

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

Population

The area of Kurukshetra district is 3.46 percent of State area and according to 2001 census, the district population is 3.92 percent of the State population. It gives an interesting demographic profile of Kurukshetra district. The total population of the district in 2001 was 8,25,454 persons which was 1,58,774 persons more as compared to 1991. The percentage increase in the decade remained 23.32 percent as against 28.43 percent of the State. Rural and urban population by sex according to 2001 census is given below:-

Rural			Urban		
<i>Total</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
6,09,943	3,25,726	2,84,217	2,15,511	1,16,602	98,909

Growth of population.- The net percentage increase in the population in 1961 over that in 1951 was 55.80 which was the highest in any decade in last 100 years. The decadal variation in the population of the Kurukshetra district during the last 100 years is shown in the following table:-

Year	Persons	Decadal variation	Percentage decadal variation	Males	Females
1901	175,735	-	-	95.287	80.448
1911	158,807	16,928	9.63	86.948	71,859
1921	164,560	5,753	3.62	90,090	74,470
1931	169,002	4,442	2.70	93,131	75,871
1941	197,157	28,155	16.66	107,616	89,541
1951	219,455	22,298	11.31	118,084	101,371
1961	341,906	122,451	55.80	184,489	157,417
1971	465,222	123,316	36.07	250,191	215,031
1981	542,423	77,201	16.59	289,759	252,664
1991	669,346	126,923	23.40	356,181	313,165
2001	825,454	156,108	23.32	442,328	383,126

Source: Census of India, 2001, District wise data sheet, P. 16.

During the hundred years from 1901 to 2001, the population of the district increased by 199.10 percent. The ten years period (1901-11) had been marked by several epidemics of plague and malaria which took a heavy toll of population. During the next decade 1911-21 occurred the great influenza epidemic. The decade 1921-31 was generally healthy but the population was almost static. It expanded faster during 1931-41. The population between these 10 years had shown an increase of 13.96 percent, but this increase was reduced by shifting of the Muslim population in the district in next decade (1941-51) in the wake of partition. The decade (1951-61) was free from disease and as a result of improved medical and health facilities; the death rate was reduced considerably, whereas the birth rate remained almost unchanged. The population of the district, thus increased by 55.80 percent in decade 1951-61. During 1961-71, the population of the district increased by 36.07 percent and in 1971-81 by a further 16.59 percent. During 1981-91, the population of the district increased by 23.40 percent and in 1991-2001 further by about 23.32 percent. In comparison during the same period, increase in the population in the State was 28.43 percent.

The Rural population of the district in 2001 was 6,09,943 persons and Urban population comprised of 2,15,511 persons. Evidently, the district gives a rural outlook. There are 407 inhabited villages and only 4 towns in the district. The villages classified by various population ranges as per 2001 census are given in the following table:-

Range	No. of villages	Population
Less than 200	17	1,634
200-499	40	14,345
500-999	117	93,546
1000-1999	156	2,23,605
2000-4999	63	1,83,947
5000-9999	13	77,630
10,000 & above	1	12,236
Total	407	6,09,943

Density.- On the basis of 1991 Census, the number of persons per square kilometer in the district was 437. The density increased to 551 in 2001. The district ranked fifth in density in the State.

Among the towns, Pehowa has the highest density of 7,344 followed by Thanesar (3,983), Shahabad (2,331) and Ladwa (1,170).

The four towns of the district had 2,15,511 persons (26.10 percent of the total population), viz. Thanesar 1,22,319; Pehowa 33,564, Shahabad, 37,289 and Ladwa 22,339.

Sex ratio.- As per 2001 census, the district had 866 females per 1,000 males. The Tehsilwise sex ratio was as under:-

Tehsil	Females per 1000 males
Kurukshetra	744
Pehowa	785
Shahabad	742

Literacy.- The percentage of literate population was 69.88 percent in 2001 against 58.78 percent in 1991. The growth ratio is slightly slow/past compared to State average which rose from 55.85 to 76.91 percent. The literacy among male was 78.06 percent while it was 60.61 percent among females. The Tehsilwise literacy ratio is as under:-

Tehsil	Literate and Educated persons			Literates as percentage of total	Percents of literate males to 1000 males	Percents of literate females to 1000 females
	Persons	Male	Female			
Thanesar	2,98,291	1,77,569	1,20,722	71.35	79.54	61.97
Shahabad	94,683	55,175	39,508	72.63	89.46	63.94
Pehowa	1,01,899	60,871	41,028	63.78	72.22	54.35
Total	4,94,873	2,93,615	2,01,028	69.88	78.06	60.61

Language.- Among the spoken languages in 1991, Hindi was spoken by 5,20,457 persons, followed by Punjabi 1,19,590 persons. Urdu was spoken by 384 persons only.

Hindi is spoken by the largest number of people in the district. Hindi, with small admixture of Punjabi words, is spoken in most parts of the district. The displaced persons who settled in the district after the partition speak Punjabi. In the Government offices and educational institutions, Hindi is spoken by the majority.

The various scripts used are:- *Devnagri* for Hindi, *Gurmukhi* for Punjabi, Persian for Urdu, Roman for English and *Lande* for book keeping. After the migration of Muslims in 1947, the use of Urdu has gradually given place to Hindi. Its use is now limited to the older generation. The younger generation mostly uses Hindi and English in speech and writing. The business community still, more or less, uses *lande* in maintaining their account books.

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

The bulk of the population consists of Hindu. Their total number in the areas comprising Kurukshetra district at the time of 2001 census was 6,75,381(362,650 males and 312,731 females) which formed 81.82 percent of the total population. Sikhs numbered 1,35,545 (71,346 males and 64,199 females), Muslims 12,028 (6,944 males and 5,084 females),Jains 622 (329 males and 293 females) and Christians 1,456 (780 males and 676 females).

Hindu

Religion plays an important role in the life of people. Hinduism is hardly distinguishable from the faith of their co-religionists elsewhere. Most of Hindus follow traditional Hindu beliefs and practice Sanatan Dharma, Hindu worship a pantheon of Gods in its various aspects, the Chief being the Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Rama and Krishna are incarnations of Vishnu. Shakti in her different forms and names and Hanuman as Rudra incarnation of Lord Shiva are also worshipped. The Vedas, Upanishads, Purans, the epics Ramayana, Mahabhart and the Bhagvad Gita- are all sacred books of Hindus.

The religious practices of the Hindus all over Haryana are almost identical. The variations, if at all, are due to customs peculiar to each caste and family. Most of the temples built are dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva, some temples are, however, built to local deities. Very few people go to temples for worship while most go for

darshans or for asking boons. The educated people mostly worship at home some of whom keep the image of their favourite deities. For the performance of *sanskara* (sacraments) and *grah pravesh* (entering newly built or purchased house) ceremonies, the *purohit's* presence is required.

The Kurukshetra *tirthas* are imbued with a religious aura. The myths connected with Kurukshetra have so engraved in their minds that the Hindus spontaneously pay homage to its very name. Kurukshetra had been the scene of Mahabharata where Gita, the song celestial, was sung. For a Hindu, a visit to Kurukshetra is a very pious act. A dip in the holy tank and visits to temples are considered as equal to the merit of performing a thousand *ashvamedha yajnas*. Pehowa is also sanctified by the existence of the Saraswati, *par excellence*, and Hindus seek salvation of their ancestors by visiting this place and offering *pindas*.

Charhawa (Offerings), made mostly by women, generally take the form of gram or milk or cooked food or sweetmeats offered in front of the deity, the *Purohit* putting a part on the platform where the deity is placed and the remainder of the offering being given to the appropriate receiver as *Prasad*. In many cases, the *Brahmans* are fed in the means of the Lord. The practice of *Shradhas* for 15 day before the commencement of *navratras*, in commemoration of ancestors is also common.

Shiva.- The district has been closely associated with Shiva worship from ancient times. Shiva temples or *Shivalas* are found in large number in towns and villages. According to the Puranic literature and the *Mahabharata*, the famous Sthanu Tirtha visited there and the place was so called after Sthanu(Shiva). A terracotta seal with a bull and a *kharoshthi* legend on it discovered from the mound known as 'Karan Ka Qilla' in Thanesar may also be corroborative of this view. The Chinese traveler Yhan Chwang also records the existence of some 100 Deva temples and people in great number belonging to different sects. It shows that the worship of Shiva in the temples at Kurukshetra and Pehowa is very popular.

Vishnu.- Vishnu is worshipped in the district under the common name of Narayan. A full reference of Vishnu's *tirth* is in the Epic Mahabharata. The famous idol of Jagron (Vishnu) in the temple of

Chakrasvamin at Kurukshetra was removed and shifted to Ghazni by the Muslim invaders. The Pehowa inscriptions also bear testimony to the practice of Vishnu worship and the existence of Vishnu temples.

Hanumana.- Hanumana, the monkey God, is also the object of veneration in many temples. He is considered to be the God of strength. People believing in Hanumana start every difficult job after uttering the word *Jai Bajrang Bali*. This deity is worshipped on Tuesday. Many temples of Hanumana are situated in the district.

Rama.- Lord Rama is also worshipped by the people as the incarnation of Vishnu. Rama is worshipped on the occasion of Dussehra when Ramlila or the story of the Ramayana is staged in various part of the district. Ramlila has been keeping the folk-theatre alive. Almost every temple is adorned with the image of Rama.

Krishna.- The whole Kurukshetra and its adjoining area is known as *dev bhumi* where Lord Krishna delivered discourses to Arjuna. It was here that he acted as Arjuna's Charioteer in the epic battle and sang the song celestial, the Gita. Like Ramlila, Krishna Lila also provides theme to the folk-theatre.

Sun God.- This is the God whom the people chiefly delight to honour. No shrine is ever built to this God, but Sunday is the day sacred to Him. On Sunday the devotees do not eat salt; nor do they set milk for *ghee*, but make it into rice-milk, a part of which is given to the Brahmans in honour of the sun; and a lamp is always lighted for him on Sunday. Water is poured towards the sun, and when the devotee first steps out of door in the morning, he salutes the sun. Then he says *darm ko sahai raklya suraj maharaj*. The *Mahabharta* refers to the popularity of sun cult in the Kurukshetra. It is believed that Aditi had given birth to *Suraj Kund* situated at Amin, about five miles from Thanesar. There still exists a temple of Aditi and a *Suraj Kund* nearby. During solar eclipse, millions of people assemble at Kurukshetra in order to bath in the holy tank.

Bhumia Khera.- Bhumia or the God of home stead or the village itself, often called *Khera* is most important. Bhumia is worshipped on Sunday. People light a lamp and offer a cake of bread at the shrine and feed Brahmans. This is always done twice a year after the harvests are gathered in and also on other occasions. Bhumia is also worshipped at

marriages. The bridegroom, before proceeding to the bride's house, takes a round of his own village and worships the Bhumia and again worships the God before he enters his house along with his bride. Again, when a son is born, the mother of the child lights lamps and affixes with cow dung five columns of the *panni* grass called bearn to the shrine. Milk of a cow which has claws is first offered as oblation to the Bhumia to avert mishappening. Orthodox women carry their young babies to the temple of this deity to ensure longevity of life.

