre gauge (1 metre wide) whereas Suratgarh-Bathinda line is broad gauge (1.676 metre wide).

Rewari-Fazilka Railway Line.—It is a metre gauge railway line and was constructed in 1883. It is the oldest railway line in the district. The construction of this railway line in 19th century enabled the people of the area to get good prices for their harvests and it prevented the tract from being desolated by the succession of famine years through which it had passed. The railway line enters the district from Hisar side, the first station falling thereon in the district is Ding. It traverses the district through Jodkhan Halt,

Suchan Kotli, Bajeka Halt, Sirsa, Kharekan Halt, Bada Gudha, Sukhchain Halt, Kalanwali and Rattangarh Kanakwal Halt and covers 73 kilometres in the district.

Suratgarh-Bathinda Railway Line.—Jodhpur-Bikaner railway line was extended to Bathinda in 1902. This broad gauge railway line enters the district from Hanumangarh side and cuts through the north-eastern fringe of the district. The first station on this line in the district is Lohgarh Abub Halt whereafter it crosses the Punjab and Haryana territories and passes through Dabwali station and finally crosses to Bathinda district.

Sadulpur-Hanumangarh Railway Line.—This metre gauge railway line was opened to traffic in 1927. It enters the district from Nohar (Rajasthan) side and traverses the district for 14 kilometres and passes through Surera Halt and Ellanabad and leaves for Hanumangarh.

TOURIST FACILITIES

In the past, serais served the people by providing shelter and other facilities. Till the beginning of this century, there existed a number of serais along Delhi-Sirsa road. But with the change of time and improvement in the means of transport, these serais have ceased to exist as an institution. Nevertheless almost every village and the town has a *chopal* or dharmsala, the maintenance of which is an old tradition of the area. These are used for the stay of marriage parties and other common purposes, as well as for visitors. The existing dharmsalas in towns owe their origin to the generosity of the rich residents. There are many good dharmsalas at Sirsa and Dabwali. The newly constructed Janta Bhavan dharmsala at Sirsa is the biggest one with modern facilities and has 24 rooms and a big hall. The list of important dharmsalas in the district is given in the Table XI of Appendix.

There are no good hotels in the district. However, Haryana Tourism Department has built Kala Teetar with motel restaurant, bar and boating facilities on Bathinda-Ganganagar Defence Highway at Abub Shahar. It has 4 rooms (2 air-conditioned and 2 non-air-conditioned). Another tourist resort, Shikra has been built at Asa Khera. It has 2 suites and also provides restaurant facilities. "Surkhab" restaurant has been opened at Sirsa with bar facilities. It has become popular both with outsiders and local residents.

There are rest houses at important places in the district for the stay of touring officials. These rest houses are maintained by P.W.D. (B. & R.), Irrigation Department, Haryana State Electricity Board, Market Committees, etc. A list of the rest houses indicating the number of suites and reservation authority is given in Table XII of Appendix.

1. The tourist complexes at Abub Shahar and Asa Khera were closed in 1983-84. Now these have been re-opened.

POST OFFICES

In 1892, the then Sirsa tahsil had 10 imperial post offices at Sirsa, Chutala, Dabwali, Ellanabad, Bada Gudha (Gudha Kalan), Jamal, Jodhkan, Rania, Rori and Kalanwali. Sirsa was a sub-office with money order and savings bank facilities while all other post offices were branch offices with money order facilities only.¹

By 1912, the number of sub-offices rose to two and that of branch offices to 11 in the then Sirsa tahsil, sub-offices were at Sirsa and Dabwali and branch offices at Ding, Ellanabad, Bada Gudha, Jodhkan, Kalanwali, Mangala, Naurang, Rania, Rori, Dabwali village and Chutala.² Between 1892 to 1912, the post office at Jamal was closed and new post offices were opened at Ding, Mangala, Naurang and Dabwali village.

In 1935, while the number of sub-offices remained the same but the number of branch offices was reduced from 11 to 10. The post offices at Jodhkan, Mangala and Naurang had been closed between 1912 to 1935 and new post offices having been opened at Alika and Suchan Kotli.³

After Independence, there was rapid extension in postal facilities particularly in rural areas and in 1961, the number of post offices increased to 73. As a result of further extension in postal facilities the number of post offices rose to 120 (14 sub-offices and 106 branch offices) by 1971, and these post offices were under the jurisdiction of Superintendent of Post Offices, Hisar. In 1972, Sirsa head post office was established.

The number of post offices was 125 (one head post office, 22 sub-offices and 102 branch offices) in 1975 and it further rose to 144 (one head post office, 25 sub-offices and 118 branch offices) by March 31, 1981 as detailed in Table XIII of Appendix.

All the villages of the district were provided with daily mail delivery and in Sirsa and Dabwali, the mail was delivered twice on all the days of a week except sundays and national holidays.

TELEGRAPHS

In 1982, a telegraph line ran along the railway line with a telegraph office at each station. There was also a postal telegraph office of the second class at Sirsa.⁴

1. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, 1892, p. 219.
2. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, *Statistical Tables*, 1912, Table 31.
3. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, *Statistical Tables*, 1935, Table 31.
4. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, 1892, p. 219.

In 1915, Sirsa was the only postal telegraph office in the district. But the railway telegraph offices at all railway stations in the district were opened to the public. There were 6 railway telegraph offices at Sirsa, Dabwali, Ding, Suchan Kotli, Bada Gudha and Kalanwali railway stations.¹

In 1961, there were 8 postal telegraph offices in the district located at Sirsa, Dabwali, Kalanwali, Bada Gudha (Gudhan Kalan), Keharwala, Ding, Rania and Ellanabad.² The number of telegraph offices rose to 11 in 1971. These were located at Dabwali, Chutala and Kalanwali in Dabwali tahsil and Sirsa, Suchan, Ding, Ottu, Rania, Moju Khera, Khari Surera and Ellanabad in Sirsa tahsil.³

In December 1981, telegraph facilities were available at the post offices of Sirsa Head Office, Nai Mandi Sirsa, Sirsa Court, Sirsa Town, Mandi Dabwali, Dabwali Town, Chutala, Ellanabad, Kalanwali, Rania, Jiwan Nagar, Khairpur and Bada Gudha.

TELEPHONES

The first telephone exchange in the district was opened at Sirsa in 1955. In 1981, 7 telephone exchanges were functioning in the district at the following places.

Name of Exchange	Year of Establishment	Number of Telephone Connections in 1981
Sirsa	1955	1,313
Kalanwali	1961	110
Ellanabad	1962	131
Ding	1970	24
Dabwali	1972	389
Rania	1973	22
Jiwan Nagar	1980	16

In 1981, the telephone service was available for the general public at the public call offices at Chutala, Abub Shahar, Ganga, Masitan Kaluana, Risalia Khera, Jamal, Bada Gudha, Shahpur Begu, Rori, Amritsar, Bhaudin, Jodhkan, Dabwali rural, Nezaadala, Bajeka, Talwara Khurd, Koriwala, Johrar Nali, Madho Singhana, Panniwala Moreka, Mangala, Desu Jodha, Suchan Kotli, Kuta Budh, Bani, Kharian and Odhan.

1. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, 1915, p. 179.

2. *Census of India*, 1961, *District Census Handbook*, *Hisar District*, 1966, Part II, pp. IV-XV.

3. *Census of India*, 1971, *District Census Handbook*, *Hisar District*, 1974, pp. 30-35 and 38-49.