Smallpox Sisters.- Sitla Mata is worshipped for protection against smallpox. Of the seven sisters, Sitla Mata is supposed to be the greatest and most virulent and is worshipped on the 7th of *Chaitra* which is called *Shili Satam*. Besides *Phag*, the day after Holi festival, and any Monday especially of the *Chaitra* or *Asadha*, are favourable days. Small shrines to the deity are found in some villages. A temple dedicated to Sitla Mata is found at Thanesar (near old Bus Stand) where she is worshipped by the people.

During an attack of smallpox, offerings are discontinued till the disease has disappeared in the belief that the evil influence may not spread. But, so long as Mata keeps Her hands off, nothing is too good for the Goddess, for she is one of the great dreads or Indian mothers. The smallpox disease has been completely eradicated, and people still have undiminished faith in the smallpox Goddess. The fairies are a somewhat vaguely defined class of malevolent spirits and with the spread of education the fairies are considered nothing but the product of superstitions.

Gugga Pir or Zahir Pir.- Gugga Pir or Zahir Pir is supposed to be the greatest of the snake kings. A number of legends have clustered around Gugga. He is called Gugga Pir (Zahir Pir) (the Saint apparent). Some refer to him as *Bayarwala* (He of the *Bagar*) because of his grave near Bahdra Tahsil of Hanumangarh district in Rajashtan. The Muslim also flock to his shrine. Gugga had a peculiar power to cure victims of snake bite. Monday is his day, the 9th is his date and *Bhadon Sudi*, the 9th date on which Gugga descended into earth.

Gugga Pir's shrine is distinguished by its square shape with minarets and a domed roof and is known as *mari*. The important *maris* of Gugga are at Thanesar (*near Civil Hospital*).

Gugga Pir is also the subject of folk songs. Songs to him are sung on the occasion of child birth and marriage.

Other Saints.- There are innumerable local saints; many villages having shrines to name never heard of elsewhere. A few of the most celebrated are Guru Ravidas, Miran Sahib, Lakidata or Sakhi Sarwar, Bawa Farid Shakaraganj and Bull-e-Shah Qalandar, among these, the last named- a contemporary of Baba Farid, is a vary celebrated local saint. The shrine of Baba Farid is situated at village Gonipur.

Sikhs.- The Sikhs constitute 16.42 percent of the total population of the district and form the second largest religious group. They number 1,35,545 (71,346 male and 64,199 female). They are composed of mostly in Thanesar, Pehowa and Shahbad Tehsils. Cultivation and Government service are their main professions.

The convention of *Jetha Kesdhari* is still prevalent in most of the Hindu families in Pehowa, Ismailabad and Shahabad areas where the hairs of the eldest son in the family are never trimmed. He ties the turban and keeps the hairs and beard intact and looks like a Sikh.

The place of worship of the Sikhs is called Gurdwara wherein the Holy Guru Granth Sahib is kept for devotional study of recitation. Besides observing some Hindu festivals, the Sikhs celebrate *Gurpurbs* (birthdays and martyrdom days of Sikhs Gurus) and Baisakhi which marks the birth of the Khalsa. Gurdwara Thanesar, Gurdwara Shahabad, Gurdwara Pehowa deserve special mention.

Muslims.- They are a minority community in the district as in the wake of Partition in 1947, almost all of them migrated to Pakistan and, in their place, non-Muslims migrating from Pakistan settled in this district.

Tehsil Thanesar has maximum number of Muslims and most of them are Sunnis. In 2001, only 12,028 persons (6,944 males and 5,084 females). There are several mosques where Muslims offer prayers. They celebrate their festivals (*Id* and *Baqrid*) with enthusiasm. Friday is sacred to them. Marriage among the Muslims is contracted with the usual *Nikah* ceremony performed by a *qazi*.

Jains.- According to the 2001 census, the number of Jains in the district was 622 (329 males & 293 females). They had twenty four

leaders called *thirathankaras*. The first of these was Rishabha and last was Mahavira, who was a senior contemporary of Lord Budha (sixth century of B.C.) .They preach the doctrine of *ahinsa* (non-violence). The Jains live mostly in urban areas of the district.

Christians.- According to 2001 census, the number of Christians in the district was 1,456 (780 males and 676 females), which formed only 0.18 percent of the total population. They are mostly concentrated in towns. The important festivals among the Christians are as elsewhere in the world , New Year's Day, Easter, Good Friday and Christmas.

Festivals and Fairs.- Festivals and fairs symbolize people's cultural, social and religious aspirations. These, besides, helping the masses in general to lead a fuller and better life, also mitigate their monotony by providing physical diversion and mental recreation. Though principally associated with religion, there are a number of occasions wherein the social aspect assumes prominence. In fact, festivals are special days, periods of time and season, which are so designed as to ensure individual joy by practicing religion coupled with social joy and domestic happiness. Festivals and fairs observed in the district are primarily connected with religious and agricultural operations.

The common festivals celebrated by the Hindus are Holi, Janam Asthmi, Dussehra and Diwali. Other festivals celebrated in the district are Makar Shokranti, Baisakhi, Ran Navmi, Teej, Raksha Bandhan, Gugga Navmi, Shiv Ratri (twice a year), Bhaiya Dooj, Durga Asthmi (twice a year) and Gita Jayanti. A few festivals like Karva Chauth, Ahoi Ashtmi and Sakkar Chauth are celebrated by women. The principal festivals are celebrated in the same manner as in other parts of the State. Two very important fairs of the district are Solar Eclipse fair at Kurukshetra and *Chait Chaudas* fair at Pehowa in the month of *Chaitra*(March-April). Both these fairs are attended by lakhs of pilgrims from every nook and corner of the country. Besides these two fairs, Somvati Amavas fair at Kurukshetra, Shivratri fair at Shahabad, Pipli and Arunai and Devi fair at Ladwa and Shahabad are of local importance.

Solar Eclipse Fair, Kurukshetra.- A very big fair is held at Kurukshetra on the occasion of solar eclipse. Occurrence of a solar eclipse is a special occasion and lakhs of pilgrims, both Hindus and

Sikhs, from all parts of the country assemble at Kurukshetra to take a dip in the holy tanks and visit the *tirthas* connected with the place with the belief of attaining *punya* and *moksha*. It is believed that one attains the benefit of an *Asvamedha Yajna* by bathing at Sannihit tank on the day of solar eclipse. According to *Matsya Purana*, one attains highest *Punya* in Kurukshetra when Rahu takes over the sun i.e. solar eclipse take place. Tradition has it that the water of all other holy ponds visit Sannihit and Brahma Sarovar at the time of solar eclipse.

The fair has a long history and finds mention in numerous religious scriptures and historical records, which testifies the fact that lakhs of pilgrims have been visiting Kurukshetra at the time of solar eclipse. By the time of Mahabharata War, the place had acquired importance for the same occasion. Mahabharata states that fifteen years after the *Rajasuya Yajna* performed by Yudhishtira, when persuasion of Lord Krishna to Duryodhana in favour of Pandavas failed, he decided with Karna to start the War on the auspicious day of *Jyestha Amavasya*- a solar eclipse day.

From fifth-sixth century A.D. upto the *Sulnate* period, there are quite a good number of references in relation to Kurukshetra scattered in indigenous literary a sources of religious and astronomical kind, foreign accounts and in inscriptions. *Shrimad Bhagavata Purana* gives graphic illustration of the religious deeds performed by the people who had gathered there in view of attaining *Punya* during the time of solar eclipse. According to it, the solar eclipse fair was attended by a large number of people including the rulers of various states i.e. Matsya, Usiwara, Kosala, Vidhtbha Kuru, Sanjay, Kamboja, Kekaya, Madra, Kunti, Anarta, Kerala, etc.

The *Padma* and *Vamana Puranas* also refer to the merit of visiting and taking bath in the sacred *tirthas* at Kurukshetra during solar eclipse. The *Vrihat Samhita* of Varahamihira, a work of 4th century A.D. also refers to the eclipse and its effects at Kurukshetra. A reference to a solar eclipse in the context of Kurukshetra also occurs in the *Kulait Plate* of Somavarman, referring to Sahiladeva of Masana race.

Al-Biruni, who visited India during 11th century furnishes information of solar eclipse fair at Kurukshetra in his book *Kitab-ul-Hind* (written about A.D. 1030) The *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana

(12th century A.D.) also find mention about solar eclipse fair at Kurukshetra.

There are a number of references in contemporary literature about the visit of various Sikh Gurus to Kurukshetra on the occasion of solar eclipse fairs. Akbar, visited Kurukshetra in 1567 on the occasion of a solar eclipse. Francois Bernier, a French traveller, who visited the country during Sahajahan's regime, furnishes the following account about solar eclipse -A.D.1666:-

“Kept with the same external observance in the Indus, in the Ganga’ and the other rivers and tanks but above all in that one at Thanesar which contained on that occasion more than one hundred and fifty thousand persons assembled from all parts of the empire; its water being considered on the day of an eclipse more holy and meritorious than those of other.”¹

Thus, solar eclipse fair at Kurukshetra has been of great cultural and religious importance. Devotees from all parts of the country have been attending this fair from time immemorial and will continue to gather in lakhs and take bath here for ages to come.

Apart from nearly a million devotees, the fair is attended by a large number of *sadhus* and *mahatmas*. Big *pandals* and tented colonies are set up by various religious and social organizations, where arrangements for stay of the pilgrims are made. Religious discourses by learned *sadhus* are arranged which are attended by thousands of persons. The pilgrims start thronging Kurukshetra many days before the solar eclipse. The Government makes elaborate arrangements for the stay and transportation of the pilgrims. The Entire fair area is given new facelift. Adequate arrangements are made for sanitation, light and water. Makeshift bazaars are set up by businessmen and shopkeepers from far and near and they do thriving business during the fair. Government also open number of fair price shops so as to provide necessities of life to the pilgrims at reasonable rates. Exhibitions set up by various Government Departments, Boards and Corporations provide special attraction for the pilgrims. Touring talkies, circus shows, magic shows, etc provide good entertainment to the people.

¹ Archibald Constable, Revised and Improved Addition Travels in the Mughal Empire, A.D. 1656-1688.

During the fair, pilgrims take dip in the two holy tanks i.e. Brahmsarover and Sannihit at the time of eclipse, give alms and charities, visit various shrines and temples in and around Kurukshetra to pay obeisance to the deities.

Chaitra Chaudus Fair, Pehowa.- This fair is held annually at Pehowa, an historic ancient town, 27 kilometres from Kurukshetra. After solar eclipse fair at Kurukshetra, it is the second largest fair held in the district. The fair is held for three days on *Chaitra Badi* 13 to 15 (March-April) but the main sanctity is attached to the night between 14th and 15th of the dark half of the lunar month. If the *amavas* occurs on Monday in *Chaitra* month, it is regarded more auspicious. People from far off places attend the fair to take holy dip in the sacred Saraswati river which is regarded as river of knowledge. The last rites of those persons who die an abnormal death due to some accident, disease and the like are performed here. It is believed that the departed ones whose spirits are not at peace get *mukti* (salvation) if necessary religious ceremonies are performed at this place.

Nothing certain is known about the age of the fair but its origin is traced back to the ancient times of Raja Prithu who is said to have founded the town. The fair is largely attended by Hindus and Sikhs. Pilgrims take bath in the river and then offer *pindas* in the name of their ancestors. Charity is given to Brahmans. Touring talkies, circus shows and magic shows provide good entertainment to the visitors. Government makes elaborate arrangements for the fair. A large number of shops and stalls are established during the fair.

Baisakhi.- It is a seasonal and religious festival of great significance and is celebrated both by Hindus and Sikhs on first of *Vaisakha* (April 13) every year. A big fair is held on the occasion at village Dayalpur (teshil Thanesar) and is attended by thousands of persons. The legend goes that it was here on this day that Arjuna shot an arrow into the earth and the water of the Ganga gushed forth. Thus, Bhishma took water and quenched his thirst during the war while lying on the arrow cot. The pond is known as *Ban Ganga* and pilgrims take bath in this pond on the occasion.

Vamana Dwadshi.- The festival is dedicated to Vamana, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It falls on *Bhadra* 12(August-September). In the Hindu scriptures, this day has been described as of great

significance and those who observe fast on this day after bath in the holy rivers and tanks and give charities to Brahmins, ensure a seat in heaven.

Legend has it that Vamana was born a dwarf to Kashyap Rishi and his virtuous wife Aditi. He appeared before King Bali in the garb of a Brahman mendicant and begged a piece of land measuring his three steps, which he needed to conduct studies of the holy Vedas. King Bali readily agreed to this request. The legend goes on to say that when the king asked Vamana to demarcate the plot which he wanted to have, the latter then assumed a gigantic form and compassed the whole earth with one step and in the next, compassed the heavenly regions. He then asked Bali where he could put the third step. Bali offered his head to receive the third step. Thereupon, Vamana hurled Bali with weight of his foot into *Patala*. At the same time, pleased with this exemplary magnanimity of Bali, he promised to guard him against all adversities.

Vamana Dwadhsi is celebrated with special fervor and enthusiasm in Thanesar and Ladwa. To mark the occasion, fairs are held at both these places.

At Thanesar, Palanquins carrying the images of Vamana are taken through the bazaars in procession, generally headed by band and *Gatka* and singing parties. A fair is held on the banks of Sannihit Sarovar and is attended by a large number of devotees from Thanesar and adjoining villages. People take dip in the holy tank.

At Ladwa, the procession carrying the Palanquins passes through the town which crosses Rama Kund in a boat. The fair held on the occasion is largely attended.

Makar Sankranti.- Makar Sankranti, the day the sun starts taking a northerly course on entering the sign of Makar or Capricorn, is considered very auspicious both by Hindus and Sikhs. According to a legend, it also happens to be the day on which Bhisma, the octogenarian leader of the forces of Kauravas, emancipated his soul from the bondage of the body by a conscious act of his will, after discoursing for many days on the mysteries of life and death as he lay wounded on the battle field pierced by innumerable arrows.

On the occasion, a fair is held at Kurukshetra which is attended by thousands of devotees. A bath in the holy tanks on this occasion has special significance for Hindus.

Somavati Amavas Fair.- A big fair is held at Kurukshetra on the day of *amavas* (moonless night) which falls on Monday. It is attended by nearly one lakh devotees from far and wide. Pilgrims take bath in the holy Brahmasarover and Sannihit tanks and give alms and charities.

SOCIAL LIFE

Social Group

The doctrine of caste system by Manu still dominates the society. The important social groups are Rors, Sainis, Bhrahmans, Jats, Gujjars, Rajputs, Khattris & Aroras, Aggarwals, Kumhars, Khatis, Lohars, Jhiwars, Chamars, Balmikis, etc. By and large, Jats, Sainis, Gujjars and Rors are the cultivators concentrated in rural areas. The business communities such as Banias and Arora/Khattris are settled in the towns. Aroras/Khattris are displaced persons from Pakistan and have settled in the district after partition in 1947. The socially and economically backward classes comprise of Khatis, Kumhars, Lohars and are known as village artisans. Balmikis, Chamars, Dhanak, etc. comprise Scheduled Castes. The caste as a whole is strictly endogamous, but every caste is divided into *gotras* and these *gotras* are exogamous. Every caste has its own *biradari*. The following description gives an idea about each caste:-

Rors.- Most of Rors trace their origin from the neighbourhood of village Badli in Jhajjar district and genetically they claim to be Tanwar Rajputs¹. Most of them are engaged in agriculture. They are peace loving and are good cultivators. Educationally, they are coming forward and are joining civil services. Having good physique, they are also taken in defence services.

Sainis. Sainis belong to Hindu community as well as Sikh community. They are mostly concentrated in Thanesar tehsil and are engaged in agriculture and prefer vegetable cultivation and fruit gardening. They have also come out of their traditional profession and have joined services and trade also.

¹ Karnal District Gazetteer 1918, p. 96.

Brahmans. Brahmans in Kurukshetra district are divided into three groups i.e. Gaur, Saraswat and Acharya. Gaurs are mostly cultivators and have abandoned priestly profession. Saraswats are engaged in business, agriculture and services, some attend to the priestly work. Acharya Brahmans are connected with only death ceremonies and they are well versed in astrology and palmistry. They earn their livelihood by practicing astrology. The Brahmans are well educated and have joined services.

Jats.- Jats are an important social group of the district. They are good cultivators and are engaged in agriculture. But with the spread of education, many of them have also joined Government service and defence forces. The Jats of the district are Hindus as well as Sikhs. Most of the Jat Sikhs settled in the district after partition and some during early fifties when barren land was reclaimed for cultivation.

Gujjars.- They claim their descent from the Rajputs and are mostly concentrated in the rural areas of Pehowa sub division. Generally of good physique, they devote most of their energies in cattle keeping. Earlier known as indifferent cultivators, they are now taking interest in agriculture and have proved good cultivators. Due to lack of education, they have not been able to make much inroads in other areas.

Rajputs.- They are fine stalwarts and prefer to join defence services than others. They are also taking to agriculture. Most of the Rajput women are still confined to homes as they observe *pardah*.

Khattris/aroras.- These main castes of non-cultivators, migrated to the district from West Punjab(Pakistan) in the wake of partition in 1947. Though most of them have settled in urban areas, some of them have also settled in rural areas. Both these communities are known for their business acumen. Educationally they are very forward and have entered into all professions, but are most successful in business and services. By dint of their hard work, intelligence and enterprising spirit, they have carved a comfortable place for themselves in the local society.

Aggarwals or banias.- They trace their origin to Maharaja Agarsen whose capital was at Agroha in Hisar district. Most of them are traditionally engaged in trade and industry. They are well educated

and peace loving. They have also switched over to other professions with great success.

Kumhars.- Kumhar is an occupational term connected with pottery. They are scattered all over the district and are generally found in every village. They make earthen pots used in the homes. In towns, they make earthen decoration pieces. They also keep donkeys for carrying soil for building work. But now this job has been completely discouraged due to availability of light and heavy earthmoving machinery. They are also good cultivators. They used to take a certain share of farm produce. This practice is still prevalent in many villages.

Khatis.- The term Khatis is the name of carpenter's occupation. They trace their origin to Brahmans and call themselves as Jangra Brahmans. Khatis prepare wooden agricultural implements and furniture. In towns, technically trained Khatis usually make furniture of fine quality. They also cultivate the land and are good cultivators. They used to take a certain part of the farm produce but this practice is now withering away. They have also shifted to other professions.

Lohars.- Lohar is also an occupational term. They are scattered all over the district. They do blacksmith's work for the villagers. But now they are no more confined to their traditional profession and have shifted to services also.

Jhinwars.- They are small in number and are scattered throughout the district. Every village generally has 2 to 3 houses of Jhinwars. They generally used to draw water from the well, but with the introduction of piped water supply schemes, they have become agricultural labourers.

Scheduled castes and backward classes.- The number of persons in the district belonging to Scheduled Castes¹ according to 2001 Census was 1,69,394 (90,196 males and 79,198 females) which formed 20.52 percent of the total population. Out of this, 80,248 (50,064 males and 30,184 females) were literate and formed 59.64 percent of the total population as against the state's total literacy of 55.45 percent. It shows that after independence, things have completely changed. Spread of education brought social and political consciousness among them. They are no more confined to their

¹ Castes defined in the Schedule of Article 341 of the Constitution of India.

traditional profession but have shifted to agriculture and services as well. This community has taken full advantage of the various Government Schemes. They are engaged in trade, commerce, industry, private and Government services. As a result of that, there has been considerable improvement in their social and economic conditions. A list of their castes have been given in Chapter XVII-Other Social Services.

Kambojs.- They have migrated from Pakistan during partition of the country. They are mostly agriculturists but now are gradually shifting to trade and services.

Inter caste relations

As in other parts of the country, inter caste relations were very rigid a generation ago. The members of different castes and sub castes lived in close water tight compartments in such manners as inter dining and inter caste marriages. The picture has greatly changed especially after independence and the changes that have occurred in recent times are noteworthy. Inter dining is no longer looked down upon by Hindus anywhere in the district particularly in urban areas, though this restriction still persists in a diluted form in rural areas. Inter caste marriages, though not very common, are more frequent than ever before. Many of the traditional restrictions on marriage based on caste are gradually disappearing as a result of spread of education, influence of western culture, equality of sexes and consequent removal of disabilities from which women suffered in the past.

Joint family system

The joint family system, a distinguished feature of the Hindu society, has been in vogue in the district since time immemorial. The most important characteristic of the joint family system is that the income of all its members is pooled and spent for the benefit of all members, whether they have actually earned or not. The basis for the system is to ensure maintenance of all descendents from a common ancestor, father or grandfather or great grandfather, the widows or orphans, the children, young boys and girls and elderly or descript or physically incapacitated member of the family. All receive the attention of the head of the family and are supported and maintained

out of the joint family funds. It offers a unique system of social security.

But with the passage of time, the bonds of joint family system have begun to loosen and the desire for individual freedom and living has necessitated a change in the concept of the family as an economic unit. The individualistic tendency of the male members of the joint family and the inability of the female members to live under the same roof, desire to be free from the control and clutches of the elders and financial matters, availability of salaried jobs elsewhere, etc. are some of the common reasons for the break-up of many joint families. Thus, conditions of modern living and the pattern of present day economy are also, to a large extent, responsible for its decline. With the spread of industrialization and increasing pressure on land, village people have moved to towns to secure gainful employment. A large number of joint families have thus begun to disintegrate and the old social order characterized by the Joint family system has been undermined under the stress of modern economic conditions and way of life. The individualistic tendencies are gaining ground day by day and the former ties which bound the family together are gradually disintegrating. This has also resulted in bifurcation of land holdings thereby decreasing the number of big land holders and increasing the number of marginal and small farmers. Younger members of the family prefer to live separate rather than continue joint and are particular about their own needs and comforts in preference to those of other members of their family.

Inheritance

In the past, inheritance of property was regularized by uncodified Hindu Law which was largely based on customs and precedents. After the father's death, all his property was equally divided among his sons. In case sons were minors, the property went to the widow who became a Trustee till the sons attained majority when the property was divided equally amongst them. In the absence of any male issue, the property was inherited by the widow who could enjoy it till her death or till she re-married, but she had no right to it. In case the wife was already dead and there was no male issue either, the brothers of the deceased inherited the property. In the absence of all the above mentioned relatives, the property was inherited by the

nearest male relative. Daughters -whether married or not, had no share in the property.

Now as regard inheritance and succession, the Hindus, Sikhs and the Jains are governed by the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which provides for a uniform system with respect to intestate succession. Muslims are governed by the Shariat Act 1937. Under Islamic Law, the sons, daughters and wife inherit the property of the deceased. The wife is the sole owner of *mehr* given to her at the time of marriage. Inheritance among Christians is governed by the Christian Succession Act, 1925.

Salient feature of Hindu Succession Act, 1956 is that it removes inequality between men and women. According to it, sons and daughters, the mother and the widow alongwith other heirs¹ of the deceased, inherit the intestate property simultaneously. A daughter has as good claim to her property as a son, provided the father does not debar her by law (in case of his self-acquired property only). However, inspite of the right conferred by law, it appears to have become a general practice for the girls not to claim any part of the intestate property. In the absence of a brother a girl may sometime give her land to her near relatives though, in such cases, she usually retains her right to property.

Marriage customs

The marriage among the Hindus is based upon the Vedic system of marriage. It is treated as sacred and is governed by traditional customs. Marriages are usually arranged by parents or guardians. Particulars about ancestry, social status, economic security, cultural standard, appearance, health, lineage, etc. are always carefully scrutinized. The marriage among Hindus is monogamous. Polygamy is illegal according to Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Marriage among same *gotra* (lineage) is prohibited. The same *gotra* implies *gotra* of father, mother and grandmother. Marriage with maternal uncle's son or daughter is also prohibited. But Aroras from West Punjab do not strictly follow this rule. This could be because of Muslim influence. Inter caste and inter sub caste marriages are generally not tolerated.

¹ Specified in clause 1 of the Schedule vide Section 8 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

However, of late, intercaste marriages among the educated persons are taking place, though on a small-scale.

The marriage ceremony is the most significant event in one's life and undergoes through various rituals. Most important among marriage rituals observed by Hindus are as follows:-

Sagai (Betrothal).- *Sagai* is the most important preliminary ceremony involved with marriage. In the past, it was settled through the institution of family Barber but now it is settled either through relatives or close friends. When the father of a girl wishes to betroth her, he makes enquiry for a marriageable boy of reputed family. Generally, horoscopes of the boy and the girl are matched so as to ensure compatibility. Earlier, the boy and the girl never got the chance to meet each other before marriage. Selection of appropriate match was the sole responsibility of the parents. But now the practice of the boy approving the girl himself, particularly in urban areas, is gaining ground. When everything is settled, the *sagai* ceremony is performed at boy's house with religious and social celebrations. On the appointed day, the father of the girl accompanied with his relatives goes to the boy's house with sweets and other gifts. In a simple ceremony, he applies *tilak* on the forehead of the boy and offers some money to the boy and his near relatives. Generally, sweets, fruits, cash and other gifts are presented by the girl's father to the boy on this occasion depending upon his economic and social status. Likewise, a makeup kit consisting of *bindi*, *sindoor* and glass bangles etc. alongwith some sweets is sent for the girl as a token of *sagai* from the boy's side which are offered to the girl by the elderly ladies of her family and sweets are then distributed. This gives a signal to the relatives and the villagers with regard to the engagement of the girl. This system is prevalent in the villages because they do not want to put unnecessary financial burden over the girl's parents. However in educated families settled in the cities, the ladies from the boy's side visit the home of the girl and perform this ceremony in person. This ceremony is called *Maangbharai*. On return, they are offered gifts consisting of clothes and cash as a token of *shagun*.

Marriage preliminaries.- *Sagai* is followed by other marriage preliminaries. The date of marriage is fixed after consulting the priest. The intimation of the proposed date of marriage is sent to the boy's

father through a letter which is sprinkled with turmeric paste requesting him to come with marriage party on the appointed day.

Mandha ceremony is performed by the maternal uncle one day before the date fixed for the departure of *baraat* in case of the bridegroom and the day on which the wedding party reaches, in case of the bride. Seven reeds put together are tied with seven knots of *munj* rope. A piece of red string then taken and seven *thusthis* with *sohelis* or *suparis* are string thereon. This string is tied to the middle of the reeds which are then fastened to a door or lintel. Maternal uncle in each case performs this ceremony and also brings *bhaat* which consists of presents and necessarily includes wedding suit for the bride or bridegroom. Prior to this *chak puja* is performed in the villages. Amongst Brahamans, sacred thread (*Janaeu*) ceremony is performed before *mandha*.

Wedding.- At the auspicious time fixed for marriage, the bridegroom is dressed in his wedding suit and *kangna* or seven knotted sacred thread is tied on his wrist. His head dress consists of a crown or a crest over the turban and a *sehra* covering the face. The wife of elder brother (*Bhabhi*) of the bridegroom also applies *kajal* in his eyes for which she is given *shagun* by the father of the bridegroom. After this, *ghurchari* ceremony is performed. The mare is fed with *Dal Chana*. The *Barbar* thereafter leads the decorated mare with the bridegroom on its back, while women follow along singing customary songs befitting the occasion and the mother or aunt or an elderly woman with a utensil containing water. His sister puts her wrap over her right hand, and on it places rice which she filings at his crown as the bridegroom goes along. He goes and worships God of the homestead (*Khera*) and other deities. Thereafter, the *baraat*, usually comprising the relatives and friends, starts with music. In case the *baraat* is to go at a distant outstation, then the *ghurchari* is performed a day earlier. In that eventuality, the bridegroom does not come back home and stays/sleeps elsewhere.

If both the parties reside in the same place which frequently happens in a town, no arrangements for the residence of the *baraat* are necessarily made. If, on the other hand, the *baraat* comes from an outstation, it is received by the bride's side usually at the pre-fixed venue, in the case of a town or on the outskirts of the village from

where the party is taken, sometimes in procession, to a *dharamsala*, or a *chaupal* or any other place where arrangements have been made for the *baraat* to stay and to be entertained. The mother of bride and other close relative women folks who observe fast on the marriage day, then go to the place of stay of the *baraat* and offer a glass of milk to the bridegroom and thereafter they only break their fast by consuming some fruits, a cup of tea or milk. In the evening, the *baraat* goes in procession, the boy on a mare or a decorated chariot to the bride's side. The first ceremony to be performed is called *dhukao* or *milni* when the boy's father and the girl's father embrace each other and the latter gives a monetary gift to the former. The women-folk along with bride wait at the door and *jaimala* is put by the bride around the neck of the bridegroom and vice versa. The *baraatis* are then entertained to a sumptuous dinner with merriment and festivity.

Marriage ceremony takes place in the courtyard or the compound where a temporary structure called *mandap* is erected. After the ceremonies at the door, the bridegroom is conducted into the house and taken to the *mandap*. The holy fire is kindled symbolically as a divine witness to the nuptial ceremony and also as its sanctifier. The bridegroom offers oblations with the bride grasping her hand that makes the offering. Then the *agniparinayan* ceremony is performed which means walking round the sacred nuptial amidst the chanting of hymns by the priest and singing of songs by the women folks present there. In the local dialect, this ceremony is known as *Phera*. *Phera* is now recognized as one of the essential ceremonies under the Hindu Marriage Act. The couple goes round the sacred fire seven times. This is followed by the *saptapadi* (seven steps) ceremony which marks the last ritual of wedding, which is considered final and bindings thereafter. After this the Brahman formally asks each whether he or she accepts the other and is ready to perform duties towards each other. The bridegroom and bride then exchange places. Then follows the *Kanyadhan*, the so-called formal bride-giving ceremony. The parents thus give away their daughter in marriage and usher her into the new world of *grihastha*. The women folks thereafter break their fast.

The marriage ceremony is very colourful and picturesque. There may, however, be noticed minor variations among certain castes in the performance and observance of these ceremonies. Notwith-

standing legislations against dowry, it remains an integral part of Indian marriage system. Bride's father presents cash, jewellery, costly clothes, utensils, furniture and other household items to bridegroom's father as dowry as per his free will.

Previously, the *baraat* used to stay at the bride's place for two to three days but things have changed now under the stress of economic forces. Now the *baraat* returns the same or next day. The bride's maternal uncle escorts the girl, followed by women singing, to the *doli*-usually a bus, car or a jeep in which she is to travel. The bride follows the bridegroom during this short walk. A few small coins are thrown over the heads of the couple as a mark of good wishes and the procession starts back for home. This ceremony is called *vidai* and generally takes place in the very early hours of morning. Earlier, marriages among Hindus were generally performed at night but of late, day marriages are also becoming popular.

Marriage among Sikhs is performed according to Anand Karaj Act, 1909. The distinction between the Anand Karaj and Vedic marriage is that in the former the bride and bridegroom instead of going round the sacred fire, go round the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. Anand Karaj is performed during day time (mostly on Sunday). Other marriage rituals are almost identical with that of Hindus. The ceremony of *ghurchari* is also performed. When the *baraat* reaches the bride's place, *milni* takes place and then *Jaimala* ceremony. After a brief shabad kirtan, the *Granthi* (Sikh Priest) reads the hymns from Guru Granth Sahib and the couple walks round the Guru Granth Sahib four times. The farewell ceremony is called *doli* after which the *baraat* returns with the bride.

Marriage among the Muslims is a mutual contract and is called *Nikah*. It is generally arranged by parents of the girl and the boy through negotiations. The amount of *mehr*, which is explicitly the property of the bride, is settled. After the betrothal takes place at the bride's residence, the date of marriage is settled. The marriage party proceeds to the bride's house where it is treated with special feast and *nikah* is performed. In the case of Sunni Muslims, the *Vakil* (agent) of the bride obtains her consent in the presence of two witnesses and conveys it to the *Vakil* of the bridegroom who sanctifies the *nikah*. Among the Shia Muslims, consent is taken at the first instance.

Among the Christians, marriage is solemnized in the Church by the priest. Before the marriage ceremony, bride and the bridegroom are baptized by the priest. After the ceremony, the friends and relatives are served with a feast.

The Jains perform their marriages according to Vedic traditions and other marriage rituals which are also the same as prevalent among Hindus.

Recent Trends.- With the spread of education, social legislation and high cost of living, the social outlook of the people on marriages has undergone a change in recent times. A number of undesirable social customs which were strictly observed in the past have lost their significance under the changed circumstances. The practice of child marriage, which was common in former times, has almost disappeared and the age of marriage has substantially advanced both in case of males and females. In the case of males the age has gone normally beyond 21 years and in the case of females beyond 18 due to strict enforcement of the provisions of the Child Marriage Restraint Act. Thus the olden days *muklawa* ceremony has now completely disappeared. Civil marriages, which were unknown in the past, are nowadays on the increase. Inter-caste and in inter-religion marriages have also started taking place among the younger generations especially in urban areas. Bigamy is now prohibited by law and is punishable u/s 494 of the IPC.

As marriage among Hindus is considered sacred and irrevocable, divorce was unheard in the past. There was a general tendency to prefer a miserable life than to dissolve the marriage. With the spread of education, change in social values and the enactment of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, divorce is no more a taboo. According to this act divorce is now permitted among all classes of Hindus under stipulated conditions and by mutual consent through the Court. The increase in the number of divorce cases in the last few years has given rise to new social problems, unheard earlier.

Widow marriage

In the past also widow marriage has been prevalent in all communities except Brahmans, Rajputs, Khattris/Aroras and Banias. But because of social reform movement launched by Arya Samaj and

other social organizations, there has been sea change in the attitude of these communities towards widow marriage also. It is no more a taboo among them now.

Karewa.- A simple sort of marriage for widow has been prevalent particularly in rural areas. It is also prevalent among Jat Sikhs. No compulsion is exercised on the widow for re-marriage. If she wishes to remain in the same family and there is a younger brother of the deceased husband, she is given liberty to marry him if he is willing to accept her. In such a case, no regular ceremony takes place, the widow is simply covered by the man with a sheet of cloth in the presence of near relations. The father of the widow gives one rupee to the brother of the daughter's deceased husband as a mark of giving the daughter to him.

Punar Vivah is more common than *Kareva* among Rajputs, Brahmans and Banias. When none of the brother of the deceased accept their sister-in-law as wife, *Punar Vivah* is performed anywhere in their caste. 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.

Karao is another form of widow marriage. It is a marriage of a widow outside her husband's clan and no ceremony attached to it. A woman marriage by *Karao* is socially looked down upon.

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

The system of widow marriage is also prevalent among Sikhs and Christians.

Position of women

Women occupied a high position in the Hindu Society since the ancient times. Lord Manu had declared that Gods reside in those houses where women are respected. The husband who cast off his wife was punished by the king. The wife likewise, was supposed to worship her husband as God and to remain faithful to him. On the whole, women enjoyed high status in the society.

The position of woman, however, declined after onslaught of Muslim invaders during medieval period when seclusion or *pardah* came in vogue as a measure of safety and protection of females. The practice continued thereafter. Their seclusion was stricter in villages than in towns.

But with the spread of western education and particularly opening of a multi-faculty university at Kurukshetra and concerted efforts made by religious reformist movements like Arya Samaj and other social organizations, the status of women has undergone sea change in the district. Women are now no more confined to homes. The society has gradually discarded many prejudices against women. *Purdah* is on the wane particularly in urban areas, where educated and serving women have almost discarded it. The medieval concept of a woman being nothing more than a housewife or at best an ornamental being has undergone a revolutionary change and today women are successfully invading what were earlier exclusively men's domains. More and more women are now joining services. With economic independence, serving women have acquired new confidence. Undoubtedly, women in urban areas enjoy better status than their counterparts in villages, where certain age long social prejudices against women still exist.

Certain legislative measures undertaken by the Government of India also played an important role in bringing new awakening among women and in ameliorating their lots. Hindu Marriage Act not only prohibited polygamy but granted the right of divorce to women as well. With the passage of Hindu Succession Act, 1956, women were put on equal footing with the men with regard to inheritance rights.

Other customs and rituals

The customs and rituals are integral parts of cultural life of the people of the district, as Hindu way of life is fraught with many *sanskaras* and rituals. Though some of the customs and rituals have got worn out in the course of time but various castes and sub-castes continue to observe many customs and rituals. There may be minor variations among different castes in observance of these rituals but essence remains the same. Some of the important customs connected with birth and death and as observed in the district are described here.

Birth Ceremonies.- Among the Hindus, the birth ceremonies start even before the birth of a child. When the mother conceives, she is served gifts amid rejoice by relations and neighbours. The birth of the child is announced by *dai* (midwife) to the members of the family. In case of a male child, she hangs some branches of mango leaves at the top of the outer door of the house. Then *chuchak dhuwai* (washing the mother's nipples) is generally performed by the sister-in-law of the women. She washes her nipples with warm water and received monetary gifts or some golden ornaments. After this ceremony, breast feeding starts. The parents of the *jacha* (mother of the baby) are informed immediately. They send ghee, gifts, ornaments, clothes, etc. for their daughter and her new born baby. The senior most member in the family, usually the father-in-law or the father, consults the priest of the time of the birth is suspicious. If it is not, *upai* (an expiatory ceremony) is held. If the child is declared as *gand mool* (born under the bad influence of stars), the necessary remedies are observed by the parents of the child. For a period of 40 days after the delivery, the mother remains confined to the house, as the period is called *sutak*.

On the sixth day, *Chhatti* ceremony is performed when all the members of the family keep awake throughout night. It is generally believed that the Goddess of fate writes the fate of the new born baby on this night. On the tenth day, *havan* is performed for purification of the house. *Ganga Jal* (sacred water of the river Ganga) is sprinkled in the house. The child is often named on this day. The Brahman suggests the name. The name of the child as proposed by Brahman was almost final in the past but it is not necessarily binding these days. However, some parents still prefer to stick to the initial word suggested by the family priest.

Among Aroras, the *Chola* is an important ceremony which is performed on the 15th or 17 day of the newly born son when new clothes consecrated by the priest are worn. A feast is arranged for relatives and friends. The *mudan* ceremony of male child is performed between the ages of 3 to 5 years. On this occasion also a feast is arranged for relatives and friends.

Among Sikhs, on the 10th day, the child and mother are bathed and *path* of the *Granth Sahib* is performed on the day. The child is named on this day. The *Granth* is opened at random and first letter of

the *bani* at which the *Granth* opens, gives the first letter of the child name. Sikhs do not perform *mundan* ceremony. Instead of *mundan*, they perform *kesi dahi* ceremony by putting curd in the hairs of the boy. When the boy grows younger with long hairs and is in a position to tie a *pugree*, the ceremony of *dastarbandi* is performed. The distinct relatives and friends attend this ceremony and bring choicest gifts and *shagun*. The guests are entertained with festivity.

Among the Muslims, on the birth of a male child, the Maulvi visits the house of the new born on any of the first three days following the birth and reads the *kalma* (holy words) in the child's ear. On the sixth day, the mother is bathed and sweetened rice are distributed. The child is named on 40th day by opening the *Koran Sharif*. *Sunnat* (circumcision) is an important ceremony among Muslims. It is performed at any time before the age of 12 in the presence of *biradari*.

A child born in a Christian family is christened by the Church priest and this ceremony is called baptism. The mother observes no period of impurity.

Death Customs.- The Hindus cremate the dead body. The dead body after giving a final bath and then wrapped in a white cloth called "Kafan" and women put *dushalas* or sarees, on bier and 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. The eldest son lits the pyre amid chanting of hymns. As 40 *Kos* area around kurukshetra is considered sacred, *phul* (last remains) of the persons who die at Kurukshetra or area around it are not immersed at Haridwar but are thrown into one of the sacred tanks. 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. Children below 8 years of age are buried without ceremony.

Sikhs also cremate the dead body. Most of the customs are almost the same as observed by Hindus. Cremation is performed by a Granthi. Sikhs end the mourning with Bhog ceremony.

Like Hindus and Sikhs, Jains also cremate their dead body and the last rites are performed by the priest.

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.

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.

HOME LIFE

Dwellings.- Housing pattern in the district has undergone changes in the last few decades. Better economic conditions, spread of education and growing outlook for better sanitation and health facilities have brought about a change in the attitude of the people towards housing.

Previously, most of the houses in the villages used to be *Kacha*. The walls of these houses were made of mud or clods of dry earth. The roof of the house was also of mud. The houses were single storeyed and there was hardly any provision for separate kitchen, bathroom or latrine. Very little care was taken about proper lighting and cross-ventilation due to restrictions of opening of windows towards other sides, barring common streets.

Over the past-few years *kacha* houses in the villages are being rapidly replaced by *pucca* houses. Though most of the houses still do not have provision for latrine, but some well-to-do families have built modern houses with a kitchen, bathroom and latrine. Special care is taken about the ventilation and lighting. Most of the houses have now provision for separate cattle shed. Now double storeyed houses are also being built in the villages. Some people have also constructed farm houses. However, still most of the houses are constructed without any proper architectural designs as these do not require any approval from the Authorities. Now the Government is encouraging

the inhabitants to make provisions for flush latrines in their houses to improve sanitary conditions, to provide security to the women and provides construction material/subsidy under its Rural Sanitation Programmes.

A house in a village consists of one to four rooms. The outdoor room or *baithak* is used as a drawing room for the family and elderly male members of the family sit here. It also serves as a sort of guest room. Between the *baithak* and the main house is the courtyard for multi-purpose use. The main house has one or two rooms with the opening towards courtyard. The kitchen is in the corner where *chullah* and *hara* are placed for cooking food. Double-storeyed houses have *chabutra* upstairs. Now all houses in the villages are electrified and most of the houses also have the facility of piped water-supply.

The dwellings in the urban areas are all pucca and mostly double-storeyed. The newly constructed houses of well-to-do families are built on the basis of modern architecture and are well designed. These houses are properly ventilated and well lighted. Almost all houses in urban areas have separate kitchen, bathroom and toilet. With the introduction of sewerage system in all the towns of the district, a number of houses in the town have now flush type latrines. All houses are provided with piped water-supply. Number of new colonies with modern type houses have also come up in towns. Haryana Urban Development Authority and Haryana Housing Board have also helped in development of modern housing colonies at Thanesar and Shahabad where modern type of houses have been built. The modern type of houses have a drawing-cum-dining room, a kitchen, bed rooms, one store/pooja room, bathroom, latrine and verandah. These houses have open space in the front and a courtyard in the back with facility of parking for vehicles. Since there is enough scope for the Govt. Housing Agencies in the district, private builders and colonizers have not made any inroads in this field.

Furniture and Decorations.- There was nothing specific to mention about the furniture available in the house of a common person until recently. Life was very simple and one could only notice a few 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*) in the name of furniture in ordinary houses. Very few persons kept some chairs or tables in their homes.

But with the passage of time, the inside appearance of a house has undergone sea changes. The influence of western ideas and improvement in the economic condition of the people in general have brought about a revolutionary change in the concept of furniture. Modern furniture items like sofa-sets, chairs, dining tables, double beds, dressing tables, etc. have become very popular, particularly in urban areas, while traditional furniture items are becoming extinct day by day. Rich and middle class both in urban and rural areas decorate their houses with modern furniture. Certain well-to-do families decorate their house very tastefully with the help of carpets, curtains, decorative wall hangings, paintings, decoration pieces, picture of National Heroes, Gods and Goddesses and portraits of their forefathers.

Modern electrical and electronic items like refrigerators, television, fans, coolers, washing machines, mixers, grinders etc. are increasingly becoming popular with the people. In preference to radio/transistor which were found in almost all houses earlier, now even poorer sections of the society are eager to install TV sets in their homes. The demand for VCD/DVD has increased among urban affluent in the last few years. Of late, cable/Dish T.V. network has appeared in urban areas in a big way and a large number of families have got connections of the same. Due to persistent and long-lasting summer season most of well-to-do-families have installed air-conditioners in their houses.

Though general prosperity has brought urban and rural life closer in respect of facilities and way of life but poorer sections of the society are still deprived of facilities of owning modern furniture or other items like refrigerators, televisions, etc.

Utensils

The excavations carried out at various archaeological sites in the district give details about the pottery of different types used in the district during the ancient period. This reveals that earthen vessels were the first domestic utensils. With the passage of time, the quality of pottery improved. Regarding cooking appliances used, Bana gives a

list which includes waterpots, cups, fire-trays, oven, simmering pans, copper sauce pans, frying pans and oven¹.

The domestic utensils in use during the beginning of the 20th century were both of metals as well as clay. The metal vessels consisted of large narrow-mouth cauldrons (*tokna, tokni*) for storing the water in and cooking at feasts, smaller vessels of similar shapes (*balti*) for ordinary cooking and carrying water to the fields, still smaller ones (*lota, gadwa, banta*) for dipping into water and drinking from: some cups (*sarda*) without handles; some tumbler-shaped drinking vessels (*gilas*); a broad shallow bowl or saucer (*Katora bela*) for drinking hot liquids; a large tray (*thali*), a larger tray for kneading dough in (*parat*); a ladle (*karchi*); a spatula for turning bread (*Koncha, Palta, Khurchna*); a thin iron plate (*tava*) for baking cakes and some pairs of iron tongs (*Chimta*), a fry-pan (*karai*) and a sieve (*Chhalni*), both of iron; and an iron bucket (*dol*) for drawing water from well. The Hindu's utensils were made of brass and perhaps a few of bell-metal (*kansi*); while the Muhammadans substituted copper for brass.

The traditional utensils are still in vogue but wares of stainless steel, aluminium, non-stick cookwares, porcelain and glass have found a place according to social status and tastes. Generally heavy utensils find less favour these days. There is sea-change in the articles of the kitchen. Oil stoves, L.P.G. gas, pressure cookers mixers, are very common. Plastic has also revolutionized the articles of daily use. Tea sets, dining sets, etc. have become common gift items. Even the refrigerator is considered as an essential item of kitchen. Thus modernization has brought a welcome change in the use of utensils and other kitchen articles.

Dress

By and large, the dress of the people in the district is simple. In rural areas, men wear shirt or *Kurta, dhoti, tehad* or *tamba* and a pair of shoes. In the past, almost all men used to wear headwear called *pagri*. But with the spread of education, younger generation has almost discarded it and only few elder people wear it and that too on some ceremonial occasions. Sikhs as per their religious traditions wear headwear called *pag*, some using it in unmindful way while the other

¹ Harsacharita, translated by E.B. Cowell and F.W. Thomas, p.262.

wear it property bleached and fashioned. A *chaddar*, *khes* or blanket in cold weather is used as wrap. In urban areas men wear shirt-pants and *Kurta-Payjamas* and very few men wear *dhoti*. People both in urban and rural areas wear woolen sweaters and coats in winter. A complete suit of male clothes is called *jora*. Men in urban areas are more fashion conscious than their rural counterparts. Use of cotton clothes is on wane as now people prefer synthetic clothes.

As elsewhere, the female dress has changed considerably in the district particularly after independence. Spread of education has further brought about significant change in dress behaviour of females. Even in rural areas, women have discarded their traditional dress and switched over to *salwar*, *Kameez* or *jumper* and *chunni* or *dupatta* i.e. headwear. The women in urban areas wear *salwar-Kameez* and *Chunni* but have also started wearing sari and blouse. In winter they wear sweaters and shawls. *Chappals* both in urban and rural areas are common footwear. High heel sandals are also used in urban areas. One also finds college and school going girls and working women wearing well designed ready made clothes, as they are becoming more and more fashion conscious.

In the past, much care was not taken about the dress of the children. The boys used to wear *jhugga* (shirt) and *kachha* (underwear) and girls petticoat drawers. However, with the passage of time, there has been considerable change in the attitude of the people towards dresses of children. Now even in rural areas there is a craze to have readymade garments for the children. People in urban areas spend much on the dresses of their children.

Ornaments

To decorate and enhance beauty and forms, ornaments are used both by males and females from time immemorial. Used mainly for emphasizing one's outward appearance, ornaments have undergone changes from time to time according to prevailing fashion. The change is effected not only in their style or design but also in their size, shape, weight and contents. While the ornaments used in the past were generally simple, but were solid and heavy. Those in vogue at present are much lighter, refined and sophisticated in design. There is a tendency to use more and more light gold and silver ornaments in preference to heavy gold ornaments due to the high price of gold and

as a measure of economy. As in the past, ornaments still served both as decoration and investment and insurance against economic difficulties.

In the past, the most important pieces of jewellery which enhanced the beauty of the face were the ear-ornaments for which ears were to be bored. There were a large variety of ear-ornament and more than one type were worn at a time by people alongwith natural flowers and foliage arranged by the side of the ears. It is interesting to note that in ancient times males also decked their ears with ornaments. Harsha, in his *Ratnavali* referred to the *Karnabharana* or ear ornaments of the king. The most notable feature is that very often people used to wear an ornament on one ear only, leaving the other to be bare. In the works of Bana there is ample testimony to this particular and peculiar fashion. Another characteristic feature was the custom of wearing asymmetrical ear-ornaments. Rings (*Anguliyaka*) were generally worn to give a charming effect to fingers. Bana made mention of the signet ring of Brahma which resembled a duster of *kusa* grass¹.

Until recent past, women as well as men of all classes were found of ornaments. Men's jewelleary was confined only to a few parts of the body while the account of ladies ornaments was very long. The ornaments worn by men consisted of ear-rings (*gokhru*), bracelets made of a cylindrical bar of metal (*kangan, todar*); a single necklace or rosary containing beads (*mala*); a broad necklace made of chains (*kantla*) a locket (*Kanthi*); rings (*angunthi*). Boys often wore waist bands a silver chain (*tagri*). The most usually worn of the above were the ear-rings, single necklace with a small locket (often sacred to Shiva), and if a Headman, a ring with a seal in it.

Women wore a band of silver cowries going up the parting of the hair, and fastening to pins on the back (*yauri*); a frontlet on the forehead (*bindi*); plain ear-rings (*bujni*); ear rings on the top of the ear-with loops of chain(*bali*), nose rings (*nat, nath*) necklaces of 14 coins (of all rupees *Jhalra*, if one a gold *mohar, tinkawal*); bossed

¹ Harsacharita, translated by E.B. Cowell and F.W. Thomas, p.8.

armlets (*tad, tadia*); bracelets in the following order from the elbow to the wrists; *pachheli*; *chhan, kangni, chura*; a bread plate of silver chain (*dharu*); chains and bells fastened to the right-hand corner of *orhna* (*Palla*) bosses and chains fastened to the front of the *orhna* so as to fall over the face (*ghungat*): a silver tassel on the petticoat over the right hip (*nara*), a bunch of chains and tassels on the ankle (*pazeb*): solid anklets (*Nank*) of course, the varieties had innumerable names. A women's social standing was greatly determined by her jewellery. The nose ring, the plain armlet, and the *chura* or wristlet had a social signification. The armlets, bracelets and anklets being solid and not easy to get off were always worn, the rest only on special occasions such as fairs and the like. The ordinary investment for spare capital was to buy jewellery for one's wife, as the money could always be realized on occasion. As present jewellery in common use include necklace for neck, *purli* or *koka* for the nose, *pajeb* for the anklets, ear-rings, bangles or *Kara* on the wrists and a ring in the finger. Still there is social consideration for the jewellery, but the educated women generally do not use much jewellery except a chain round the neck and a few bangles on the wrists. A widow does not wear bangles of *lac* or glasses but use small jewellery. The full demonstration of jewellery can be seen on social gatherings like marriages etc. Otherwise its use is minimal. Due to fear of chains snatching, most of the women now prefer to wear artificial ornaments which otherwise have a better look and finishing in comparison to original ones.

Food

There has been a noticeable change in the food habits and diet of the people of the district in the last few decades. Low consumption of wheat, rice, vegetables and pulses and too much dependence on coarse grains were the peculiar features of diet in the past. Food was very simple and there was hardly any variety in it. Too much stress was laid on consumption of *desi ghee*, curd, milk and other milk products. With economic prosperity wheat, rice and vegetable are no more luxury. Spread of education has brought about a significant change in the attitude of the people towards fat rich diet. Change in the nature of occupations due to urbanization has also affected food

habits of the people and younger generation now prefer fast foods at eating joints.

The number of meals varies according to seasons and the nature of work done by the people. The breakfast in rural areas comprises of *chappati* or *parantha* with *lassi* or curd and morning and evening meals consists of *chappatis* of *makki*, wheat, or wheat and gram mixed. *Chappatis* of *makki* are preferred in winter. *Chappatis* are taken with *saag*, pulses, *karhi*, other vegetables and *lassi* (butter milk). Now rice is also eaten frequently. Salt, chilies and spices are used commonly. *Kheer*, *halwa* and other sweet dishes are prepared on festivals social gatherings. People in rural area still prefer *desi ghee* for preparing various dishes. But middle class and poorer sections mostly use vegetable oils. On the whole, people in rural areas take simple and rich diet and they are health-conscious.

Food habits of the urban people differ in some respects. The urbanites prefer wheat flour to other kind of flours. In the breakfast, vegetarians take stuffed *paranthas* with curd or pickles or bread-butter and non-vegetarians prefer boiled eggs/omelet. Some people also take *dalia*. In lunch and dinner people take *chappatis* of wheat flour and dishes of seasonal vegetables and pulses. Rice is also eaten very often. Use of *desi ghee* for preparing various dishes is on the wane. Instead, people prefer refined oils with low fat contents.

By and large people both in rural and urban areas are vegetarians but non-vegetarian food has started finding favour with the younger generation of all communities. Smoking is quite common in the district and traditional *hookah* is still prevalent in the villages.

In the past, various drinks both soft and alcoholic were consumed by the people. But milk and *lassi* were the most common and universal drinks. Butter milk was a popular and refreshing drink and the Harishcarita mentions about chilled butter milk as a soft drink.

Instead of milk, tea as a drink has become more popular both in urban and rural areas. Now tea stalls can be found in every town and all the big villages and even on the wayside. In summer months some people prefer to drink a glass of conventional cold drink i.e. *shikanjavi*, *sharbet* or *lassi*. Cane juice is also being used by all

sections of people. Soft drinks have also become popular and are often served to guests at social gatherings.

Though the overall development of the district has brought changes in the food habits, but certain food habits and social customs connected with it are still followed by people. The age-old custom of feeding guests with best available food in the house still continues. The kitchen is kept clean. The daily chores of village women are cleaning the kitchen with cow dung early in the morning before preparing the meals. Generally male members of the house take meal first and then followed by female members. However, in towns the younger generation prefers to take meal jointly with their family. The custom to remember God before taking meals continues in rural areas. Thus, village life still revolves round the old eating habits and social values. But western food habits and etiquettes have deeply influenced large sections of urban people and well- to-do families in rural areas.

COMMUNITY LIFE

As everywhere else, community life is somewhat more effectively organized in villages than in towns. A growing town cannot claim to be the nucleus of a single community. The various social and economic groups are more exclusive than inclusive. They do not come into such frequent contact with one another. Civic responsibilities, no doubt, are applicable to all, but these are not cohesive in their nature. And this is truer of an expanding town which sprawls over a large area. There is a growing tendency for voluntary social agencies to establish themselves in local areas or small towns and organize community life in some form or other. They also organize mass celebration of important festivals in their respective areas.

The social situation in villages is different. Big and small land-owners, agricultural labourers and other workers are not far apart from each other. The limited amenities and amusements of village life are equally shared by all of them and require their combined attention. The community development programmes have given a fillip to community activity of various kinds and the panchayats have also become a nucleus of community activities.

FOLK CULTURE

Folk culture is reflected in folk songs, dances and theatre. With fast changing conditions, urban life is slowly but surely making rural life taking away some of its inherent beauty and cultural an inroad into wealth. The gramophone is an onslaught on the song of the village life and the radio seeks to replace the group festival of folk songs and dances. However, folk culture still continues to enliven the countryside which hums with songs and dances on festivals and other numerous occasions. All India Radio is giving good attention to the revival of folk culture and broadcasts various Haryanvi programmes.

Folk Songs.- Folk culture is preserved by women through folk songs. They sing folk songs connected with various social, cultural and religious occasions. These songs express hopes aspirations, love longings, joys and sorrows of the people.

There is variety of folk songs, each connected with particular occasion. A good number of these are nature songs sung in particular months. The month of *Sravana* (July-August) brings ecstasy in its wake. The impact of the season on the emotional life is obvious. With the onset of black clouds of the monsoon raging torrential rains, love longings are evoked. When the sky is overcast with the hanging clouds, young women come out of their homes and get lost in the raptures and ecstasies of nature. *Teej* or *Haryali Teej* is the main festival of *Sravana*, falling on Sudi-3 (third of the lunar month). It is observed throughout Haryana. By this time the rains have started. On the day of *Teej*, the women come out of their homes in colourful costumes for enjoying a swing. While swinging they sing.-

Gagan bares chamke bijli re.
Paren bundiyan lagen pyari re,
Sawan barkha lage pyari re,
Kare gya bagh ka mali re
Lage qya amn ki dali re.

Love of brothers and sisters also becomes a keynote of the songs of *Teej*.

Neem ke nimoli lagi saman kad awega ?
Awe re meri ma ka jaya
Ke ke chiji lyavega....

At marriage, when the girl is taking *phas*, her married friends remind her of their own experience and advise her to walk slowly around the sacred fire for otherwise she will become a laughing stock among her friends by revealing her impatience.

The following few lines of a song beautifully depict this situation.-

Holi holi chal lado mahari

Tane hansengi sahelariyan

Ye moth se mat rare lado mahari..

Songs of *Jeeja-Sali* (brother-in-law and sister-in-law) are a peculiar feature of the culture of this region. Whenever the boy irrespective of his age, old, middle-aged and young goes to his in-laws to bring his wife, her sisters and friends joke and taunt him with songs. In the following lines the sisters and friends of the wife entreat her husband not to join service away from home for that would separate them from him and leave them forlorn.-

Hari hari baari main bathna bo diya

Bich main phool chameli ka

Nokari mat na javee pio jeeja

Ji na lage saali ka

Marriage is a special occasion when folk songs are sung on different ceremonies. The ladies receive maternal uncle with a song.-

Aaj mahilan mere beera unmani

Aaya meri maa ka jaaya beer,

Heeraband liyayh chundri....

The bride and bridegroom are taken to the God of homestead or shrine of Devi and ladies accompanying them sing the following song.-

Paanch patse pana ka beedle.

Le bhayan pe javo ji,

Jis daali mhara bhayan bethia

Wo daali jhirk javo ji

Folk Dance.- Folk dancing an outburst of surging emotions at times accompanies folk singing. Among the male folk-dances, *daph*-dance and *dhamal* dance are prevalent in the district. After harvesting, youth gather at night at the outskirts of the village and enjoy loud singing with *dhamal* and *daph* dances. *Daph*-dance is known for its vigour and fast movement. The dancing continues till late at night.

Famous among female folk dances is *ghumar*, in which the girls in group dance in a circle. In the following lines of a *ghumar* song, a bride asks for different gifts from her husband in exchange for love.-

Mera daman sima de ho ho nandi ke beera

Meri chundri manga de ho ho nandi ke beera.

Tanu Nyun ghughat main rakhu ho ho nandi ke beera...

Folk Talks.- The region is rich in legends and folk tales, many of which form the themes of folk theatre and the songs of village bards. The impact of folk tales on the social life of the people is manifest in the characters from the tales forming the motifs of temples and *chaupal*. Popular folk tales of the area are of Gopi Chand-Bharthri, Nal-Damayanti, Satyawati-Savitri, Puran Bhagat, Alha- Udal and the like.

Folk Theatre.- *Saang* is the main form of the folk theatre. It is very popular in the rural areas. The cinema has given great set back to *saangs*. The department of Youth Welfare Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra has got enough success to revive the traditional folk-theatre. The folk theatre is being made popular through colleges and schools. The theatre-artists are given incentives by the Cultural Affairs Department, Haryana.

GAMES AND RECREATION

Games and recreation have been common in the district from time immemorial. By and large, our social and cultural life was woven around numerous religious and social festivals throughout the year. These festivals were an important source of recreation for the masses. Besides, marriage ceremony or birth of a male child in a family was some of the other occasions on which festive atmosphere prevailed.

These occasions provided enjoyment and recreation for people of all age groups.

Games are another important source of recreation and enjoyment. There have been many traditional games in the district which were played by boys and girls and the young and old alike. Most of these games did not require much equipment. These games can be mainly grouped under outdoor and indoor games. Among the outdoor games, prominent ones were *Kabaddi*, wrestling, *gindo-khuli* and *gulli-danda*. *Chopar*, cards, and chess were some of the important indoor games which were played and enjoyed in urban as well as rural areas. The villagers playing *chopar* in the *chaupal* was a familiar sight.

Barring *Kabaddi* and wrestling, all have been invaded by modern games. Playing cards continues to be the most important indoor game. In the past few decades, modern games like hockey, cricket, football, volleyball and basketball have become popular particularly among students of urban areas. Volleyball is very popular in rural areas. Games like Kho-Kho and net ball are popular among girls. Various organizations organize regular tournaments to popularize modern games. Sports Department has also undertaken various steps to promote sport activities in the rural and urban areas. Male Children like playing *bantas* (marbles) and *pithoo* (a game played with ball and pieces of stones) and girls prefer *pehal- dooj* and skipping of rope, etc. Wrestling and *Kabaddi* are still popular sports of the young and middle-aged persons in rural areas. *Guli danda* (tip cat) a popular traditional game is rarely played in urban areas but continues to be a popular game in rural areas.

Community listening is a very popular source of entertainment of the villagers. Drama parties and *bhajan mandlis* of Public Relations Department visit various villages from time to time for educating the people about policies of the Government through certain entertaining programmes. The Public Relations Department frequently exhibits films, mostly documentaries with the help of mobile cinema unit. Listening to the radio and watching television are common pastimes. Most of the people in Urban areas and well-to-do families in rural areas have installed television sets in their homes. In town, some of the shopkeepers have installed portable T.V. sets in their shops. The

State Government has also supplied radio and television sets to Panchayats.

Cinema continues to be the universal media of mass entertainment. Besides Hindi films, Haryanvi and Panjabi films are also popular in the district. All towns in the district have cinema houses in which Hindi, Haryanvi and Panjabi films are shown. Villagers are also very fond of cinema and see films during their visit to towns. Haryanvi films have become popular with the people, as these depict social environment and cultural life of the people of Haryana. In fact, in the last few years cinema and television have become the most popular source of recreation T.V. serials and films are shown on social gatherings and religious occasion with the help of V.C.P./D.V.D.

REHABILITATION

The Partition in 1947 was followed by horrible communal disturbances which inflicted untold sufferings and led to mass migration of population from Pakistan to India and vice versa. Lakhs of homeless Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan entered, which was then called East Punjab.

Although accurate statistics are not available, it is estimated that 77,300 Muslims migrated from this district to Pakistan. They consisted of Afghans, Blauches, Rajputs, Sayyids, Gujjars and Sheikhs. The immigrants into the district numbering about 47,309 were mainly Brahmans, Virks, Mazhabi Sikhs, Aroras and Khattris from Shekhupura, Gujranwala, Multan and Muzaffargarh district of Pakistan. About 58 percent of them settled in the urban areas and the remaining in the rural areas.

Refugee Camps.- As a first step, the displaced persons were given shelter under canvas tentage in relief camps. Two such camps were set up at Kurukshetra and Shahabad. The biggest of these was established at Kurukshetra which accommodated a large number of refugees. The educational institutions which remained closed for months upto February 1948, provided additional accommodation. The services of the staff and students were utilized in the management of the relief camps. Students who rendered three months social service in refugee

camps were considered eligible for the award of certificate/degree of the Panjab University without taking the examination.

Camp life was made reasonably agreeable by the provision of a number of facilities. Free ration was distributed in these camps. Fruits, multi-vitamin tablets and other special items of diet were issued to refugees on medical advice. Blankets, quilts and clothes were supplied during winter. Dispensaries were opened in tents for immediate medical relief. These camps provided much needed relief to the displaced people and gave breathing to all concerned to plan their future.

By the summer of 1948, the routine of Camp life and administration of relief was well organized. The stage had arrived to take the next step enabling the displaced persons to find independent means of existence. The able-bodied male adults between the age of 26 and 60 years who began to do some work or who referred to do work when it was available were de-rationed alongwith their dependents though they were allowed to live in camps. Those entitled to allotment of land were obliged to leave soon after temporary allotment of the evacuee land had been made available to them.

Rural Rehabilitation.- The early allotment of evacuee land helped the Government in the speedy resettlement of rural refugees in camps. It was first made on temporary basis to groups of cultivators who wished to live together. Apart from resettling people, the idea was to promote the sowing of Rabi crop of 1947-48. All agricultural refugees who owned or held land and were cultivating in Pakistan were eligible for such allotment. These temporary allotments were later covered into quasi-permanent in April, 1948. This was a significant step towards the final resettlement of the displaced cultivators on the land allotted to them and was to serve as an incentive to improve their lands. Claims were invited from displaced persons and orally verified at tehsil headquarters. Unfortunately, in spite of their sufferings, many unscrupulous displaced persons made exaggerated claims, and obtained excessive allotments. To overcome this difficulty, Govt. obtained original revenue record from Pakistan to verify claims of the displaced persons. These also showed that there was substantial difference between the land left behind in Pakistan by the incoming displaced persons and that abandoned by the Muslims in East Punjab (India). The latter was less. To overcome this problem, the available

land was converted into standard acres, and graded cuts were applied in making allotment to displaced claimants. The cuts were in proportion to the size of the claim bigger claimants sacrificed a little more in comparison to the smaller claimants.

The quasi-permanent allotments were followed by conferring proprietary rights in 1955. While doing so, bogus and excessive allotments were cancelled, and only the genuine claim of each displaced person verified from revenue record received from Pakistan, was admitted. This resulted in the return to the evacuee pool of lakhs of evacuee lands usurped by unscrupulous displaced persons.

Lands in Kurukshetra district were allotted to displaced persons mainly from Gujranwala, Shekhupura, Lyallpur and Montgomery districts, Chunian tehsil of Lahore district and colonists originally belonging to the Kurukshetra district. Every effort was made to allot land of similar quality as that left by the claimant in Pakistan. Suburban land was allotted to claimant of similar land or to other claimants on valuation basis.

Agricultural Loans.- Allotment of land on a quasi-permanent basis was not enough. The allottees were given assistance by way of agricultural loans for purchasing bullocks, agricultural implements, fodder, seeds, etc. and for repairing house and wells. In order to minimize the chances of misuse, these loans were advanced in kind. The following amount was disbursed for this purpose:-

Year	Amount
1947-48	1,65,403
1948-49	5,20,130
1949-50	2,40,210
1950-51	3,25,203
1951-52	4,34,350
1952-53	90,415
1953-54	67,645

The disbursement of loan was stopped after 1953-54.

Rural Housing.- Rains and floods had damaged a large number of houses abandoned by the Muslims and many of them got damaged beyond repairs. According to the statistics available immediately after

the partition, there were 6,121 undamaged houses, 2,140 repairable houses and 2,715 damaged houses beyond repairs. Even these houses were unevenly distributed. In some villages, the number of houses was in excess of the needs of the allottees while in other almost the entire *abadi* had crumbled and not a single house was available.

Like land, their houses were also allotted on temporary basis in the first instance. Rules for their distribution analogous to those for quasi-permanent land allotment were framed afterwards. Records were prepared regarding the exact accommodation available in each house, its general condition and its approximate value, alongwith the list of allottees and the quality and value of houses left by them in Pakistan. The *Halqa* Revenue Officer, usually a Naib Tehsildar was entrusted with the job of allotment of rural houses. A list giving the order of precedence was prepared. After keeping aside a few houses for common purposes, allottees were given a chance of selection according to their place in the merit list.

Urban Rehabilitation.- The general trend of shifting towards urban areas after independence made the problem of providing residential accommodation to displaced persons in urban areas more acute. The Government rose to the occasion and evolved schemes to utilize the available properties abandoned by Muslims and developed more housing colonies. All Muslim- abandoned properties were taken over as evacuee properties and were governed by the Panjab Evacuee Ordinance IV of 1947, later on supplanted by the Administration of Evacuee Property Act, 1950. Such properties comprising houses, shops, vacant sites, kholas and industrial establishments were temporarily allotted to displaced persons on rental basis. Their permanent disposal started in 1953-54. Properties valued below Rs.10,000 (below Rs. 50,000 for industrial establishments) were declared allotable while those assessed above these amounts, were sold by open auction. Properties lying vacant or in unauthorized possession were similarly auctioned.

In the urban areas of Shahabad, Thanesar and Ladwa, there were 3,815 evacuee properties, 3,132 valued below Rs.10,000 and 720 valued above this amount. These became a part of the evacuee pool for payment of compensation to displaced persons having verified claims.

Allotable properties were given away permanently to claimants against their verified claims. If the value of property was in excess of his compensation amount, claimant concerned was allowed to deposit the excess in instalments. Properties occupied by non-claimants were offered to them on annual instalments.

Housing Schemes.- The properties abandoned by the Muslims were insufficient to provide shelter to all the displaced persons settled in the district. While the Muslim migrants were generally labourers or artisans with a comparatively low standard of living, the incoming Hindus and Sikhs were businessmen and shopkeepers and were used to a much better standard of living. To meet the grave situation arising from the inadequate residential accommodation available in East Punjab, and to provide shelter to the incoming population according to its incoming groups, the Government established 4 marla (cheap) tenements. The new 4 marla (cheap) tenements were allotted to the poor, particularly to displaced persons occupying places of worship or living in dharamsalas, infirmaries and those living on pavements. The statement below gives details of houses and sites and shops constructed and plots laid out under various schemes:-

	Tenants	sites
4 marla (cheap) Housing Colony, Thanesar	100	-
4 marla (cheap) Housing Colony, Shahabad	50	-
4 marla (cheap) Housing Colony, Pehowa	100	-

The allotment of 4 Marla (cheap) tenements was made under the executive instructions issued with the approval of the Govt. of India.

In all these colonies, satisfactory arrangements for underground drainage, water supply and electricity were made and provisions existed for amenities such as school buildings, public parks, hospitals, clubs, libraries and religious places have been sold to private registered bodies at half the reserve price on the condition that the plots sold would be utilized for the purpose for which these were earmarked, shopping centres have been provided in these colonies.

Small Urban and House Building Loans

The scheme of advancing loans and grants was introduced in February, 1948 to help the poor and middle class displaced persons to restart their business, trade or other profession. Under the Punjab Refugees Rehabilitation (loans and grants) Act, 1948, the loan was limited to Rs.5,000 to an individual. The grants were restricted to unattached women, widows and other who were unable to repay loans but, at the same time, wanted monetary help in their resettlement. The maximum amount of grant was limited to Rs.500.

Small Urban Loans.- These loans were advanced to displaced persons to enable them to establish themselves in different vocations. All classes of displaced persons comprising trades, shopkeepers, artisans, industrialists, students, lawyers and medical practitioners were helped under the scheme. The loans carried an interest @ 3 percent and the recovery of loans started after 2 years of their disbursement. The loans together with all interest were repayable in equal instalments spread over a period of 6 years. The loans and grants were strictly to be utilized for the purpose for which they were asked for by the applicant or sanctioned by the Govt. The details of the loan of Rs.3,20,000 advanced to 407 displaced persons during 1948-49 to 1956-57 were as follows:-

Year	Amount
1948-49	97,100
1949-50	2,01,700
1950-51	30,200
1951-52	1,000
1952-53	-
1953-54	-
1954-55	500
1955-56	81,500
1956-57	8,000

The scheme to advance small urban loan was discontinued in 1956-57.

Payment of Compensation

Compensation was paid to displaced persons who had abandoned their immovable property in Pakistan after verifying their claims under the Displaced Persons (claims) Act, 1950. Interim compensation was sanctioned for certain categories of displaced persons who were in urgent need of relief. The interim scheme was later replaced by "Displaced Persons (compensation and Rehabilitation) Act, 1954". Under it, scaled compensation was prescribed. It gave more to smaller claimants and less to bigger claimants. This compensation was paid out of the compensation pool to which the Govt. of India had contributed.

In this manner, the rehabilitation of displaced persons was completed, and now minor residuary problems remained, e.g. correction of clerical mistakes in allotment or rectification of deficiencies, if any. The Rehabilitation Department has been disposing of surplus evacuee properties purchased by the Erstwhile Punjab Government from the Government of India. The properties situated in Haryana are being disposed of by the Tehsildars (Sales) specially appointed, in auctions restricted mostly to Harijans. This process also helped in the detection of usurped properties and their disposal brings in additional revenue to Government.

Socio-Economic Blend

The rehabilitation of displaced persons proved to be as much the glory of the Punjab as the partition and the consequent uprooting of millions was its misfortune. The effect of the exchange of population is a phenomenon of great historical importance in the evolution of the socio-economic pattern of life of the people of Punjab and Haryana and the Kurukshetra district. The process of change is at various stages in the manifold aspects of life and a complete picture can emerge only after sometime. As a result of the partition, population in urban areas increased.

Consequent upon the partition, there has been two type of settlement of the displaced persons. The persons who took to agriculture mainly settled in the villages and non-agricultural communities notably Aroras and Khattris because of their business acumen, preferred to settle in the towns. They successfully set

themselves up as shopkeepers and traders and competed with the local business communities. This resulted into a healthy competition among different trading communities and brought new looks to the markets. Inter-fusion of displaced persons and local population deeply influenced each other way of life and led to a better living in terms of clothing, furniture, food etc.

With the lapse of time, the displaced persons have almost completely integrated themselves with the local population of the district. With the process of inter-mixture of dialects, Aroras, Khattris and Virks from Pakistan have mastered the local dialect. The influence was not one sided, even the local people have learnt Panjabi. One can now easily notice the impact of Panjabi language on the local dialect and vice versa. It is only a matter of time when the older generation passes away and the younger generation takes over and is able to identify itself completely with life and culture of the new homes in which they were born.

Uprooting of the population caused struggle and turned the displaced persons more skilled and adventurous. The people who migrated from Pakistan have proved more enterprising and have made their presence felt in trade and services. The local people too have realized the resourcefulness of the displaced persons. They now have shook off the inertia and pursued into all sectors of economic activities successfully.